

Christians

Identified

by

ROY LONEY

Christians Identified

A SERIES OF LESSONS ON
CHRISTIAN RESPONSIBILITY

BY
ROY LONEY
WELLSVILLE, KANSAS

Price 35 cents each—Three for \$1.00

CHAPTER I

ALL CHRISTIANS ARE GOD'S CHILDREN

"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:26). There is no passage in the New Testament that appeals to me more strongly than the one quoted above. To be God's child is the greatest honor that can be claimed by the sons and daughters of Adam's sinful race. Man in sin is a child of the devil. Jesus said to the apostate Jews, "Ye are of your father the devil and the lusts of your father will ye do" (John 8:44). Liars, thieves, drunkards, adulterers, murderers and all other sinners are the offspring of Satan, begotten in his moral image, and destined to share his terrible fate. Of such an ancestry there is nothing to boast, and few there are who willingly acknowledge the relationship. But to be a child of an infinitely loving and merciful Father, whose grace and compassion have brought to the world its only moral and spiritual blessing, is an honor that outshines all earthly glories. Such an honor when properly understood and appreciated, gives a person an exalted perspective of the meaning and value of life and stimulates him to the noblest of activities in his relations with his fellowmen.

Man is the "offspring of God" (Acts 17:29) by creation. He was created in God's image and God is the Father of his spirit (Heb. 12:9), for he "formed the spirit of man within him" (Zech. 12:1). Man came from the hand of God as pure as his Creator, but when sin entered his heart, it corrupted his moral nature, and thus a complete separation was effected between man and God. "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face that he will not hear" (Isaiah 59:1,2). But God would not cast off man without hope. A life dead in sin can be made alive. Man can be turned from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God. A child of the devil can become a purified and consecrated child of God. Christ came to his own and his own received him not; but as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:11,12). Those who thus become sons of God are born, "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Thus we learn that **people become God's children by a spiritual birth**. Jesus declared to Nicodemus, "ye must be born again." "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). You can't pray your way into God's family, you must be born into that family. Peter speaks of those who were "born, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth forever" (1 Peter 1:23). God has no use for an unregenerated heart. The love of the world and of the self must be cast out of that heart and Christ must enter it before God will accept it. We, as a church, have ever stressed baptism

as a "birth of water", but we have not stressed as we should, the birth of the Spirit. The burial in the watery grave will avail nothing unless we rise therefrom to "walk in newness of life". The old man of sin must be crucified before the "new man" in Christ can exist. We must put off the old man with his deeds and put on the "new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. 4:22-24). We must learn to love the things we once despised and despise the things we once loved. The seed of the kingdom, the word of God, must be planted in the heart and be permitted to produce the fruits of righteousness. It is only a crucified heart that is a purified heart. The washing in the water of baptism must be accompanied with a washing of the heart in the blood of Christ. Baptism will not bring us into the death of Christ (Rom. 6:3) unless we have died to the practice of sin. Only those who are dead to sin are freed from sin. Repentance is more than mere sorrow for sin. It is a complete turning away from sin and a turning to God. "A new heart will I give you and a new spirit will I put within you." The lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye and the pride of life, must be superseded by a love for God and a hunger for righteousness. The heart's affections must be centered on "things above, not on things on the earth." In a word, to become God's child, we must be "transformed by the renewing of our minds that we may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. When this is done, then **we as God's children will bear the family resemblance.**

Most parents take pleasure in the fact that their children look like them. To have a son who is the "split image of his father" will make a man glow with pride in his offspring, and he is generally pleased to have his son follow his chosen occupation. The old saying "like father like son" holds true in the spiritual world. If we have truly been "born of God" we will bear our Father's likeness. We have from him this command, "Be ye holy for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:15). Christians, can you truthfully say that you look like God? Look into the gospel mirror (James 1:24) and take note if your moral and spiritual features resemble those of your elder brother, Christ. Peter said that Christ suffered for us "leaving us an example that we should follow his steps." Which means that we are to live as he lived. Our conduct, our habits and our attitude toward God and man will be the same as his. He came to show God's children how to live. His Father's will was his will, and he taught only as the Father revealed the truth to him. His submission to the Father was full and complete. Well may we sing, "He the great example is and pattern for me". His likeness and image are revealed in the New Testament, and we must look therein to know how we are to live and look. Our sincere prayer should ever be:

O to be like thee, blessed Redeemer

This is my constant longing and prayer:

Gladly I'll forfeit all of earth's treasures,
Jesus thy perfect likeness to wear.

When we look into the Lord's mirror, we see the image of Christ and can be "changed into the same image from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18). When Peter and John were arrested by the enemies of the church it was said "they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus (Acts 4:13). Which means that they were reminders of Christ. They personified Christ who was revealed through them. Once some Greeks came to Phillip saying, "Sir, we would see Jesus", and Christ was presented to them in person. We cannot do that, but we can show to the world a Christ who lives in our hearts by faith (Eph. 3:17). If Christ lives in us he will not enjoy our cigarettes, slangy language, lurid comics, shady stories nor our general indifference to the spiritual realities of life. Our daily walk should ever be with the consciousness that he is ever by our side, and that we are to be "living epistles . . . known and read of all men."

Queen Victoria once paid a visit to a paper mill. The foreman showed her over the plant not knowing her identity. She was taken into a rag sorting room where the men were employed in sorting dirty rags collected from the refuse of the city. She inquired what was done with such a dirty mass of rags, and was informed that when sorted out, they could be used in making the finest of white paper. After her departure, the foreman learned her identity and after sometime elapsed, Her Majesty received a packet of the most delicate white paper, having the Queen's likeness for the water mark, with the information that this paper was made from the dirty rags she had inspected. Even so, our lives, oftentimes made repulsive by sin, can be renewed by the spirit of the Lord and be made to bear his image. This is your work and mine, for the Lord cannot change a sinful life except by the willing help of the individual.

This brings us to another vital thought. **Every child of God should learn to love the whole family.** Jesus laid down an infallible test of true discipleship. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35). The attainment of a perfectly happy home life depends on this principle. A family rent with bitter quarrels and sordid fights experiences neither peace nor happiness. It was love in the beginning that formed the family and it is only love that will hold it together. The family of God has no greater lesson to learn than to "love one another with a pure heart fervently." In view of the fact that the love that saved us was a pure and unselfish love, a love that gave the highest and most precious gift known to man (John 3:16), we should be unselfish in our attachment to the entire family of God's children. "If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." "We know we have passed from death un-

to life when we love the brethren" for "he that loveth not his brother abideth in death."

In the early days of Christianity, when thousands sealed their faith with their life's blood, the church was bound together by a tie so strong that even the most hardened of the Roman soldiers would exclaim in astonishment, "Behold how the Christians love each other." But in this modern age of fast changing spiritual values, most members of the church regard each other as mere acquaintances, and they would feel insulted if asked to bear the burden of another's trouble. That selfless devotion that bound the early Christians together is, in many congregations, as rare as a blooming rose in a desert. Paul declared that the Body (church) is one, but has many members and that if one member suffered, all members suffered with it; or if one member was honored, all members rejoiced together. Such a care and devotion can be produced only by a scriptural knowledge of our relationship to God and to each other. It was said of the early church, "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul" (Acts 4:32). All hearts blended into one.

Blest be the tie that binds
Our hearts in Christian love,
The fellowship of kindred minds,
Is like to that above.

The next thought I wish to present is that **all of God's children should be interested in their Father's cause.** If an earthly father was doing a work that brought great blessings to his fellowmen, he would be grieved if his children took no interest in his work. Our Father has a great work to do. He sent his Son to seek and save that which was lost. His only interest in man is in blessing and uplifting him. A true child of God can have no other interest. Jesus plainly said, "No man can serve two masters: For either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will cling to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon". Too many professed Christians are entirely engrossed in material things and have no time for the spiritual things that concern the Father. You simply cannot partake of the Father's likeness without at the same time, partaking of his interest in spiritual things. We are not to be interested in treasures that are subject to rust and decay, but should be entirely interested in the kind of treasures that are deposited in the bank of heaven. Our Lord spoke of how the "cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke out the word so that it becomes unfruitful. He who has no real interest in the saving of souls and in building up the church, has no claim upon his Father's inheritance. There are thousands in the church today that have never lifted their little finger to save a soul and I shudder at the thought of their doom! David complained, "No man cared for my soul (Psalms 142:4), and if you have no interest in another's

salvation, you really have no interest in your own. God is not willing that any should perish, but that all might come to repentance. Long ago God said, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked should turn from their evil ways and live" (Ezek. 33:11). God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved, and to me it is little less than hypocrisy for worldly minded members to sing in stentorian tones; "Rescue the perishing, care for the dying; Snatch them in pity from sin and the grave. Weep o'er the erring one, lift up the fallen, tell them of Jesus the mighty to save", and then when they meet their friends and neighbors, never have a single word to say to them of their souls' redemption! Are we not parasites if we live off of our Father's bounty and never seek to share his grace with those who are doomed?

Our next thought is that **God's children should often commune with their Father.** Oftentimes Jesus would withdraw himself from the teeming, noisy crowds and spend quiet and restful hours alone with his Father. Between that Father and his Son was the closest bond of affection, interest and fellowship. I have often wondered why many people call God their Father when they never have one word to say to him from one day to another. I've known people, who when asked to pray, would say in a panic "Oh I can't pray!" **How absurd!** Can't talk to the kindest Father the world has ever known! What could make it impossible for a child to converse with a most loving and affectionate father? Our Father is one of infinite love, mercy and compassion. His interest in us and love for us is beyond expression. We claim to have been saved and redeemed by his infinite grace, and yet we can't talk to him! How absurd! If a friend whom you loved, gave you a gift of much value, would it be beyond your mental or physical power to say "Thank You, my friend"? Would we not feel ashamed to accept this gift without tendering grateful and heart-felt thanks? Yet each day, we receive from the Father "every good gift and every perfect gift", spiritual gifts and material gifts and never utter a single word of gratitude or appreciation! Thanking the Father for his precious gifts and asking him for strength and grace to meet all our daily trials should be the most natural thing in the world. The church as God's family never will be what the Father intended it to be until every sincere Christian recognizes his kinship to God and treats him with the same loving adoration that a properly trained child shows toward his father. Praying to the Father should be as natural and as easy as to converse with any one we love and admire, and Christians miss the greatest experience in life if they never learn to pray. Marian Anderson, the world-famous contralto (colored) wrote of her people: "When my people pray, they speak to God as to a good friend. He is not a remote power . . . He is all about them. In their moments of extremity they turn to him as their great friend, baring their soul, striving only to be heard and understood. It is as if they were contacting someone

with whom they need never pretend, who will look into their hearts and know what is there. Then they have the true experience of religion. They speak directly to the Lord."

