

THE MAGNIFICAT

THE SONG
OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY



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The Magnificat:

The Song of the Blessed Virgin

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There are in use today several approved Roman Catholic versions of the Holy Scriptures, but the primary one is the Rheims-Douai (commonly known as the Douai or Douay). Only Church-approved versions are used throughout this book. Unless otherwise stated, Scripture quotations are taken from the Rheims-Douai. References within brackets (generally referring to verses in the book of Psalms) indicate verse locations in other Church-approved translations.

“For God so loved the world, as to give His only begotten Son; that whosoever believeth Him, may not perish, but may have life everlasting.”

— St. John 3:16

DEDICATION

TO ALL THOSE WHO LOVE
THE BLESSED VIRGIN
WHO BORE
OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR.

MAY THE BLESSING
OF THE ALMIGHTY
REST ON THOSE
WHO READ THIS BOOK
AND DRAW
COMFORT AND STRENGTH
FROM ITS PAGES.

THE SONG OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN

ET AIT MARIA MAGNIFICAT ANIMA MEA
DOMINUM ET EXULTAVIT SPIRITUS MEUS IN
DEO SALUTARI MEO QUIA RESPEXIT
HUMILITATEM ANCILLAE SUAE ECCE ENIM
EX HOC BEATAMME DICENT OMNES
GENERATIONES QUIA FECIT MIHI MAGNA
QUI POTENS EST ET SANCTUM NOMEN EIUS
ET MISERICORDIA EIUS IN PROGENIES ET
PROGENIES TIMENTIBUS EUM FECIT
POTENTIAM IN BRACHIO SUO DISPERSIT
SUPERBOS MENTE CORDIS SUI DEPOSUIT
POTENTES DE SEDE ET EXALTAVIT HUMILES
ESURIENTES IMPLEVIT BONIS ET DIVITES
DIMISIT INANES SUSCEPIT ISRAHEL
PUERUM SUUM MEMORARI MISERICORDIAE
SICUT LOCUTUS EST AD PATRES NOSTROS
ABRAHAM ET SEMINI EIUS IN SAECULA

ST. LUKE 1:46-55

LATIN VULGATE, A.D. 405

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“Behold a Virgin shall be with child, and bring forth a Son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.”

— *St. Matthew 1:23*

“And may my God supply all your want, according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”

— *Philippians 4:19*

“He that spared not even His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how hath He not also, with Him, freely given us all things?”

— *Romans 8:32*

“The Lord is good and giveth strength in the day of trouble: and knoweth them that hope in Him.”

— *Nahum 1:7*

“For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor might, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

— *Romans 8:38-39*

“Knowing that the trying of your faith worketh patience . . . Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he hath been proved, he shall receive the crown of life, which God hath promised to them that love Him.”

— *James 1:3, 12*

“My help is from the Lord, who made heaven and earth . . . The Lord is thy keeper, the Lord is thy protection upon thy right hand.”

— *Psalms 119:2, 5*
[*Psalms 120:2, 5*]

THE CHURCH DIRECTS US TO SCRIPTURE

The Church directs us to the Holy Scriptures. As we study it, the Sacred Writings direct us to our Lord. Coming to Him, we praise Him for His marvelous mercy to the children of men.

“The Church of Jesus Christ, by virtue of her divinely endowed infallibility, vouches for the divine origin of the Sacred Scriptures, and as such we respectfully, but confidently, submit them to the public.”

— *His Eminence James Cardinal Gibbons,
Preface, p. 2, of the Holy Bible, Douay Version*

“To be ignorant of the Scripture is not to know Christ.”

— *St. Jerome, Isaiam Prologue*

“A man who is well grounded in the testimonies of the Scripture is the bulwark of the Church.”

— *St. Jerome, Isaiam 54:12*

“Often read the divine Scriptures; yea, let holy reading be always in thy hand; study that which thou thyself must preach . . . Let the speech of the priest be ever seasoned with Scripture reading.”

— *St. Jerome, in Epistle to Nepotian*
S. Hier. de vita cleric, ad Nepot

“Those who are zealous in the work of preaching must never cease the study of the written Word of God.”

— *St. Gregory the Great*
M. Regul. past. ii. 11 (al. 22)
Moral. xvii. 26 (al. 14)

“For I know the thoughts that I think towards you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of affliction, to give you an end and patience.”

— *Jeremias 29:11*

“He that feareth man shall quickly fall. He that trusteth in the Lord, shall be set on high.”

— *Proverbs 29:25*

“As many as received Him, He gave them power to be made the sons of God, to them that believe in His name.”

— *St. John 1:12*

“The meek shall inherit the land, and shall delight in abundance of peace . . . The salvation of the just is from the Lord, and He is their protector in the time of trouble. And the Lord will help them and deliver them.”

— *Psalms 36:11, 39-40*
[Psalms 37:11, 39-40]

TWO IMPORTANT ENCYCLICALS

Two important papal encyclicals demand our attention. The first encyclical was written by Pope Leo XIII (February 20, 1878 - July 20, 1903) in the fifteenth year of his reign. It is a profound document, full of meaning.

The second was penned by Pope Benedict XV (September 3, 1914 - January 22, 1922) in the sixth year of his papacy. This significant document, from the papal chair, should be viewed with the deepest interest.

THE ENCYCLICAL OF LEO XIII PROVIDENTISSIMUS DEUS

In November 1893, Pope Leo XIII penned his most famous encyclical, entitled *Providentissimus Deus*. It was addressed to priests and bishops throughout the world, on the study of Sacred Scripture by the laity. It included the following passages:

“1. DOCTRINAL.—Among the reasons for which the Holy Scripture is so worthy of commendation—in addition to its own excellence and to the homage which we owe to God’s Word—the chief of all, is the innumerable benefits of which it is the source; according to the infallible testimony of the Holy Ghost Himself, who says: ‘All

Scripture, inspired of God, is profitable to teach, to reprove, to correct, to instruct in justice: that the man of God may be perfect, furnished to every good work' (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

“a. Words and Example of Christ. That such was the purpose of God in giving the Scriptures to men is shown by the example of Christ our Lord and of His apostles. For He Himself who ‘obtained authority by miracles, merited belief by authority, and by belief drew to Himself the multitude’ was accustomed, in the exercise of His divine mission, to appeal to Scriptures. He uses them at times to prove that He is sent by God, and is God Himself. From them He cites instructions for His disciples and confirmation of His doctrine. He vindicates them from the calumnies of objectors; He quotes them against Sadducees and Pharisees and retorts from them upon Satan himself when he dares to tempt Him. At the close of His life His utterances are from the Holy Scriptures, and it is the Scriptures that He expounds to His disciples after His resurrection, until He ascends to the glory of His Father.”

Pope Leo XIII in his encyclical further states that Christ made use of the Scriptures and that He is our example: “We, therefore, should follow His example by being conversant with the Holy Scriptures.”

The pope even granted an indulgence for reading the Bible: “‘Pope Leo XIII grants to the faithful who shall read for at least a quarter of an hour the books of the Sacred Scripture with the veneration due to the Divine Word and as spiritual reading, indulgence of 300 days.’” — *Providentissimus Deus*, 645.

THE ENCYCLICAL OF BENEDICT XV SPIRITUS PARACLITUS

Pope Benedict XV wrote his encyclical, *Spiritus Paraclitus* (September 15, 1920), on the importance of

regular study of Holy Scripture by everyone. These excerpts are worthy of prayerful consideration by every Catholic:

“The Holy Spirit, the Comforter, had bestowed the Scriptures on the human race for their instruction in Divine things. He also raised up in successive ages saintly and learned men whose task it should be to develop the treasure and so provide for the faithful plenteous ‘consolation afforded by the Scriptures’ (Romans 15:4). Foremost among these teachers stands St. Jerome . . . The responsibility of our Apostolic office impels us to set before you his wonderful example and so promote the study of Holy Scripture in accordance with the teachings of our predecessors, Leo XIII and Pius X.

“And none can fail to see what profit and sweet tranquillity must result in well-disposed souls from such devout reading of the Bible. Whoever comes to it in piety, faith and humility, and with a determination to make progress in it, will assuredly find therein and will eat the ‘bread that comes down from heaven’ (St. John 6:50).

“Hence, as far as in us lies, we, Venerable Brethren, shall, with St. Jerome as our guide, never desist from urging the faithful to read daily the Gospels, the Acts and the epistles, so as to gather thence food for their souls . . . But what, in his view, is the goal of such study? First, that from the Bible’s pages we learn spiritual perfection . . . Secondly, it is from the Bible that we gather confirmations and illustrations of any particular doctrine we wish to defend . . . We confidently hope that his example will fire both clergy and laity with enthusiasm for the study of the Bible . . . So convinced indeed was Jerome that familiarity with the Bible was the royal road to the knowledge and love of Christ that he did not hesitate to say: ‘Ignorance of the Bible means ignorance of Christ’ (Prol. in Comment. in Isa. cf. Tract. de Ps. 77).

“Jerome still calls to us. His voice rings out, telling us of the superexcellence of Holy Scripture, of its integral

character and historical trustworthiness, telling us, too, of the pleasant fruits resulting from reading and meditating upon it.

“Our one desire for all the church’s children is that, being saturated with the Bible, they may arrive at the all-surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ.

“Every professed Christian should accept the instruction of St. Jerome, who said, ‘Love the Bible and wisdom will love you; love it and it will preserve you; honor it and it will embrace you; these are the jewels which you should wear on your breast and in your ears.’ ”—*Spiritus Paraclitus*, 130:20.

“The fear of the Lord is the lesson of wisdom: and humility goeth before glory.”

— *Proverbs 15:33*

“I will look towards the Lord, I will wait for God my Saviour: my God will hear me.”

— *Michaas 7:7*

“My grace is sufficient for thee: for power is made perfect in infirmity.”

— *2 Corinthians 12:9*

“Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasure of the Egyptians. For he looked unto the reward.”

— *Hebrews 11:26*

“If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you shall ask whatever you will, and it shall be done unto you.”

— *St. John 15:7*

WHAT THE HOLY SCRIPTURES CAN DO FOR YOU

As Leo XIII and Benedict XV clearly established, the Holy Scriptures are the Inspired Word of Our Saviour. As we study the Sacred Writings, our Lord works by His Spirit to change our lives for the better.

Did Jesus, our Lord and Saviour, base His teachings on the Holy Scriptures? This is a very important question. Both the Church and the Scriptures themselves give a resounding yes!

Pope Benedict XV, in his encyclical *Spiritus Paraclitus*, published these words:

“When Christ preached to the people, whether on the mount by the lakeside, or in the synagogue at Nazareth, or in His own city of Capernaum, He took His points and His arguments from the Bible.”

We find that the record of Sacred Scripture bears this out.

The basis of all religious authority is found in the Holy Scriptures.

Here is why the Holy Scriptures are so important and

All Scripture quotations in this chapter are from the Rheims-Douai.

what they can do for you:

The Holy Scriptures are God's Inspired Word. They were given to us by the Holy Spirit.

"For prophecy came not by the will of man at any time: but the holy men of God spoke, inspired by the Holy Ghost."—*2 St. Peter 1:21*.

By studying and obeying the Sacred Scriptures, God can help you in ways which nothing and no one else can.

"Thy Word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my paths."—*Psalms 118:105*.

"All Scripture, inspired of God, is profitable to teach, to reprove, to correct, to instruct in justice. That the man of God may be perfect, furnished to every good work."—*2 Timothy 3:16-17*.

"For what things soever were written, were written for our learning: that through patience and the comfort of the Scriptures, we might have hope."—*Romans 15:4*.

"Sanctify them in truth. Thy word is truth."—*St. John 17:17*.

"And because from thy infancy thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which can instruct thee to salvation, by the faith which is in Christ Jesus."—*2 Timothy 3:15*.

Jesus taught the importance of Scripture study.

"Search the Scriptures, for you think in them to have life everlasting; and the same are they that give testimony of Me."—*St. John 5:39*.

"Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, who received the Word with all eagerness, daily searching the Scriptures, whether these things were so."—*Acts 17:11*.

"Blessed is he, that readeth and heareth the words of this prophecy; and keepeth those things which are written in it; for the time is at hand."—*The Apocalypse 1:3*.

“And Jesus answering, said to them: You err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God.”—*St. Matthew 22:29*.

“And He [Christ] said to them: These are the words which I spoke to you, while I was yet with you, that all things must needs be fulfilled, which are written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning Me.”—*St. Luke 24:44*.

“And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures, the things that were concerning Him.”—*St. Luke 24:27*.

We must test everything by Scripture. If any teaching, theory, or doctrine is not found in it, we cannot accept it as Scriptural.

“I have not departed from the commandments of His lips, and the words of His mouth I have hid in my bosom.”—*Job 23:12*.

“To the law rather, and to the testimony. And if they speak not according to this Word, they shall not have the morning light.”—*Isaias 8:20*.

The Inspired Word of God will never lose its importance or its authority in our lives.

“The grass is withered, and the flower is fallen: but the Word of our Lord endureth for ever.”—*Isaias 40:8*.

“Heaven and earth shall pass, but My words shall not pass.”—*St. Matthew 24:35*.

The Sacred Scriptures can help you clean your life and live in harmony with the will of God.

“Being born again not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible, by the Word of God who liveth and remaineth for ever.”—*1 St. Peter 1:23*.

“By what doth a young man correct his way? by observing Thy words.”—*Psalms 118:9*.

“Thy words have I hidden in my heart, that I may not sin against Thee.”—*Psalms 118:11*.

“For the Word of God is living and effectual, and

more piercing than any two edged sword; and reaching unto the division of the soul and the spirit, of the joints also and the marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”—*Hebrews 4:12*.

“If then any be in Christ a new creature, the old things are passed away, behold all things are made new.”—*2 Corinthians 5:17*.

“Jesus answered and said unto him, Amen, amen I say unto thee, unless a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”—*St. John 3:3*.

“The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty, He will save: He will rejoice over thee with gladness, He will be silent in His love, He will joy over thee in praise.”

— *Sophonias 3:17*

“If any one love Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our abode with Him.”

— *St. John 14:23*

“Behold My servants shall rejoice . . . My servants shall praise for joyfulness of heart.”

— *Isaias 65:14*

“Blessed are they that wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb: that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in by the gates into the city.”

— *The Apocalypse 22:14*

“Our help is in the name of the Lord.”

— *Psalms 123:8 [124:8]*

THE RHEIMS-DOUAI AND THE VULGATE

All Scripture passages quoted in this book have received the *Nihil obstat* and *Imprimatur*. Most are from the Rheims-Douai Version (also known as the Douai and Douay). This is the standard Catholic translation, in English, of the Latin Vulgate. References within brackets refer to verse locations in other translations. (All other Scripture quotations in this book are cited, and are from other Church-approved Scripture versions.)

Here is additional information on the Rheims-Douai and its origins:

The Rheims-Douai Bible: In 1568, several Catholics left England and established an English-language college in Douai, in Flanders, France. This city was the seat of a university founded by Philip II of Spain in 1562, and was an important center of English Roman Catholicism.

The founder of this English college, William Allen, was an Oxford graduate and a canon under Queen Mary. He conceived the idea of producing an English translation of the Scriptures for English Roman Catholics. Gregory Martin, another Oxford graduate, headed the translation team.

During the progress of the work, political problems compelled the removal of the college from Douai to Rheims in 1578. By 1582 the entire work of translation had been completed and the New Testament section was published. In 1593 the college was compelled by political turmoil to

return to Douai where the Old Testament was printed in 1609-1610.

For this reason, scholars refer to this translation as the Rheims-Douai Bible, but generally the Douai Bible. (It is often called the Douay Bible today.)

This Douai Version was translated from St. Jerome's Vulgate. This version became the official English Bible of the Roman Catholic Church.

The revision of Bishop Challoner in the middle of the eighteenth century, along with later minor changes while adapting it to the needs of its modern readers, have not fundamentally affected its character.

In spite of the later introduction of other Church-approved English Bibles, because of its qualities and the authority of ecclesiastical superiors, the Douai continues to maintain its position as the Bible of English-speaking Catholics the world over.

The Douai has the approbation of His Eminence James Cardinal Gibbons, Archbishop of Baltimore. For this reason, it is the only Bible quoted in the book you have in hand (with one or two exceptions, which are quoted from other Church-approved versions).

It should be remembered that, in the Rheims-Douai, some Old Testament passages, when quoted in the New Testament, have been placed in Italics.

The Rheims-Douai was translated from the Latin Vulgate. Here is the story behind that translation:

The Latin Vulgate: St. Jerome (c. 345-c. 419) was born near Aquileia, on the Adriatic Sea's northernmost point, about the year A.D. 345. Jerome spent his youth obtaining a broad education in Rome. In 375, St. Jerome became concerned about his soul, and began a period of intense study of the Bible. To do this required learning Hebrew and Greek, the languages in which the Bible was written.

In 377, St. Jerome was ordained to the priesthood; and, in 385, he became personal secretary to Pope Damasus.

Throughout this time, St. Jerome continued his deep personal study of the Bible. From 382 to 385, while he was still with Pope Damasus, St. Jerome translated the New Testament from the Greek into Latin.

In 386, after the death of Pope Damasus, St. Jerome moved to Bethlehem, where he spent the last years of his life. From 390 to 405, he completed his final revisions of the New Testament and translated the Old Testament from the Hebrew to the Latin. He died about the year 419.

St. Jerome had produced what became known as the Vulgate. It was later declared to be the official Latin Bible of the Roman Catholic Church.

“Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him.”

— *1 Corinthians 2:9*

“Hearken to My voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be My people: and walk ye in all the way that I have commanded you, that it may be well with you.”

— *Jeremias 7:23*

“He became to all that obey Him, the cause of eternal salvation.”

— *Hebrews 5:9*

“Who keepeth mercy unto thousands, who taketh away iniquity, and wickedness, and sin.”

— *Exodus 34:7*

- PART ONE -

THE MAGNIFICAT

THE SONG
OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN
AS GIVEN IN
THE SACRED SCRIPTURES

THE MAGNIFICAT

INTRODUCTION

THE VIRGIN'S DEEPEST THOUGHTS

“And Mary said: My soul doth magnify the Lord.”—
St. Luke 1:46.

The song of the Blessed Virgin Mary is considered one of the most sublime hymns in all sacred literature. It is a lyric of exquisite beauty worthy of the Virgin.

It is not only pervaded by a spirit of humble adoration and thankfulness, but it glorifies the power, holiness, and mercy of God.

This wonderful song has, for centuries, been called the *Magnificat*. This is because “Magnificat” (magnifies) is the first word of this canticle, in the Latin Vulgate, which was translated in the early fifth century and became the official Latin text of the Bible. From that time down to the present, the song of the Virgin Mary has been called the *Magnificat*.

The well-recognized and very scholarly one-volume *Catholic Encyclopedia* explains the background of this glorious song:

“Magnificat—This title has been given to the canticle spoken by the Blessed Mother on the occasion of

All Scripture passages quoted in this chapter have received the *Nihil obstat* and *Imprimatur*. When not otherwise stated, quotations are from the Rheims-Douai. (References within brackets refer to verse locations in other translations.)

her visit to her cousin, Elizabeth, as recorded in St. Luke 1:46-55. The Magnificat is an expression of genuine humility, which is drawn largely from Old Testament thought, especially the Psalms (Psalms 22:8; 30:8; 33:4; 70:18). It acknowledges the goodness of God, that God is her Savior, and that God is to be served. The title comes from the first word of the Latin version.”—*The Catholic Encyclopedia, 1986 edition, p. 367.*

The gift of inspiration seems to fall upon the Virgin as she speaks forth in calm and majestic strains. It expresses her personal emotion and experience as she meditates upon the message of the angel Gabriel.

The ideas and words reflect what inspired Bible writers have said, both before and after she uttered that sublime song.

As one would gaze into a pool of clearest water, with its myriad hues of blue and green, mingled with shimmering light, so, in this book, we shall penetrate the depths of

“Thou wilt keep peace: peace because we have hoped in Thee. You have hoped in the Lord for evermore, in the Lord God mighty for ever.”

— *Isaias 26:3-4*

“The joy of the Lord is our strength.”

— *Nehemias 8:10*

“In God I will praise my words, in God I have put my trust: I will not fear what flesh can do against me.”

— *Psalms 55:5 [Psalm 56:4]*

“Many are the afflictions of the just; but out of them all will the Lord deliver them.”

— *Psalms 33:20 [Psalm 34:19]*

this wondrous song. It is a study from which you, the reader, will draw renewed courage.

How thankful we can be for this wonderful song, from which we derive so much strength. This is because, as we study it, the song of the Virgin is a song of the Holy Scriptures. It carries us from one sweet theme of the Bible to another.

Let us, together, consider this sweetest of hymns. This is the story of the inmost thoughts of the Blessed Virgin: This is the Magnificat.

CHAPTER ONE

THE HANDMAID OF THE LORD

“When the fulness of the time was come, God sent His Son, made of a woman.”—*Galatians 4:4*.

Mary was important in the sending of our Saviour to us. The God of heaven looked down and saw that she would prove faithful to the calling which He was about to bring to her.

“In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee, called Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin’s name was Mary.”—*St. Luke 1:26-27*.

She was just a young girl, in her late teens or early twenties. As she was growing into adulthood, few in her village of Nazareth would have thought that anything out of the ordinary might ever happen to the maiden.

Yet the young girl had a profound dedication to the will of God. This was unusual in her time. She loved and obeyed God’s Word—the Holy Scriptures,—and she sought in every little way to be helpful to those around her.

Do you and I realize that, as we study God’s Word today and seek to be obedient to what we find therein, that

someday we too might be used by God to bring a greater blessing to others?

That is what Mary did, and that is why she became so Blessed. She was, indeed, blessed of God, because she sought to comfort and help all who came in contact with her.

One day as young Mary was working about the house, an angel came to see her. It was an important angel from the heavenly courts, and he came with an important message.

“And the angel being come in, said unto her: Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.”—*St. Luke 1:28*.

Mary had received of the grace of God; and, as we read her song, we can better understand why she was so

“If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the just . . . He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world . . . I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you, for His name’s sake.”

—1 *St. John 2:1-2, 12*

“As the Father hath loved Me, I also have I loved you. Abide in My love.”

— *St. John 15:9*

“Blessed be the man that trusteth in the Lord, and the Lord shall be his confidence. And he shall be as a tree that is planted by the waters, that spreadeth out her roots toward moisture: and it shall not fear when heat cometh. And the leaf thereof shall be green; and in the time of drought it shall not be solicitous, neither shall it cease at any time to bring forth fruit.”

— *Jeremias 17:7-8*

blessed.

