



# *TOWARD THE MARK*

*“I PRESS TOWARD THE MARK FOR THE PRIZE  
OF THE HIGH CALLING OF GOD IN CHRIST JESUS.”  
PHILIPPIANS 3:14*

*A MAGAZINE FOR YOUNG CHRISTIANS  
OF ALL AGES*

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Dear Reader,

**“And Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not pollute himself with the king’s delicate food, nor with the wine which he drank” (Daniel 1:8).**

A good diet is important for our well-being. What we eat impacts our health—one of the top New Year’s resolutions is to eat healthy—and it is the same with our spiritual well-being. Daniel knew the danger of what he was facing, by sitting at the king’s banquets daily and eating the food he was offered. He realized the danger he faced and knew that gradually he might conform to the Babylonian system and would think, speak, act, and stand for what that system represented. So he drew a line of resistance by training his appetite, for an untrained appetite is a downfall for many young Christians. How important is the training of the mind and the discipline of the will to purpose, with the Lord’s help, to spend time in His presence, to read and meditate on His Word and speak to Him in prayer (Psalm 119). It is impossible to live a healthy Christian life without feeding the spirit to nourish the soul.

It is important to have a sense of accountably and to develop good habits to avoid at all costs what seems so pleasant to the eyes and delightful to the flesh. If you do not do this it will render you very ineffective for the cause of Christ. You must protect your mind and your heart from the pollution that will cause you to conform to the ungodly world around you. Dear Christian, time is rushing on, the Lord wants you healthy and holy and He provides all the resources needed, but you need to avail yourself to be trained and committed to read your Bible and pray every day so you can grow and be used for him.

**It’s hard to believe this is the 15<sup>th</sup> year for *Toward the Mark*. I would like to acknowledge those faithful ones who have been a source of help and encouragement to me: The Lord knows them and He will reward them. Also, I want to thank all of you dear readers for your overwhelming response to the magazine. I trust that you will enjoy this issue, and please keep praying for the Lord’s blessing on *Toward the Mark*: “Even so, come Lord Jesus.”**

Yours in our soon-coming Lord,

*Emil S. Nashed*

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# TOWARD THE MARK

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*Quotations from Scripture are generally taken either from the King James translation or the J.N. Darby translation.*

## MILK

*"The truth shall make you free"*

### A PRAYER FOR THE NEW YEAR!

In the Holy Scriptures, which are given for our learning, the Spirit of God has been pleased in some cases to inspire for us extended histories of His people. Of Abraham, of Jacob, of Joseph, much is recorded to instruct us as to the dealings and discipline of God.

But of some we know little indeed, important though that little is. They come into view when we are not looking for them. In one case it may be as a type of our Lord Jesus—like Melchizedek in Genesis 14. In another case to carry some valued lesson for our pathway as believers, as in that of **Jabez** in 1 Chronicles 4:9–10. Let us engage our thoughts for a while with this latter instance.

It is in the midst of the names of the posterity of Judah that he is introduced unexpectedly. Was he connected with the tribe of Judah? It is probable but we cannot say. We are not informed as to his parents. We know not if he had a wife or a family. In his case, as it is so often, much that we might wish to know is withheld. It was not necessary that mere curiosity should be gratified. But what is briefly narrated of his biography is full of blessing and teaching for us all: "And Jabez was more honourable than his brethren: and his mother called his name Jabez [i.e., sorrowful] saying, Because I bare him with sorrow. And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that Thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that Thine hand might be with me, and that Thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me! And God granted him that which he requested."

Jabez is "the sorrowful one." He may bring to our thoughts this present world of men, for, "Man that is born of a woman is of

few days and full of trouble." In pain and sorrow he is brought into the world and in pain and sorrow he pursues his way through it. "Every man at his best state is altogether vanity," said the Palmist. "For all his days are sorrows and his travail grief, yea his heart taketh not rest in the night. This is also vanity." So cried Solomon in Ecclesiastes, the book which has been described as: "The funeral dirge of a dead world with its greatest prince as chiefest mourner." The wisest of men had tested—had weighed in the balances—everything under the sun and had written "WANTING" on all.

He had proved what had been stated in Eden of old to our first mother, Eve, and to our first father, Adam. Sorrow was to be the portion of each and all outside of Paradise. There is the first mention of sorrow. The last mention is found in Revelation 21:4, where of the eternal state of happiness in which the redeemed are found it is said, "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." Tears, death, sorrow, crying, pain—what an epitome of the conditions which prevail, though men seek to hide the truth and ignore the facts and endeavour to be happy apart from God.

Blessed indeed are those who have seen a light above the brightness of the sun and who know also that all under the sun is made to work together for their good.