There can be no real religious life whatever without a personal contact with our Father, who is ever interested in all that pertains to our welfare. Peter urges us to "cast all your cares upon him for he careth for you." Paul insists that we should go "boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in the time of need." The Philippians were admonished to be "careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, let your requests be made known unto God." What is the sense of singing "Sweet hour of prayer, Sweet hour of prayer, That calls me from a world of care. And bids me at my Father's throne, make all my wants and wishes known" while at the same time we never avail ourselves to the personal blessings of that hour? If a father is the right kind of a parent, his children will get into his lap with the utmost confidence and assurance that they will be loved and comforted in their childish troubles and sorrows. They know his strong arms will close around them in loving protection and comfort. The Christian life will be well nigh meaningless to any one unless he can look upon the heavenly Father with the same degree of security, intimacy and trust as a child goes to its earthly father. Your Father is ever as near to you as the door of your heart, and at any moment when that door is opened in welcome the all-loving Father will be in your presence to "comfort strengthen and keep you."

And this brings us to the next thought. **God's children should trust their Father to provide all their needs.** Jesus once asked: "Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give them a stone? Or if he ask a fish will he give him a serpent? If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven, give good things to those that ask him?" One of the rarest things in the church today is to find a professed Christian who has implicit trust in the Lord to supply all his needs. We sometimes sing "I'm the child of a King", and in that song we speak of how his "coffers are full, he has treasures untold," yet we slave and work and work and worry for fear we shall not have the wherewithall to be fed and clothed. **O ye of little faith!** Jesus once pointed out the fact that the lillies of the field were more gorgeously apparelled than Solomon in all his glory even though they could neither toil nor spin; and the birds of the air neither sow, reap nor gather into barns, yet they are fed through a father's care. "Are ye not much better than they?" I seriously doubt if there is any one thing that distresses our Father more than to have whining, complaining, and worried children. An affectionate and considerate Father is ever ready and willing to provide our every need. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth

those that fear him." Why can't we or won't we trust him? Jesus says "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things". This being true, which no real child of God will deny, why should we be so fearful of the future? Why the strained look, the wrinkled brow and the heavy heart? Why is it such a risk to lose a dollar by going to the Father's house to worship him and commune with him? I once told a sister, whose husband (a member) had to work on Sunday to hold his job, that I had enough faith in God to believe that if I gave up such a job in order to be free to worship the Lord, that the Lord through his grace would enable me to find a better job. Quick as a wink she heatedly said, "I don't believe that!" Yet Jesus said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you." I would hesitate to call Christ a liar, yet that, in effect, is what we do when we doubt his word. I will take him at his word. That is what faith in the Father means. As a rule, you will find that those who are faithful in attendance at the hour of worship each Lord's day, are just as prosperous and many times far more happy than those who refuse to trust the Father for their daily bread. I do not believe we have to disregard the commands of God in order to earn our daily bread. I often wonder why people will sing "Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus" when they never trust his promise for one hour or a day. Listen to Paul: "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high minded nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy." I certainly believe that the name of "God" should be something more than a mere word to those who profess to be his children. "In him we live and move and have our being." He is one who is "able to do abundantly above all that we think or ask." And we have the assurance that "no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly".

Finally, I wish to call your attention to this most wonderful truth. **God's children, if faithful to him, can all look forward to a great family reunion.** The holiday season approaches and generally it is a season of family reunions. The married children with their companions and children return to the old homestead to spend the day with Mother and "Dad". What a happy occasion it is! Brothers and sisters reunited and again under the old family roof, drinking deeply from the well of affection and reliving the sweet memories of the childhood days that are past. The cares and responsibilities of life are for the moment forgotten, and they all revel in the presence of those they love. But there can be only a few hours at the most of sweet companionship and then all must part. We cannot expect a permanent reunion of an earthly family; but the day is coming when the great family of God, gathered from every tribe and nation will meet around the eternal throne of the Father, in that land where no storm clouds gather—where we'll never say "Good Bye". "And after this I beheld, and lo a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations and kindreds

and people and tribes and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb clothed with white robes and palms in their hands." Every saint and redeemed one from all the generations of the past, will be there. The great and the mighty of all of God's servants together with even the smallest in the kingdom—all home at last! No parting, no tears, no sad farewells. "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away. And he that set up on the throne said, Behold I make all things new." "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ; and if so be that we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified."

At the sounding of the trumpet, when the saints are
gathered home,
We shall meet each other by the crystal sea.
There to meet and join to sing the songs of Moses and
the Lamb,
What a gathering of the faithful that will be!

CHAPTER II

ALL CHRISTIANS ARE KINGS

"Give us a king that he may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles for us" (1 Sam. 8).

For five hundred years the Lord had been Israel's king, and there had been no lack of royal favors as long as the nation had been obedient to his laws. His provisions had been amply sufficient and his rulership benevolent; but in the sad history of man it has been demonstrated again and again that he always prefers the human to the divine, the material to the spiritual, so now they were asking God to abdicate his throne and turn it over to a weak and fallible man. No wonder that Samuel was grieved! His pleas to them were unavailing and the information he gave as to what it would cost them in taxes and servitude to maintain the retinue of royalty fell upon ears that were deliberately deaf to the truth. Their cry, "Nay, but we will have a king" expressed the willful determination of unregenerated hearts; so God and Samuel yielded to their rash importunities and a king was given.

Saul pleased them at first. His gigantic size and bold spirit caught the popular imagination and great were their hopes for the future. But his haughty and disobedient heart led to his rejection by the Lord, and David the shepherd boy, a man after God's own heart, took the crown after Saul's tragic death. His firm and righteous rule placed Israel in the forefront of the nations, and God made an oath that "his seed should endure forever and his throne unto all generations" (Psalms 89:35,36). David's son, Solomon, raised the nation to the very pinnacle of power and glory; but in his latter years, his idolatry brought a sharp rebuke from God, together with a stern warning of impending doom unless Israel and David's seed walked with God. For the promise of the perpetuation of David's dynasty was a conditional one. "If thou wilt walk before me as David thy father walked, in integrity of heart and in uprightness . . . then I will establish the throne of thy kingdom forever. But if ye shall at all turn from following me and will not keep my commandments . . . I will cut off Israel out of the land which I have given them . . . and Israel shall be a proverb and a byword among the nations" (1 Kings 9:5,7).

Among the kings who followed Solomon were some truly good and righteous men; but too often the seed of David followed the wicked inclination of Israel into idolatry. However, these few good kings for many years saved Judah from the captivity that befell the northern kingdom until the culminating sins of David's sons finally brought Judah to the vortex of ruin. Of the next to the last king of David's seed, Jehoiachim, Jeremiah uttered these solemn prophetic words, "Write ye this man childless, for no man

of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David and ruling any more in Judah" (Jer. 22:30). The wicked Zedekiah soon ascended the throne, and against him came the hosts of Babylon's Nebuchadnezzar who reduced Jerusalem to an ash heap, burned the beautiful temple of Solomon and carried Judah captive to distant Babylon. **The throne of David was vacant!** God had given Israel a king in his anger and had taken him away in his wrath (Hosea 13:11).

But the Lord had not left Israel without hope. Jeremiah sang the praises of a new king in these words, "Behold the days come saith the Lord that I will raise unto David a righteous branch and a king shall reign and prosper . . . and this is his name whereby he shall be called, the Lord our righteousness" (23:5,6). Israel was to "abide many days without a king, without a prince and without a sacrifice", afterwards, they were to "seek the Lord their God and David their king" (Hosea 3:4,5).

Seventy years of captivity ended and Israel returned to Judea under Ezra, Zerubbabel and Nehemiah. The temple was rebuilt and Jerusalem's walls restored and although that did not restore David's throne, God's immutable promise to David was not to fail; and hundreds of years later, in the days of the mighty Ceasars, the angel Gabriel brought to the startled virgin of Nazareth the never-to-be-forgotten announcement, "Behold thou shall conceive in thy womb and bring forth a son . . . and he shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Highest, and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

Months later the startled shepherds of Bethlehem received the amazing news of the new-born king. He was not born in a king's palace, among the pomp and glory of royalty; but in a stable and cradled in a manger. The jealous, murderous Herod unsheathed the sword, but God preserved the infant king amidst Egypt's fading splendors, while Herod died hated and detested.

This Prince of the House of David grew to manhood, not in a royal palace, but amidst the rustic scenes of lowly Nazareth, working in a carpenter shop to supply his temporal needs. At the age of thirty, hearing the call of the Baptist on the banks of the Jordan, he left his humble home in Nazareth, and in the presence of the curious multitude, received his baptism while God from heaven acknowledged his royal Son. Anointed by the Holy Spirit, he began the preparatory work of organizing his kingdom. Calling to his aid twelve apostles to be his ambassadors, he set forth in that memorable Sermon on the Mount the righteous principles that shall ever guide his people in holiness and peace.

The proud and haughty Sanhedrim, pledged to the literal restoration of David's throne, watched with jealous eyes his every

move. When his well meaning friends sought to take him by force and make him a king, he declined the proffered crown. His was not to be a kingdom of this world. Going everywhere doing good, his popularity among the common people grew with amazing rapidity while the emissaries of Satan plotted his destruction. The inevitable clash between these two forces brought forth from his divine lips the most scathing denunciation of all time and he pronounced the verdict of heaven against them, "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to another nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." The moody Gaiaphas decreed that "this one man should die" for the decaying nation; and so his doom was sealed. Brought to trial and accused of sedition, the weak and wavering Pilate gave the world's unanimous verdict, "I find in him no fault at all." But political pressure taking precedence over justice, brought forth the sentence of death, so **Israel crucified their one and only king!** He died with this royal inscription over his head, "Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews".

With crushed spirits his disheartened disciples laid him in a borrowed tomb, while the weeping women, having no hope, prepared sweet spices for his permanent burial. Three days later the powers of Satan were shaken when death was conquered and the entombed king broke the bars of the grave and came forth triumphantly from the dead. The fear-shaken disciples could scarcely believe the electrifying news of the exultant women, "He is risen!" Through death he was the ultimate conqueror, not the conquered, and his abashed enemies hid themselves behind a veil of falsehood. For forty days the risen king lived and walked among his disciples, instructing them in things pertaining to the kingdom of God. Finally from the summit of Mt. Olive he ascended from earth amidst the clouds of heaven to receive the royal crown and a seat upon the throne of glory. The angelic host escorting him on his coronation parade to heaven, greeted the angels at heaven's gate with these stentorian words, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates and be ye lifted up ye everlasting doors, that the King of Glory shall come in." The gates are opened and the new Sovereign, clothed with the radiance and glory of God, is brought before the "Ancient of days" and there is given unto him dominion and glory and a kingdom: "his dominion is an everlasting dominion and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed" (Dan. 7:13, 14). The diadem of power is placed upon his brow and angels, principalities and powers are made subject unto him as God the Father issues this decree, "Sit thou on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool."