It was by the enabling grace of God that the young girl was able to live such a clean life. Mary loved God and was a daily recipient of His grace.

“Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a Son; and thou shalt call His name Jesus.”—*St. Luke 1:31*.

The Virgin was astounded. Yet there was more to the message:

“He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the most High; and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of David His father; and He shall reign in the house of Jacob forever.”—*St. Luke 1:32*.

To Mary was to be born the Saviour of the world! An astonishing message! Why was Mary selected? The reason is given in verse 38: She was one who was fully surrendered to the will of God and totally willing to obey His Word.

“And Mary said: Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to Thy word.”—*St. Luke 1:38*.

Gabriel had brought her the Word of God, and she bowed willingly in submission to it. God can only use those who are willing to obey His Word, as given in the Sacred Scriptures.

For Mary, God’s Word was found in those Scriptures; and, because she readily obeyed them, she was called to a special work for God.

So it may be with us today. For years, Mary had been in the habit of obeying God’s Written Word; that was why she was selected for a special task.

As the angel Gabriel was concluding his astounding announcement, he mentioned that Mary’s cousin, Elizabeth the wife of Zachary (also called Zacharias), was also to have a child.

“And behold thy cousin Elizabeth, she also hath con-

ceived a son in her old age; and this is the sixth month with her that is called barren.”—*St. Luke 1:36*.

The following verses of Sacred Scripture tell us that Mary then journeyed south to the home of her cousin.

“And she entered into the house of Zachary, and saluted Elizabeth.”—*St. Luke 1:40*.

Oh, how happy the two women were to see one another! But further evidence was immediately given that Mary had the Christ Child within her.

“And it came to pass, that when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the infant leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost.”—*St. Luke 1:41*.

As Mary contemplated these things, and especially the words of Gabriel, the spirit of Inspiration came upon her, and she lifted up her voice in holy words of praise.

“Then Moses and the children of Israel sung this canticle [song] to the Lord: and said: Let us sing to the Lord: for He is gloriously magnified.”

— *Exodus 15:1*

“And they sung as it were a new canticle, before the throne . . . These follow the Lamb withersoever He goeth.”

— *The Apocalypse 14:3-4*

“And singing the canticle of Moses, the servant of God, and the canticle of the Lamb, saying: Great and wonderful are Thy works, O Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, O King of ages.”

— *The Apocalypse 15:3*

“For in Him our heart shall rejoice: and in His holy name we have trusted.”

— *Psalms 32:21 [Psalm 33:21]*

That glorious song has come down through the ages, and cheered thousands who have sought a closer walk with God. It will encourage us today, as we study more fully into the message the Virgin Mary had for us.

How thankful we can be for the Holy Scriptures, for they provide us with perfectly true and accurate statements—which we can always rely upon.

CHAPTER TWO

MAGNIFYING THE LORD

ST. LUKE 1:46

The Song of Mary reveals many things: Why she was chosen, who Christ is, what His work is, and how we can receive what He has for us! There are many noble truths revealed in that glorious canticle. In her song, we find that Mary explains major teachings of the Bible.

“And Mary said: My soul doth magnify the Lord.”—
St. Luke 1:46.

Mary was selected because *her whole life* magnified the Lord! She loved God with all her heart, and fully yielded to His will.

Think not that God casually chose her out of the crowd at random. Before He sent His angel to her with a special work, she was already dedicated to Him.

Oh, that each one of us will be as dedicated as Mary.

In this song, the soul of Mary is magnifying the Lord. *We have here the very words of Mary!* Profound are the truths to be found within them.

“My soul doth magnify the Lord.”—*St. Luke 1:46.*

It is Mary that is magnifying the Lord. Mary’s “soul” is part of her. A “soul” is not something separate from the body which floats in space. It is part of us. It is our feelings, our inner being; it is each one of us.

The word, “soul,” comes from a Greek word, *psuche* (as in psychology), and denotes the inner feeling, part of the entire being.

Especially in these last days, we must beware of those who would teach strange theories which are not found in the Word of God. Her soul was not something apart from Mary that was praising God; it was her heart and very being. It was her.

“Now the Spirit manifestly saith, that in the last times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to spirits of error, and doctrines of devils, speaking lies in hypocrisy, and having their conscience seared.”—*1 Timothy 4:1-2*.

While Mary was magnifying the Lord, most people in her time were magnifying themselves. This is the condition of many in our society today. We must beware of the ungodly.

“Traitors, stubborn, puffed up, and lovers of pleasures more than of God. Having an appearance indeed

“The Lord will redeem the souls of His servants: and none of them that trust in Him shall offend.”

— *Psalm 33:23 [Psalm 34:22]*

“And they shall know that I the Lord their God am with them.”

— *Ezekiel 34:30*

“We are saved by hope.”

— *Romans 8:24*

“Search the Scriptures, for you think in them to have life everlasting; and the same are they that testify of Me.”

— *St. John 5:39*

of godliness, but denying the power thereof. Now these avoid.”—2 *Timothy* 3:4-5.

Instead of magnifying the Lord, all too many are busy seeking to be puffed up. Oh, how many lives are lost by exalting self!

But blessed Mary chose the right way: She magnified the Lord! And that is why she was so blessed.

Later, in her song, Mary made this comment:

“He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble.”—*St. Luke* 1:52.

Through all history, God has pulled down the mighty and exalted the humble. Back in the beginning, Lucifer was a leading angel in heaven, but he became conceited and opposed God. He wanted to exalt himself, so he was cast out of heaven.

“How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, who didst rise in the morning? How art thou fallen to the earth, that didst wound the nations?”

“And thou saidst in thy heart: I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God, I will sit in the mountain of the covenant, in the sides of the north.

“I will ascend above the height of the clouds, I will be like the most High.”—*Isaias* 14:12-14.

Just as Mary said, it is the arrogant who trust in themselves and oppose the godly who are cast down—for the Scriptures declare of Lucifer who sinned in heaven, “But yet thou shalt be brought down” (*Isaias* 14:15).

Lucifer got many angels on his side, and he defied God. Ultimately there was a great war.

“And there was a great battle in heaven, Michael and his angels fought with the dragon, and the dragon fought and his angels: And they prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven.

“And that great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, who seduceth the whole world; and he was cast unto the earth, and

his angels were thrown down with him.”—*The Apocalypse 12:7-9*.

The Scriptures tell us that the angels that sinned were cast down, “to be reserved unto judgment” (2 St. Peter 2:4).

If the angels sinned, what is sin?

“Whosoever committeth sin committeth also iniquity; and sin is iniquity.”—*1 St. John 3:4*.

Sin is the transgression of the law. “Iniquity” comes from the Latin, *iniquitum*, which means a violation of equity; that is, a violation of justice and right rules.

Another translation which has received the *imprimatur* of the Church, says it this way:

“Every one who commits sin is guilty of lawlessness; sin is lawlessness.”—*1 John 3:4, RSV*.

St. Paul said that where there is no law, there is no sin. This is because it is by the law that we identify sin for what it is.

“I do not know sin, but by the law; for I had not

“My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready: I will sing, and rehearse a psalm.”

— *Psalms 56:8 [Psalm 57:7]*

“Thou art my God, and I will praise Thee: Thou art my God, and I will exalt Thee.”

— *Psalms 117:28 [Psalm 118:28]*

“Behold, God is my Saviour, I will deal confidently, and will not fear: because the Lord is my strength, and my praise, and He is become my salvation.”

— *Isaiah 12:2*

“O praise ye the Lord, for He is good: for His mercy endureth forever.”

— *Psalms 117:29 [Psalm 118:29]*

known concupiscence, if the law did not say, Thou shalt not covet.”—*Romans 7:7*.

Indeed, where there is no law, there is no transgression.

“For the law worketh wrath. For where there is no law, neither is there transgression.”—*Romans 4:15*.

Therefore, if the angels in heaven sinned,—*there had to be an eternal law in heaven that they sinned against*. So there is an everlasting law which cannot be abolished nor destroyed.

“All His commandments are faithful: confirmed for ever and ever, made in truth and equity.”—*Psalms 110:8*.

The evil angels were expelled from heaven because they disobeyed God’s holy law. We today cannot transgress even part of that law, or we shall suffer for having done so.

“And whosoever shall keep the whole law, but offend in one point, is become guilty of all.

“For He that said, Thou shalt not commit adultery, said also, Thou shalt not kill. Now if thou do not commit adultery, but shalt kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.”—*St. James 2:11*.

So, when we break one of the Ten Commandments, we have broken all of them. The Decalogue is a written statement of what God is like. Those who are godly live in obedience to this law. Trusting in Jesus, they are given grace to render that obedience.

How terrible would life be, if we did not have our Saviour! Only Jesus can empower us to obey the Word of God.

Jesus, Himself, emphasized the importance of the clean, pure way of life which He offers us—which we can have as, by faith in His enabling grace, we obey His Ten Commandment law.

“Do not think that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

For amen I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot, or one tittle shall not pass of the law, till all be fulfilled.

“He therefore that shall break one of these least commandments, and shall so teach men, shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven. But he that shall do and teach, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”—*St. Matthew 5:17-19*.

How thankful we can be that God’s holy law is unchangeable and eternal! It will never change—never. Because God and His law are unchangeable, all His creatures who are saved will live in holy obedience to His principles throughout all eternity.

What are the Ten Commandments? They are found in Exodus 20:3-17. Here they are:

The First Commandment—“Thou shalt not have strange gods before Me.”—*Exodus 20:3*.

The Second Commandment—“Thou shalt not make to thyself a graven thing, nor the likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, nor of

“Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord: he shall delight exceedingly in His commandments.”

— *Psalm 111:1 [Psalm 112:1]*

“Much peace have they that love Thy law, and to them there is no stumbling block.”

— *Psalm 118:165 [Psalm 119:165]*

“God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He hath prepared for them a city.”

— *Hebrews 11:16*

“By what doth a young man correct his way? by observing Thy words.”

— *Psalm 118:9 [Psalm 119:9]*

those things that are in the waters under the earth.

“Thou shalt not adore them, nor serve them: I am the Lord thy God, mighty, jealous, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me: And shewing mercy unto thousands to them that love Me, and keep My commandments.”—*Exodus 20:4.*

The Third Commandment—“Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that shall take the name of the Lord his God in vain.”—*Exodus 20:7.*

The Fourth Commandment—“Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day. Six days shalt thou labour, and shalt do all thy works.

“But on the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God. Thou shalt do no work on it, thou nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy beast, nor the stranger that is within thy gates.

“For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things that are in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it.”—*Exodus 20:8-11.*

The Fifth Commandment—“Honour thy father and thy mother, that thou mayest be long lived upon the land which the Lord thy God will give thee.”—*Exodus 20:12.*

The Sixth Commandment—“Thou shalt not kill.”—*Exodus 20:13.*

The Seventh Commandment—“Thou shalt not commit adultery.”—*Exodus 20:14.*

The Eighth Commandment—“Thou shalt not steal.”—*Exodus 20:15.*

The Ninth Commandment—“Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.”—*Exodus 20:16.*

The Tenth Commandment—“Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s house: neither shalt thou desire his wife,

nor his servant, nor his handmaid, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is his.”—*Exodus 20:17*.

The Apocalypse 12 not only tells us how Satan was cast out of heaven, but also tells of his efforts to slay Christ. That chapter reveals that Satan tried to destroy God’s faithful people in the centuries that followed.

According to verse 9, the “dragon” in this chapter is Satan and the organization he works through to accomplish his purpose. The pure “woman” is a symbol of the true church (2 Cor 11:2). The “child” of the woman is Christ. Here is the passage:

“And a great sign appeared in heaven: A woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. And being with child, she cried travailing in birth, and was in pain to be delivered.

“And there was seen another sign in heaven: and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads, and ten horns: and on his heads seven diadems.

“And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven,

“I Know the thoughts that I think towards you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of affliction, to give you an end and patience.”

— *Jeremias 29:11*

“The Lord is good to them that hope in Him, to the soul that seeketh Him.”

— *Lamentations 3:25*

“Say to the just man that it is well, for he shall eat the fruit of his doings.”

— *Isaias 3:10*

“The Lord is my helper: I will not fear what man shall do to me.”

— *Hebrews 13:6*

and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to be delivered; that, when she should be delivered, he might devour her Son.

“And she brought forth a man Child, who was to rule all nations with an iron rod: and her Son was taken up to God, and to His throne.

“And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she had a place prepared by God.”—*The Apocalypse 12:1-6.*

All through the ages—and even down at the end of time—Satan has continued his efforts to slay God’s faithful people!

“And the dragon was angry against the woman: and went to make war with the rest of her seed, who keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”—*The Apocalypse 12:17.*

This Bible passage identifies the faithful sons and daughters of God in the last days. The unique characteristic of God’s people at the end of time is that they keep the commandments of God. That is something you and I want to do, is it not? By faith in the empowering grace of Jesus Christ, we can do it!

Did you know that, down at the end of time—and just two verses before the second coming of Christ—we are given another description of what God’s faithful ones will be like?

“Here is the patience of the saints, who keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.”—*The Apocalypse 14:12.*

Surely, we want to be among those people who, through the faith of Jesus, obey the commandments of God. Trust Him, Oh, my friend, trust Him! He can guide you all along life’s journey!

Through the enabling strength of Christ’s grace, you can withstand the temptations of the devil, and live a clean, pure life.

CHAPTER THREE
REJOICING IN HER SAVIOUR
ST. LUKE 1:47

“And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.”—
St. Luke 1:47.

Mary’s Saviour was God. It is clear that she looked to no other. The sweet Virgin knew that she could not save herself. All she had was God; and in giving her all to Him—she had become a person whom He could use for a special work.

“Let them rejoice and be glad, who are well pleased with My justice, and let them say always: The Lord be magnified, who delights in the peace of His servant. And my tongue shall meditate Thy justice, Thy praise all the day long.”

— *Psalm 34:27-28 [Psalm 35:27-28]*

“If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him.”

— *2 Timothy 2:12*

“Wherefore having the loins of your mind girt up, being sober, trust perfectly in the grace which is offered you in the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

— *1 St. Peter 1:13*

“Go out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing: and I will receive you.”

— *2 Corinthians 6:17-18 [2 Corinthians 6:17]*

Think not that God cannot use you also! The God of heaven loves you with the deepest love; and He will work through you to help and bless others, to whatever degree you let Him.

Mary tells us that she needed a Saviour! There is a deep truth here. The Bible teaches that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

“For all have sinned, and do need the glory of God.”—*Romans 3:23.*

A wonderful chapter, *Isaias 53*, echoes the same words.

“All we like sheep have gone astray, every one hath turned aside into his own way: and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”—*Isaias 53:6.*

This has been the story of all Adam’s children. We have all gone our own way. Because of this, each one of us needs a Saviour. Only those who have never sinned never need a Saviour.

So when Mary, by the Inspiration of God, says, “God is my Saviour,” it means a lot. She recognizes that she also has sinned and is dependent on the saving grace of Christ.

How thankful we can be that we have a Saviour to whom we can go! What if we had no Saviour? How terrible would be our lot!

Mary knew who her Saviour was. For the angel had explained it. Jesus Christ is the only Saviour.

“And she shall bring forth a Son: and thou shalt call His name Jesus. For He shall save His people from their sins.”—*St. Matthew 1:21.*

How does Christ save us? He does it by His grace. And what is grace? It is both forgiveness for sins and enabling strength to obey God’s holy law.

“For by grace you are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, for it is the gift of God.”—*Ephesians 2:8.*

Grace is more than love and forgiveness, it is also help and power to obey.

“And He said to me: My grace is sufficient for thee: for power is made perfect in infirmity.”—*2 Corinthians 12:9*.

“Be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus.”—*2 Timothy 2:1*.

Grace is power to live a virtuous life.

Many today say that grace is a blank check to follow their own gratification. But this is not true. Grace is help through the merits of Christ to help us stop sinning—not to help us keep doing it.

“What shall we say, then? shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. For we that are dead to sin, how shall we live any longer therein?”—*Romans 6:1-2*.

If we want to follow Mary’s example, we must trust in the grace of God to help us obey His Ten Commandment law.

“I will give them a heart to know Me, that I am the Lord: and they shall be My people, and I will be their God: because they shall return to Me with their whole heart.”

— *Jeremias 24:7*

“Blessed is he that understandeth concerning the needy and the poor: the Lord will deliver him in the evil day.”

— *Psalm 40:2 [Psalm 41:1]*

“They cried to the Lord in their affliction: and He delivered them out of their distresses.”

— *Psalm 106:19 [Psalm 107:19]*

“This is God, our God unto eternity, and for ever and ever: He shall rule us for evermore.”

— *Psalm 47:15 [Psalm 48:14]*

Thank God every day for His grace!

“Not because we first loved Him did Christ love us; but ‘while we were yet sinners’ He died for us. He does not treat us according to our desert. Although our sins have merited condemnation, He does not condemn us. Year after year He has borne with our weakness and ignorance, with our ingratitude and waywardness. Notwithstanding our wanderings, our hardness of heart, our neglect of His Holy Word, His hand is stretched out still.

“Grace is an attribute of God exercised toward undeserving human beings. We did not seek for it, but it was sent in search of us. God rejoices to bestow His grace upon us, not because we are worthy, but because we are so utterly unworthy. Our only claim to His mercy is our great need.”—*Ministry of Healing*, 161.

Jesus is our Saviour. But what does He save us from? He saves us from sin.

“And she shall bring forth a Son: and thou shalt call His name Jesus. For He shall save His people from their sins.”—*St. Matthew 1:21*.

St. Paul said that we cannot know what sin is, except by the law.

“I do not know sin, but by the law; for I had not known concupiscence, if the law did not say, Thou shalt not covet.”—*Romans 7:7*.

Mary is saying, “Jesus is my Saviour.” Blessed Mary! She is blessed who hath done so much for us, by bearing the Messiah! And we can be blessed too. All of us have sinned and come short; but, in the strength of Christ our Saviour, we can be empowered to live clean, godly lives.

And it is done by His grace. His grace is His empowering strength, which He freely offers us.

God is love,—and in love He offers us so much help! Just so much! All that we need.

So we see that it is grace which enables us to obey His

will, which is His law. This is because the Ten Commandments are a reflection of all that God is and stands for. When we read the Ten Commandments, we read what God is like, His character.

Yet is there not anyone else to whom we can turn for salvation? No, there is not one. The Sacred Scriptures tell us that there is no one else who can save us from our sins.

“Neither is there salvation in any other. For there is no other name under heaven, given to men, whereby we must be saved.”—*Acts 4:12*.

“No other name.” And what is that name?

“Be it known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God hath raised from the dead,—even by Him this man standeth here before you whole.”—*Acts 4:10*.

“Now to Him who is able to preserve you without sin, and to present you spotless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.”

— *Jude 24*

“All thy children shall be taught of the Lord: and great shall be the peace of thy children.”

— *Isaias 54:13*

“You shall walk in the way that the Lord your God hath commanded, that you may live, and it may be well with you, and your days may be long in the land of your possession.”

— *Deuteronomy 5:33*

“For according to the height of the heaven above the earth: He hath strengthened His mercy towards them that fear [reverence] Him.”

— *Psalms 102:11 [Psalm 103:11]*

The Scriptures do not support the idea that any human being can be a co-redemptor. Salvation is only in Jesus Christ. That is what the Bible teaches.

“For there is one God, and one Mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”—*1 Timothy 2:5*.

Only God can redeem us. And those whom He redeems are those who have sinned, but who, in humility of soul, have confessed that He is their Saviour. Mary did this.

“And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.”—*St. Luke 1:47*.

The Redeemer is Jesus. He is Mary’s Redeemer; He is ours. Christ is the only Redeemer anyone can have!

“Neither is there salvation in any other. For there is no other name under heaven, given to men, whereby we must be saved.”—*Acts 4:12*.

Everyone needs a Saviour; and, by her own statement, Mary herself needed a Saviour!

“And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.”—*St. Luke 1:47*.

Look to Jesus! Jesus Christ is the only pathway to heaven for any human being.

“Jesus saith to him: I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No man cometh to the Father, but by Me.”—*St. John 14:6*.

That verse does not say “by us,” but “by Me.” Only through Christ can we have forgiving and enabling grace. Only through Him can we be saved.

CHAPTER FOUR

BLESSED ART THOU

ST. LUKE 1:48-49

Continuing on with the wonderful song of Mary, we

next read this passage:

“Because He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid; for behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.”—*St. Luke 1:48*.

Mary was a sweet child of God who loved Him deeply. She recognized that she was a humble servant. It is only the humble, those who take a lowly place before God, that He can use in His work.

Her attitude was clearly shown in her words when she first received the message of the Incarnation:

“And Mary said: Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to Thy word.”—*St. Luke 1:38*.

It is difficult for us today to realize the great sacrifice that Mary made in her decision to submit to the Word of God.

“His mercy is from generation unto generations, to them that fear Him.”

— *St. Luke 1:50*

“The needy and the poor seek for waters, and there is none: their tongue hath been dry with thirst. I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.”

— *Isaias 41:17*

“It is good to give praise to the Lord: and to sing to Thy name, O Most High. To shew forth Thy mercy in the morning, and Thy truth in the night.”

— *Psalm 91:2-3 [Psalm 92:1-2]*

“Blessed is the man who hath not walked in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stood in the way of sinners.”

— *Psalm 1:1*

She was poor, a single parent. Today people would say she should abort her baby! In obeying the Word of God, Mary knew that, for the rest of her life, she would face the stigma of an unusual birth. Those were times when women were stoned for having children out of wedlock.

But Mary was willing to pay a price, the highest price, if it would please God. Although to all about her, this would be viewed as a betrayal to her betrothed, yet Mary remained firm to her commitment.

She would obey the Word of God. And she was blessed for it. Greatly blessed.

You will recall her submissive words when the task was presented to her:

“Be it done to me according to Thy word.”—*St.*

Luke 1:38.

This was what made Mary great! This is why the God of heaven could use her to bear the promised Messiah! She had total submission to the revealed will of God. She would obey, regardless of the cost.

Our Saviour speaks to us today through the pages of Holy Writ. To you and me today, the will of God is found in the Scriptures. To the degree that we are as submissive as Mary to the Word of God, we shall, like her, receive a blessing.

In her song, Mary also spoke these words:

“From henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.”—*St. Luke 1:48.*

She knew she would be held in remembrance by all ages because she was the bearer of the Messiah. Only one person throughout human history would ever have that task assigned to her. It was the dream of every Jewish woman that she might be the mother of the Messiah.

Mary, humble little Mary, was the one given that solemn responsibility.