It is to God—the God of Israel—that the sorrowful Jabez turns. "The God of Israel" is the One known in relationship and blessing. Crippled Jacob had clung in faith to the One who had wrestled with and crippled him. Crippled Jacob became clinging Jacob, and clinging Jacob became conquering Jacob. And there at Peniel he "had power...and prevailed, he wept, and made supplication" and so he obtained the name Israel, which means "A prince with God," and was blessed. To Him who had cared for and blessed Jacob thus, Jabez made his supplication. Out of

affliction we may raise the cry of earnest need to Him who hears prayer, and who delights to be put in remembrance. The Scripture says “Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray.”

For us in these glad Christian days the fullest revelation has been given. The Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit are made known. We “call on the Father.” Through Christ “we have access by one Spirit unto the Father.” And asking according to His Will, we know that He hears us.

We may examine the details of the prayer of this sorrowful one, and we shall find applications which suit ourselves.

1. “Oh! that Thou wouldest bless me indeed.” He felt his dependence upon the God of Israel and his need of His intervention in blessing. Jehovah, the God of Israel had promised to bless His people and Jabez comes with his claim for a fulfilment of it in his own particular case. We Christians have been fully endowed. We are blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ. But while all is ours we need the eyes of our hearts opened to know the breadth, and length, and depth and height of it all. Shall we ask ourselves whether we make the prayers of the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 1 and 3 our prayers? We should do so.

2. “And enlarge my coast.” He wished for a greater extent of territory—for more of the land on which God’s eyes rested from one year’s end to the other. It may be that there was much yet to be possessed—that he had not put his foot upon the portion assigned to him and that he was setting out to enter upon what was his in title and to do battle in order that he might “possess his possessions.” This should be our attitude and action. We are in danger ever of being content with that to which we have attained instead of energetically pressing forward to appropriate all that is ours.

3. “And that Thine hand might be with me.” He longed for the guidance and support of Him who had made Himself known to him. He had learned his need of divine succour and therefore

petitions for the aid of the God of Israel, in that to which he was putting his hand.

And happy are we in knowing that the Hand outstretched for our blessing is Almighty, that there is always succour for us from on high and grace for seasonable help. So Paul could say when all human aid failed, “Nevertheless the Lord stood by me and strengthened me.” Has not our Lord said power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth . . . and lo, I am with you always.” So we may draw again and again upon His inexhaustible resources.

4. “And that Thou wouldest keep me from evil that it may not grieve me.” He longs that deliverance might be wrought for him or a shelter put about him, so that he, the sorrowful one—might be without sorrow on account of evil. What grace is with our God and Father, grace that can clear us as to our sins, blotting them out for ever, and can so command and control our circumstances that they shall become a source of good, and that the valley of tears may become a wellspring of richest profit; the sorrow being turned to singing as we journey through it.

How simple the added words! “And God granted him that which he requested.” Or as another translation has it, “And God brought about that which he had requested.” Everything was so ordered that the end desired was accomplished.

**One is reminded of Psalm 37:5: “Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass.” He will act in the way which is best for our well-being. He will put into action that which will effect His own thoughts of good on our behalf.**

**What encouragement to prayer and confidence we have in these two verses, written that we “through comfort and encouragement of the Scriptures” may repose our trust in our God, who is the Father of mercies and the God of all encouragement.**

I. Fleming

## MEAT

*"Sanctify them by the truth"*

### LORD AND CHRIST!

**Genesis 41:37–40; Matthew 12:15–21; Acts 2:33–36; 1  
Corinthians 1:1–3; 2 Corinthians 1:19–22**

I would like us to consider the Headship and Lordship of Christ that we may find, first the blessing secured for the saints of God in Him who is raised from among the dead and glorified at God's right hand; then, as the result of our being blessed in Him as Head, the obligation, as well as the great privilege, of being subject to Him as our Lord.

We may well give special attention to these two thoughts in these last days of the church's history on earth, when in her responsibility she has very apparently failed. We may well give thanks to God that in these days of weakness and failure the same grace and guidance are available for us, as in the early days of the church. Thus a way is open for the overcomer; that is, for any who will avail themselves of the grace given, to enjoy the blessings and answer to the obligations.

When you read the verses in Genesis 41 you would see in Joseph *typically* what we have *really* in Christ. As with the Lord Jesus, so it was with Joseph, humiliation and rejection preceded exaltation. Joseph came, as sent by his father, to enquire as to the welfare of his brethren, but was met by their hatred and sold by them into Egypt. **The Spirit of God records that with Joseph three things went down into Egypt, spices, balm, and myrrh.** We see the beauty of this only as we view by faith Him who is greater than Joseph. **The spices** would surely tell us of the fragrance of the perfect life of the Lord Jesus. He did always the things that pleased the Father and which could be fully appreciated only by the Father. **The balm** would set forth the healing power and grace offered to man and available to everyone in need. **The myrrh** would set forth the sorrow which

was ever His portion down here as the "Man of sorrows" in a world of sin and grief. Thus, in the type, we see that if Joseph is sent into Egypt the blessing must go with him. Until his brethren come to where he is, their history is one of failure and famine.