Today Christ sits upon David's throne, which is God's throne, in the highest heavens, and rules with a rod of love the saved and redeemed from every nation under heaven. While "all authority is given unto him in heaven and in earth", he shares with his disciples the rulership and glory of his kingdom. Listen to this royal

decree, "He that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me upon my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my father upon his throne". This cannot refer to rulership after the judgment, for his rulership ends then; but to rulership now in his kingdom, for "He hath made us unto our God to be **kings** and **priests** and we shall reign on the earth" (Rev. 5:10).

I have come to the most important thought of this lesson. **Christians are kings!** Kings with Christ! You may look upon yourself as a small and very insignificant person; but according to the royal decree of Christ, you are a King! The church's greatest shame today is that many, far too many, look upon themselves as nobodies — just peons. But if you have been saved by the blood of Christ **you are a king!** Let me now list our royal advantages.

(1). **We are of royal birth.** We are born "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:13). Truthfully we sing "I'm the child of a king". Paul said, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God: And if children then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ" (Rom. 8:16,17). God is my father and Christ, the great Monarch of heaven, is my brother. All the advantages of royalty are ours if we will avail ourselves of that which our Father has provided. Thousands of people miss the best in life, in the church, because they do not understand the exalted dignity and honor of their relationship to God. We are princes of the royal blood. Let our conduct, our thinking and planning be that of kings.

(2). **We have royal garments.** Ancient kings were clothed with purple and fine linen. Their expensive, expertly tailored clothes set them apart from the multitudes. A Christian has no business wearing the soiled garment of unrighteousness. Let us be clothed like kings! Apart from Christ, our righteousness is but "filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6), but when he clothes us with the garments of salvation, and covers us with the robe of righteousness (Isaiah 61:10) we can walk in dignity in the courts of kings. Each day as we grow in grace we will heed Paul's command, "put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 13:14). To be "clothed with humility" shows our kinship with Him who was meek and lowly in heart. It is said that "clothes make the man". That is true spiritually. A king clothed with soiled tattered garments commands no respect from his subjects; but a Christian clothed with purity and holiness, is respected by even the emissaries of Satan.

(3). **We are given royal food.** The prodigal son in his degradation fed himself with the husks the swine did eat. Coarse, unpalatable food! But God's children may each day eat "royal dainties" (Gen. 49:20) from the Father's bounteous table. Upon that royal table are found the richest viands from the storehouse of the King. The milk and meat he provides contain all the vitamins

necessary for spiritual health and strength. "If so be you have tasted, that the Lord is gracious." "Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." We should say with the saint of old, "I have esteemed the words of thy mouth more than my necessary food." Most Christians starve in the midst of plenty. The Manna that gives eternal life is treated with indifference by those who claim to love it best. A neglected Bible is Satan's greatest joy. It is true spiritually as well as physically that a man is what he eats; and unless you eat daily of the royal food at the royal table, you will bear little resemblance to the King.

(4). We exercise royal rulership. We do the work of kings! And we rule by divine right, and the domain of that rulership is in our hearts. Solomon said, "He that ruleth his spirit is better than he that taketh a city." Most people are slaves. They permit Satan largely to dominate their lives. It is he who says, "thou shalt and thou shalt not". Every Christian should draw up a Declaration of Independence of Satan's power and resolve that with God's help he will make something grand and sublime of the life God gave him, that he will "no longer live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men but to the will of God (1 Peter 4:2). How few there are who fully realize the unseen power of Satan over their lives preventing them from rising to heights of real power and usefulness in the kingdom of God. We fritter and fiddle away precious hours and days in frivolous time-consuming things that benefit no one but Satan, and thereby rob God and ourselves of a heritage of usefulness and power. "Be not like dumb driven cattle; be a hero in the strife" with something attempted, something done that befits the life of a king. A greater king than Paul never wore the crown of real Christian rulership, and of himself he said, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (1 Cor. 9:27). He controlled self that he might live for Christ; and in so doing he was a real king. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." No weakling was he, for he had a real mission in life and he made each day count. May we heed the divine admonition, "Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown" (Rev. 3:11).

CHAPTER III

ALL CHRISTIANS ARE PRIESTS

"No man taketh this honor unto himself but he that is called of God as was Aaron" (Heb. 5:4).

God called his people out of Egyptian bondage to plant them in the promised land and make of them a free nation; and out of that nation he selected a group of men for the priesthood (Ex. 19:6). The tribe of Levi was chosen in the place of the firstborn, to minister unto the Lord in the tabernacle, and from that tribe Aaron and his sons were chosen for the priesthood. "And take thou unto thee thy brother Aaron, and his sons with him, . . . that he may minister unto me in the priest's office" (Exod. 28:1). Theirs was to be a perpetual priesthood with special emoluments and great honors. They were "born to the purple" and became priests without choice on their parts. Aaron was the first high priest, to whom was given the *gorgeous priestly robes* for "glory and for beauty" which set him aside from the common people with great responsibilities to perform as the religious leader of the nation. These men were inducted into office at the proper age by an imposing ceremony called "consecration" (Exod. 29) which required the slaughter of certain animals, the *sprinkling of blood* before the Mercy Seat and the donning of the priestly robes after a washing of the body which signified the purity of the lives they were to live and the purifying nature of the work they were to perform. The special work with their free cities and emoluments, made the priesthood a very attractive and lucrative office; and no one not of Aaron's descent could ever hope to attain to that high office where every need was supplied by the bountiful provisions of the law. The rest of Israel could only bring their offerings to the tabernacle and watch with reverent interest while the priests offered their sacrifices unto the Lord.

Even the work of the common priests was limited. They could only perform the daily duties in the holy place and offer the morning and evening sacrifices upon the brasen altar outside the tabernacle. The most holy place with its sacred Ark of the Covenant and golden Mercy Seat before which the atoning blood must be sprinkled yearly for Israel's transgressions, could be entered only by the High Priest and then only once a year on the great day of Atonement or when consecrating other priests.

Paul tells us that the imposing ceremony on the Day of Atonement indicated that the way into the "holiest of all (heaven) was not yet made manifest." It pointed forward to that wonderful day when Christ as our great High Priest entered into heaven with his own blood "having obtained eternal redemption for us" — redemption paid not with the blood of bulls and goats, but with the blood of **The Lamb** slain from the foundation of the world. Those num-

erous, bloody animal sacrifices could never take away sin; so when Christ came into the world he said, "Sacrifices and offerings (of animals), thou wouldst not, but a body thou hast prepared me". That terrible, agonizing death Christ endured on Calvary's tree, was the one perfect sacrifice by which the sins of mankind could be removed, for "by one offering he hath perfected forever them that believe." He who was to be a "priest upon the throne" (Zech. 6:13) has by his authority as King of kings, changed the entire priesthood. "For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change of the law." When our atoning sacrifice was offered at that last great Passover, the rent veil of the temple gave testimony to all the Jews that the temple and its entire priesthood would no longer represent God to the Jewish nation, or the Israel of God. The blood line of Aaron no longer qualifies priests for service in the great spiritual Temple of God which has superseded and forever set aside that material one with its walls of burnished gold, its imposing ceremonies and bloody rites.

But of all the changes that were made in turning from the material to the spiritual, from the shadow to the substance, from the typical to the anti-typical, no greater change was made than that which affected the priesthood. The sons of Aaron "served unto the example and shadow of heavenly (spiritual) things"; but under Christ, our perfect high priest we have "better sacrifices than these", and the glorious spiritual temple of God built with the "living stones" of redeemed souls, is not sanctified by the blood of animals, but with the "precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." Its priests are not chosen by the "law of a carnal commandment, but by the power of an endless life." Listen! "Ye also as lively (living) stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5). **How wonderful!** In this spiritual temple, the church of the living God, there are no separate favored classes, for "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." Every sincere child of God, born through his infinite grace, is a priest fully qualified and empowered to enter into the sacred precincts of his holy temple, and there in grateful love "offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is the fruit of our lips, giving thanks unto his name." For "he hath made us kings and **priests** unto God and his Father" (Rev. 1:6).

We, as priests, wear no gorgeous material robes, dyed resplendent in purple, blue and scarlet and embroidered with costly gold, but we wear the beautiful white garments of Christ's righteousness which in the sight of God is of great price. We burn no material incense upon a golden altar, but each day and hour we may offer unto the loving Father the incense of heartfelt praise before the throne of divine grace. We light no lamps on a golden candlestick to dispel the gloom of approaching night! but daily we can walk

in the light of the Saviour's word that lights the way to heaven. We eat not of material bread from the material table that can satisfy only physical hunger; but we feast upon the bread of life, that satisfies every desire of the soul. We are not cumbered with the onerous duty of the daily slaughter of an innocent lamb, and the burning of its body on the brasen altar; but at all times our own bodies, alive and consecrated to God can be offered a "living sacrifice holy acceptable unto God which is your reasonable service." **How greatly we are honored!** It is not for us to stand back inactive and unhonored while others approach God through the public ministry of His spiritual service; but each redeemed soul laden with the offering of his deep gratitude and thankfulness, can approach the altar of an all loving Father and give of his best to the service.

Our superiority is not in the blood line of remote ancestors; but through the obedience of faith which makes us "new creatures" in Him and as God's own children we are "heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ" of a land that is "fairer than day". Many times I wonder if the average Christian realizes the exalted honor he is accorded as God's priest; or of the glory and dignity of the great work he can perform in the spiritual ministry of Christ. There is no greater neglect than that of our privileges as the children of God. To assist in the worship of God is not a mere duty—it is a glorious honor and there is truly no honor in avoiding that which will bring us closer to God through active service to Him.