Elizabeth had spoken these words to the Virgin:

“Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.”—*St. Luke 1:42.*

This was not the first time, in Scripture, that a special blessing had been given by God to women. Another example is to be found in the book of Judges.

“Blessed among women be Jahel the wife of Haber the Cinite, and blessed be she in her tent.”—*Judges 5:24*.

Jahel was also a humble woman who loved God and obeyed His will. Just as that woman was especially blessed of God, we too can be blessed, each of us in our own sphere of activity.

The Virgin was blessed because she was willing to take any assignment, do any task assigned her. This was clearly expressed in her words, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it done to me according to Thy word” (St. Luke 1:38).

Mary was calling herself a servant of the Lord. Mary showed a commitment to fully obey whatever she was told in God’s Word.

Thirty years later, the Virgin was still submissive to

“The Lord keepeth all them that love Him.”

— *Psalm 144:20 [Psalm 145:20]*

“The meek shall inherit the land, and shall delight in abundance of peace.”

— *Psalm 36:11 [Psalm 37:11]*

“The poor shall eat and be filled: and they shall praise the Lord that seek Him: their hearts shall live for ever and ever.”

— *Psalm 21:27 [Psalm 22:26]*

“He was mindful of us in our affliction: for His mercy endureth for ever.”

— *Psalm 135:23 [Psalm 136:23]*

“He shall save His people from their sins.”

— *St. Matthew 1:21*

God's Word! We shall see this as we continue this study.

As we live our earthly life, we should say to ourselves, "Are we going to follow the example of Mary? Are we going to do whatever we are told by the Lord in the Scriptures?"

Mary's life was a life of obedience. We can surely know that, as she worked with young Jesus, she emphasized obedience to the law of God. The child Jesus happily did so. So it should be with us today. It is those that teach obedience who are called great in the kingdom of heaven. Jesus carefully explained this in the Sermon on the Mount:

"Do not think that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For amen I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot, or one tittle shall not pass of the law, till all be fulfilled.

"He therefore that shall break one of these least commandments, and shall so teach men, shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven. But he that shall do and teach, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."—*St. Matthew 5:17-19.*

Today we hear many conflicting voices, telling us to obey the sayings of men. But those who are truly blessed are those who keep the commandments of God, by enabling faith in Jesus Christ.

"Here is the patience of the saints, who keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus."—*The Apocalypse 14:12.*

When the angel first told Mary that she was going to bear the Son of the living God, she was startled.

"And Mary said to the angel: How shall this be done, because I know not man."—*St. Luke 1:34.*

The reply of the angel was deep with significance.

"And the angel answering, said to her: The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the most High shall overshadow thee. And therefore also the Holy

which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.”—*St. Luke 1:35*.

The power of the most High would be the means by which the Word of God would be fulfilled. This is the way it shall ever be.

The power of the Almighty is related to His Word. By a word, God can help His people in time of need.

“Come ye to Him and be enlightened: and your faces shall not be confounded. This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him: and saved him out of all his troubles.

“The angel of the Lord shall encamp round about them that fear Him: and shall deliver them. O taste, and see that the Lord is sweet: blessed is the man that hopeth in Him.”—*Psalm 33:8-9*.

God’s Word has immense power.

“It is good to confide in the Lord, rather than to have confidence in men.”

— *Psalm 117:8 [Psalm 118:8]*

“I am come that they might have life, and may have it more abundantly.”

— *St. John 10:10*

“Believe in your God, and you shall be secure; believe His prophets, and all things shall succeed well.”

— *2 Paralipomenon 20:20*

“The Lord your God is in the midst of you, and will fight for you against your enemies, to deliver you from danger.”

— *Deuteronomy 20:4*

“Through God we shall do mightily: for He shall bring to nothing them that afflict us.”

— *Psalm 59:14 [Psalm 60:12]*

“So shall My word be, which shall go forth from My mouth: it shall not return to Me void, but it shall do whatsoever I please, and shall prosper in the things for which I sent it.”—*Isaias 55:11*.

That power, which can build the human body within the womb, can also cleanse our souls of sin and restore our entire being in newness of life.

The power of God’s Word is to be found in the Holy Scriptures. As we study and obey them, our lives become clean and godly.

“All Scripture, inspired of God, is profitable to teach, to reprove, to correct, to instruct in justice; that the man of God may be perfect, furnished to every good work.”—*2 Timothy 3:16-17*.

But there is more to Mary’s song in St. Luke 1:48.

“Because He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid; for behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.”—*St. Luke 1:48*.

The sweet Virgin is saying that all future generations would recognize that, through her, the Saviour came into the world. She surely was blessed in being selected to bear the Messiah!

There is an interesting parallel ten chapters later in St. Luke. Jesus was speaking precious words of life to the people gathered about Him. Oh, how their hearts thrilled with joy upon learning the words of life.

You and I today may also hear those words as we faithful read in the Four Gospels and elsewhere in the Holy Scriptures.

As Jesus spoke to the group about Him, a woman cried out. What was it that she said? *She repeated the blessing on Mary:*

“And it came to pass, as He spoke these things, a certain woman from the crowd, lifting up her voice, said to Him: Blessed is the womb that bore Thee, and the paps that gave Thee suck!”—*St. Luke 11:27*.

How many down through the centuries have echoed that adoring statement of the Virgin Mary!

Yet to this Christ gave a remarkable reply. Turning toward the woman, and then beckoning to all that vast throng, He said:

“Yea rather, blessed are they who hear the Word of God, and keep it!”—*St. Luke 11:28*.

What did Christ mean when He said that? The words are quite obvious, and so is the meaning. Our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, declared that, even though the Virgin was blessed for having borne Him,—*yet the greater blessing of God rested on anyone and everyone who would obey the Holy Scriptures!*

This is an extremely significant statement,—and it agrees with what God and all the holy prophets and apostles have said throughout the Bible.

Was Mary blessed? Yes, she surely was. Can anyone else be blessed to a like degree? According to the words of

“The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the just runneth to it, and shall be exalted.”

— *Proverbs 18:10*

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel. For it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.”

— *Romans 1:16*

“And I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me. And that I live now in the flesh: I live in the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself for me.”

— *Galatians 2:20*

“Better is a little to the just, than the great riches of the wicked.”

— *Psalms 36:16 [Psalm 37:16]*

Christ, everyone can—if they will obey the Word of God. Mary obeyed God; you and I can also.

The greatest blessing rests on those who humble their hearts before God; surrender their lives to His control; and, in full reliance on the enabling grace of Christ,—put into their every day lives the teachings of Scripture! They live for God fully, and they are blessed for it.

The Virgin was blessed because she humbled her heart and dedicated her life to God, so she could be used by Him.

What a glorious promise it is, that you and I can have a blessing such as Mary received! According to St. Luke 11:27-28, each of us can! Indeed, the deeper our dedication and obedience to God's Word, the deeper will be the blessing.

It is a blessing which comes to all who, through the grace of Christ, live clean, godly lives and spend their time encouraging others and ministering to their needs. Yes, yes, we can be blessed as Mary was! It is a blessing we today can share in.

Notice what Jesus said:

“Blessed are they who hear the Word of God, and keep it!”—*St. Luke 11:28*.

It is hearing and doing that counts. Listen to God speak:

“If therefore you will hear My voice, and keep My covenant, you shall be My peculiar possession above all people: for all the earth is Mine.”—*Exodus 19:5*.

God predicted that the people could be saved when, amid their troubles, heartaches, and sins, they sought Him with all their heart, and returned and heard His voice. Then He would be found of them.

“And when thou shalt seek there the Lord thy God, thou shalt find Him: yet so, if thou seek Him with all thy heart, and all the affliction of thy soul.

“After all the things aforesaid shall find thee, in the latter time thou shalt return to the Lord thy God, and shalt hear His voice.”—*Deuteronomy 4:29-30*.

What a wonderful promise. O child of God, whatever

the sins you may have committed, you can come back to Him—even now—and find forgiveness and acceptance. But it can only happen as we repent of our sins, and in the strength of Christ determine to forsake them, listen, and obey God’s voice as given in the sacred books of the Old and New Testaments.

There are those in the world today who refuse to do this. They choose to not hear and obey God speaking to them in the Scriptures.

“And the word of the Lord came to Zacharias, saying:

“Thus saith the Lord of hosts, saying: Judge ye true judgment, and shew ye mercy and compassion every man to his brother. And oppress not the widow and the fatherless, and the stranger, and the poor: and let not a man devise evil in his heart against his brother.

“But they would not hearken, and they turned away

“The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the just runneth to it, and shall be exalted.”

— *Proverbs 18:10*

“Trust in the Lord, and do good, and dwell in the land, and thou shalt be fed with its riches . . . They that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the land . . . The Lord will help them and deliver them: and He will rescue them from the wicked, and save them, because they have hoped in Him.”

— *Psalms 36:3, 9, 40 [Psalm 37: 3, 9, 40]*

“Seek the Lord, all ye meek of the earth, you that have wrought His Judgment: seek the just, seek the meek: if by any means you may be hid in the day of the Lord’s indignation.”

— *Sophonias 2:3 [Zephaniah 2:3]*

the shoulder to depart: and they stopped their ears, not to hear.

“And they made their heart as the adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the Lord of host sent in His Spirit by the hand of the former prophets: so a great indignation came from the Lord of hosts.”—*Zacharias 7:8-12*.

We do not want to be like those who stubbornly rebel against the Word of the Lord and refuse to hear it! God’s instruction to Josue (also called Joshua) tells us how we may please Him:

“Let not the book of this law depart from thy mouth: but thou shalt meditate on it day and night, that thou mayst observe and do all things that are written in it: then shalt thou direct thy way, and understand it.”—*Josue 1:8*.

The blessing is for those who will take time to read in the Bible every day, and obey it!

We want that promised blessing,—the blessing our Saviour promised to those who would hear and do the Words of God.

“And it came to pass, as He spoke these things, a certain woman from the crowd, lifting up her voice, said to Him: Blessed is the womb that bore Thee, and the paps that gave Thee suck!

“But He said: Yea rather, blessed are they who hear the Word of God, and keep it!”—*St. Luke 11:27-28*.

There must be not only hearing, but doing! The Holy Scriptures declare that only the doers are justified.

“For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.”—*Romans 2:13*.

Christ gave many deep truths in His Sermon on the Mount (recorded in St. Matthew 5, 6, and 7). He ended that wonderful sermon with words which summarized it all:

“Every one therefore that heareth these My words,

and doeth them, shall be likened to a wise man that built his house upon a rock.

“And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and they beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock.

“And every one that heareth these My words, and doeth them not, shall be like a foolish man that built his house upon the sand.

“And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and they beat upon that house, and it fell, and great was the fall thereof.”—*St. Matthew 7:24-27*.

It is hearing Christ's words—all through the Sacred books of Scripture—and doing them that counts. Just knowing that the Bible is on the shelf is not enough.

We must be founded on the Rock; and that Rock is

“The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a contrite heart: and He will save the humble of spirit.”

— *Psalm 33:19 [Psalm 34:18]*

“If any man love God, the same is known by Him.”

— *1 Corinthians 8:3*

“When thou shalt pass through the waters, I will be with thee, and the rivers shall not cover thee: when thou shalt walk in the fire, thou shalt not be burnt; and the flames shall not burn in thee: For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour.”

— *Isaias 43:2-3*

“Blessed are the meek; for they shall possess the land.”

— *St. Matthew 5:4 [Matthew 5:5]*

Jesus Christ, our only Saviour from sin.

“Neither is there salvation in any other. For there is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved.”—*Acts 4:12*.

Before concluding this section on those whom Heaven blesses, we surely want to consider the people of God whom Christ has said are especially blessed.

When our Lord and Saviour gave the Sermon on the Mount, He began by giving the Beatitudes. These consist of eight blessings on those who, having accepting Christ as their Saviour, hear and obey the Word of God.

These blessings are for you and me today. It is for all those who see their spiritual need, humble their hearts before God, mourn over their sins and put them away, hunger and thirst for godliness, show mercy to others, have clean hearts, try to make peace with others, and willingly suffer persecution for Christ’s sake:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are the meek: for they shall possess the land.

“Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

“Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice [righteousness]: for they shall have their fill.

“Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

“Blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God.

“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

“Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when they shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you, untruly, for My sake: Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven. For so they persecuted the prophets that were

before you.”—*St. Matthew 5:3-12.*

God is willing to bestow these blessings upon each of us.

CHAPTER FIVE

BE THOU THEREFORE HOLY

ST. LUKE 1:49

Let us now continue on with Mary’s song:

“Because He that is mighty, hath done great things to me; and holy is His name.”—*St. Luke 1:49.*

In order to honor a holy God, we must be holy ourselves. As we submit our lives to Him, He will make us holy.

“In whom we have redemption through His blood, the remission of sins, according to the riches of His grace.”

— *Ephesians 1:7*

“We look for new heavens and a new earth according to His promises, in which justice dwelleth.”

— *2 St. Peter 3:13*

“Now we have received not the spirit of this world, but the Spirit that is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given us from God.”

— *1 Corinthians 2:12*

“Be thou faithful until death: and I will give thee the crown of Life.”

— *The Apocalypse 2:10*

“Holy is His name.”—*St. Luke 1:49.*

The name indicates the character. Moses in the mount asked to better know the name of God. He wanted to better know what He was like. So the Lord graciously passed before Moses and proclaimed His holy name.

“And when the Lord was come down in a cloud, Moses stood with Him, calling upon the name of the Lord.

“And when He passed before him, He [the Lord] said, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, patient and of much compassion and true.

“Who keepest mercy unto thousands: who takest away iniquity, and wickedness, and sin.”—*Exodus 34:7.*

That is what the holiness of the Lord is. It means to be good, kind, and just. The Virgin said, “And holy is His name.”

“Because He that is mighty, hath done great things to me; and holy is His name.”—*St. Luke 1:49.*

We need to share with others the blessings God has given us. In her song, the Virgin Mary immediately began sharing the good news of how kind the Lord had been to her. We should be like Mary, and also tell what great things God hath done for us.

When Jesus healed a man at Gadara, who then became His new disciple, Christ immediately gave him a message to carry everywhere to the people.

“Now the man, out of whom the devils were departed, besought Him [Christ] that he might be with Him. But Jesus sent him away, saying:

“Return to thy house, and tell how great things God hath done to Thee. And he went through the whole city, publishing how great things Jesus had done to him.”—*St. Luke 8:38-39.*

As soon as Jesus made a disciple, He sent him out to be a missionary. We too should go out and tell others the blessings God has given us.

Mary said that the name of God is holy. St. Peter said we should be holy also.

“Because He that is mighty, hath done great things to me; and holy is His name.”—*St. Luke 1:49.*

“But according to Him that hath called you, who is holy, be you also in all manner of conversation holy: because it is written: You shall be holy, for I am holy.”—*1 St. Peter 1:15-16.*

“Conversation” in this passage comes from a Greek word for “conduct.” In all ways we are to live clean, godly lives. This includes the way we eat. According to Holy Scripture, we should eat clean food.

In the Scriptures, God explained that some food is not clean and should not be eaten. For example, Scripture says

“And whatsoever we shall ask, we shall receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things which are pleasing in His sight.”

—*1 St. John 3:22*

“The Lord hath heard the desire of the poor: Thy ear hath heard the preparation of their heart.”

— *Psalm 9:17 [Psalm 10:17]*

“And this is the confidence which we have towards Him: That whatsoever we shall ask according to His will, He heareth us. And we know that He heareth us, whatsoever we ask: we know that we have the petitions which we request of Him. He that knoweth his brother to sin a sin which is not to death, let him ask, and life shall be given to him, who sinneth not to death.”

—*1 St. John 5:14-16*

that swine (pigs) are unclean animals and should never be eaten. Both farmers and scientific researchers know that this is because they eat all kinds of garbage and are filled with worms and parasites. Our kind heavenly Father commands only that which is for our best good.

After describing which animals, birds, and fish are unclean, the final verses of the eleventh chapter of Leviticus explain why we must not eat such creatures:

“Do not defile your souls, nor touch aught thereof, lest you be unclean, for I am the Lord your God: be holy because I am holy. Defile not your souls by any creeping thing that moveth upon the earth.”—*Leviticus 11:43-44*.

Thus we see that God wants His people to have clean bodies. Heaven communicates with us through our brains; and, when the mind is clouded with impurities from bad food, then our moral nature is weakened and it is more difficult to resist temptation.

“You shall be holy, because I am holy. This is the law of beasts and fowls, and of every living creature that moveth in the waters, and creepeth on the earth: that you may know the differences of the clean, and unclean, and know what you ought to eat and what to refuse.”—*Leviticus 11:46-47*.

God’s biddings are enablings. Every command of the Lord is actually a promise of divine help, to strengthen us to obey it. He commands us to be holy. Whenever God commands us to do something, He will help us do it.

Our Saviour wants us to be holy people, a holy nation. He gives us a holy diet, and wants us to eat moderately even of that which is good. In Leviticus 11, He tells us which are the scavenger animals, and commands us not to eat them. They are scavenger foods.

“The prohibition of so many kinds of beasts, birds, and fishes in the law, was ordered, first, to exercise the people in obedience and temperance; secondly, to restrain them from the vices of which these animals were symbols; thirdly, because the things here forbidden were

for the most part unwholesome and not proper to be eaten; fourthly, that the people of God, by being obliged to abstain from things corporally [physically] unclean, might be trained up to seek a spiritual cleanness.”—*Foot-note to Leviticus 11, Rheims-Douai Bible.*

Elsewhere in Leviticus, God explains His purpose for our lives:

“Sanctify yourselves, and be ye holy because I am the Lord your God.”—*Leviticus 20:7.*

God is showing Himself as the source of the power needed to live a holy life. The command to live such a holy life is found, not only in St. Peter’s writings, but all through the Scriptures. We can be thankful that God has told us how to live better, more wholesome lives.

“Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be humbled: and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.”

— *St. Matthew 23:12*

“He that sheweth mercy to the poor, shall be blessed.”

— *Proverbs 14:21*

“Sanctify them in truth: Thy word is truth . . . And for them do I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.”

— *St. John 17:17, 19*

“We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus in good works, which God hath prepared that we should walk in them.”

— *Ephesians 2:10*

CHAPTER SIX

HIS MERCY AND JUSTICE

ST. LUKE 1:50

The Virgin Mary tells us in her song about the continual mercies of God.

“And His mercy is from generation unto generations, to them that fear Him.”—*St. Luke 1:50*.

The word “fear,” given here, means “reverence, awe, reverential respect.” God is the Maker of all things! He is all powerful, and we are to bow in total submission, reverence, and worship to Him. No created being—anywhere—is to receive our worship and reverence! Only the Creator of heaven and earth.

Those who fear—reverence, worship—the true God, hate every evil thing.

“The fear of the Lord hateth evil: I hate arrogance, and pride, and every wicked way, and a mouth with a double tongue.”—*Proverbs 8:13*.

The followers of Christ hate evil and live righteousness. Christianity is not merely avoiding the negative; it is also loving those things which are good.

“Thou [Christ] hast loved justice, and hated iniquity.”—*Hebrews 1:9*.

The word “justice,” in the Rheims-Douai, is frequently translated “righteousness” in many other translations. What is both justice and righteousness? they mean obedience to the law of God.

God’s justice, His righteousness, is bound up in His eternal Ten Commandment law.

“Thy justice is justice for ever and Thy law is the truth.”—*Psalms 118:142*.

“My tongue shall pronounce Thy Word [proclaim Thy Scriptures] because all Thy commandments are justice.”—*Psalms 118:172*.

Here is how another Church-approved version words this:

“Thy righteousness is righteous for ever, and Thy law is true.”—*Psalm 119:142, R.S.V.*

“My tongue will sing of Thy Word, for all Thy commandments are right.”—*Psalm 119:172, R.S.V.*

St. Peter has stated it so well:

“Let him decline [stay away] from evil, and do good: let him seek after peace and pursue it: because the countenance of the Lord [is] upon them that do evil things.”—*1 St. Peter 3:11-12.*

King Solomon was a wise man; and, in the book of Ecclesiastes, he summarized the only way to live a happy, useful life which God could approve:

“Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made Heaven and earth.”

— *Psalm 123:8 [Psalm 124:8]*

“He that shall hear Me, shall rest without terror, and shall enjoy abundance, without fear of evils.”

— *Proverbs 1:33*

“He that feareth the commandment, shall dwell in peace.”

— *Proverbs 13:13*

“My flesh and my heart hath fainted away: Thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion for ever.”

— *Psalm 72:26 [Psalm 73:26]*

“I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.”

— *St. John 14:18*

“Let us all hear together the conclusion of the discourse. Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is all man [all that man needs to do].

“And all things that are done, God will bring into judgment for every error, whether it be good or evil.”—*Ecclesiastes 12:13-14*.

Another accepted version says it this way:

“The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God, and keep His commandments; for this is the whole duty of man.

“For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.”—*Ecclesiastes 12:13-14, R.S.V.*

Those who truly fear—truly reverence—God will be those who obey His Ten Commandment law. A parallel passage to Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 is The Apocalypse 14:7-12. Both tell us that the ones who genuinely worship and reverence God are those who obey Him. They will be safe in that hour when God judges the secrets of men.

“Fear the Lord and give Him honour, because the hour of His judgment is come; and adore ye Him, that made heaven and earth, the sea, and the fountains of waters.”—*The Apocalypse 14:7*.

At the end of time, as in all ages before, those who love and reverence God and keep His commandments—will be the ones who will be the closest to Him. The Apocalypse 14:7 emphasizes that God’s people, living in the last days, will adore God—and no human creature. The Apocalypse 14:12, which is only two verses before the Second Advent of Christ, declares that God’s special people in the last days will keep His Ten Commandment law, by the faith of Jesus Christ.

“Here is the patience of the saints, who keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.”—*The Apocalypse 14:12*.

The above verse defines a “saint.” It is one who serves the Lord Jesus and who keeps God’s commandments. We

dare not set aside God's law as of little consequence. The immorality in the world today is destroying it. But it is because the great majority of mankind scorn obedience to God's moral law.

The Apocalypse, quoted above, explains that God's judgment of mankind will occur in the last days. The so-called Apostles' Creed also mentions the fact that God is going to judge mankind. (It is officially acknowledged that the Apostles did not write it: The *Catholic Encyclopedia* explains: "Its name is not because of the fact that it was written by the Apostles."—*Catholic Encyclopedia*, p. 45.

Here is what the Apostles Creed says about the coming judgment:

"He [Christ] ascended into heaven, sits at the right

"And hope confoundeth not: because the charity of God is poured forth in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost, who is given to us."

— *Romans 5:5*

"To whom shall I have respect? But to him that is poor and little, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My words."