The Catholics and most of the denominations have their special clergy to perform all the public functions of worship, and are thus denied the satisfaction of a personal approach unto God. And in many of the so-called churches of Christ the hireling Minister is an obstruction between the Christians and God. He is the "Bureaucrat" of the church with his special emoluments, exalted position, and his **usurped** authority as the only one to "speak unto edification" to God's children. His position as the "Edifier" of the assembly, corresponds exactly to that of the Jewish priesthood who as a special class were the **only ones** to offer the sacrifices unto the Lord. In accepting these hirelings, we have gone back to the law and have forsaken the true spirit of the Gospel that makes us all "kings and priests unto God". The Corinthian brethren were exhorted to speak unto edification and all were given gifts to use whereby the entire church, as the Lord's priests, might magnify the Lord through the offering of their spiritual sacrifices. The Roman brethren received commendation from Paul because they were able without a hired priesthood, to admonish one another, being filled with all goodness and knowledge (Rom. 15:14). The Thessalonians were to comfort one another through edification given by themselves (1 Thess. 5:11) and the Ephesians were taught that they could edify **themselves** through the work of every member of the entire body cooperating together as the Lord's priests in the ministry of his spiritual temple (Eph. 4:16). **This is the Lord's plan**, and we

change it at our own peril. It is time to reject the hireling Ministry and send it back to Babylon from whence it came, and let every servant of the Lord learn through consecrated devolpment to exercise all perogatives as priests in doing the work the Lord has laid upon each one "unto the edifying of the body in love" and we will all find happiness, peace and contentment to a far greater degree than we've yet experienced.

In all worship, the primary purpose is two-fold: (1) The glorification of God, and (2) the spiritual edification of the worshiper, and the value of the worship service is judged solely by the spiritual benefit one feels he has obtained from the experience. The sermon therefore is too often and wrongfully the center around which all other elements, now regarded as merely incidental, revolve and the chief reason offered by those who formerly were accustomed to participate in the public exercises for having abandoned them is that they "got nothing from them". And so an especially trained and qualified speaker must now do all the work for the edification of the church. But this is a total misconception of religion or worship. It is not what one gets from a sermon or a service that counts; but what one gives out of his own heart to God; for worship is an act, not a mere passive state. You are not truly worshipping God if you merely sit and listen to others sing, pray or preach. In worship it is true, one should receive grace from God; but in worship as in ordinary affairs of life, one gets out of it only in proportion to what they put into it, and every Christian priest is under obligations to actively participate in the worship of God by their own acts of singing, praying or teaching. In all true worship the soul communes with God, and religion is a direct personal relationship between the soul and God. In the worship, every heart should be praying and praising God. We should worship as much to give as to receive, and it is not what one "gets out of it" but what one puts into it that will most satisfy the soul's longing for God and a higher life. We should ever remember that Christ's statement, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" applies to worship just as much as it does in material fellowship. Under the Jewish law each priest "executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course" (Luke 1:8), and the same thing should be true, in general, of the spiritual priests of the Lord today. We should **practice** being priests, not merely profess being priests without performing the duties and accepting the obligations of the priesthood. No one can worship God by proxy, and the hireling Minister is something as foreign to apostolic Christianity as is the Catholic priesthood.

CHAPTER IV

ALL CHRISTIANS ARE MINISTERS

Every generation has its own apostasy, and every new apostasy coins new names and expressions. Words are taken out of

their spiritual context and new meanings applied to them. In the second century the common word bishop, which in the New Testament is applied to that class of public workers sometimes designated as elders or presbyters, meaning an overseer in the local congregation, came to be applied to just one in the congregation who received more pre-eminence and exercised greater authority than the presbyters. His was a one man rule with the presbyters acting as a cabinet or board of advisers. He alone presided over the public services and practically all authority was placed in his hands.

Scripturally all elders are bishops and all bishops are presbyters. The word bishop signifies the nature of their official work, which is the oversight of the local congregation, while the word elder or presbyter indicates that they are men of age and experience, and thus qualified to minister to the flock (Acts 20:28).

The "mystery of iniquity" (2 Thess. 2:7) already at work in Paul's days soon corrupted this divine arrangement, and the "Bishop" took precedence over the presbyters and ruled the congregation. This was the first real apostasy of the apostolic church, and the evils which followed finally culminated in the establishment of the Papacy, the greatest spiritual disaster of all time. Misapplication of scriptural words is always a mark of apostasy. The common word patriarch, or father, so often applied to the venerable men of the Old Testament times was misused during this age of apostasy and became the designated name of a pompous character who ruled as an autocrat over a large segment of the churches in the Roman empire.

In the rapid progress of this apostasy the churches were divided into four districts with four Patriarchs ruling from the four great metropolitan areas of Rome, Antioch, Constantinople and Alexandria, Egypt. But the appetite for usurped power knows no limitations, and so in time was developed the predicted "Man of sin" (2 Thess. 2:3,4), the Lord God the Pope, the "spiritual Father" who still holds in spiritual bondage millions of deluded followers. It required the untiring labor of several hundred years and the life blood of thousands of consecrated martyrs to bring the true church back from the wilderness of apostasy and rescue the millions under Satan's power.

Today the pattern of apostasy is exactly the same. Common words are wrested out of their connection and given a meaning entirely foreign to the minds of the inspired writers. Thus are developed characters, offices and "isms" unknown to the apostolic age. The spiritual altar of worship (Heb. 13:10) has become the material "Mourners' Bench". The Supper of the Lord has become the imposing ritual called the "Mass", and the quiet sanctification of a converted soul, has become a tense emotional experience with physical gyrations that rival a Hula Hula dancer.

In most of the churches of Christ today there is a character designated "The Minister." He is the local preacher, hired oftentimes at a princely salary, who takes precedence over the elders in all the public functions of the church. His name flies at the masthead of all advertisements of the congregation. Seldom are the elders mentioned. "The Minister" is pre-eminently above them in all the public work, and even in the private work he does most of the visiting of the sick and delinquent members. He calls on the "prospects" and is the one to teach them the truth. In fact all the church's activities center around him. Occasionally he goes out to conduct "revivals" and then he becomes an evangelist; but as soon as he returns he is "The Minister" again. Little if any incentive is given to the ordinary members to become public workers for the Lord. The "laity" is not qualified for such work, you see! "The Minister" in order to be acceptable to most congregations, must attend a "Bible College" and obtain a degree before he is qualified to minister to the spiritual needs of the flock. He is thus, in a class set apart from the common herd. He is superior to and above the common elders, in the estimation of the congregation. You see, the elders having only a common education and no specialized training, cannot of themselves properly teach and edify the congregation. In soliciting a "location" the preacher's academic training is always mentioned as his chief qualification, rather than his spiritual character and knowledge of God's word. When he is "located" all the edification of the church is placed in his hands. If he should be absent on a paid "vacation" or otherwise, the pulpit is not occupied, for only a "Minister" is qualified to edify the church. There may be a few exceptions, but this is the common rule among the "Ministered" congregations. Seldom is the slightest effort made to develop the other men into public workers. These "Ministers" must come from the "Christian Colleges" and are not developed in the congregation. In addition to "The Minister", many congregations now have an "Associate Minister" to assist in ministering to the myriad needs of a fast growing congregation. Such characters and offices are as unknown to the apostolic church as the Catholic Cardinals and the Holy See of Rome.

It is well that we should study the scriptural meaning of the word minister. That word simply means "a servant" or "one who serves", and is never used to designate a particular office. It is not an official title like the name apostle. Any one who serves God in any capacity is a minister, for all the service of the Lord is ministration to him.

The word minister was, I believe, first applied to Joshua, who was called "Moses's minister" (Josh. 1:1). He was not a preacher, but gave service to Moses in the leadership of Israel. In Ex. 28:1 we have this: "And take thou unto thee Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may

minister unto me in the priest's office." Aaron's official title was High Priest, and his work was to minister unto God, and in that sense he was a minister—a servant. In Jer. 33:21 the Lord speaks of the Levites and priests as "my ministers", which is the same as saying they were the Lord's servants. Angels, too, are called ministers (Ps. 104:4 and Heb. 1:14). They have a work to do for God as his servants.

In the Old Testament the word minister is from "pelach". In the New Testament it is from "diakonos" from which we also have the words deacon, laborer, ministrant, carrying the simple idea of service. It is never capitalized nor is it an official title. Government rulers are plainly called "ministers of God" (Rom. 13:4). And Paul and Apollos are spoken of as "ministers by whom ye believed" (1 Cor. 3:5). In Col. 1:7, Epaphras, who evidently was an evangelist, is called a "fellow-servant and a faithful minister of Christ." A synagogue attendant, who would correspond to a church sexton is called "the minister" (Luke 4:20). Certainly he was not "the local preacher" sporting a big "M" at the head of the word Minister. After Christ had healed Peter's mother-in-law, she "arose and ministered unto them" (Luke 4:39). Did she preach unto them? Matthew speaks of the numerous women who had "ministered" unto Christ (27:55). In the day, of judgment Christ will speak favorably to those who had "ministered unto him" (Matt. 25:34-44). Christ is the "minister of the sanctuary" (Heb. 8:2). Paul speaks of the "hands that have ministered unto my necessities" (Acts 20:34). The Gentile Christians were under obligations to their needy Jewish brethren to "minister unto them in carnal things" (Rom. 15:27). Thus we see that everyone who serves God in any capacity is a minister and to take that word and apply it exclusively to any special class in the church is a perversion of the word of God. It is just as scriptural and appropriate to apply the word priest, to the preacher, as the Catholics do, as to call him "The Minister." The word priest in the Hebrew, is from "Kohen" meaning "a minister," one who serves the Lord in performing the public rites of the tabernacle. Only the sons of Aaron could be priests under the Mosaic law, but under the gospel, all Christians are priests and hence ministers before God. We have no special priesthood in Christ's church. All as priests can offer up "spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:5).

Our Lord taught us that true greatness is found in service. "Whosoever shall be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever shall be chief among you, let him be your servant" (Matt. 20:26,27). He exemplified his own teaching when he came "not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many." A life that forgets self in Christ's service, is the only life that brings true happiness. If our ears are opened

to the voice of the Lord, we daily hear him say, "Go work in my vineyard." Sitting comfortably in your pew and listening to "The Minister" is not my idea of a life of service. Hiring a clergyman to do practically all the church's work is not Christ's way to "work out your salvation with fear and trembling." Any true Christian who desires to minister unto Christ, can find many avenues of service wherein he can glorify his own life and honor Christ. No true Christian should be content to be just a common man, doing no ennobling work. Each one can be un-common in his striving after perfection, and to perfect the lives of others. We should seek the opportunity of service, not the security of the sheltered pew. If Christ is truly born in your hearts, his zeal and determination to save the lost, will find its counterpart in you. No one can be half a man unless he will dream of great things to be done. He will not wish to be a kept citizen in the kingdom, but one who will strive to "make his life sublime, and departing leave behind him footsteps on the sands of time." There can be no real individual dignity in a spiritual life of ease. A drone is as out of place in the church as in a bee hive. It is your heritage to think and act for yourself, to enjoy the benefit of your own accomplishments. He who will trade the freedom and dignity of work for a life of ease planned and executed by others, sells his birthright for a miserable mess of pottage. To be "always abounding in the work of the Lord," is not a duty, but an honor and exalted privilege. To be nothing but a "pew warmer" is to barter incentive and manhood for a dole. God has work for each and every citizen in his kingdom. Let me now mention the most notable avenues of service where we as Christian ministers, can lose our lives in Christ.

(1) The public service or worship. The apostolic church had apostles, evangelists, elders and deacons. These men all had official work to do; but the public work of the church was not performed entirely by them. Paul said of the Roman brethren: "I am persuaded of you my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another (Rom. 15:14). To the Thessalonians: "Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another as also ye do" (1 Thess. 5:11).

When the people of the Lord assemble in his spiritual temple to worship him, they need no ordained clergy to intone their prayers, sing God's praises, nor break Christ's bread for them. All as ministers and priests can engage in that holy service. The lowly carpenter, the rugged blacksmith, the bookkeeper, banker or merchant are on an equality before him. And each worshiper can scripturally arise, with the love of God in his heart and words of wisdom on his lips, and tell the old story of redeeming love. There is no greater ministry than to prepare a lesson for the edification of the saints, and speak to the assembled worshipers words of

truth and soberness. To take that service from the hands of the worshipers, and put it in the hands of a professional clergy, is to rob the church and oneself of one of life's richest blessings. To put the edification of the church into the hands of a professional "Minister" is just as unscriptural as to put the song service into the hands of a hired choir. Christ ordained that his church should be able to "edify itself in love" (Eph. 4:16) and this requires that the whole body of believers should be workers together with him. The Lord put the edification of the church into the hands of the common people just as much as he did the song service. Every worshiper has the scriptural privilege of "offering the sacrifice of praise to God continually, the fruit of your lips" (Heb. 13:15), even as every worshiper can speak unto edification. Some restrictions are placed upon the sisters (1 Tim. 2:11,1), but even at that, they can and should be "teachers of good things."

(2) **Personal work for Christ.** All Christians who wish to "work out their salvation with fear and trembling" will seek in every way possible to bring souls to Christ. The knowledge that Christ has saved us from the consequences of sin should stimulate us to try to save others. Christ saved you that you might save others. Thousands could be saved yearly, instead of a few hundred, if all Christians would become soul winners for Christ. This is indeed a ministry of love. There can be no service so satisfying as to lead a soul from the darkness of sin into the glorious light of God's eternal truth. This is a work in which every member regardless of age, sex or financial situation can be engaged. The neighbor across the way, the friends who visit you, the loved ones in your own home, and even the wayfarer who passes your door, can be given a message that may bring eternal blessing to them. A word of encouragement to the weak, a solemn warning to the careless, and a few appropriate scriptures to teach the ignorant the way of God more perfectly will glorify God and may save a soul from hell, and bring to you the "peace of God that passeth all understanding." The God who longed for your salvation, has an equal interest in your neighbor; and the Christ who died for you, also died for your bitterest enemy. To leave all this work to the salaried "Minister" is to cheapen the gospel and rob oneself of the highest happiness.

(3) **The ministry of kindness to those in need.** Paul speaks of those who had "addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints" (1 Cor. 16:15). The parable of the good Samaritan was the classical answer Christ gave to the age-old question: "Who is my neighbor?" To feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked and minister to the sick, is to minister to Christ. We live today in a time of abundant prosperity as compared with the abject poverty of Christ's day; yet there is in every community, the sick and afflicted, the needy and the friendless, whose lives can be immeasurably brightened by little deeds of thoughtful kind-

ness, little deeds of love. It was said of Christ that he "went everywhere doing good", and following his footsteps will take us to the homes of sorrow, the hovels of penury and even into the odorous slums of human misery, where the ministry of helpfulness will be as welcome as the angels of God. Let the ministry of service for Christ adorn our lives through active work for him each day.

CHAPTER V

ALL CHRISTIANS ARE SOLDIERS

The Christian life is a constant warfare. A thousand foes beset our pathway, and strong forces are in a perpetual struggle to gain control of our lives. The human heart is the world's greatest battlefield, and the contending forces are ever struggling for the mastery of that heart. Paul gave this command to Timothy: "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold upon eternal life whereunto thou art called" (1 Tim. 6:12). No one ever made anything worthwhile out of his life except by struggling against the evil forces that would drag him down and make havoc of his moral nature and take from him the incentive to improve himself and all those whom he might influence. When Christ called us through the gospel, he had a double purpose: First to save us from the serfdom of sin, and, second, to use us as soldiers to fight in a warfare in which eternal principles are at stake. No one can be a true soldier without being an active soldier, and Christ needs soldiers—people of faith, courage and devotion who will not quail at any foe and who will be constant in their opposition to anything that would degrade the lives of men.

Whenever a war breaks out, and enlistments are sought to increase the army being raised to fight the foe, I think the first thought that enters the mind of the would-be soldier is in regard to the nature and strength of the enemy. To be a valiant soldier, one must know the enemy, his strength, his purposes and his devices. Let us now learn about

OUR ENEMY

Peter admonishes us to "be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil as a roaring lion walketh about seeking whom he may devour." In connection with the word devil, we often find the word Satan, which means adversary. He is the adversary of both God and man. We believe that he is a creature of God's creation, for God created all in heaven and on earth, visible or invisible, "whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities or powers; all things were created by him and for him" (Col. 1:16). Evidently the devil was at first an archangel, for he has great power, strength and wisdom! But he was not content to remain in the position the Lord placed him, but rebelled against God and sought to dethrone him, and influenced many angels to leave the service of God, and join his unholy conspiracy. This is evident from Paul's statement to Timothy that a novice (a babe in Christ) should not be appointed to the eldership, "lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil." This was the devil's condemnation. If he always came to us as a roaring lion, it would indeed simplify the warfare, for all men would instinctively resist him and attempt his destruction. But Satan's wisdom and cunning

is such that he knows he could not win against man if his true character and purposes were made known. He has the power to transform himself into "an angel of light", and with his deceptive words and smooth speeches, he can all but deceive the very elect (Matt. 24:24). His very first attempt at deception led Eve into sin and thus brought death and all its sorrows into the world. No pen or tongue can adequately portray the devilish power of Satan to deceive. His victories equal the number of all the persons who have lived since creation, for "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Be it remembered that all sin originates with the devil, and there has been no form so fair but sin has marred it, no life so pure but sin has sullied it, no character so strong but sin has weakened it. O that men would understand the terrible power of Satan! His only purpose is to wreck and destroy. He has no love for anyone save himself, and he only uses man to effect his own diabolic purposes and bring man to destruction and ruin. Jesus said to the apostate Jews, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own, for he is a liar and the father of it" (John 8:44). No words could more impressively describe the horrifying nature of the devil's character, or depict his hellish purposes. Every tear that was ever shed, every sorrow that ever clouded a life, every evil that ever existed and every death that has broken a family circle and left a vacant chair, all had their origins in the devil's depraved and wicked heart! **This is the enemy we face.**

When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor and left many of our great battleships a mass of twisted steel, causing the death of hundreds of our brave men, thousands of aroused American youth immediately enlisted in the Services to avenge that wanton slaughter. The dangers they faced meant nothing; only that the enemy should be swiftly punished for their dastardly crime. But there would be no war, no crime, no wickedness were it not for the fact that the entire world has an enemy more dangerous than a hundred Japans. And Christ calls for enlistees to wage an all-out warfare against this universal foe. Christ has an organized army, composed of all who are true Christians, the redeemed people of God, to fight this monster from hell. No one can be a member of that army unless he is properly enlisted, even as one cannot enter the army of the United States except by legal enlistment. He must make an oath of loyalty.

OUR ENLISTMENT

requires that we make a public confession of faith in Christ. "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him also will I confess before my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 10:32). With the heart "man believeth unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. 10:10). This confession

is equivalent to the oath each enlistee must make when entering the United States army. I fear there is far too little importance attached to this act of obedience. Before the Eunuch could be baptized, it was necessary that he confess his faith in Christ. This confession should ever be regarded as an affirmation to leave the world and all its allurements and cling to Christ, as the ruler of our lives. The vow the bride makes to "love, honor and obey" binds her to her husband "till death do us part". Even so, the public confession each believer in Christ makes of his faith in the Son of God, should be considered the "oath of enlistment" that places him under the rulership of Jesus Christ. Let us now consider:

OUR COMMANDER

In every army there is perhaps no subject of conversation more spirited than with reference to the commanding officer. If he is harsh, overbearing and unsympathetic, he obtains only a minimum of obedience from his men; but if his attitude toward them is considerate and kind and shows the qualities of leadership that leads to victory, his men will often follow him to death even though he may require the maximum of discipline and obedience. In the person of Jesus Christ, whom Paul speaks of as the "captain of our salvation" (Heb. 2:10) we have a commander who by the "grace of God tasted death for every man", who can have compassion on them that are out of the way, for he was invested in a body of flesh and "tempted in all points like we are, yet without sin." Thus he can have a perfect understanding of our needs and weaknesses. "He knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust." God vested him with "all power in heaven and in earth" so his authority to command is unlimited. He does not wage this warfare for his personal aggrandizement, for the extension of his own power or fame, but to "set the captives free" and "deliver them who through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage." In him every soldier can have implicit trust and confidence. He has never lost a battle nor retreated a step. Alone and in hunger, he met the arch-enemy of souls and defeated him in the world's most decisive battle. He offers "eternal salvation to all them that obey him", and is ever ready to defend and protect the frailest and weakest in his kingdom. Any soldier of the lowest rank can approach his presence at any time and solicit his advice and assistance. He also has the means at hand to provide his soldiers with the best of equipment to wage an aggressive warfare. The first thing he provides is

OUR UNIFORM

Each soldier in every army has a uniform that distinguishes him from the soldiers of other armies. It is his mark of identity. It must be strong enough for a rugged campaign and yet comforta-

ble and convenient for his physical well-being. The soldier dons his uniform as soon as he is enlisted. The Christian soldier is required to "put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 13:14). This uniform is put on in baptism, for "as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27). This is the most attractive uniform ever worn by man. Christ's righteousness was without a flaw. He "did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth", and we are required to wear his robe of righteousness. We are to "put off the old man with his deeds" and put on "the new man which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him" (Col. 3:9,10). Three of my sons have served in the armed services of their country, and when home on furlough I was interested in the meticulous care they gave their uniforms. The buttons were kept polished and all the clothing cleaned and neatly pressed. Christian soldiers should ever be careful to keep themselves "pure and unspotted from the world" (James 1:27). This is for our protection. May our conduct be such as becometh saints, and thus honor the Cause for which we strive.