— *Isaias 66:2*

"The innocent in hands, and clean of heart, who hath not taken his soul in vain, nor sworn deceitfully to his neighbor. He shall receive a blessing from the Lord, and mercy from God his Saviour."

— *Psalms 23:4-5 [Psalm 24:4-5]*

"My sheep hear My voice: and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them life everlasting."

— *St. John 10:27-28*

hand of God, the Father. From thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.”—*From the Apostles’ Creed.*

We know that the judgment is coming, and we want to prepare for it. In the strength of Christ’s enabling grace, we can obey God’s law and do all that He asks of us in the Scriptures.

When St. Paul was brought before Governor Felix to answer for his faith, Felix was terrified at the thought of a judgment to come.

“And as he [St. Paul] treated of justice, and chastity, and of the judgment to come, Felix being terrified, answered: For this time, go thy way: but when I have a convenient time, I will send for thee.”—*Acts 24:25.*

But Felix busied himself with other matters and did not return to talk to St. Paul about this. You and I do not want to be like Felix! We want to come to God right now; surrender our lives to Him;—and determine, in His strength, to study and obey His Inspired Writings and tell others about them.

Fortunately, we know what those Inspired Writings are. They are the books of the Old and New Testaments: the Holy Bible.

All other books and writings and decrees are fallible and erring. Only the Sacred Scriptures are a safe guide on the pathway to heaven.

CHAPTER SEVEN
HE HATH PUT DOWN THE
MIGHTY
ST. LUKE 1:51-52

“He hath shewed might in His arm: He hath scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart.

“He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble.”—*St. Luke 1:51-52.*

Mary was thinking about the dealings of God with His people in past centuries. Just as we should do today, she thought about what is taught in the Bible.

In ancient times, God brought His people out of Egypt and set them free from oppression and slavery. The deeds of God, all through history, are mighty.

In the twentieth chapter of 2 Paralipomenon (also known as 2 Chronicles), there is a wonderful example of how God will protect and guide His earthly children. Here is the story of what happened:

A large army had gathered to destroy God’s people, and were marching toward them.

“After this the children of Moab, and the children of

“The peace of God, which surpasseth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.”

— *Philippians 4:7*

“The Lord shall be unto thee for an everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.”

— *Isaias 60:20*

“Light is risen to the just, and joy to the right of heart.”

— *Psalms 96:11 [Psalm 97:11]*

“Whosoever shall glorify Me, him will I glorify.”

— *1 Kings 2:30 [1 Samuel 2:30]*

“If you keep My commandments, you shall abide in My love.”

— *St. John 15:10*

Ammon, and with them of the Ammonites, were gathered together to fight against Josaphat.

“And there came messengers, and told Josaphat, saying: There cometh a great multitude against thee from beyond the sea, and out of Syria, and behold they are in Asosonthamar, which is Engaddi.”—*2 Paralipomenon 20:1-2*.

When King Josaphat (Jehoshaphat) heard this, he prayed to God for help. Then, after gathering the Israelites together they prayed some more, and the Lord instructed them by a prophet to march against the immense foe. They were given the assurance that the God of heaven would fight the battle for them.

“It shall not be you that shall fight, but only stand with confidence, and you shall see the help of the Lord over you.”—*2 Paralipomenon 20:17*.

In full faith and courage, they set a group of singers to go in front of the army! Then off they marched. However, they had not gone far, when another message came from the Lord. It was not only a message to God’s people in ancient times, it is a message for us today:

“Hear me, ye men of Juda, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem: believe in the Lord your God, and you shall be secure: believe His prophets, and all things shall succeed well.”—*2 Paralipomenon 20:20*.

What a wonderful message of instruction and courage! You and I will be perfectly safe if we trust our lives to the Inspired Writings—the Holy Scriptures!

No human help could deliver the Israelites, but God fought for them that day; and, when they arrived at the place of battle, they found their enemies slain by one another.

“He hath shewed might in His arm: He hath scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart.”—*St. Luke 1:51*.

It is as we trust in the Lord our God, that we have help from above! He can do wonderful things to guide and pre-

serve us, if we will let Him. In His strength, we can overcome all the power of the enemy, and come off more than conquerors. This is because Jesus came to earth to save us from our sins!

“And she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus. For He shall save His people from their sins.”—*St. Matthew 1:21*.

CHAPTER EIGHT

HE FILLS THE HUNGRY

ST. LUKE 1:53

Just as the Virgin said: If we would be blessed like

“He that spared not even His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how hath He not also, with Him, freely given us all things?”

—*Romans 8:32*

“The meek shall increase their joy in the Lord, and the poor men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.”

— *Isaias 29:19*

“In all these things we overcome because of Him that hath loved us.”

— *Romans 8:37*

“God is our refuge and strength: a helper in troubles, which have found us exceedingly. Therefore we will not fear, when the earth shall be troubled; and the mountains shall be removed into the heart of the sea. The waters roared and were troubled: the mountains were troubled with His strength.”

— *Psalm 45:2-4 [Psalm 46:1-3]*

Mary, we must be humble little children of God.

“He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He hath sent empty away.”—*St. Luke 1:53*.

Only those who bow low in reverent worship of, and obedience to, the God of heaven can receive His blessing. But, as we have seen, the Virgin did just that. She meekly submitted to the will of God, therefore He could fulfill His plan for her life.

In St. Matthew 19, we learn about a wealthy, young man who did not make the right choice. Although he had great treasures, he did not have the Lord in his life. He had not done as Mary did. He had not surrendered all that he had to God.

“And behold one came and said to Him [Jesus]: Good Master, what good shall I do that I may have everlasting life?”—*St. Matthew 19:16*.

To this, Jesus replied,

“If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.”—*St. Matthew 19:17*.

When the young man asked, “which one,” Jesus named several of the Ten Commandments found in Exodus 20:3-17.

“He said to him, Which? And Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness.”—*St. Matthew 19:18*.

In answer to the young man’s question about how to inherit eternal life, Jesus told him to keep the law of God. But, unfortunately, the young man hesitated, would not make a full surrender, and he left.

“He went away sad: for he had great possessions.”—*St. Matthew 19:22*.

The rich man had allowed his wealth to keep him from heaven. Truly, Mary said:

“He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He hath sent empty away.”—*St. Luke 1:53*.

Unless they surrender their lives to Jesus Christ, the strong, the wealthy, the great men of this world will lose out on eternal life. Only those who are humble, meek, and obedient to the Word of God will enter through the heavenly gates into the glorious paradise beyond.

God can, indeed, fill the hungry with good things! Mary probably had in mind the wonderful story of the manna in the wilderness.

After the Israelites had left Egypt, they found that they lacked food. They cried to Moses for help, and God worked a miracle. The entire story is in Exodus, chapter 16.

“And the Lord said to Moses: Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you: let the people go forth, and gather what is sufficient for every day: that I may prove them whether they will walk in My law, or not.”—*Exodus 16:4*.

“The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him: to all that call upon Him in truth.”

— *Psalms 144:18 [Psalm 145:18]*

“Praising I will call upon the Lord: and I shall be saved from my enemies.”

— *Psalms 17:4 [Psalm 18:3]*

“Let not the book of this law depart from thy mouth: but thou shalt meditate on it day and night, that thou mayst observe and do all things that are written in it: then shalt thou direct thy way, and understand it.”

— *Josue 1:8 [Joshua 1:8]*

“He will keep the salvation of the righteous, and protect them that walk in simplicity . . . For they that are upright shall dwell in the earth, and the simple shall continue in it.”

— *Proverbs 2:7, 21*

The Lord was testing the people. Would they obey His law? But, you might ask, “How would the gathering of the manna each day show whether they were obeying the Ten Commandments?”

The next verse explains the test:

“But the sixth day, let them provide for to bring in: and let it be double to that they were wont to gather every day.”—*Exodus 16:5*.

The remainder of the chapter explains what happened after this. Each night, while the children of Israel slept, manna would fall from the sky. It appeared to be small and white; and, the following morning, the people would gather it in pots and eat it. By the middle of the day, the manna had melted away.

The Lord had instructed the people through Moses that, throughout the week, they should not try to save any of the manna till the next morning. So, when some tried to do so, they found that it had putrefied.

Then, on the sixth day, twice as much manna fell! The people were told to gather twice as much and save part of it till the next day, which was the Bible Sabbath.

This they did; but, when some went out on Sabbath morning to gather manna, the Lord was displeased.

“Gather it six days: but on the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord, therefore it shall not be found.

“And the seventh day came: and some of the people going forth to gather, found none.

“And the Lord said to Moses: How long will you refuse to keep My commandments, and My law?

“See that the Lord hath given you the Sabbath, and for this reason on the sixth day He giveth you a double provision.”—*Exodus 16:26-29*.

So that was the test: Would the people keep the Fourth Commandment, which is the Sabbath Commandment?

After that reproof, the Israelites observed the Sabbath more carefully.

“And the people kept the Sabbath on the seventh day.”—*Exodus 20:30*.

It is of interest that this incident about the manna occurred four chapters before the Ten Commandments were proclaimed in Exodus 20. God’s people had known about God’s law of Ten Commandments earlier; but, after coming out of Egyptian bondage, they were given the law again to remind them of its great importance.

They would not, in Exodus 16, have been expected, to know and keep the Sabbath commandment, if they were first given it four chapters later.

Here is the Fourth Commandment, as given in the Holy

“Seek ye Me, and you shall live.”

— *Amos 5:4*

“The Lord will give strength to His people: the Lord will bless His people with peace.”

— *Psalms 28:10 [Psalm 29:11]*

“Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.”

— *St. Matthew 5:7*

“God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He hath prepared for them a city.”

— *Hebrews 11:16*

“The Lord is my firmament, my refuge, and my deliverer. My God is my helper, and in Him will I put my trust. My protector and the horn of my salvation, and my support.”

— *Psalms 17:3 [Psalm 18:2]*

“Godliness with contentment is great gain.”

— *1 Timothy 6:6*

Scriptures:

The Fourth Commandment—“Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day. Six days shalt thou labour, and shalt do all thy works.

“But on the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: thou shalt do no work on it, thou nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy beast, nor the stranger that is within thy gates.

“For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things that are in them, and rested on the seventh day: therefore the Lord blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it.”—*Exodus 20:8-11*.

Remembering all this, the Virgin Mary declared in her song:

“He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He hath sent empty away.”—*St. Luke 1:53*.

God is able to feed us both physically and spiritually.

“Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice [righteousness]: for they shall have their fill.”—*St. Matthew 5:6*.

Another version, approved by the Catholic Church, says it this way:

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.”—*St. Matthew 5:6*.

Here is an interesting comment on this beautiful verse:

“Righteousness is holiness, likeness to God, and ‘God is love.’ 1 St. John 4:16. It is conformity to the law of God, for ‘all Thy commandments are righteousness’ (Psalm 119:172), and ‘love is the fulfilling of the law’ (Romans 13:10). Righteousness is love, and love is the light and the life of God. The righteousness of God is embodied in Christ. We receive righteousness by receiving Him.

“Not by painful struggles or wearisome toil, not by gifts or sacrifice, is righteousness obtained; but it is

freely given to every soul who hungers and thirsts to receive it. 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat . . . without money and without price.' 'Their righteousness is of Me, saith the Lord.' And, 'This is His name whereby He shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness.' Isaias 55:1; 54:17; Jeremias 23:6.

"No human agent can supply that which will satisfy the hunger and thirst of the soul. But Jesus says, 'Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.' 'I am the bread of life; he that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst.' The Apocalypse 3:20; St. John 6:35.

"As we need food to sustain our physical strength, so do we need Christ, the Bread from heaven, to sus-

"But He giveth greater grace. Wherefore He saith: God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace unto the humble."

— *James 4:6*

"For you are dead; and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ shall appear, who is your life, then you shall appear with Him in glory."

— *Colossians 3:3-4*

"Love your enemies: do good to them that hate you: and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you: that you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven, who maketh His sun to rise upon the good, and bad, and raineth upon the just and unjust."

— *St. Matthew 5:44-45*

tain spiritual life and impart strength to work the works of God. As the body is continually receiving the nourishment that sustains life and vigor, so the soul must be constantly communing with Christ, submitting to Him and depending wholly upon Him.”—*Mount of Blessing, 18-19.*

Thank God every day for what He can do in your life! Your Redeemer can take the shattered threads of your life and reunite them. He can do for you that which you could never do for yourself.

CHAPTER NINE

GOD'S ETERNAL FAITHFULNESS

ST. LUKE 1:54-55

The Virgin Mary knew that God would fulfill His promises to His faithful, obedient people; for, throughout history, He always has.

“He hath received Israel His servant, being mindful of His mercy.

“As He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed for ever.”—*St. Luke 1:54-55.*

In earlier centuries, the Lord had made promises to Abraham that, in his seed, all the world would be blessed.

“And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed My voice.”—*Genesis 22:18.*

God chose Abraham and blessed the world through him, because he willingly obeyed God's commandments.

The promise was later repeated to Jacob:

“And in thee and thy seed all the tribes of the earth shall be blessed.”—*Genesis 28:14.*

The blessing was to come through Abraham's seed, that is, through Christ.

“To Abraham were the promises made and to his seed. He saith not, And to his seeds, as of many: but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.”—*Galatians*

3:16.

And that promise is for us today!

“And if you be Christ’s, then are you the seed of Abraham, heirs according to the promise.”—*Galatians* 3:29.

God made the promise to Abraham that, in his seed, all the world would be blessed.

God made a covenant with Abraham. It is called the Abramic covenant. It is the foundation covenant of God with His people in all ages.

Just before proclaiming the Ten Commandments to the people at Mount Sinai, God promised to make them His people if they would obey Him.

“If therefore you will hear My voice, and keep My covenant, you shall be My peculiar possession above all people: for all the earth is Mine.

“Surely His salvation is near to them that fear Him.”

— *Psalms* 84:10 [*Psalms* 85:9]

“The blessing of the Lord is upon the head of the just . . . to the just their desire shall be given . . . The expectation of the just is joy.”

— *Proverbs* 10:6, 24, 28

“The Lord will reward me according to my justice; and according to the cleanness of my hands before His eyes.”

— *Psalms* 17:25 [*Psalms* 18:25]

“No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper: and every tongue that resisteth thee in judgment, thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their justice with Me, saith the Lord.”

— *Isaiah* 54:17

“And you shall be to Me a priestly kingdom, and a holy nation.”—*Exodus 19:5-6*.

A covenant is an agreement between two parties. God promised to protect and save the people, if they would, by faith in His enabling strength, obey His law.

God has never changed that covenant, for God does not change. It is an everlasting covenant.

“For I am the Lord, and I change not.”—*Malachias 3:6*.

“Every best gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no change, nor shadow of alteration.”—*St. James 1:17*.

How thankful we can be that, through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour, we can enter into the everlasting covenant and be redeemed!

Our Lord never changes, and He is one in divinity and purpose with the Father.

“Jesus Christ, yesterday, and to day; and the same for ever.”—*Hebrews 13:8*.

“That which My Father hath given Me, is greater than all: and no one can snatch them out of the hand of My Father. I and My Father are one.”—*St. John 10:29-30*.

As God does not change, and Christ does not change; neither does the covenant change. Those who will, by faith in Christ, obey God’s law may inherit eternal life.

There is only one everlasting covenant (also called the “everlasting testament”).

“And may the God of peace, who brought again from the dead the great pastor of the sheep, our Lord Jesus Christ, in the blood of the everlasting testament, fit you in all goodness, that you may do His will; doing in you that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom is glory for ever and ever.”—*Hebrews 13:20*.

This “everlasting” covenant, or testament, God will write

in our hearts, if we will humbly repent of our sins and accept Him as our only Saviour.

“And this is the testament which I will make unto them after those days, saith the Lord. I will give My laws in their hearts, and on their minds will I write them.”—*Hebrews 10:16* (quoting *Jeremias 31:32-33*).

This is not a “new” covenant in the sense of a new kind. But it is new in the sense of a new aspect of the covenant made with Abraham. It is the one everlasting covenant.

Who are the special people whom God uses here on earth, the ones who especially enter into the everlasting covenant with Him? They are the ones who obey His Word. Because Abraham was obedient to God’s commands, he was especially used by heaven to give an example to generations which came after him.

“The mercy of the Lord is from eternity and unto eternity upon them that fear Him: And His justice unto children’s children, to such as keep His covenant, and are mindful of His commandments to do them.”

— *Psalm 102:17-18* [*Psalm 103:17-18*]

“If you be willing, and will hearken to Me, you shall eat the good things of the land.”

— *Isaias 1:19*

“He will guide the mild in judgement: He will teach the meek His ways.”

— *Psalm 24:9* [*Psalm 25:9*]

“The Lord is good and giveth strength in the day of trouble: and knoweth them that hope in Him.”

— *Nahum 1:7*

“For I know that he will command his children, and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord and do judgment and justice: that for Abraham’s sake the Lord may bring to effect all things He hath spoken unto him.”—*Genesis 18:19*.

So it may be with us today. God will accept and take us for His special people, if we will take hold of His strength and obey Him.

“If therefore you will hear My voice, and keep My covenant, you shall be My peculiar possession above all people: for all the earth is Mine.”—*Exodus 19:5*.

The entire song of Mary consists of Mary’s understanding of the Old Testament Scriptures. Everything she presents comes from the Old Testament.

“He hath received Israel His servant, being mindful of His mercy: As He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed for ever.”—*St. Luke 1:54-55*.

We have learned that the covenant which God spoke to our fathers is the everlasting covenant. It has not changed; for God does not change. This covenant is established on the fact that we will obey Him. He writes His law on our hearts; and, by the enabling grace of our Saviour, we obey it.

Along with the covenant, our Lord has given us abundant promises through the Bible prophets! Let us consider several of these glorious promises:

“And thou shalt know that the Lord thy God, He is a strong and faithful God, keeping His covenant and mercy to them that love Him, and to them that keep His commandments, unto a thousand generations.”—*Deuteronomy 7:9*.

A Bible “generation” is frequently considered to be 120 years. At that rate, it would take 120,000 years for a thousand generations to elapse! If a “generation” were only half that amount (60 years), it would be 60,000 years. According to the Scriptures, the world was created only about 6,000 years ago. God’s covenant with man will last so far

into the future that time will be forgotten by then.

Here are more of these sweet promises:

“Blessed be the Lord, who hath given rest to His people Israel, according to all that He promised: there hath not failed so much as one word of all the good things that He promised.”—*3 Kings [1 Kings] 8:56*.

“O Lord, Thy mercy is in heaven, and Thy truth reacheth even to the clouds.”—*Psalms 35:6 [Psalms 36:5]*.

“God is faithful: by whom you are called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.”—*1 Corinthians 1:9*.

“God, meaning more abundantly to shew to the heirs of the promise the immutability of His counsel, interposed an oath. That by two immutable things, in which

“I love them that love Me: and they that in the morning early watch for Me, shall find Me.”

— *Proverbs 8:17*

“Faith then cometh by hearing; and hearing by the Word of Christ.”

— *Romans 10:17*

“Because I live, and you shall live.”

— *St. John 14:19*

“And I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me. And that I live now in the flesh: I live in the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself for me.”

— *Galatians 2:20*

“Blessed is he, that readeth and heareth the words of this prophecy; and keepeth those things which are written in it.”

— *The Apocalypse 1:3*

it is impossible for God to lie, we may have the strongest comfort, who have fled for refuge to hold fast the hope set before us. Which we have as an anchor of the soul, sure and firm.”—*Hebrews 6:17-19*.

“Wherefore let them also that suffer according to the will of God, commend their souls in good deeds to the faithful Creator.”—*2 St. Peter 4:19*.

Christ, our Saviour, said that He is the only pathway to heaven. Only through Him can we be saved.

“Jesus saith to him: I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No man cometh to the Father, but by Me.”—*St. John 14:6*.

Jesus has gone to prepare mansions for us; so, we should spend our time down here preparing our lives for heaven. By His grace we should live clean, obedient lives.

“Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in Me.

“In My Father’s house there are many mansions. If not [If it were not so], I would have told you: because I go to prepare a place for you.

“And If I shall go, and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and will take you to Myself; that where I am, you also may be.”—*St. John 14:1-3*.

There are many other wonderful promises in the Holy Scriptures. As you read, you will come across one after another. They are like diamonds lying on the ground, just waiting to be gathered up!

Did you know that the Virgin Mary is also mentioned in the book of Galatians?

“But when the fulness of time was come, God sent His Son, made of a woman, made under the law: That He might redeem them who were under the law: that we might receive the adoption of sons.”—*Galatians 4:4-5*.

This Son is the son of the Blessed Virgin Mary—whom she pointed to—declaring that the people should obey all that He said.

Did you know that the Virgin told the people that they must obey Christ? We read about this event in the second chapter of St. John.

“And the third day, there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee: and the mother of Jesus was there.

“And Jesus also was invited, and His disciples, to the marriage.”—*St. John 2:1-2*.

Some people say that Jesus is opposed to marriage, and the holiest people on earth are those who never marry. Yet Jesus went to a wedding, at the beginning of His ministry, and performed His first miracle there.

Marriage was given to mankind by the God of heaven. When a man and woman who have dedicated their lives to God, to serve and obey Him, are wedded—they start a home which is a little heaven on earth. The children which go forth from that home are a blessing to mankind. Marriage, when properly entered into, is of God.

“I am not ashamed of the gospel. For it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.”

— *Romans 1:16*

“You, when you were dead in your offences, and sins . . . God, who is rich in mercy . . . even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together in Christ (by whose grace you are saved) and hath raised us up together, and hath made us sit together in heavenly places, through Christ Jesus.”

— *Ephesians 2:1, 4-6*

“Watch ye therefore . . . lest coming on a sudden, He find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch.”

— *Mark 13:35-37*

“And the Lord God said: It is not good for man to be alone: let Us make him a help like unto himself . . . And the Lord God . . . brought her [Eve] to Adam . . . Wherefore a man shall leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they shall be two in one flesh.”—*Genesis 2:18, 22, 24.*

There are those who say that marriage does not have the honor which God placed upon it. They declare that the holiest people are those who never marry! They forbid marriage. But this teaching is unscriptural. Here is what the Apostle Paul says:

“Now the Spirit manifestly saith that, in the last times, some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to spirits of error, and doctrines of devils, speaking lies in hypocrisy, and having their conscience seared, forbidding to marry.”—*1 Timothy 4:1-3.*

St. Peter was married and, to the best of our knowledge, so were all the other Apostles. They were the first ministers of the church: and the ministers, in later centuries, would follow their example.

It is God’s plan that a man be married. It is normal and good.

“Let every man have his own wife.”—*1 Corinthians 7:2.*

But should ministers in the church be married? What does the Bible say?