OUR TRAINING

No part of a soldier's duty is more important than to be properly trained. Many months of arduous toil are necessary to turn a green recruit into a finished soldier and inure him to the hardship of war. Long marches over rugged terrain, complicated drills and general physical exercises are a necessary part of a soldier's "basic training". And these things are no less important to the Christian. We are required to "endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" so that we might war a good warfare. Here is where the church is making its greatest failure. It compasses sea and land to gain new recruits, but seldom gives them any training to fit them for active service in the army of Jesus Christ. Our general practice is to enroll their names on the church record and then give them little attention as long as they are reasonably regular in attendance at the hour of worship. A strange way to make soldiers! Soldiers are not trained in the science of war at the dining table! They are not even trained in the lecture room. Occasional lectures are given and then they are required to go out on the drilling grounds and demonstrate the truths learned. Yet in the majority of so-called churches of Christ, the only training a Christian soldier receives is to listen to the "Minister" preach. Paul wrote to Timothy: "And the things which thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2). That requires active participation in the public work of the church. I sometimes wonder what would be done with a soldier who when ordered to go out on maneuvers, would say to his Officer, "O, I just have no talent for drill work, I can't handle a rifle nor a machine gun, I can't drive a tank nor even a half-track, so you'll just have to leave me here in camp." Would not such a soldier be summarily

thrown into the guard house? Yet thousands of recruits are excused from all public work because they have not the training received by "The Minister." All they do is listen to the "Minister" preach! It would be a strange army that is never drilled, never trained and never taught how to fight. Every soldier in Christ's army should be willing to take up any work that will enable him to "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ". Christ will supply every soldier with the means and methods by which he can wage an aggressive warfare with the least danger to himself. Let me now speak of

OUR ARMOUR

Paul to the Ephesians said, "Put on the whole armour of God that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Eph. 6:11). An armour is for protective purposes and each separate part is essential for full protection. We are admonished to "Put on the whole armour", not just part of it. Our soldier boys in Korea when equipped with bullet proof vests, are far more aggressive, than they would be otherwise, and so the entire armour must be next considered. First is **The Girdle of Truth**. The ancient soldier wore about his loins a heavy leather girdle that furnished much protection. "Having your loins girt about with truth." "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." Falsehood is the devil's best weapon. He told a lie to Eve and in believing it she brought to the world its burden of sin and sorrow. God's people are to be protected through the truth. If we wear the girdle of truth then we are encompassed with the truth, which means that we are to speak the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Falsehood can never be profitably used in a righteous cause, and to the extent that Christians are concerned for their salvation to that extent they will ever be concerned in "speaking the truth in love." They will believe the truth, accept the truth and obey the truth without hesitation or reluctance. "Sanctify them through thy truth. Thy word is truth" (John 17:17). The truth revealed in God's word will perfect the man of God "unto all good works."

The Breastplate of Righteousness. "And having on the breastplate of righteousness." The ancient soldier covered his chest with a heavy piece of leather which was covered with squares of metal that fully protected his chest against the darts and spears of the enemy. A spiritual breastplate is important to the Christian soldier. Our breastplate is not material; it is the principle of righteousness, which simply means "right doing." As long as we are always busy in the work of God, we will have no time to do wrong. The old saying is true, "The devil always finds something for idle hands to do." A thousand temptations comes to the idler that never reach the man busy in noble work. When Christians are trained to "exercise themselves unto godliness" they will al-

ways find spiritual work to do that will honor their Lord and beautify their own lives. Paul gives this admonition, "That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate" (1 Tim. 6:18). Christ "went everywhere doing good" and all his followers should emulate his example to their own happiness and to the blessing of others.

The Gospel Shoes. Soldiers on the march, traveling over rugged or rocky terrain need good strong shoes. Did you ever see a soldier on duty wearing house slippers? We are to have our feet shod "with the preparation of the gospel of peace." Many professed Christians often sing with much spirit, "I love to tell the story of unseen things above", but never once in their lives do they tell that story to their friends and neighbors. The gospel means "good tidings" — good news, and glorious indeed is the news it reveals! How eager we should be to carry the good news to souls facing eternity", having no hope and without God in the world." There is nothing that will make a Christian stronger than to work for the salvation of others. "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace and bring glad tidings of good things." There can be no conquest of the devil, unless we bring freedom to those taken captive by him. This is a vital part of our warfare, and is a work that should be done by all members of the church, not just "The Minister." Christ came to preach "deliverance to the captives" and that same preaching is the world's greatest need.

The Shield of Faith. "Above all, taking the shield of faith wherewith we shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." The shield used by the ancient soldier was generally as long as his body, oval in shape and made of metal, which he carried in his left hand, holding it before him as he advanced into battle. It gave splendid protection in the most spirited conflict. Our shield is Faith. "Without faith it is impossible to please God," and that faith means far more than merely believing in God. It means taking God at his word, and faith is never passive. It is always active. That is why Paul speaks of "the obedience of faith" (Rom. 16:26). **Faith leads to action!** No noble work is ever accomplished without faith. It is the motive power back of all progress, morally, spiritually, or physically. Remember, Paul said, "**Above all**, taking the shield of faith." This is of supreme importance. How disgusting to listen to Christians (?) talk discouragingly of any effort to establish the cause of Christ in a new place. They seem to think God is dead and Christ dethroned, with the result that the devil now has a strangle hold on heaven as well as earth. When members indulge in such talk, I know the devil has a strangle hold on them. They remind me of a little boy who went to Sunday School and was given a beautifully decorated card on which was printed in large letters, "Have faith in God." Riding home on a bus a gust of wind snatched the card out of his hand and through the open window. He rushed to the driver frantic-

ly crying, "Stop the Bus I've lost my faith in God!" And that sums up the condition of too many professed Christians, whose faith is too weak to permit them to undertake any real work of the Lord. They deliberately ignore the truth that "this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 John 5:4). Such unhappy characters need to have written on their hearts "Without faith it is impossible to please God." They only please the devil. He is always happy to have some murmurers and complainers throw a "wet blanket" on any proposal for the advancement of heaven's truth. Despondency or discouragement is the devil's best tool with Christians. He cannot reach them on a moral issue, but if he can get them discouraged and thus lose faith, they become utterly useless to the Lord. "O for a faith that will not shrink, though pressed by every foe; That will not tremble on the brink of any earthly woe." Dare we forget the words of Christ: "If ye have faith as the grain of mustard seed, ye shall say to this mountain: Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove and nothing shall be impossible unto you." I have the faith that leads me to believe that the cause of Christ can be established in every village, town or city if a determined effort is properly made. In such an effort, we can always have the assurance of the Father's approval. The man of faith is the invincible man.

The Helmet of Salvation. "And take the helmet of salvation." Elsewhere Paul describes our helmet as "the hope of salvation" (1 Thess. 5:8). The modern soldier when in battle wears a metal helmet on his head which adds much to his protection. The Lord does not leave his soldiers unprotected, and there is no greater protection in the hours of trial and temptation than the hope of heaven. How wonderful it is in the midst of life's greatest trials, to say, "It is better farther on." Paul declares "we are saved by hope" (Rom. 8:24). Life is filled with many trials and sorrows. Truly, "Man that is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble." If the conditions of this life are the best we can ever expect as a reward for a righteous life, the prospects are not too alluring. But "we live in hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie promised before the world began." A man without hope is a man without strength or character. The true and sincere Christian always has a vision of the splendor of a golden day! A body enfeebled by age and beset with many infirmities, will be exchanged for an incorruptible body, made like unto the glorious body of our Lord. A transient home, often marred by griefs and sorrows will be exchanged for that "city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Such a hope is worth more than all of Satan's allurements, for he promises nothing beyond this life. It will be of small profit to exchange such a glorious hope for only a "grave in the dark." Christian soldiers, keep that hope before you. It will protect you from every danger.

Our Weapon. A soldier who strives only to protect himself

can never conquer the enemy. Christian soldiers need a weapon of great strength and power to overcome the power and might of our enemy. Paul speaks of "The sword of the Spirit, the word of God." "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:4,5). When Jesus met the devil in that pitched battle in the wilderness, he parried every thrust of Satan's keenest blade with a quotation from God's word. "It is written" was sufficient to rout the devil and drive him from the field. "For the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and the marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." With that sword the soldier of the cross is "thoroughly furnished unto all good works." But before the soldier can use it effectively, he must have an excellent working knowledge of its truths. This is of supreme importance in our warfare against sin; and it is at this very point where the church today is making its greatest failure. With the One-man pastor system, the general tendency is to leave all the study of the Bible to the "Minister" for he is "especially educated for that purpose" so they say, and thus the ignorance of the Bible on the part of the average member is appalling! They have little incentive to study for their own improvement. "Leave it to the Minister. He can answer all the questions," is the all but universal tendency. In a secular army there is no part of a soldier's training of more importance than to learn to handle his rifle efficiently, and it would be a strange army in which the commissioned officers were the only ones who knew how to handle the weapons! What are the "foot soldiers" for if not to take the weapon of the Lord and put the enemy to rout? I know that this objection will be met with the plausible argument that "we do have training classes and Bible studies." Perhaps so but you will notice they are never trained to take the place of "The Minister." He is the one indispensable man! The congregation must have him regardless of the training given the "foot soldiers." If the "Minister" is the only one who can edify the church, and generally he is the only one permitted to do so, there is little purpose in teaching the other members the word of God. They will never have the right incentive to know the Bible unless they are given the opportunity to use it against the wiles of the devil.

Our Victory. When a war breaks out the main thought is of victory. How soon will we win? The V sign of victory used so often during the late war, doubtless gave great encouragement to all and built up the morale of civilians and soldiers alike. The sign of victory ever before them was a stimulation that caused them to exert themselves to the utmost. In our spiritual war a-

gainst the strongest foe of all time, there will be occasions when the progress we make seems insignificant, and the difficulties insurmountable, and many will be tempted to fall by the wayside. Jesus spoke of those who endure for awhile "but when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by they are offended" Our victory is not won in a day nor a year, for the promise is "be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." The victory is sure if we with patience continue our opposition to all that which is evil. We have this assurance, "For he (Christ) must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet, and the last enemy to be destroyed is death" (1 Cor 15:25). The devil's doom is certain: "And the devil that received them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are and they shall be tormented day and night forever" (Rev. 20:10). O Glorious Victory! In that wonderful day when the soldiers of the cross can "lay our armour by and rest in peace at home." Is not this worth striving for? "He that overcometh, shall inherit all things and I will be his God and he shall be my son." In that day, all heaven and earth will shake under the mighty impact of the marching victorious hosts and thousands upon thousands of the redeemed shall join the angelic chorus in singing the song of victory before the throne of God and of the Lamb! The victory of Christ is certain, but your victory depends on your efforts to live righteously and walk humbly before your God. If you will not "endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" and faithfully keep his commandments, your doom will be the devil's victory even in his hour of utter defeat.

Fight on my soul till death
Shall bring thee to thy God:
He'll take thee at thy parting breath
To his divine abode.

CHAPTER VI

CHRISTIANS ARE A PURCHASED PEOPLE

"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

The word peculiar, as used above, is from **periponisis**, meaning "purchased", hence all Christians are a purchased people—a possession belonging to God. I believe there is nothing of greater importance than to cause God's people to understand the nature of their relationship to God. Paul said to the Corinthians, "Ye are not your own . . . For ye are bought with a price" (1 Cor. 6:19,20). We often speak of making a deal, which means we pay a price for a certain possession. That which is purchased is obtained from a seller, who sets his price. There must be two parties to every deal—the buyer and the seller. Long ago God said to apostate Israel, "Ye have sold yourselves for naught; and ye shall be redeemed without money" (Isaiah 52:3). **Sold for nothing!** Isn't that a bargain of doubtful value? Jesus said: "Whosoever committeth sin, is the servant (slave) of sin" (John 8:34). Paul speaks of delivering some from the snare of the devil "who were taken captive by him at his will" (2 Tim. 2:26). It was said of wicked Ahab that he sold himself to work wickedness (1 Kings 21:25), and his reward was a miserable death.

Satan is a cruel taskmaster and his rewards are pitifully small. When Pharaoh enslaved Israel, he "made their lives bitter with hard bondage." That bondage was nothing compared to the bondage of Satan. "Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness" (Rom. 6:16). **Sin unto death! The wages of sin is death!** "Isn't that a poor reward for a whole life time of service? Satan is a more cruel taskmaster than Pharaoh. He robs man of all eternal values. No wonder Jesus asked: "For what is a man profited if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Christ came to "bring deliverance to the captives." He delivers us from the thralldom of Satan. If your life and your soul is not being used in Christ's happy service, Satan controls you, and to him you must look for your reward.

Christ will make no bargain with Satan for your soul, for Satan will not release his captives at any price. His hatred of God and all that is decent, pure and holy prevents that. Christ's bargain must be made with you. You bargained with Satan first; suppose you now make a contract with Christ. You willingly sold yourself into the bondage of sin, and now only you and Christ can make the contract that will "set the captive free." A price must

be paid—a price has been paid. “Ye are bought with a price, and that price was the greatest consideration ever paid in all the transactions of time. “Forasmuch as ye know that gold were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold . . . but with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:18,19). Paul speaks of the church which Christ “purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:28).

Redeemed, how I love to proclaim it,
Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb;
Redeemed through his infinite mercy,
His child forever I am.

The shedding of Christ's blood on Calvary's tree, revealed two very important facts: (1) The value of man's soul, and (2) God's love for that soul. Generally we value an article according to the price paid for it. This is the accepted measure of values. God valued your soul sufficiently that he gave the most priceless treasure in his possession—his Son. This is how much you are worth to God. What a pity that man's sense of values does not equal God's. The tragedy of most lives is that men hold themselves too cheap. A soul that can be purchased only by the blood of God's Son is too precious to be thrown into the cauldron of hell! Long ago God said, “I will make a man more precious than fine gold, even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir” (Isaiah 13:12). Now we can sing, “Redemption is finished, the price has been paid.” The bloody cross of Calvary is the finger of God pointing to you and saying “You are not your own, ye are bought with a price.” That price was Love's tribute to you. “Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we might be called the sons of God!” “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son. That whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” That love redeemed you and purchased you from the eternal bondage of Satan. “And they shall call them the holy people, the redeemed of the Lord.” How important that all Christians should recognize the obligations of ownership. Too many church members live their lives as if God had absolutely no claim of any nature or degree upon them. They attend services only when they please and generally they go to the devil's playground just as often as they please, and they never take God into their confidence with reference to such matters. They never stop to consider the awful price that was paid to redeem them and by ignoring that price they again sell themselves into the bondage of the devil. They forget that Christ said “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.” No cross—no crown! The golden crown of immortality is not obtained by embezzlement. You can't rob the Lord of his possessions and still expect him to acknowledge you as his own. God once asked, “Will a man rob God?” (Mal.

3:8) and then he accused the Jews of being thieves because they withheld from the Lord that which rightfully belonged to him. The cross of Christ that effected your redemption, ever stands as a mute witness of your obligations to God. Your time, your talents, your money, yea, your all belongs to God and must be used for his honor and glory.

Christ has chosen one day of the week out of seven, as his own. It is the Lord's day. Note the possessive case. It is Christ's and he expects you to go to the house of God and worship him in grateful remembrance of a Saviour's death. "Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another and so much the more as ye see the day approaching" (Heb. 10:25). I never knew of a delinquent Christian to say to the Lord on that day, "Lord, I know that I belong to you and that this day is your day, but I wish permission to go visiting this morning and this evening I crave an easy chair by my warm fire-side. Wcn't you please excuse me?" No, they don't talk thus to God. They simply rob him of the hours of worship that are due him without so much as "by your leave". They spend most all their money on themselves and give to the Lord a few niggardly dimes and quarters, forgetting that "the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof." If you were to go to your neighbor's house in his absence and help yourself to any of his property, without his consent, what would be your crime? Dare you forget that "Ye are not your own. Ye are bought with a price?" Some professed Christians occasionally attend services and there they will melodiously sing, "I am thine, O Lord, I have heard thy voice, and it told thy love to me; But I long to rise in the arms of faith and be closer drawn to thee," and then immediately return home, taking that which belongs to God and using it in sensuous, carnal, forbidden pleasures, forgetting they are to "glorify God in their bodies and in their spirits which are God's."

If you sell your services to a company for a good salary, are you permitted to take a vacation whenever it suits you and without consulting them, and expect your salary to continue as usual? You would probably say "How absurd!" Of course its absurd; but how much more absurd for you to take yourself away from the place of the Lord's service, go on a vacation whenever you desire and yet expect the Lord to continue to bless you with "every good gift and every perfect gift."

And again! If you sell your services to a company for a salary, do you have a right to decide for yourself just how much service you will give? Do they not have the right to specify the number of hours, days and weeks you must serve to earn the salary? Yet many church members seemingly think they can render a very limited service to the Lord and still receive the same reward given to the most faithful workers. What assurance do you have that God will accept a limited service? The church at Laodicea (Rev.

3:15-19) thought that they "were rich and increased with goods and had need of nothing" at the very time when their love for the Lord was neither cold nor hot. As a result, the Lord threatened to "spue them out of his mouth." A cold heart cannot give a warm service. Christ will not accept a limited service. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy mind, and with all the strength and with all thy soul." There was nothing lacking in the service Christ rendered to you upon the cross. His service to you was without stint or limit. Is it unjust that he should expect the same from you? Should we not love him "because he first loved us?" Christ was not content to remain safe and secure in heaven while you were headed for hell. His sense of duty to his Father and his passionate love for you forbade that, and so "for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." That was a willing and a perfect sacrifice. He once said, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again" (John 10:17,18). Should not your service be as willing and as consecrated as his? Do you really think you can be stingy with God and at the same time expect him to pour out to you the abundance of his grace? Just who are you that you think God owes you everything, while you withhold from him even the smallest service and sacrifice? Christ bought you and redeemed you from the degrading bondage of Satan. Does not simple honesty require that you give to him that which is rightfully his? Why do you sing, "Jesus died for me; All to him I owe", and then deny him the right to that which he purchased through the sweat of agony and the blood of Calvary? He asks nothing from you except that which is for your good. He is not a slave-driver, laying upon you heavy burdens, cruel to bear. Remember, he said, "My yoke is easy and my burden is light." The yoke is not placed upon you to burden you and crush you down. A yoke is the emblem of service. The oxen could be of no service to their masters without a yoke which enabled them to pull the load, and the burdens of life are made infinitely easier to bear, if we wear the efficient yoke of the compassionate Christ. "And this is the love of God that you keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous" (1 John 5:3). The service of love is always a joyful service, and the service he asks of you cannot be an irksome service if he has your heart. Set your affection on things above, "for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."

O Love that will not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in thee;
I give thee back the life I owe,
That in thine oceans depths its flow
May richer, fuller be.

CHAPTER VII

THE UNITY OF BELIEVERS IN CHRIST

"And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul" (Acts 4:32).

A new king was upon the throne in the highest heavens. A new law was being given, and an army was being enlisted to fight the deadliest foe that ever struck terror to the hearts of men. At least five thousand recruits had sworn allegiance to the newly crowned King who had delivered them from the bondage of sin. Rejoicing in the hope of heaven, they found themselves perfectly unified in the common faith so that they were all "of one heart and one soul", just as their king had planned. This unity was achieved by believing in the same Lord, and the nature of that unity was that their hearts and souls were merged in the great Body of Christ. The immediate result of this unity was that the different members merged even their material possessions into one treasury. This was a voluntary act on their part and was not commanded by their King; but their spiritual unity was planned and commanded by the Lord. One great result of this unity was that "believers were the more added unto the Lord, multitudes both of men and women:" and in the following years as this faith was carried on wings of love to the far distant provinces of the Roman world, thousands became obedient to the Lord Christ. The greatest moral phenomenon the world has ever known took place in this century of the Christian era, when thousands of the Lord's Freedmen were perfectly united in one great overpowering desire to sweep the whole world of mankind into the Fold of Christ. All historians of that era have testified to the irresistible power of the gospel, backed by a unified church. The glory that was theirs will never grow dim, for they "loved not their lives unto death" but counted themselves happy when they could suffer shame for his name.