Three of the Apostle Paul’s letters were written to young pastors, and are filled with ministerial counsel. Three times St. Paul mentioned that church officers (deacons, elders, pastors, etc.) should be married.

First, St. Paul said that deacons should be married:

“Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife: who rule well their children, and their own houses.”—*1 Timothy 3:12.*

Second, St. Paul said that bishops in the church should be married:

“It behoveth therefore a bishop to be blameless, the

husband of one wife.”—*1 Timothy 3:2*.

Third, St. Paul said that all the priests should be married. He also said they should not drink fermented wine:

“I left thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and shouldest ordain priests in every city, as I also appointed thee:

“If any be without crime, the husband of one wife, having faithful children, not accused of riot, or unruly.

“For a bishop must be without crime, as the steward of God: not proud, not subject to anger, not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre:

“But given to hospitality, gentle, sober, just, holy, continent.

“Embracing that faithful word which is according to doctrine, that he may be able to exhort in sound doctrine, and to convince the gainsayers.”—*Titus 1:5-9*.

“You shall seek Me, and shall find Me: when you shall seek Me with all your heart.”

— *Jeremias 29:13*

“The same is Lord over all, rich unto all that call upon Him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved.”

— *Romans 10:12-13*

“When thou shalt seek there the Lord thy God, thou shalt find Him: yet so, if thou seek Him with all thy heart, and all the affliction of thy soul.”

— *Deuteronomy 4:29*

“Thy mercy will follow me all the days of my life. And that I may dwell in the house of the Lord unto the length of days.”

— *Psalms 22:6 [Psalm 23:6]*

It is God's plan that a minister be married, so that he is not tempted when he is counseling his parishioners. We read in the newspapers of the scandals which Catholic priests and Protestant ministers are led into, when they are not married. Indeed, without marriage, the moral fabric of civilization tends to break down!

But, just now, let us return to the marriage at Cana. When Jesus went there, He took His disciples so they could see how important the institution of marriage was in His estimation. He did not want people to later say that He was opposed to marriage.

When they arrived for the wedding, Mary was already there. She was so happy to see her Son again.

But then a problem developed. Normally, the family of the bridegroom would provide enough grape juice (called "wine" in this passage) to last throughout the entire marriage feast. But the supply had run out.

"And the wine failing, the mother of Jesus saith to Him: They have no wine."—*St. John 2:3*.

Was this wine fermented or unfermented? There is no doubt that Jesus would not have attended this gathering—if it had been a drunken feast! Neither would His mother, Mary! Can you imagine Mary at a liquor party? There were no alcoholic beverages at this happy event.

It was Christ who, in the Old Testament, condemned the use of alcoholic drinks.

"Wine is a luxurious thing and drunkenness riotous: whosoever is delighted therewith shall not be wise."—*Proverbs 20:1*.

Here is how another Church-approved translation puts it:

"Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler; and whoever is led astray by it is not wise."—*Proverbs 20:1, R.S.V.*

Drunkenness is terrible, and is classed with other terrible sins:

"Fornication, uncleanness, immodesty, luxury, idola-

try, witchcrafts . . . envies, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like. Of the which I foretell you, as I have foretold to you, that they who do such things shall not obtain the kingdom of God.”—*Galatians 5:19-21*.

No, no! neither Jesus nor His good mother, Mary, went to a drunken party!

“Be not in the feasts of great drinkers, nor in their revellings, who contribute flesh to eat: Because they that give themselves to drinking, and that club together shall be consumed.”—*Proverbs 23:20-21*.

“Who hath woe? Whose father hath woe? Who hath contentions? Who falls into pits? Who hath wounds without cause? Who hath redness of eyes? —Surely they that pass their time in wine, and study to drink off their cups.

“Godliness is profitable to all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.”

— *1 Timothy 4:8*

“In every nation, He that feareth Him and worketh justice, is acceptable to Him.”

— *Acts 10:35*

“Then they that feared the Lord spoke every one with his neighbor: and the Lord gave ear, and heard it: and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that fear the Lord, and think on His name. And they shall be My special possession, saith the Lord of hosts, in the day that I do judgment: and I will spare them, as a man spareth his son that serveth him.”

— *Malachias 3:16-17*

“Look not upon wine . . . It goeth in pleasantly, but, in the end it will bite like a snake, and will spread abroad poison like a basilisk [another type of serpent].”—*Proverbs 23:29-32*.

The Greek word, translated “wine” in St. John 2, is *oinos*. It means unfermented grape juice.

So Mary, the mother of Jesus went to Him and told Him that the supply of grape juice was exhausted.

“And the wine failing, the mother of Jesus saith to Him: They have no wine.”—*St. John 2:3*.

The Virgin Mary had implicit faith in her Son. She knew that she, herself, could do nothing to solve the problem,—but that Jesus had all power to do whatever was needed.

So it is today! Only Jesus can help us! No one else can, not even His precious mother. Christ alone can deliver, Christ alone can redeem our souls. Christ alone can provide for our great need. He alone can intercede for us in heaven today. He alone can answer our prayers.

In response to what Mary said, Jesus said something, which to us, seems unusual:

“And Jesus saith to her: Woman, what is that to Me and to thee? My hour is not yet come.”—*St. John 2:4*.

“And Jesus said to her, O woman, what have you to do with Me? My hour has not yet come.”—*John 2:4, R.S.V.*

If you could read this in the original Greek, you would find that it reads just like the above; yet was not an unkind remark. In the custom of that time, Jesus was addressing His mother very courteously.

Yet He was telling her that He was now an adult, about to start on His mission to save mankind, and that He was no longer her child, to be directed and told what to do. Remember this. Jesus was grown-up when He said that to Mary. *He is still grown up!* His work of redeeming mankind, begun back then, continues today.

It was important that Jesus explain this to His mother. Mary needed to understand that she was not in charge of

Christ, and no longer—forever—able to get Him to do anything special for her, that He would not do for any of His other followers.

Then Mary turned to the attendants at the wedding feast, and she made this extremely significant statement:

“Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye.”—*St. John 2:5*.

Here is how another version, approved by Rome, translates it:

“Do whatever He tells you.”—*John 2:5, R.S.V.*

Thirty years had passed since Christ was a new-born child. He was now beginning His ministry, and it would lead to His death on Calvary—and to His resurrection and ascension to heaven to begin His ministry as our great High Priest.

In view of all that was ahead, what did Mary say to the

“Trust in the Lord, and do good, and dwell in the land, and thou shalt be fed with its riches. Delight in the Lord, and He will give thee the requests of thy heart.”

— *Psalm 36:3 [37:3]*

“But the mercy of the Lord is from eternity and unto eternity upon them that fear Him. And His justice unto children’s children, to such as keep His covenant, and are mindful of His commandments to do them.”

— *Psalm 102:17-18 [Psalm 103:17-18]*

“In every nation, he that feareth Him and worketh justice, is acceptable to Him.”

— *Acts 10:35*

“Salvation is of the Lord, and Thy blessing is upon Thy people.”

— *Psalm 3:9*

people?

She said, “*Do whatever He tells you!*” That is what she said to them. That is what she would say to us today.

“Do whatever He tells you!”

Did you know that these were the last words of Mary, recorded in Holy Scripture? That makes them important words for us, today. Let us remember them:

“Do whatever He tells you!”

The rest of the story is well-known. You will find the entire story in St. John 2:1-11. Christ turned fresh water into fresh grape juice.

Yet it only happened because the servants obeyed. Good things can only happen in our lives today because we, too, obey our Saviour.

If we want our hearts changed by a miracle of Christ, we need to follow all that Jesus says in His Written Word.

We do not honor Jesus when we do not obey Him.

“And it came to pass, as He spoke these things, a certain woman from the crowd, lifting up her voice, said to Him: Blessed is the womb that bore Thee, and the paps that gave Thee suck!

“But He said: Yea rather, blessed are they who hear the Word of God, and keep it!”—*St. Luke 11:27-28.*

Mary recognized the fact that Christ could work miracles for the people, and that she could not. It was because she knew He could, that she directed the people to go to Him for help.

Just as Mary did, we today should direct people to go to Christ for spiritual help and healing of soul. Only the Creator can provide what we need. Jesus is God; Mary was only His earthly mother. Christ is her Saviour, just as He is ours.

If you want help, do as Mary said: Go to Jesus and do what He says. It is found in the Bible.

All the information we find in Holy Scripture was given to us by Christ. That is where you will find His instructions. None of it will do us any good unless we obey it. The last words of Mary are for us today: “Do what He tells you!”

- PART TWO -

**BASIC STEPS
TO
OUR SAVIOUR**

FOR THE BLESSED SEEKERS
OF THE INHERITANCE
OF THE HOLY ONES OF OLD

BASIC STEPS TO OUR SAVIOUR

CHAPTER ONE HOW CAN I COME TO OUR SAVIOUR?

Nature and revelation alike testify of God's love. It is transgression of God's law - the law of love - that has brought woe and death. Yet even amid the suffering that results from sin, God's love is revealed. "God is love" is written upon every opening bud, upon every spire of springing grass.

Jesus came to live among men to reveal the infinite love of God. Love, mercy, and compassion were revealed in every act of His life; His heart went out in tender sympathy to the children of men. He took man's nature, that He might reach man's wants. The poorest and humblest were not afraid to approach Him. Such is the character of Christ as revealed in His life. This is the character of God.

It was to redeem us that Jesus lived and suffered and died. He became a "Man of Sorrows," that we might be

All Scripture passages quoted in this chapter have received the *Nihil obstat* and *Imprimatur*. When not otherwise stated, quotations are from the Rheims-Douai.

made partakers of everlasting joy. But this great sacrifice was not made in order to create in the Father's heart a love for man, not to make Him willing to save. No, no! "For God so loved the world, as to give His only begotten Son; that whosoever believeth Him, may not perish, but may have life everlasting." St. John 3:16. The Father loves us, not because of the great propitiation, but He provided the propitiation because He loves us. None but the Son of God could accomplish our redemption.

What a value this places upon man! Through transgression the sons of man become subjects of Satan. Through faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ the sons of Adam may become the sons of God. The matchless love of God for a world that did not love Him! The thought has a subduing power upon the soul and brings the mind into captivity to the will of God.

Man was originally endowed with noble powers and a well-balanced mind. He was perfect in his being, and in harmony with God. His thoughts were pure, his aims holy. But through disobedience, his powers were perverted, and selfishness took the place of love. His nature became so weakened through transgression that it was impossible for him, in his own strength, to resist the power of evil.

It is impossible for us, of ourselves, to escape from the pit of sin in which we are sunken. Our hearts are evil, and we cannot change them. There must be a power working from within, a new life from above, before men can be changed from sin to holiness. That power is Christ. His grace alone can quicken the lifeless faculties of the soul, and attract it to God, to holiness. To all, there is but one answer, "Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him who taketh away the sin of the world." John 1:29. Let us avail ourselves of the means provided for us that we may be transformed into His likeness, and be restored to fellowship with the ministering angels, to harmony and communion with the Father and the Son.

How shall a man be just with God? How shall the sinner be made righteous? It is only through Christ that we

can be brought into harmony with God, with holiness; but how are we to come to Christ?

Repentance includes sorrow for sin and a turning away from it. We shall not renounce sin unless we see its sinfulness; until we turn away from it in heart, there will be no real change in the life.

But when the heart yields to the influence of the Spirit of God, the conscience will be quickened, and the sinner will discern something of the depth and sacredness of God's holy law, the foundation of His government in heaven and on earth. Conviction takes hold upon the mind and heart.

The prayer of David, after his fall, illustrates the nature of true sorrow for sin. His repentance was sincere and deep. There was no effort to palliate his guilt; no desire to escape the judgment threatened inspired his prayer. David saw the enormity of his transgression; he saw the defilement of his soul; he loathed his sin. It was not for pardon only that he prayed, but for purity of heart. He longed for the joy of holiness, to be restored to harmony and communion with God. A repentance such as this is beyond the reach of our own power to accomplish; it is obtained only from Christ.

Christ is ready to set us free from sin, but He does not force the will. If we refuse, what more can He do? Study God's Word prayerfully. As you see the enormity of sin, as you see yourself as you really are, do not give up in despair. It was sinners that Christ Jesus came to save. When Satan comes to tell you that you are a great sinner, look to your Redeemer and talk of His merits. Acknowledge your sin, but tell the enemy that "Christ came into this world to save sinners" and that you may be saved (1 Timothy 1:15).

"He that hideth his sins, shall not prosper: but he that shall confess, and forsake them, shall obtain mercy." Proverbs 28:13. The conditions of obtaining the mercy of God are simple and just and reasonable. Confess your sins to God, who only can forgive them, and your faults to one another. Those who have not humbled their souls before God, in acknowledging their guilt, have not yet fulfilled the

first step of acceptance. We must be willing to humble our hearts and comply with the conditions of the Word of truth. The confession that is the outpouring of the inmost soul finds its way to the God of infinite pity. True confession is always of a specific character, and acknowledges particular sins. All confession should be definite and to the point. It is written, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just, to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all iniquity." 1 St. John 1:9.

God's promise is, "You shall seek Me, and shall find Me, when you shall seek Me with all your heart." Jeremias 29:13. The whole heart must be yielded, or the change can never be wrought in us by which we are to be restored to His likeness.

The warfare against self is the greatest battle that was ever fought. The yielding of self, surrendering all to the will of God, requires a struggle; but the soul must submit to God before it can be renewed in holiness.

In giving ourselves to God, we must necessarily give up all that would separate us from Him. There are those who profess to serve God while they rely upon their own efforts to obey His law, to form a right character and secure salvation. Their hearts are not moved by any deep sense of the love of Christ, but they seek to perform the duties of the Christian life as that which God requires of them in order to gain heaven. Such religion is worthless.

When Christ dwells in the heart, the soul will be so filled with His love, with the joy of communion with Him, that it will cleave to Him; and in the contemplation of Him, self will be forgotten. Love to Christ will be the spring of action. Such do not ask for the lowest standard, but aim at perfect conformity to the will of their Redeemer.

Do you feel that it is too great a sacrifice to yield all to Christ? Ask yourself the question, "What has Christ given for me?" The Son of God gave all - life and love and suffering - for our redemption. And can it be that we, the unworthy objects of so great love, will withhold our hearts from Him? What do we give up, when we give all? A sin-

polluted heart, for Jesus to purify, to cleanse by His own blood, and to save by His matchless love. And yet men think it hard to give up all! God does not require us to give up anything that it is for our best interest to retain. In all that He does, He has the well-being of His children in view.

Many are inquiring, “*How* am I to make the surrender of myself to God?” You desire to give yourself to Him, but you are weak in moral power, in slavery to doubt, and controlled by the habits of your life of sin. Your promises and resolutions are like ropes of sand. You cannot control your thoughts, your impulses, your affections. The knowledge of your broken promises and forfeited pledges weakens your confidence in your own sincerity, and causes you to feel that God cannot accept you; but you need not despair.

What you need to understand is the true force of the will. This is the governing power in the nature of man, the power of decision, or of choice. Everything depends on the right action of the will. The power of choice God has given to men; it is theirs to exercise. You cannot change your heart, you cannot of yourself give to God its affections; but you can *choose* to serve Him. You can give Him your will; He will then work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure. Thus your whole nature will be brought under the control of the Spirit of Christ; your affections will be centered upon Him, your thoughts will be in harmony with Him.

Desires for goodness and holiness are right as far as they go; but if you stop here, they will avail nothing. Many will be lost while hoping and desiring to be Christians. They do not come to the point of yielding the will to God. They do not *now choose* to be Christians.

Through the right exercise of the will, an entire change may be made in your life. You will have strength from above to hold you steadfast, and thus through constant surrender to God you will be enabled to live the new life, even the life of faith.

As your conscience has been quickened by the Holy Spirit, you have seen something of the evil of sin, of its

power, its guilt, its woe; and you look upon it with abhorrence. It is peace that you need. You have confessed your sins, and in heart put them away. You have resolved to give yourself to God. Now go to Him, and ask that He will wash away your sins and give you a new heart.

Then believe that He does this *because He has promised*. The gift which God promises us, we must believe we do receive, and it is ours. You are a sinner. You cannot atone for your past sins; you cannot change your heart and make yourself holy. But God promises to do all this for you through Christ. You *believe* that promise. You confess your sins and give yourself to God. You will to serve Him. Just as surely as you do this, God will fulfill His Word to you. If you believe the promise, - God supplies the fact. Do not wait to *feel* that you are made whole, but say, "I believe it; it is so, not because I feel it, but because God promised."

CHAPTER TWO

HOW CAN I REMAIN TRUE TO OUR SAVIOUR?

Jesus says, "Therefore I say unto you, all things, whatsoever you ask when ye pray, believe that you shall receive; and they shall come unto Thee." Mark 11:24. There is a condition to this promise - that we pray according to the will of God. But it is the will of God to cleanse us from sin, to make us His children, and to enable us to live a holy life. So we may ask for these blessings, and believe that we receive them, and thank God that we *have* received them.

Henceforth you are not your own; you are bought with a price. Through this simple act of believing God, the Holy Spirit has begotten a new life in your heart. You are a child born into the family of God, and He loves you as He loves His Son.

Now that you have given yourself to Jesus, do not draw back, do not take yourself away from Him, but day by day say, "I am Christ's; I have given myself to Him," and ask Him to give you His Spirit and keep you by His grace. As it is by giving yourself to God, and believing Him, that you become His child, so you are to live in Him.

Here is where thousands fail; they do not believe that Jesus pardons them personally, individually. They do not take God at His Word. It is the privilege of all who comply with the conditions to know for themselves that pardon is freely extended for every sin. Put away the suspicion that God's promises are not meant for you. They are for every repentant transgressor.

Look up, you that are doubting and trembling; for Jesus lives to make intercession for us. Thank God for the gift of His dear Son.

"If then any be in Christ a new creature, the old things are passed away, behold, all things are made new." 2 Corinthians 5:17.

A person may not be able to tell the exact time or place, or trace all the chain of circumstances in this process of conversion; but this does not prove him to be unconverted. A change will be seen in the character, the habits, the pursuits. The contrast will be clear and decided between what they have been and what they have become. Who has the heart? With whom are our thoughts? Of whom do we love to converse? Who has our warmest affections and our best energies? If we are Christ's, our thoughts are with Him. There is no evidence of genuine repentance unless it works reformation. The loveliness of the character of Christ will be seen in His followers. It was His delight to do the will of God.

There are two errors against which the children of God especially need to guard: The first is that of looking to their own works, trusting to anything they can do, to bring themselves into harmony with God. All that man can do without Christ is polluted with selfishness and sin. It is the grace of Christ alone, through faith, which can make us holy.

The opposite and no less dangerous error is that belief in Christ releases men from keeping the law of God; that since by faith alone we become partakers of the grace of Christ, our works have nothing to do with our redemption.

Obedience is the fruit of faith. Righteousness is defined by the standard of God's holy law, as expressed in the ten commandments (Exodus 20:3-20). That so-called faith in Christ, which professes to release men from the obligation of obedience to God is not faith, but presumption. The condition of eternal life is now just what it always has been - just what it was in paradise before the fall of our first parents - perfect obedience to the law of God, perfect righteousness. If eternal life were granted on any condition short of this, then the happiness of the whole universe would be imperiled. The way would be open for sin, with all its train of woe and misery, to be immortalized.

Christ changes the heart. He abides in your heart by faith. You are to maintain this connection with Christ by faith and the continual surrender of your will to Him; and so long as you do this, He will work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure.

The closer you come to Jesus, the more faulty you will appear in your own eyes; for your vision will be clearer. This is evidence that Satan's delusions are losing their power. No deep-seated love for Jesus can dwell in the heart that does not realize its own sinfulness. The soul that is transformed by the grace of Christ will admire His character. A view of our sinfulness drives us to Him who can pardon; and when the soul, realizing its helplessness, reaches out after Christ, He will reveal Himself in power. The more our sense of need drives us to Him and to the Word of God, the more exalted views we shall have of His character, and the more fully we shall reflect His image.

The change of heart by which we become children of God is in the Bible spoken of as birth. Again it is compared to the germination of the good seed sown by the husbandman. It is God who brings the bud to bloom and the flower to fruit. It is by His power that the seed develops.

As the flower turns to the sun, that the bright beams may aid in perfecting its beauty and symmetry, so should we turn to the Sun of Righteousness, that heaven's light may shine upon us, that our character may be developed into the likeness of Christ.

Do you ask, "How am I to abide in Christ?" In the same way as you received Him at first. "As therefore you have received Jesus Christ the Lord, walk ye in Him." Colossians 2:6. By faith you became Christ's, and by faith you are to grow up in Him - by giving and taking. You are to give all, - your heart, your will, your service - give yourself to Him to obey all His requirements; and you must take all - Christ, the fullness of all blessing, to abide in your heart, to be your strength, your righteousness, your everlasting helper - to give you power to obey.

Consecrate yourself to God in the morning; make this your very first work. Let your prayer be, "Take me, O Lord, as wholly Thine. I lay all my plans at Thy feet. Use me today in Thy service. Abide with me, and let all my work be wrought in Thee." This is a daily matter. Each morning consecrate yourself to God for that day. Surrender all your plans to Him, to be carried out or given up as His providence shall indicate. Thus day by day you may be giving your life into the hands of God, and thus your life will be molded more and more after the life of Christ.

A life in Christ is a life of restfulness. There may be no ecstasy of feeling, but there should be an abiding, peaceful trust. When the mind dwells upon self, it is turned away from Christ, the source of strength and life. Hence, it is Satan's constant effort to keep the attention diverted from the Saviour and thus prevent the union and communion of the soul with Christ.

When Christ took human nature upon Him, He bound humanity to Himself by a tie of love that can never be broken by any power, save the choice of man himself. Satan will constantly present allurements to induce us to break this tie - to choose to separate ourselves from Christ. But let us keep our eyes fixed upon Christ, and He will pre-

serve us. Looking unto Jesus, we are safe. Nothing can pluck us out of His hand. All that Christ was to the disciples, He desires to be to His children today.

Jesus prayed for us, and He asked that we might be one with Him, even as He is one with the Father. What a union is this! Thus, loving Him and abiding in Him, we shall "grow up in Him who is the head, even Christ." Ephesians 4:15.

God is the source of life and light and joy to the universe. Wherever the life of God is in the hearts of men, it will flow out to others in love and blessing.