With this introduction, I now wish to present

THE SCRIPTURAL TEACHING OF UNITY

When our Saviour stood in the shadow of the awful Cross and was ready to surrender himself into the hands of his enemies, he took his case to God in prayer. He knew that with the sufferings of the Cross completed, his redeeming work in behalf of man was ended. He had taught, trained and tested the men called to the apostleship. The divine word had been committed to them, and fervent and earnest was the prayer that flowed from his heart that these men might prove worthy of the great task soon to be committed to their charge. But his concern reached even beyond these men and so he prayed "Neither pray I for these alone; but for them also which shall believe on me through their word: **that they all may be one**, even as thou Father art in me and

I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." I am sure that Christ with his divine wisdom did not pray for an unattainable ideal. He prayed for what could be accomplished by fallible men, whose hearts were placed entirely in Christ's keeping; and so he embodied in his law, through his Spirit filled apostles, the command to "speak the same things—to be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor. 1:10). God gives no command that is impossible of obedience, even as Christ would not pray for an unattainable ideal, so we must conclude that organic unity among all believers can be and should be an accomplishment of every generation. Paul writing to the Philippians, gave this admonition: "Nevertheless, whereunto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same things." I now wish to present for your consideration some thoughts concerning

THE INCENTIVES TO UNITY

The first consideration is the essential fact that "God hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth" (Acts 17:26). The white, black, brown and yellow races differ widely in physical appearance, habits of life and modes of livelihood, but underneath the various colored skins, men are essentially the same. The blood of my father Adam flows also in the veins of the black skinned savage in darkest Africa. Racial prejudice has done more to perpetuate wars than any other cause in the world. A world-wide recognition of the universal brotherhood of man, is the one hope of peace in a war-torn and a war-weary world. And the gospel of Christ is the only means by which that fact can be made to penetrate the hearts of all men. The gospel is not sectional, for Christ's command to the apostles was to "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" and when men of various races and nationalities accept the one gospel, a most glorious result is produced. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, **for ye are all one in Christ Jesus**" (Gal. 3:28). Paul tells the Ephesians (2:13,14) that "in Christ Jesus ye who were sometimes afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself one new man, so making peace; that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, . . . for through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." Now, all are fellowcitizens of the saints and of the household of God. All men, of all races and nations, have one Father and one Saviour, and through obedience of faith, all are made one in him. One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism by which all enter into the One Body, and remember in that One

Body, there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female, but all are one in Christ. Christ unites men, but Satan through false doctrines disunites them. Now we are prepared to consider

THE NATURE OF SCRIPTURAL UNITY

Christ prayed, "That they all may be one, **even as thou Father art in me and I in thee.**" This statement expresses the full nature of the unity required by the Lord. It is well that we should have a clear understanding of the meaning of the word unity. It means oneness, all of one kind. Many mistake union for unity, but there can be union without real unity. A basket of apples, peaches, pears, and plums is a union of four different kinds of fruits. Putting all four kinds into one basket does not unify them—make them all of one kind. We are commanded to "speak the same things, to be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." Obedience to that command will make us all exactly the same kind of people, with the same faith, same practice and same nature religiously. Denominations proclaim union when various churches unionize in a revival, but they are still different kinds of religionists. No law of Christ will make one man a Baptist, another a Methodist and another a Presbyterian. Christ's law transcends all denominational lines, for it makes all simply Christians. Paul said the Galatians were neither Jew nor Greek. They had not lost their racial identity, for that is a physical matter; but they were no longer Jews or Greeks in heart. There can be no divisions whatever among true Christians as long as the law of Christ is their only guide. It is the introduction of something other than the law of Christ that creates schism in Christ's Body. Let us never forget that! The seed of the kingdom produces only one kind of fruit (1 Peter 1:23)—Christians! The slightest deviation from Christ's law changes the nature of the fruit. It becomes a hybrid, and a hybrid can never approach the perfection of a free born man in Christ. Let us now consider

THE BASIS OF UNITY

Paul's command to the Corinthians was to "speak the same things." Before there can be a unity of speech, there must be an understanding of what we will speak. Peter commands, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God" (1 Peter 4:11). "To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20). Only Christ's law can make one "wise unto salvation" (2 Tim. 3:15). It perfects the man of God "unto all good works." We can know nothing whatever as to what is right or wrong only insofar as we learn God's word. "For by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3:20). Right here we must come to one of the most important considerations of this subject. The tragedy of this age is that peo-

ple will not study the Bible for themselves, and this is as true of many in the church of Christ as it is of those in the denominations. They will follow a favorite preacher and accept without question his dictum on any subject. The Paulites and Appollosites constitute a mighty army today. Undue honor given to men has caused thousands to lose sight of Christ. God said of Christ, "Hear ye him", for it is by him and through him that God still speaks today. How important that we "try the spirits whether they be of God" (1 John 4:1). Individually, we are responsible to God and individually we must answer to him. How important then that each individual study God's book to learn His ways! It is true today that many "err, not knowing the scriptures nor the power of God." Only an enlightened people can be a truly united people. Ignorant "camp followers" are not trained soldiers. There can be no real unity of action in ignorance.

Just here it is important that we consider another phase of this question. Many become so enthusiastic in behalf of unity, that they will seek to compromise the truth in order to promote unity among the professed Christians. Compromising the truth of God might unify a certain group, but that would not produce the kind of unity God requires. A unity that disregards Christ's law, dishonors him. The basis of scriptural unity is **in Him**. "That they may be one **IN US**." The unity that makes us **ONE** in Christ is effected only through His law. This forbids unity with all those who are dissatisfied with the simplicity of the gospel. God will not accept a unity that nullifies His word. "The wisdom from above is first pure and then peaceable" (James 4:17). We can with the utmost safety and assurance offer the hand of fellowship to all who will walk in the "old paths", but peace is not so dear nor unity so precious that it must be bought with a mangled Bible! Long ago God said it was foolish to cry "Peace, peace when there was no peace" (Jer. 6:14). There can be no unity with God nor with the true people of God, until the just demands of God's law are met. There never would have been the slightest apostasy if all professed Christians had remained unified on the word of God. We cannot bless other people if we lower the bars of scriptural teaching in order to win their friendship. "For do I now persuade men or God? . . . For if I pleased men, I should not be the servant of God" (Gal. 1:10).

We now come to the most pleasant aspect of this subject.

THE BLESSINGS OF UNITY

When Christ prayed for the unity of His people, there was a purpose to be accomplished, a blessing to be obtained. "That the world might believe that thou hast sent me." In unity there is strength. "A house divided against itself cannot stand." A single stick can be easily broken, but several sticks bound together in

one bundle will resist the strength of the strongest man. An army "knit together as one man", united in purpose and activated by the loftiest motives may become an irresistible force. The church faces the strongest foe in the universe. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Truly strong and formidable foes, and the crime of the age is the divided condition of God's people. The yawning mouth of hell receives thousands, who would be saved if only God's people presented a united front to the enemy. The church of today is not doing one half of one percent of what it could do if we were "perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." The billions of dollars being spent today for the weapons of war is astronomical and staggering, when we consider that the vast amount spent for war in our own generation would be sufficient to bring prosperity and plenty to every individual in all the world. But the wreckage and waste of carnal war is as nothing compared to the evils of religious division. A united church could and would prevent all future wars, it could abolish the horrible liquor traffic, empty thousands of prisons and save millions of precious souls from hell. No man has the eloquence or the mental power to accurately picture to us the blessings of unity. Today, the church is but a little insignificant force which scarcely touches the outer fringes of the mighty army marching in serried ranks to eternal perdition! If we could attain to real scriptural unity, broken homes would be mended, estranged hearts reunited; brother would greet brother with the heartiest handclasp of fraternal love and affection. Factionism would cease and denominationalism would become only a fading vision of the past; and best of all God would be honored, Christ glorified and the angels would sing hosannas of praise in the highest heaven. David understood this when he said, "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." Considering all the wonderful blessings to be obtained through unity, it is proper that we now consider

THE HINDRANCES TO UNITY

I am sure that we can properly state that the first and greatest hindrance to unity is — **lack of desire**. Few people can be aroused to any interest in promoting the cause of unity. The vast majority, even in our own ranks, seem content with the present situation. Long ago it was stated, "Where there is no vision the people perish," and the present day religionists simply have no real vision of the wondrous blessings of unity. They are seemingly content that the religious world should remain in its present condition of sects, parties, factions, cliques and clans. Some even thank God for the various divisions because each person can join the church of their choice; and among the divergent clans in the so-called church of Christ, the main leaders remain smug in their

abominable clannishness! They sit in their little ivory towers, content in their isolation while the earth trembles under the impact of the millions marching to hell! Paul's statement: "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved" should also be the expression of every heart that yearns for the salvation of mankind. Paul saw a race in danger, and that race was his own people, and great was his desire to save them. Until there is in our hearts a burning, passionate desire for the unification of God's people, there is no hope for any change in the discordant factionalism of the present day.

Second: The lack of effort to effect unity is another powerful hindrance that multiplies the devil's power over helpless humanity. Paul gave this command: "Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3). **That requires action!** Unity will never be achieved by sitting supinely in our easy chairs and expressing the pious hope that God's people might be united. No greater task ever faced the church of the living God than this very task. We are commanded to "follow after the things that make for peace and things whereby we may edify one another" (Rom. 14:19), and that is just as much an inspired command as to assemble for worship on the Lord's day. The tares of disunion must be weeded out and the seed of peace carefully planted and watered by consecrated hands. So great is this task that we must "quit ourselves like men and be strong." The three hundred brave soldiers under Gideon, through God's guidance, routed the unnumbered hosts of the Midianites, while the fearful, quaking cowards went slinking home! Too many today are afraid of soiling their hands in dealing with the numerous and varied issues that divide the people of God. Plainly it is dirty work, for we have to deal with sin in all its disgusting forms and few have any spiritual stomach for such work. But God is calling You to do that work today! Most people would far rather lie in their hammocks and doze than to get down in the muck and mire of sin to save people from hell.

The third and last hindrance we wish to mention, is a lack of love for both God and man. God's love for man was active, strong and effective. He loved doomed humanity, and so He gave, and in His giving he reached the highest heights of love that God himself could ever reach — **He gave His Son**, the Son of His love, and this giving was to accomplish a divine purpose—the salvation of man. We cannot partake of the real nature of God, without at the same time partaking of His deep love for the lost. Jesus came to seek and to save the lost; and the salvation of the lost depends on the unification of God's people. Love for lost humanity is the one and only motive power that will unite the scattered and divided forces of the Lord and organize them into a mighty army of irresistible power. Truly Paul declared that the greatest thing in the world is love, and unless we personally as Christians, and

collectively as a church, cultivate the saving grace of love, the battlefields of the world will remain strewn with the blasted hopes of a sin-forgiving Christ.

A little boy saw a mud puddle into which some oil had fallen, presenting a kaleidoscope of various colors without form or pattern, and he called to his mother: "Oh Mamma look! Here is a rainbow that got busted!" God, through his holy and divine Son, painted on the great vault of heaven the beautiful rainbow of hope to a world flooded with the black waters of sin. Shall the church through its continued divisions, make it a "busted rainbow?"

Oh shout the glad word,
Oh hasten the day
When all of God's people are one!