Our Saviour's joy was in the uplifting and redemption of fallen men. For this He counted not His life dear to Himself, but endured the cross, despising the shame. When the love of Christ is enshrined in the heart, like sweet fragrance it cannot be hidden. Love to Jesus will be manifested in a desire to work as He worked for the blessing and uplifting of humanity. It will lead to love, tenderness, and sympathy toward all the creatures of our heavenly Father's care. Those who are the partakers of the grace of Christ will be ready to make any sacrifice, that others for whom He died may share the heavenly gift. They will do all they can to make the world better for their stay in it. This spirit is the sure outgrowth of a soul truly converted. No sooner does one come to Christ than there is born in his heart a desire to make known to others what a precious friend he has found in Jesus. If we have tasted and seen that the Lord is good, we shall have something to tell. We shall seek to present to others the attractions of Christ and the unseen realities of the world to come. There will be an intensity of desire to follow in the path that Jesus trod.

And the effort to bless others will react in blessings upon ourselves. Those who thus become participants in labors of love are brought nearest to their Creator. The spirit of unselfish labor for others gives depth, stability, and Christlike loveliness to the character, and brings peace and happiness to its possessor. Strength comes by exercise. We need not go to heathen lands, or even leave the narrow

circle of the home, if it is there that our duty lies, in order to work for Christ. With a loving spirit we may perform life's humblest duties "as to the Lord." Colossians 3:23. If the love of God is in the heart, it will be manifested in the life. You are not to wait for great occasions or to expect extraordinary abilities before you go to work for God. The humblest and poorest of the disciples of Jesus can be a blessing to others.

Many are the ways in which God is seeking to make Himself known to us and bring us into communion with Him. If we will but listen, Nature speaks to our senses without ceasing. God's created works will teach us precious lessons of obedience and trust.

No tears are shed that God does not notice. There is no smile that He does not mark. If we would but fully believe this, all undue anxieties would be dismissed. Our lives would not be so filled with disappointment as now; for everything, whether great or small, would be left in the hands of God.

God speaks to us through His providential works and through the influence of His Spirit upon the heart. God speaks to us in His Word. Here we have in clearer lines the revelation of His character, of His dealings with men, and the great work of redemption. Fill the whole heart with the words of God. They are the living water, quenching your burning thirst. They are the living bread from heaven.

The theme of redemption is one that the angels desire to look into; it will be the science and the song of the redeemed throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity. Is it not worthy of careful thought and study now? As we meditate upon the Saviour, there will be a hungering and thirsting of soul to become like Him whom we adore.

The Bible was written for the common people. The great truths necessary for salvation are made as clear as noonday. There is nothing more calculated to strengthen the intellect than the study of the Scriptures. But there is little benefit derived from a hasty reading of the Bible. One passage studied, until its significance is clear to the mind

and its relation to the plan of salvation is evident, is of more value than the perusal of many chapters with no definite purpose in view and no positive instruction gained.

Keep your Bible with you. As you have opportunity, read it; fix the texts in your memory.

We cannot obtain wisdom without earnest attention and prayerful study. Never should the Bible be studied without prayer. Before opening its pages, we should ask for the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, and it will be given. Angels from the world of light will be with those who in humility of heart seek for divine guidance. How must God esteem the human race, since He gave His Son to die for them and appoints His Holy Spirit to be man's teacher and continual guide!

Through nature and revelation, through His providence, and by the influence of His Spirit, God speaks to us. But these are not enough; we need also to pour out our hearts to Him. In order to commune with God, we must have something to say to Him concerning our actual life.

Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend. Not that it is necessary in order to make known to God what we are, but in order to enable us to receive Him. Prayer does not bring God down to us, but brings us up to Him.

Our heavenly Father waits to bestow upon us the fullness of His blessing. What a wonder it is that we pray so little! God is ready and willing to hear the sincere prayer of the humblest of His children. What can the angels of heaven think of poor helpless human beings, who are subject to temptation, when God's heart of infinite love yearns toward them, ready to give them more than they can ask or think, and yet they pray so little and have so little faith?

The darkness of the evil one encloses those who neglect to pray. The whispered temptations of the enemy entice them to sin; and it is all because they do not make use of prayer. Yet prayer is the key in the hand of faith to unlock heaven's storehouse, where are treasured the boundless resources of Omnipotence.

There are certain conditions upon which we may expect that God will hear and answer our prayers:

One is that we feel our need of help from Him. If we regard iniquity in our hearts, if we cling to any known sin, the Lord will not hear us; but the prayer of the penitent, contrite soul is always accepted. When all known wrongs are righted, we may believe that God will answer our petitions.

Another element of prevailing prayer is faith. When our prayers seem not to be answered, we are to cling to the promise; for the time of answering will surely come, and we shall receive the blessing we need most. But to claim that prayer will always be answered in the very way and for the particular thing that we desire is presumption.

When we come to God in prayer, we should have a spirit of love and forgiveness in our own hearts.

Perseverance in prayer has been made a condition of receiving. We must pray always if we would grow in faith and experience.

We should pray in the family circle, and above all we must not neglect secret prayer, for this is the life of the soul. Family or public prayer alone is not sufficient. Secret prayer is to be heard only by the prayer-hearing God.

There is no time or place in which it is inappropriate to offer up a petition to God. In the crowds of the street, in the midst of a business engagement, we may send up a petition to God and plead for divine guidance.

Let the soul be drawn out and upward, that God may grant us a breath of the heavenly atmosphere. We may keep so near to God that in every unexpected trial our thoughts will turn to Him as naturally as the flower turns to the sun. Keep your wants, your joys, your sorrows, your cares, and your fears before God. You cannot burden Him; you cannot weary Him. He is not indifferent to the wants of His children.

We sustain a loss when we neglect the privilege of associating together to strengthen and encourage one another in the service of God. If Christians would associate

together, speaking to each other of the love of God and the precious truths of redemption, their own hearts would be refreshed and they would refresh one another.

We must gather about the cross. Christ and Him crucified should be the theme of contemplation, of conversation, and of our most joyful emotion. We should keep in our thoughts every blessing we receive from God, and when we realize His great love we should be willing to trust everything to the hand that was nailed to the cross for us.

The soul may ascend nearer heaven on the wings of praise. As we express our gratitude, we are approximating to the worship of the heavenly hosts.

Many are at times troubled with the suggestions of skepticism. God never asks us to believe, without giving sufficient evidence upon which to base our faith. Disguise it as they may, the real cause of doubt and skepticism, in most cases, is the love of sin. We must have a sincere desire to know the truth and a willingness of heart to obey it.

This chapter was adapted from the book, *Steps to Christ*.

“All you that thirst, come to the waters:
and you that have no money make haste,
buy, and eat: come ye, buy wine and milk
without money, and without price.”

— *Isaias 55:1*

“A faithful saying, and worthy of all
acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into
the world to save sinners.”

— *1 Timothy 1:15*

“In all thy ways think on Him, and He shall
direct thy steps.”

— *Proverbs 3:6*

- PART THREE -

**THE PROPHECY
OF ST. SIMEON
TO THE
BLESSED VIRGIN**

INSTRUCTION FROM
THE ANCIENT WRITINGS
TO THE VIRGIN

THE PROPHECY OF ST. SIMEON TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN

St. Simeon, a prophet of God, entered the Temple in Jerusalem as the infant Jesus was being dedicated.

Under the inspiration of God, St. Simeon took the infant Christ in His arms and uttered a remarkable prediction, part of which applied to the blessed Virgin Mary. Here is the entire passage, as quoted in the Rheims-Douai:

“And behold there was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was in him.

“And he had received an answer from the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Christ of the Lord.

“And he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when his parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the law,

“He also took him into his arms, and blessed God, and said:

All Scripture quotations in this chapter are from the Rheims-Douai, unless otherwise cited.

“Now Thou dost dismiss Thy servant, O Lord, according to Thy word in peace;

“Because my eyes have seen Thy salvation,

“Which thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples:

“A light to the revelation of the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel.

“And his father and mother were wondering at those things which were spoken concerning him.

“And Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother: Behold this Child is set for the fall, and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted;

“And thy own soul a sword shall pierce, that, out of many hearts, thoughts may be revealed.”—*St. Luke 2:25-35* (Rheims-Douai).

For the sake of greater clarity, we will repeat the actual prophecy in another Church-approved version:

“And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary His mother, “Behold, this Child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is spoken against.

“(and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed.”—*St. Luke 2:34-35* (*Revised Standard Version*).

Let us consider this important prophecy more closely. Scripture quotations in the following comment will be from the Church-approved Revised Standard:

Spiritual things are spiritually discerned. In the temple, the Son of God was dedicated to the work He had come to do. The priest looked upon Him as he would upon any other child. But though he neither saw nor felt anything unusual, God’s act in giving His Son to the world was acknowledged. This occasion did not pass without some recognition of Christ.

“Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name

was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ."—*St. Luke 22:25-26.*

As Simeon enters the Temple, he sees a family presenting their first-born son before the priest. Their appearance bespeaks poverty; but Simeon understands the warnings of the Spirit, and he is deeply impressed that the infant being presented to the Lord is the Consolation of Israel, the One he has longed to see. To the astonished priest, Simeon appears like a man enraptured. The child has been returned to Mary, and he takes it in his arms and presents it to God, while a joy that he has never before felt enters his soul. As he lifts the infant Saviour toward heaven, he says:

"Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy Word; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation which Thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to Thy people Israel."—*St. Luke 2:29-32.*

The spirit of prophecy was upon this man of God; and, while Joseph and Mary stood by, wondering at his words, he blessed them, and said unto Mary:

"Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is spoken against (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed."—*St. Luke 2:33-34.*

Anna also, a prophetess, came in and confirmed Simeon's testimony concerning Christ. As Simeon spoke, her face lighted up with the glory of God, and she poured out her heartfelt thanks that she had been permitted to behold Christ the Lord.

These humble worshipers had not studied the prophecies in vain. But those who held positions as rulers and priests in Israel, though they too had before them the precious utterances of prophecy, were not walking in the way of the Lord and their eyes were not open to behold the

Light of life.

So it is still. Events upon which the attention of all heaven is centered are undiscerned; their very occurrence is unnoticed by religious leaders and worshipers in the house of God. Men acknowledge Christ in history while they turn away from the living Christ. Christ in His Word calling to self-sacrifice, in the poor and suffering who plead for relief, in the righteous cause that involves poverty and toil and reproach, is not more readily received today than He was eighteen hundred years ago.

Mary pondered the broad and far-reaching prophecy of Simeon. As she looked upon the child in her arms and recalled the words spoken by the shepherds of Bethlehem, she was full of grateful joy and bright hope. Simeon's words called to her mind the prophetic utterances of Isaias:

“There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of His roots. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. And His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord . . . Righteousness shall be the girdle of His waist. . . The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined . . . For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder, and His name will be called “Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”—*Isaias 11:1-5; 9:2-6.*

Yet Mary did not understand Christ's mission. Simeon had prophesied of Him as a light to lighten the Gentiles, as well as a glory to Israel. Thus the angels had announced the Saviour's birth as tidings of joy to all peoples. God was seeking to correct the narrow Jewish conception of the Messiah's work. He desired men to behold Him, not merely as the deliverer of Israel, but as the Redeemer of the world. Many years must pass before even the mother of Jesus would understand His mission.

Mary looked forward to the Messiah's reign on David's throne, but she saw not the baptism of suffering by which it must be won. Through Simeon it is revealed that the Messiah is to have no unobstructed passage through the world.

The words are then spoken to Mary,

“A sword will pierce through your own soul also.”—

St. Luke 2:35.

In those words, God in His tender mercy gives to the mother of Jesus an intimation of the anguish that already for His sake she had begun to bear.

“Behold,” Simeon had said, “this Child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is spoken against.”—*St. Luke 2:34.*

We must fall upon the Rock and be broken before we can be uplifted in Christ. Self must be dethroned, pride must be humbled, if we would know the glory of the spiritual kingdom. The Jews would not accept the honor that is reached through humiliation. Therefore they would not receive their Redeemer. He was a sign that was spoken against.

“That thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed.”—*St. Luke 2:35.*

In the light of the Saviour's life, the hearts of all, even from the Creator to the prince of darkness, are revealed. Satan has represented God as selfish and oppressive, as claiming all and giving nothing, as requiring the service of His creatures for His own glory and making no sacrifice for their good. But the gift of Christ reveals the Father's heart. It testifies that the thoughts of God toward us are “thoughts of peace, and not of affliction.” *Jeremias 29:11.*

It declares that while God's hatred of sin is as strong as death, His love for the sinner is stronger than death. Having undertaken our redemption, He will spare nothing, however dear, which is necessary to the completion of His work. No truth essential to our salvation is withheld, no miracle of mercy is neglected, no divine agency is left un-employed. Favor is heaped upon favor, gift upon gift.

The whole treasury of heaven is open to those He seeks

to save. Having collected the riches of the universe, and laid open the resources of infinite power, He gives them all into the hands of Christ, and says, All these are for man. Use these gifts to convince him that there is no love greater than Mine in earth or heaven. His greatest happiness will be found in loving Me.

At the cross of Calvary, love and selfishness stood face to face. Here was their crowning manifestation. Christ had lived only to comfort and bless; and, in putting Him to death, Satan manifested the malignity of his hatred against God. He made it evident that the real purpose of his rebellion was to dethrone God and to destroy Him through whom the love of God was shown.

By the life and the death of Christ, the thoughts of men also are brought to view. From the manger to the cross, the life of Jesus was a call to self-surrender and to fellowship in suffering. It unveiled the purposes of men. Jesus came with the truth of heaven, and all who were listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit were drawn to Him. The worshipers of self belonged to Satan's kingdom. In their attitude toward Christ, all would show on which side they stood. And thus everyone passes judgment on himself (*adapted from Desire of Ages, 55-57*).

“Take up My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, because I am meek, and humble in heart: and you shall find rest to your souls.”

— *St. Matthew 11:29*

“Being confident of this very thing, that He, who hath begun a good work in you, will perfect it unto the day of Christ Jesus.”

— *Philippians 1:6*

- PART FOUR -

**THE LETTERS
OF ST. PETER
TO THE CHURCH**

THE ONLY WRITINGS
OF ST. PETER
WHICH EXIST

THE LETTERS OF ST. PETER

St. Peter, acknowledged by the faithful as one of the most important leaders of the early Church, sent by special courier two very important messages to the churches. These letters were sent not only to the leaders but also to the members. They contain valuable counsel for us today. After all these centuries, this is all that Peter wrote that we have today; nothing else!

Should we listen to and heed the words of St. Peter? Yes, we should.

INTRODUCTION

St. Peter was born Simon, the son of Jona (also called Jonah). His home was in Bethsaida, a town on the Sea of Galilee. The Apostle Andrew was St. Peter's brother. It is believed that he may have been living closer to Capernaum when Jesus called him to the ministry.

In later years, it is thought that St. Peter went to Rome where, at his own request, he was crucified with his head downward. It is likely that he was killed, between A.D. 64 and 68, during the persecutions of the Emperor Nero

During his ministry, St. Peter wrote two important letters to the the people of God. The Church considers these documents of extreme importance, and you will want to

read them carefully. They are filled with deep spiritual insights into the love of God, the sacrifice of our Lord, and how to go to our Lord for forgiveness of sin, how to trust and obey His Word.

Commenting on the two letters of St. Peter, we are told:

“They assuredly contain the doctrine of St. Peter . . . Their content gives a doctrinal background to our supernatural knowledge of Christ and the promises He gave.”—*The Catholic Encyclopedia*, p. 474.

Here are these two very important letters, penned by St. Peter himself:

They are the only written materials by St. Peter which exist, so they are considered extremely important.

CHAPTER ONE

OF THE FIRST LETTER OF ST. PETER

1. Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers dispersed through Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect,

2. According to the foreknowledge of God the Father, unto the sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you and peace be multiplied.

3. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy hath regenerated us unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

4. Unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that can not fade, reserved in heaven for you,

5. Who, by the power of God, are kept by faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.

6. Wherein you shall greatly rejoice, if now you must be for a little time made sorrowful in divers temptation:

7. That the trial of your faith (much more precious

than gold which is tried by the fire) may be found unto praise and glory and honour at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

8. Whom having not seen, you love: in whom also now, though you see Him not, you believe: and believing shall rejoice with joy unspeakable and glorified;

9. Recieving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.

10. Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and diligently searched, who prophesied of the grace to come in you.

11. Searching what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ in them did signify: when it foretold those sufferings that are in Christ, and the glories that should follow.

12. To whom it was revealed, that not to themselves, but to you they ministered those things which are now declared to you by them that have preached the gospel to you, the Holy Ghost being sent down from heaven, on whom the angels desire to look.

13. Wherefore having the loins of your mind girt up, being sober, trust perfectly in the grace which is offered you in the revelation of Jesus Christ,

14. As children of obedience, not fashioned according to the former desires of your ignorance:

15. But according to Him that hath called you, who is holy, be you also in all manner of conversation holy:

16. Because it is written: You shall be holy, for I am holy.

17. And if you invoke as Father Him who, without respect of persons, judgeth according to every one's work: converse in fear during the time of your sojourning here.

18. Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things as gold or silver, from your vain conversation of the tradition of your fathers:

19. But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb unspotted and undefiled,

20. Foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world, but manifested in the last times for you,

21. Who through Him are faithful in God, who raised

Him up from the dead, and hath given Him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God.

22. Purifying your souls in the obedience of charity, with a brotherly love, from a sincere heart love one another earnestly:

23. Being born again not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible, by the Word of God who liveth and remaineth for ever.

24. For all flesh is as grass: and all the glory thereof as the flower of grass. The grass is withered, and the flower thereof is fallen away.

25. But the Word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the Word which by the gospel has been preached unto you.

CHAPTER TWO

OF THE FIRST LETTER OF ST. PETER

1. Wherefore laying away all malice, and all guile, and dissimulations, and envies, and all detractions,

2. As newborn babes, desire the rational milk without guile, that thereby you may grow unto salvation:

3. If so be you have tasted that the Lord is sweet.

4. Unto whom coming, as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen and made honourable by God.

5. Be you also as living stones built up, a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

6. Wherefore it is said in the Scripture: Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious. And he that shall believe in Him, shall not be confounded.

7. To you therefore that believe, He is honour: but to them that believe not, the stone which the builders rejected, the same is made the head of the corner:

8. And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of scandal, to

them who stumble at the Word, neither do believe, whereunto also they are set.

9. But you are a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people: that you may declare His virtues, who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light:

10. Who in time past were not a people: but are now the people of God. Who had not obtained mercy; but now have obtained mercy.

11. Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, to refrain yourselves from carnal desires which war against the soul,

12. Having your conversation good among the Gentiles: that whereas they speak against you as evil doers, they may, by the good works, which they shall behold in you, glory God in the day of visitation.

13. Be ye subject therefore to every human creature for God's sake: whether it be to the king as excelling;

14. Or to governors as sent by Him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of the good.

15. For so is the will of God, that by doing well you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men:

16. As free, and not as making liberty a cloak for malice, but as the servants of God.

17. Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the King.

18. Servants, be subject to your master with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.

19. For this is thankworthy, if for conscience towards God, a man endure sorrows, suffering wrongfully.

20. For what glory is it, if committing sin, and being buffeted for it, you endure: But if doing well you suffer patiently; this is praiseworthy before God.

21. For unto this are you called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow His steps.

22. Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth.

23. Who, when He was reviled, did not revile: when He suffered, He threatened not: but delivered Himself to him that judged Him unjustly.

24. Who His own self bore our sins in His body upon the tree: that we, being dead to sins, should live to justice: by whose stripes you were healed.

25. For you were as sheep going astray; but you are now converted to the shepherd and bishop of your souls.

CHAPTER THREE

OF THE FIRST LETTER OF ST. PETER

1. In like manner also let wives be subject to their husbands: that if any believe not the Word, they may be won without the Word, by the conversation of the wives.

2. Considering your chaste conversation with fear.

3. Whose adorning let it not be the outward plaiting of the hair, or the wearing of gold, or the putting on of apparel:

4. But the hidden man of the heart in the incorruptibility of a quiet and a meek spirit, which is rich in the sight of God.

5. For after this manner heretofore the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection to their own husbands:

6. As Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughter you are, doing well, and not fearing any disturbance.

7. Ye husbands, likewise dwelling with them according to knowledge, giving honour to the female as to the weaker vessel, and as to the co-heirs of the grace of life: that your prayers be not hindered.

8. And in fine, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, being lovers of the brotherhood, merciful, modest, and humble.

9. Not rendering evil for evil, nor railing for railing, but

contrariwise, blessing: for unto this are you called, that you may inherit a blessing.

10. For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile.

11. Let him decline from evil, and do good: let him seek after peace and pursue it:

12. Because the eyes of the Lord are upon the just, and His ears unto their prayers: but the countenance of the Lord is upon them that do evil things.

13. And who is he that can hurt you, if you be zealous of good?

14. But if also you suffer any thing for justice' sake, blessed are ye. And be not afraid of their fear, and be not troubled.

15. But sanctify the Lord Christ in you hearts, being ready always to satisfy every one that asketh you a reason of the hope which is in you.

16. But with modesty and fear, having a good conscience: that whereas they speak evil of you, they may be ashamed who falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.

17. For it is better doing well (if such be the will of God) to suffer, than doing ill.

18. Because Christ also died once for our sins, the just, for the unjust: that He might offer us to God, being put to death indeed in the flesh, but enlivened in the spirit,

19. In which also coming He preached to those spirits that were in prison:

20. Which had been some time incredulous, when they waited for the patience of God in the days of Noe, when the ark was in building: wherein a few, that is eight souls, were saved by water.

21. Whereunto baptism being of the like form, now saveth you also: not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the examination of a good conscience towards God by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

22. Who is on the right hand of God, swallowing down

death, that we might be made heirs of life everlasting: being gone into heaven, the angels and powers and virtues being made subject to Him.

CHAPTER FOUR

OF THE FIRST LETTER OF ST. PETER

1. Christ therefore having suffered in the flesh, be you also armed with the same thought: for he that hath suffered in the flesh, hath ceased from sins.

2. That now, he may live the rest of his time in the flesh, not after the desires of men, but according to the will of God.

3. For the time past is sufficient to have fulfilled the will of the Gentiles for them who have walked in riotousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and unlawful worshipping of idols.

4. Wherein they think it strange, that you run not with them into the same confusion of riotousness, speaking evil of you.

5. Who shall render account to Him, who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

6. For, for this cause was the gospel preached also to the dead: that they might be judged indeed according to men, in the flesh; but may live according to God, in the Spirit.

7. But the end of all is at hand. Be prudent therefore, and watch in prayers.

8. But before all things have a constant mutual charity among yourselves: for charity covereth a multitude of sins.

9. Using hospitality one towards another, without murmuring,

10. As every man hath received grace, ministering the same one to another: as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

11. If any man speak, let him speak, as the words of

God. If any man minister, let him do it, as of the power, which God administereth: that in all things God may be honoured through Jesus Christ: to whom is glory and empire for ever and ever. Amen.

12. Dearly beloved, think not strange the burning heat which is to try you, as if some new thing happened to you;

13. But if you partake of the sufferings of Christ, rejoice that when His glory shall be revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.

14. If you be reproached for the name of Christ, you shall be blessed: for that which is of the honour, glory, and power of God, and that which His Spirit, resteth upon you.

15. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or a railer, or a coveter of other men's things.

16. But if as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.

17. For the time is, that judgment should begin at the house of God. And if first at us, what shall be the end of them that believe not the gospel of God?

18. And if the just man shall scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?

19. Wherefore let them also that suffer according to the will of God, commend their souls in good deeds to the faithful Creator.

CHAPTER FIVE

OF THE FIRST LETTER OF ST. PETER

1. The ancients therefore that are among you, I beseech, who am myself also an ancient, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ: as also a partaker of that glory which is to be revealed in time to come.

2. Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking care of it, not by constraint, but willingly, according to God: not for filthy lucre's sake, but voluntarily:

3. Neither as lording it over the clergy, but being made

a pattern of the flock from the heart.

4. And when the prince of pastors shall appear, you shall receive a never fading crown of glory.

5. In like manner, ye young men, be subject to the ancients. And do you all insinuate humility one to another, for God resisteth the proud, but to the humble He giveth grace.

6. Be you humbled therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in the time of visitation:

7. Casting all your care upon Him, for He hath care of you.

8. Be sober and watch: because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour.

9. Whom resist ye, strong in faith: knowing that the same affliction befalls your brethren who are in the world.

10. But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory in Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a little, will Himself perfect you, and confirm you, and establish you.

11. To Him be glory and empire for ever and ever. Amen.

12. By Sylvanus, a faithful brother unto you, as I think, I have written briefly: beseeching and testifying that this is the true grace of God, wherein you stand.

13. The church that is in Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you: for so doth my son Mark.

14. Salute one another with a holy kiss. Grace be to all you, who are in Christ Jesus. Amen.

CHAPTER ONE

OF THE SECOND LETTER OF ST. PETER

1. Simon Peter, servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained equal faith with us in the justice of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

2. Grace to you and peace be accomplished in the

knowledge of God and of Christ Jesus our Lord:

3. As all things of His divine power which appertain to life and godliness, are given us, through the knowledge of Him who hath called us by His own proper glory and virtue.

4. By whom He hath given us most great and precious promises: that by these you may be made partakers of the divine nature: flying the corruption of that concupiscence which is in the world.

5. And you, employing all care, minister in your faith, virtue; and in virtue, knowledge;

6. And in knowledge, abstinence; and in abstinence, patience; and in patience, godliness;

7. And in godliness, love of brotherhood; and in love of brotherhood, charity.

8. For if these things be with you and abound, they will make you to be neither empty nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

9. For he that hath not these things with him, is blind, and groping, having forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.

10. Wherefore, brethren, labour the more, that by good works you may make sure your calling and election. For doing these things, you shall not sin at any time.

11. For so an entrance shall be ministered to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

12. For which cause I will begin to put you always in remembrance of these things: though indeed you know them, and are confirmed in the present truth.

13. But I think it meet as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance.

14. Being assured that the laying away of this my tabernacle is at hand, according as our Lord Jesus Christ also hath signified to me.

15. And I will endeavour, that you frequently have after my decease, whereby you may keep a memory of these things.

16. For we have not by following artificial fables, made known to you the power, and presence of our Lord Jesus Christ; but we were eyewitnesses of His greatness.

17. For He received from God the Father, honour and glory: this voice coming down to Him from the excellent glory: This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him.

18. And this voice we heard brought from heaven, when we were with Him in the holy mount.

19. And we have the more firm prophetic Word: whereunto you do well to attend, as to a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:

20. Understanding this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is made by private interpretation.

21. For prophecy came not by the will of man at any time: but the holy men of God spoke, inspired by the Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER TWO

OF THE SECOND LETTER OF ST. PETER

1. But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there shall be among you lying teachers, who shall bring in sects of perdition, and deny the Lord who brought them: bringing upon themselves swift destruction.

2. And many shall follow their riotousnesses, through whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.

3. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you. Whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their perdition slumbereth not.

4. For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but delivered them, drawn down by infernal ropes to the lower hell, unto torments, to be reserved unto judgment:

5. And spared not the original world, but preserved

Noe, the eighth person, the preacher of justice, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly.

6. And reducing the cities of the Sodomites, and of the Gomorrhites, unto ashes, condemned them to be overthrown, making them an example to those that should after act wickedly.

7. And delivered just Lot, oppressed by the injustice and lewd conversation of the wicked.

8. For in sight and hearing he was just: dwelling among them, who from day to day vexed the just soul with unjust works.

9. The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly from temptation, but to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be tormented.

10. And especially them who walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government, audacious, self willed, they fear not to bring in sects, blaspheming.

11. Whereas angels who are greater in strength and power, bring not against themselves a railing judgment.

12. But these men, as irrational beasts, naturally tending to the snare and to destruction, blaspheming those things which they know not, shall perish in their corruption,

13. Receiving the reward of their injustice, counting for pleasure the delights of a day: stains and spots, sporting themselves to excess, rioting in their feasts with you:

14. Having eyes full of adultery and of sin that ceaseth not: alluring unstable souls, having their heart exercised with covetousness, children of malediction:

15. Leaving the right way they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam of Bosor, who loved the wages of iniquity,

16. But had a check of his madness, the dumb beast used to the yoke, which speaking with man's voice, forbade the folly of the prophet.

17. These are fountains without water and clouds tossed with whirlwinds, to whom the mist of darkness is reserved.

18. For, speaking proud words of vanity, they allure by the desires of fleshly riotousness, those who for a little while

escape, such as converse in error:

19. Promising them liberty, whereas they themselves are the slaves of corruption. For by whom a man is overcome, of the same also he is the slave.

20. For if, flying from the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they be again entangled in them and overcome: their latter state is become unto them worse than than the former.

21. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of justice, than after they have known it, to turn back from the commandment which was delivered onto them.

22. For, that of the true proverb has happened to them: The dog is returned to his vomit: and, The sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire.

CHAPTER THREE

OF THE SECOND LETTER OF ST. PETER

1. Behold this second epistle I write to you, my dearly beloved, in which I stir up by way of admonition your sincere mind:

2. That you may be mindful of those words which I told you before from the holy prophets, and of your apostles, of the precepts of the Lord and Saviour.

3. Knowing this first, that in the last days there shall come deceitful scoffers, walking after their own lusts,

4. Saying: Where is His promise or His coming? for since the time that the fathers slept, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.

5. For this they are wilfully ignorant of, that the heavens were before, and the earth out of water, and through water, consisting by the Word of God.

6. Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished.

7. But the heavens and the earth which are now, by the

same Word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of the ungodly men.

8. But of this one thing be not ignorant, my beloved, that one day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

9. The Lord delayeth not His promise as some imagine, but dealeth patiently for your sake, not willing that any should perish, but that all should return to penance.

10. But the day of the Lord shall come as a thief, in which the heavens shall pass away with great violence, and the elements shall be melted with heat, and the earth and the works which are in it, shall be burnt up.

11. Seeing then that all these things are to be dissolved, what manner of people ought you to be in holy conversation and godliness?

12. Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of the Lord, by which the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with the burning heat?

13. But we look for new heavens and a new earth according to His promises, in which justice dwelleth.

14. Wherefore, dearly beloved, waiting for these things, be diligent that you may be found before Him unspotted and blameless in peace.

15. And account the longsuffering of our Lord, salvation; as also our most dear brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, hath written to you:

16. As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are certain things hard to be understood, which the unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.

17. You therefore, brethren, knowing these things before, take heed, lest being led aside by the error of the unwise, you fall from your own steadfastness.

18. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and unto the day of eternity. Amen.

- PART FIVE -

THE ORIGIN OF EVIL

IMPORTANT TRUTHS
ABOUT THE
ORIGIN, NATURE, AND DESTINY
OF SIN AND SATAN.
THE PROBLEM OF SIN
IS NOT GOD'S FAULT.

THE ORIGIN OF EVIL

How DID evil begin? Why IS there sin anyway? Here is the remarkable story of how sin began.

Although surrounded by continual selflessness, something happened. What could turn an angel of light into a devil—and do it right in the middle of heaven? You will here learn why our Blessed Saviour had to wait—and the wonderful future in store for His earthly children—because He did.

To many minds, the origin of sin and the reason for its existence are a source of great perplexity. They see the work of evil, with its terrible results of woe and desolation, and they question how all this can exist under the sovereignty of One who is infinite in wisdom, in power, and in love. Here is a mystery, of which they find no explanation. And in their uncertainty and doubt, they are blinded to truths plainly revealed in God's Word, and essential to salvation.

There are those who, in their inquiries concerning the existence of sin, endeavor to search into that which God has never revealed; hence they find no solution of their difficulties; and such as are actuated by a disposition to doubt and cavil, seize upon this as an excuse for rejecting the words of Holy Writ.

All scriptures in this chapter are from Church-authorized versions. Unless otherwise noted, the Rheims-Douai is quoted.

Others, however, fail of a satisfactory understanding of the great problem of evil, from the fact that tradition and misinterpretation have obscured the teaching of the Bible concerning the character of God, the nature of His government, and the principles of His dealing with sin.

It is impossible to so explain the origin of sin as to give a reason for its existence. Yet enough may be understood concerning both the origin and the final disposition of sin, to fully make manifest the justice and benevolence of God in all His dealings with evil.

Nothing is more plainly taught in Scripture than that God was in nowise responsible for the entrance of sin; that there was no arbitrary withdrawal of divine grace, no deficiency in the divine government, that gave occasion for the uprising of rebellion.

Sin is an intruder, for whose presence no reason can be given. It is mysterious, unaccountable; to excuse it, is to defend it. Could excuse for it be found, or cause be shown for its existence, it would cease to be sin. Our only definition of sin is that given in the Word of God; it is "the transgression of the law;" it is the outworking of a principle at war with the great law of love which is the foundation of the divine government.

Before the entrance of evil, there was peace and joy throughout the universe. All was in perfect harmony with the Creator's will. Love for God was supreme, love for one another impartial. Christ the Word, the only begotten of God, was one with the eternal Father,—one in nature, in character, and in purpose,—the only being in all the universe that could enter into all the counsels and purposes of God.

By Christ, the Father wrought in the creation of all heavenly beings. "For in Him were all things created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones, or dominations, [dominions], or principalities, or powers." (Colossians 1:16) and to Christ, equally with the Father, all Heaven gave allegiance.

The law of love being the foundation of the government of God, the happiness of all created beings depended upon their perfect accord with its great principles of righteousness. God desires from all His creatures the service of love,—homage that springs from an intelligent appreciation of His character. He takes no pleasure in a forced allegiance, and to all He grants freedom of will, that they may render Him voluntary service.

But there was one that chose to pervert this freedom. Sin originated with him, who, next to Christ, had been most honored of God, and who stood highest in power and glory among the inhabitants of Heaven.

Before his fall, Lucifer was first of the covering cherubs, holy and undefiled. "You were the signet of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering." "An annointed guardian cherub I placed you; you were on the holy mountain of God; in the midst of the stones of fire you walked. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you." Ezekiel 28:11-15, R.S.V.

Lucifer might have remained in favor with God, beloved and honored by all the angelic host, exercising his noble powers to bless others and to glorify his Maker. But, says the prophet, "Thy heart was lifted up with thy beauty: thou hast lost thy wisdom in thy beauty." Ezechiel 28:17. Little by little, Lucifer came to indulge a desire for self-exaltation. "Because you consider yourselves as wise as a god." "You said in your heart, I will ascend to heaven: above the stars of God. I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will make myself like the Most High." Ezekiel 28:6; Isaiah 14:13-14, R.S.V.

Instead of seeking to make God supreme in the affections and allegiance of His creatures, it was Lucifer's endeavor to win their service and homage to himself. And, coveting the honor which the infinite Father had bestowed upon His Son, this prince of angels aspired to power which

it was the prerogative of Christ alone to wield.

All Heaven had rejoiced to reflect the Creator's glory and to show forth His praise. And while God was thus honored, all had been peace and gladness. But a note of discord now marred the celestial harmonies. The service and exaltation of self, contrary to the Creator's plan, awakened forebodings of evil in minds to whom God's glory was supreme. The heavenly councils pleaded with Lucifer.

The Son of God presented before him the greatness, the goodness, and the justice of the Creator, and the sacred, unchanging nature of His law. God Himself had established the order of Heaven; and in departing from it, Lucifer would dishonor his Maker, and bring ruin upon himself. But the warning, given in infinite love and mercy, only aroused a spirit of resistance. Lucifer allowed jealousy of Christ to prevail, and he became the more determined.

Pride in his own glory nourished the desire for supremacy. The high honors conferred upon Lucifer were not appreciated as the gift of God, and called forth no gratitude to the Creator. He gloried in his brightness and exaltation, and aspired to be equal with God. He was beloved and revered by the heavenly host. Angels delighted to execute his commands, and he was clothed with wisdom and glory above them all.

Yet the Son of God was the acknowledged sovereign of Heaven, one in power and authority with the Father. In all the counsels of God, Christ was a participant, while Lucifer was not permitted thus to enter into the divine purposes. "Why," questioned this mighty angel, "should Christ have the supremacy? Why is He thus honored above Lucifer?"

Leaving his place in the immediate presence of God, Lucifer went forth to diffuse the spirit of discontent among the angels. Working with mysterious secrecy, and for a time concealing his real purpose under an appearance of reverence for God, he endeavored to excite dissatisfaction concerning the laws that governed heavenly beings, inti-

mating that they imposed an unnecessary restraint.

Since their natures were holy, he urged that the angels should obey the dictates of their own will. He sought to create sympathy for himself, by representing that God had dealt unjustly with him in bestowing supreme honor upon Christ. He claimed that in aspiring to greater power and honor he was not aiming at self-exaltation, but was seeking to secure liberty for all the inhabitants of Heaven, that by this means they might attain to a higher state of existence.

God, in His great mercy, bore long with Lucifer. He was not immediately degraded from his exalted station when he first indulged the spirit of discontent, nor even when he began to present his false claims before the loyal angels. Long was he retained in Heaven. Again and again he was offered pardon, on condition of repentance and submission. Such efforts as only infinite love and wisdom could devise, were made to convince him of his error.

The spirit of discontent had never before been known in Heaven. Lucifer himself did not at first see whither he was drifting; he did not understand the real nature of his feelings. But as his dissatisfaction was proved to be without cause, Lucifer was convinced that he was in the wrong, that the divine claims were just, and that he ought to acknowledge them as such before all Heaven. Had he done this, he might have saved himself and many angels. He had not at this time fully cast off his allegiance to God.

Though he had forsaken his position as covering cherub, yet if he had been willing to return to God, acknowledging the Creator's wisdom, and satisfied to fill the place appointed him in God's great plan, he would have been reinstated in his office. But pride forbade him to submit. He persistently defended his own course, maintained that he had no need of repentance, and fully committed himself, in the great controversy, against his Maker.

All the powers of his master mind were now bent to the work of deception, to secure the sympathy of the angels that had been under his command. Even the fact that

Christ had warned and counseled him, was perverted to serve his traitorous designs. To those whose loving trust bound them most closely to him, Satan had represented that he was wrongly judged, that his position was not respected, and that his liberty was to be abridged.

From misrepresentation of the words of Christ, he passed to prevarication and direct falsehood, accusing the Son of God of a design to humiliate him before the inhabitants of Heaven. He sought also to make a false issue between himself and the loyal angels. All whom he could not subvert and bring fully to his side, he accused of indifference to the interests of heavenly beings.

The very work which he himself was doing, he charged upon those who remained true to God. And to sustain his charge of God's injustice toward him, he resorted to misrepresentation of the words and acts of the Creator. It was his policy to perplex the angels with subtle arguments concerning the purposes of God. Everything that was simple he shrouded in mystery, and by artful perversion cast doubt upon the plainest statements of Jehovah. His high position, in such close connection with the divine administration, gave greater force to his representations, and many were induced to unite with him in rebellion against Heaven's authority.

God in His wisdom permitted Satan to carry forward his work, until the spirit of disaffection ripened into active revolt. It was necessary for his plans to be fully developed, that their true nature and tendency might be seen by all. Lucifer, as the anointed cherub, had been highly exalted; he was greatly loved by the heavenly beings, and his influence over them was strong.

God's government included not only the inhabitants of Heaven, but of all the worlds that He had created; and Satan thought that if he could carry the angels of Heaven with him in rebellion, he could carry also the other worlds. He had artfully presented his side of the question, employing sophistry and fraud to secure his objects. His power to deceive was very great, and by disguising himself in a cloak

of falsehood he had gained an advantage. Even the loyal angels could not fully discern his character, or see to what his work was leading.

Satan had been so highly honored, and all his acts were so clothed with mystery, that it was difficult to disclose to the angels the true nature of his work. Until fully developed, sin would not appear the evil thing it was. Heretofore it had had no place in the universe of God, and holy beings had no conception of its nature and malignity. They could not discern the terrible consequences that would result from setting aside the divine law.

Satan had, at first, concealed his work under a specious profession of loyalty to God. He claimed to be seeking to promote the honor of God, the stability of His government, and the good of all the inhabitants of Heaven. While instilling discontent into the minds of the angels under him, he had artfully made it appear that he was seeking to remove dissatisfaction. When he urged that changes be made in the order and laws of God's government, it was under the pretense that these were necessary in order to preserve harmony in Heaven.

In his dealing with sin, God could employ only righteousness and truth. Satan could use what God could not—flattery and deceit. He had sought to falsify the Word of God, and had misrepresented His plan of government before the angels, claiming that God was not just in laying laws and rules upon the inhabitants of Heaven; that in requiring submission and obedience from His creatures, He was seeking merely the exaltation of Himself.

Therefore it must be demonstrated before the inhabitants of Heaven as well as of all the worlds, that God's government was just, His law perfect. Satan had made it appear that He Himself was seeking to promote the good of the universe. The true character of the usurper, and his real object, must be understood by all. He must have time to manifest himself by his wicked works.

The discord which his own course had caused in Heaven, Satan charged upon the law and government of

God. All evil he declared to be the result of the divine administration. He claimed that it was his own object to improve upon the statutes of Jehovah. Therefore it was necessary that he should demonstrate the nature of His claims, and show the working out of his proposed changes in the divine law. His own work must condemn him.

Satan had claimed from the first that he was not in rebellion. The whole universe must see the deceiver unmasked.

Even when it was decided that he could no longer remain if Heaven, infinite wisdom did not destroy Satan. Since the service of love can alone be acceptable to God, the allegiance of His creatures must rest upon a conviction of His justice and benevolence. The inhabitants of Heaven and of other worlds, being unprepared to comprehend the nature or consequences of sin, could not then have seen the justice and mercy of God in the destruction of Satan.

Had he been immediately blotted from existence, they would have served God from fear, rather than from love. The influence of the deceiver would not have been fully destroyed, nor would the spirit of rebellion have been utterly eradicated. Evil must be permitted to come to maturity.

For the good of the entire universe through ceaseless ages, Satan must more fully develop his principles, that his charges against the divine government might be seen in their true light by all created beings, that the justice and mercy of God and the immutability of His law might forever be placed beyond all question.

Satan's rebellion was to be a lesson to the universe through all coming ages, a perpetual testimony to the nature and terrible results of sin. The working out of Satan's rule, its effects upon both men and angels, would show what must be the fruit of setting aside the divine authority. It would testify that with the existence of God's government and His law is bound up the well-being of all the creatures He has made.

Thus the history of this terrible experiment of rebellion was to be a perpetual safeguard to all holy intelligences, to prevent them from being deceived as to the nature of transgression, to save them from committing sin, and suffering its punishment.

To the very close of the controversy in Heaven, the great usurper continued to justify himself. When it was announced that with all his sympathizers he must be expelled from the abodes of bliss, then the rebel leader boldly avowed his contempt for the Creator's law. He reiterated his claim that angels needed no control, but should be left to follow their own will, which would ever guide them right. He denounced the divine statutes as a restriction of their liberty, and declared that it was his purpose to secure the abolition of law; that, freed from this restraint, the hosts of Heaven might enter upon a more exalted, more glorious state of existence.

With one accord, Satan and his host threw the blame of their rebellion wholly upon Christ, declaring that if they had not been reprov'd, they would never have rebelled. Thus stubborn and defiant in their disloyalty, seeking vainly to overthrow the government of God, yet blasphemously claiming to be themselves the innocent victims of oppressive power, the arch-rebel and all his sympathizers were at last banished from Heaven.

The same spirit that prompted rebellion in Heaven, still inspires rebellion on earth. Satan has continued with men the same policy which he pursued with the angels. His spirit now reigns in the children of disobedience. Like him they seek to break down the restraints of the law of God, and promise men liberty through transgression of its precepts.

Reproof of sin still arouses the spirit of hatred and resistance. When God's messages of warning are brought home to the conscience, Satan leads men to justify themselves, and to seek the sympathy of others in their course of sin. Instead of correcting their errors, they excite indignation against the reprov'er, as if he were the sole cause of

difficulty. From the days of righteous Abel to our own time, such is the spirit which has been displayed toward those who dare to condemn sin.

By the same misrepresentation of the character of God as he had practiced in Heaven, causing him to be regarded as severe and tyrannical, Satan induced man to sin. And having succeeded thus far, he declared that God's unjust restrictions had led to man's fall, as they had led to his own rebellion.

But the Eternal One Himself proclaims His character: "The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness; keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty." Exodus 34:6, 7 (R.S.V.).

In the banishment of Satan from Heaven, God declared His justice, and maintained the honor of His throne. But when man had sinned through yielding to the deceptions of this apostate spirit, God gave an evidence of His love by yielding up His only begotten Son to die for the fallen race. In the atonement the character of God is revealed. The mighty argument of the cross demonstrates to the whole universe that the course of sin which Lucifer had chosen was in nowise chargeable upon the government of God.

In the contest between Christ and Satan, during the Saviour's earthly ministry, the character of the great deceiver was unmasked. Nothing could so effectually have uprooted Satan from the affections of the heavenly angels and the whole loyal universe as did his cruel warfare upon the world's Redeemer.

The daring blasphemy of his demand that Christ should pay him homage, his presumptuous boldness in bearing Him to the mountain summit and the pinnacle of the temple, the malicious intent betrayed in urging Him to cast Himself down from the dizzy height, the unsleeping malice that hunted Him from place to place, inspiring the hearts of priests and people to reject His love, and at the last to cry,

“Crucify Him! crucify Him!”—all this excited the amazement and indignation of the universe.

It was Satan that prompted the world’s rejection of Christ. The prince of evil exerted all his power and cunning to destroy Jesus; for he saw that the Saviour’s mercy and love, His compassion and pitying tenderness, were representing to the world the character of God. Satan contested every claim put forth by the Son of God, and employed men as His agents to fill the Saviour’s life with suffering and sorrow.

The sophistry and falsehood by which he had sought to hinder the work of Jesus, the hatred manifested through the children of disobedience, his cruel accusations against Him whose life was one of unexampled goodness, all sprung from deep-seated revenge. The pent-up fires of envy and malice, hatred and revenge, burst forth on Calvary against the Son of God, while all Heaven gazed upon the scene in silent horror.

When the great sacrifice had been consummated, Christ ascended on high, refusing the adoration of angels until He had presented the request, “I will that where I am, they also whom Thou hast given Me may be with Me.” St. John 17:24.

Then with inexpressible love and power came forth the answer from the Father’s throne, “Let all the angels of God adore Him.” Hebrews 1:6. Not a stain rested upon Jesus. His humiliation ended, His sacrifice completed, there was given unto Him a name that is above every name.

Now the guilt of Satan stood forth without excuse. He had revealed his true character as a liar and a murderer. It was seen that the very same spirit with which he ruled the children of men, who were under his power, he would have manifested had he been permitted to control the inhabitants of Heaven. He had claimed that the transgression of God’s law would bring liberty and exaltation; but it was seen to result in bondage and degradation.

Satan’s lying charges against the divine character and

government appeared in their true light. He had accused God of seeking merely the exaltation of Himself in requiring submission and obedience from His creatures, and had declared that while the Creator exacted self-denial from all others, He Himself practiced no self-denial, made no sacrifice.

Now it was seen that for the salvation of a fallen and sinful race, the Ruler of the universe had made the greatest sacrifice which love could make; for "God indeed was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself." 2 Corinthians 5:19. It was seen, also, that while Lucifer had opened the door for the entrance of sin, by his desire for honor and supremacy, Christ had, in order to destroy sin, humbled Himself, and become obedient unto death.

God had manifested His abhorrence of the principles of rebellion. All Heaven saw His justice revealed, both in the condemnation of Satan and in the redemption of man. Lucifer had declared that if the law of God was changeless, and its penalty could not be remitted, every transgressor must be forever debarred from the Creator's favor. He had claimed that the sinful race were placed beyond redemption, and were therefore his rightful prey.

But the death of Christ was an argument in man's behalf that could not be overthrown. The penalty of the law fell upon him who was equal with God, and man was free to accept the righteousness of Christ, and by a life of penitence and humiliation to triumph, as the Son of God had triumphed, over the power of Satan. Thus God is just, and yet the justifier of all who believe in Jesus.

But it was not merely to accomplish the redemption of man that Christ came to the earth to suffer and to die. He came to "magnify the law" and to "make it honorable." Not alone that the inhabitants of this world might regard the law as it should be regarded; but it was to demonstrate to all the worlds of the universe that God's law is unchangeable.

Could its claims have been set aside, then the Son of God need not have yielded up His life to atone for its trans-

gression. The death of Christ proves it immutable. And the sacrifice to which infinite love impelled the Father and the Son, that sinners might be redeemed, demonstrates to all the universe—what nothing less than this plan of atonement could have sufficed to do—that justice and mercy are the foundation of the law and government of God.

In the final execution of the Judgment it will be seen that no cause for sin exists. When the Judge of all the earth shall demand of Satan, “Why hast thou rebelled against Me, and robbed Me of the subjects of My kingdom?” the originator of evil can render no excuse. Every mouth will be stopped, and all the hosts of rebellion will be speechless.

The cross of Calvary, while it declares the law immutable, proclaims to the universe that the wages of sin is death. In the Saviour’s expiring cry, “It is finished,” the death-knell of Satan was rung. The great controversy which had been so long in progress was then decided, and the final eradication of evil was made certain. The Son of God passed through the portals of the tomb, that “through death He might destroy him that had the empire of death, which is the devil.” Hebrews 2:14. Lucifer’s desire for self-exaltation had led him to say,

“I will ascend to heaven: above the stars of God . . . I will set my throne on High.” Isaiah 14:13 (R.S.V.). God declares, “I will make thee as ashes upon the earth . . . and thou shalt never be any more.” Ezechiel 28:18, 19. When “the day shall come kindled as a furnace; and all the proud, and all that do wickedly shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall set them on fire, saith the Lord of hosts. It shall not leave them root, nor branch.” Malachias 4:1.

“The day comes burning like an oven.” Malachi 4:1 (R.S.V.)

The whole universe will have become witnesses to the nature and results of sin. And its utter extermination, which in the beginning would have brought fear to angels and dishonor to God, will now vindicate His love and establish His honor before a universe of beings who delight to do

His will, and in whose heart is His law. Never will evil again be manifest. Says the Word of God, "There shall not rise a double affliction." Nahum 1:9.

The law of God, which Satan has reproached as the yoke of bondage, will be honored as the law of liberty. A tested and proved creation will never again be turned from allegiance to Him whose character has been fully manifested before them as fathomless love and infinite wisdom.

This chapter was adapted from the book, Great Controversy.

"Then they that feared the Lord spoke every one with his neighbour; and the Lord gave ear, and heard it: and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and think on His name.

"And they shall be My special possession, saith the Lord of hosts, in the day that I do judgment; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his son that serveth him."

—*Malachias 3:16-17*

"And Christ died for all; that they also who live, may not now live to themselves, but unto Him who died for them, and rose again . . .

"If then any be in Christ a new creature, the old things are passed away, behold all things are made new. But all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Christ."

— *2 Corinthians 5:15, 17-18*

"To whom shall I have respect, but to him that is poor and little, and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at My Words."

— *Isaias 66:2*

- PART SIX-

**CHRISTIANS
WHO WERE TRUE
TO GOD**

HUMBLE PEOPLE
WHO PROVED FAITHFUL

- PART SIX-

**CHRISTIANS
WHO WERE TRUE
TO GOD**

**HUMBLE PEOPLE
WHO WERE FAITHFUL**

Here is an interesting story from earlier times. It is a sweet story of how folk in earlier centuries came to know their precious Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

The Waldenses were the first of all the peoples of Europe to obtain a translation of the Holy Scriptures. Hundreds of years before the Reformation, they possessed the Bible in manuscript in their native tongue. They had the truth unadulterated. While, under the pressure of long-continued persecution, some compromised their faith, little by

All Scripture passages quoted in this chapter have been approved by the Church. When not otherwise stated, quotations are from the Rheims-Douai.

little yielding its distinctive principles, others held fast the truth.

Behind the lofty bulwarks of the mountains,—in all ages the refuge of the persecuted and oppressed,—the Waldenses found a hiding place. Here, for a thousand years, witnesses for the truth maintained the ancient faith.

God had provided for His people a sanctuary of awful grandeur, befitting the mighty truths committed to their trust. To those faithful exiles the mountains were an emblem of the immutable righteousness of Jehovah. They pointed their children to the heights towering above them in unchanging majesty, and spoke to them of Him with whom there is no variableness nor shadow of turning, whose Word is as enduring as the everlasting hills. God had set fast the mountains, and girded them with strength; no arm but that of infinite power could move them out of their place. In like manner He had established His law, the foundation of His government in Heaven and upon earth. The arm of man might reach His fellow-men and destroy their lives; but that arm could as readily uproot the mountains from their foundations, and hurl them into the sea, as it could change one precept of the law of Jehovah or blot out one of His promises to those who do His will. In their fidelity to His law, God's servants should be as firm as the unchanging hills.

The mountains that girded their lowly valleys were a constant witness to God's creative power, and a never-failing assurance of His protecting care. Those pilgrims learned to love the silent symbols of Jehovah's presence. They indulged no repining because of the hardships of their lot; they were never lonely amid the mountain solitudes. They thanked God that He had provided for them an asylum from the wrath and cruelty of men. They rejoiced in their freedom to worship before Him. Often when pursued by their enemies, the strength of the hills proved a sure defense. From many a lofty cliff they chanted the praise of God, and the armies of their enemies could not silence their songs of thanksgiving.

Pure, simple, and fervent was the piety of these fol-

lowers of Christ. The principles of truth they valued above houses and lands, friends, kindred, even life itself. These principles they earnestly sought to impress upon the hearts of the young. From earliest childhood the youth were instructed in the Scriptures, and taught to sacredly regard the claims of the law of God. Copies of the Bible were rare; therefore its precious words were committed to memory. Many were able to repeat large portions of both the Old and the New Testaments. Thoughts of God were associated alike with the sublime scenery of nature and with the humble blessings of daily life. Little children learned to look with gratitude to God as the giver of every favor and every comfort.

Parents, tender and affectionate as they were, loved their children too wisely to accustom them to self-indulgence. Before them was a life of trial and hardship, perhaps a martyr's death. They were educated from childhood to endure hardness, to submit to control, and yet to think and act for themselves. Very early they were taught to bear responsibilities, to be guarded in speech, and to understand the wisdom of silence. One indiscreet word let fall in the hearing of their enemies, might imperil not only the life of the speaker, but the lives of hundreds of his brethren; for as wolves hunting their prey did the enemies of truth pursue those who dared to claim freedom of religious faith.

The Waldenses had sacrificed their worldly prosperity for the truth's sake, and with persevering patience they toiled for their bread. Every spot of tillable land among the mountains was carefully improved; the valleys and the less fertile hillsides were made to yield their increase. Economy and severe self-denial formed a part of the education which the children received as their only legacy. They were taught that God designs life to be a discipline, and that their wants could be supplied only by personal labor, by forethought, care, and faith. The process was laborious and wearisome, but it was wholesome, just what man needs in his fallen state, the school which God has provided for His training and development.

While the youth were inured to toil and hardship, the culture of the intellect was not neglected. They were taught that all their powers belonged to God, and that all were to be improved and developed for His service.

The Vaudois [Waldensian] churches, in their purity and simplicity, resembled the church of apostolic times. They held the Bible as the only supreme, infallible authority. Their pastors followed the example of their Master, who "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." They fed the flock of God, leading them to the green pastures and living fountains of His holy Word. Far from the monuments of human pomp and pride, the people assembled, not in magnificent churches or grand cathedrals, but beneath the shadow of the mountains, in the Alpine valleys, or, in time of danger, in some rocky stronghold, to listen to the words of truth from the servants of Christ. The pastors not only preached the gospel, but they visited the sick, catechized the children, admonished the erring, and labored to settle disputes and promote harmony and brotherly love. In times of peace they were sustained by the free-will offerings of the people; but, like Paul the tent-maker, each learned some trade or profession by which, if necessary, to provide for his own support.

From their pastors the youth received instruction. While attention was given to branches of general learning, the Bible was made the chief study. The Gospels of Matthew and John they committed to memory, with many of the Epistles. They were employed also in copying the Scriptures. Some manuscripts contained the whole Bible, others only brief selections, to which some simple explanations of the text were added by those who were able to expound the Scriptures. Thus were brought forth the treasures of truth so long concealed by those who sought to exalt themselves above God.

By patient, untiring labor, sometimes in the deep, dark caverns of the earth, by the light of torches, the sacred Scriptures were written out, verse by verse, chapter by chapter. Thus the work went on, the revealed will of God shin-

ing out like pure gold; how much brighter, clearer, and more powerful because of the trials undergone for its sake, only those could realize who were engaged in the work. Angels from Heaven surrounded these faithful workers.

In a most wonderful manner the Word of truth was preserved uncorrupted through all the ages of darkness. It bore not the stamp of man, but the impress of God. Men have been unwearied in their efforts to obscure the plain, simple meaning of the Scriptures, and to make them contradict their own testimony; but, like the ark upon the billowy deep, the Word of God outrides the storms that threaten it with destruction. As the mine has rich veins of gold and silver hidden beneath the surface, so that all must dig who would discover its precious stores, so the Holy Scriptures have treasures of truth that are revealed only to the earnest, humble, prayerful seeker. God designed the Bible to be a lesson-book to all mankind, in childhood, youth, and manhood, and to be studied through all time. He gave His Word to men as a revelation of Himself. Every new truth discerned is a fresh disclosure of the character of its Author. The study of the Scriptures is the means divinely ordained to bring men into closer connection with their Creator, and to give them a clearer knowledge of His will. It is the medium of communication between God and man.

While the Waldenses regarded the fear of the Lord as the beginning of wisdom, they were not blind to the importance of a contact with the world, a knowledge of men and of active life, in expanding the mind and quickening the perceptions. From their schools in the mountains some of the youth were sent to institutions of learning in the cities of France or Italy, where there was a more extended field for study, thought, and observation than in their native Alps. The youth thus sent forth were exposed to temptation, they witnessed vice, they encountered Satan's wily agents, who urged upon them the most subtle heresies and the most dangerous deceptions. But their education from childhood had been of a character to prepare them for all this.

In the schools whither they went, they were not to

make confidants of any. Their garments were so prepared as to conceal their greatest treasure,—the precious manuscripts of the Scriptures. These, the fruit of months and years of toil, they carried with them, and, whenever they could do so without exciting suspicion, they cautiously placed some portion in the way of those whose hearts seemed open to receive the truth. From their mother's knee the Waldensian youth had been trained with this purpose in view; they understood their work, and faithfully performed it. Converts to the true faith were won in these institutions of learning, and frequently its principles were found to be permeating the entire school; yet the church leaders could not, by the closest inquiry, trace the so-called corrupting heresy to its source.

The spirit of Christ is a missionary spirit. The very first impulse of the renewed heart is to bring others also to the Saviour. Such was the spirit of the Vaudois Christians. They felt that God required more of them than merely to preserve the truth in its purity in their own churches; that a solemn responsibility rested upon them to let their light shine forth to those who were in darkness; by the mighty power of God's Word they sought to break the bondage which error had imposed. The Vaudois ministers were trained as missionaries, every one who expected to enter the ministry was required first to gain an experience as an evangelist. Each was to serve three years in some mission field before taking charge of a church at home. This service, requiring at the outset self-denial and sacrifice, was a fitting introduction to the pastor's life in those times that tried men's souls. The youth who received ordination to the sacred office saw before them, not the prospect of earthly wealth and glory, but a life of toil and danger, and possibly a martyr's fate. The missionaries went out two and two, as Jesus sent forth His disciples. With every young man was usually associated a man of age and experience, the youth being under the guidance of his companion, who was held responsible for his training, and whose instruction he was required to heed. These co-laborers were not always together, but of-

ten met for prayer and counsel, thus strengthening each other in the faith.

To have made known the object of their mission would have insured its defeat; therefore they carefully concealed their real character. Every minister possessed a knowledge of some trade or profession, and the missionaries prosecuted their work under cover of a secular calling. Usually they chose that of merchant or peddler. They dealt in choice and costly articles, such as silks, laces, and jewels, which in those times could not be readily procured, and thus they found entrance where they would otherwise have been repulsed. All the while their hearts were uplifted to God for wisdom to present a treasure more precious than gold or gems. They secretly carried about with them copies of the Bible, in whole or in part, and whenever an opportunity was presented, they called the attention of their customers to these manuscripts. Often an interest to read God's Word was thus awakened, and some portion was gladly left with those who desired to receive it.

The work of these missionaries began in the plains and valleys at the foot of their own mountains, but it extended far beyond these limits. With naked feet and in garments coarse and travel-stained as were those of their Master, they passed through great cities, and penetrated to distant lands. Everywhere they scattered the precious seed. Churches sprung up in their path, and the blood of martyrs witnessed for the truth. The day of God will reveal a rich harvest of souls garnered by the labors of these faithful men. Veiled and silent, the Word of God was making its way through Christendom, and meeting a glad reception in the homes and hearts of men.

To the Waldenses the Scriptures were not merely a record of God's dealings with men in the past, and a revelation of the responsibilities and duties of the present, but an unfolding of the perils and glories of the future. They believed that the end of all things was not far distant; and as they studied the Bible with prayer and tears, they were the more deeply impressed with its precious utterances, and

with their duty to make known to others its saving truths. They saw the plan of salvation clearly revealed in the sacred pages, and they found comfort, hope, and peace in believing in Jesus. As the light illuminated their understanding and made glad their hearts, they longed to shed its beams upon those who were in the darkness of papal error.

They saw that under the guidance of the churches of the day, multitudes were vainly endeavoring to obtain pardon by afflicting their bodies for the sin of their souls. Taught to trust to their good works to save them, they were ever looking to themselves, their minds dwelling upon their sinful condition, seeing themselves exposed to the wrath of God, afflicting soul and body, yet finding no relief. Thus conscientious souls were bound by the erroneous doctrines. Thousands abandoned friends and kindred, and spent their lives in convent cells. By oft-repeated fasts and cruel scourgings, by midnight vigils, by prostration for weary hours upon the cold, damp stones of their dreary abode, by long pilgrimages, by humiliating penance and fearful torture, thousands vainly sought to obtain peace of conscience. Oppressed with a sense of sin, and haunted with the fear of God's avenging wrath, many suffered on, until exhausted nature gave way, and without one ray of light or hope, they sank into the tomb.

The Waldenses longed to break to these starving souls the bread of life, to open to them the messages of peace in the promises of God, and to point them to Christ as their only hope of salvation. The doctrine that good works can atone for the transgression of God's law, they held to be based upon falsehood. Reliance upon human merit intercepts the view of Christ's infinite love. Jesus died as a sacrifice for man because the fallen race can do nothing to recommend themselves to God. The merits of a crucified and risen Saviour are the foundation of the Christian's faith. The dependence of the soul upon Christ is as real, and its connection with Him must be as close, as that of a limb to the body, or of a branch to the vine.

The teachings of the Church had led men to look upon

the character of God, and even of Christ, as stern, gloomy, and forbidding. The Saviour was represented as so far devoid of all sympathy with man in his fallen state that the mediation of priests and saints must be invoked. Those whose minds had been enlightened by the Word of God longed to point these souls to Jesus as their compassionate, loving Saviour, standing with outstretched arms inviting all to come to Him with their burden of sin, their care and weariness. They longed to clear away the obstructions which Satan had piled up that men might not see the promises, and come directly to God, confessing their sins, and obtaining pardon and peace.

Eagerly did the Vaudois missionary unfold to the inquiring mind the precious truths of the gospel. Cautiously he produced the carefully written portions of the Holy Scriptures. It was his greatest joy to give hope to the conscientious, sin-stricken soul, who could see only a God of vengeance, waiting to execute justice. With quivering lip and tearful eye did he, often on bended knees, open to his brethren the precious promises that reveal the sinner's only hope. Thus the light of truth penetrated many a darkened mind, rolling back the cloud of gloom, until the Sun of Righteousness shone into the heart with healing in His beams. It was often the case that some portion of Scripture was read again and again, the hearer desiring it to be repeated, as if he would assure himself that he had heard aright. Especially was the repetition of these words eagerly desired: "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." 1 St. John 1:7. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him, may not perish; but may have life everlasting." St. John 3:14, 15.

Many were undeceived in regard to the claims of Church. They saw how vain is the mediation of men or angels in behalf of the sinner. As the true light dawned upon their minds, they exclaimed with rejoicing, "Christ is my priest; His blood is my sacrifice; His altar is my confessional." They cast themselves wholly upon the merits of

Jesus, repeating the words, "Without faith it is impossible to please God." Hebrews 11:6. "There is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved." Acts 4:12.

The assurance of a Saviour's love seemed too much for some of these poor tempest-tossed souls to realize. So great was the relief which it brought, such a flood of light was shed upon them, that they seemed transported to Heaven. Their hand was laid confidently in the hand of Christ; their feet were planted upon the Rock of Ages. All fear of death was banished. They could now covet the prison and the fagot if they might thereby honor the name of their Redeemer.

In secret places the Word of God was thus brought forth and read, sometimes to a single soul, sometimes to a little company who were longing for light and truth. Often the entire night was spent in this manner. So great would be the wonder and admiration of the listeners that the messenger of mercy was not infrequently compelled to cease his reading until the understanding could grasp the tidings of salvation. Often would words like these be uttered: "Will God indeed accept my offering? Will He smile upon me? Will He pardon me?" The answer was read, "Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28 (R.S.V.).

Faith grasped the promise, and the glad response was heard, "No more long pilgrimages to make; no more painful journeys to holy shrines. I may come to Jesus just as I am, sinful and unholy, and He will not spurn the penitential prayer. 'Thy sins are forgiven thee.' Mine, even mine, may be forgiven!"

A tide of sacred joy would fill the heart, and the name of Jesus would be magnified by praise and thanksgiving. Those happy souls returned to their homes to diffuse light, to repeat to others, as well as they could, their new experience; that they had found the true and living Way. There was a strange and solemn power in the words of Scripture that spoke directly to the hearts of those who were longing

for the truth. It was the voice of God, and it carried conviction to those who heard.

The messenger of truth went on his way; but his appearance of humility, his sincerity, his earnestness and deep fervor, were subjects of frequent remark. In many instances his hearers had not asked him whence he came, or whither he went. They had been so overwhelmed, at first with surprise, and afterward with gratitude and joy, that they had not thought to question him. When they had urged him to accompany them to their homes, he had replied that he must visit the lost sheep of the flock. Could he have been an angel from Heaven? they queried.

In many cases the messenger of truth was seen no more. He had made his way to other lands, he was wearing out his life in some unknown dungeon, or perhaps his bones were whitening on the spot where he had witnessed for the truth. But the words he had left behind could not be destroyed. They were doing their work in the hearts of men; the blessed results will be fully known only in the Judgment.

The persecutions visited for many centuries upon this God-fearing people were endured by them with a patience and constancy that honored their Redeemer. Notwithstanding the crusades against them, they continued to send out their missionaries to scatter the precious truth. They were hunted to the death; yet their blood watered the seed sown, and it failed not of yielding fruit.

Thus the Waldenses witnessed for God, many centuries ago. Their work is to be carried forward to the close of time by those who also are willing to suffer all things for "the Word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus." The Apocalypse 1:9.

This chapter was adapted from the book, *Great Controversy*.

"Blessed are all they that trust in Him."

— *Psalms 2:13*

- PART SEVEN-

**LESSONS FROM
THE MOST ANCIENT
WRITINGS
OF THE SAINTS**

LESSONS FROM
THE ANCIENT WRITINGS
OF THE MOST HOLY GOD,
THROUGH
THE HOLY SAINTS OF OLD