Our thoughts revert to Matthew 23:38–39, where we see the Lord Jesus rejected by His earthly people, leaving the temple for the last time, and we hear Him saying, "Behold your house is left unto you desolate; for I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." In the passage we read, in chapter 12, the Pharisees were counselling to destroy Him, while He Himself (now in seclusion) was still going on with His works of goodness, and God was inviting those who had ears to hear and anointed eyes, to behold the beauty of His Servant, in whom His soul delighted.

The passage from Isaiah 42 quoted in Matthew 12 closes with the words, "In Him shall the Gentiles trust." In verse 37 of our chapter in Genesis we read, "The thing was good in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of his servants." These words show that our hearts are to be engaged with Him who was ever God's delight, and that the One who was rejected and crucified here, has been made Lord and Christ. To Joseph, Pharaoh addresses the words, "Thou shalt be over my house and according to thy word shall all my people regulate themselves." Joseph was not only a dreamer of dreams, he was also the interpreter of dreams and the fulfiller of them.

I have thought that the words "Thou shalt be over my house" might be considered in the light of the truth brought before us in 2 Corinthians. Our hearts are there set at rest through being engaged with the Son of God, Jesus Christ, in whom all the promises of God are eternally verified.

In Psalm 36 we read, "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of Thy house; and Thou shalt make them drink of the river of Thy pleasures." Through the work of redemption

accomplished on the Cross, God can now bless man according to His own purpose and grace. Christ's place in the glory is the pattern and pledge to all who put their trust in Him. Of course we must always bear in mind that in all things He must have pre-eminence. The Spirit of God who indwells each believer is the anointing, the seal, and the earnest of all our blessings. In Ephesians 3 we find the apostle saying, "Unto me who am less than the least of all saints is this grace given that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." The Gospel of the Glory, then, as committed to Paul, brings before us in a special way God's thoughts of blessing for all who believe on His Son during this present day of grace. Believers are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.

**The Headship of Christ is viewed in various aspects in Scripture: 1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 1:10, 22; Colossians 1:18; 2:10. The prominent thought seems to be derivation. If it be the saints today, or the redeemed creation in the coming day, all are to derive from, and take character from Him who is Head. But if through sovereign grace all our blessings are eternally secured in our risen and exalted Head, there are also present obligations resting upon us as the result of these blessings being ours.**

This brings us to the second part of our verse in Genesis 41, "According to thy word shall all my people be ruled." May we not apply these words to the main teaching of 1 Corinthians, where we have the Lordship of Christ prominently brought before us? The world has expressed its thought of the Son of God in the words, "Away with Him, crucify Him." God has given His answer to this in making Him Lord and Christ. We find it stated in Acts 10:36. "He is Lord of all." This is not yet publicly manifested.

**We may briefly consider the Lordship of Christ in a threefold aspect. First, in relation to believers individually, as in 1 Corinthians 6: "Ye are not your own for ye are bought**

with a price: therefore glorify God in your body." The body is for the Lord and the Lord for the body. We do well to pause here and challenge ourselves in this manner, "Is the Lord Jesus, the One whom the world refuses, the One into whose hands God has committed all things, controlling and guiding me in every detail of my life?" His claims upon us are claims of love. May we ever say from the heart, "Lord we are Thine, Thy claims we own."

**Secondly, we have the collective sphere** where His Lordship is to be maintained in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14. In the great house of profession, we see everywhere human organization. While the Lord's name is professed, God's word, and the divine order set forth therein, are ignored or refused. Is there then a possibility of yielding to Him His rights in this collective way? Surely there is. The instructions given in 1 Corinthians 12 are obligatory on us today in spite of the outward breakdown of the church. This was surely anticipated by the Lord Jesus when He promised that "Where two or three are gathered together in My name there am I in the midst of them." If there has been failure, and if there is but little strength, surely there is still an open door for faithfulness. **The new cart, setting forth human arrangement, might be tolerated amongst the Philistines, but not amongst the people of God. See 1 Samuel 6:7, and 2 Samuel 6:3-7.**

**Finally, the full extent of the Lordship of Christ will be manifested when He shall have put down all rule, and authority, and power, and shall deliver up the kingdom of God, even the Father, that God may be all in all, as we see in 1 Corinthians 15. May it be ours through grace, while waiting for His coming, to be rejoicing in the blessings He has won for us, and gladly owning His claims upon us in every sphere, saying from our hearts:—**

**"Thee we reverence, Thee obey,  
Own Thee Lord and Christ alway."**

R. Nelson

## EXERCISE

*"Exercise thyself unto piety"*

### FILL THE WATER POTS!

#### **A word of encouragement to Sunday School Workers and to those who work among the younger generation!**

Everyone who takes up any service for the Lord ought to be able to give some reason why he serves Him. Let me say at once that no service save that which flows from the constraint of love—the love of Christ—can possibly be acceptable to the Lord. But because He has loved us, we do love Him; and love delights to serve. Love, then, must be our motive. Anything short of this is utterly unworthy. And if we are constrained by the love of Christ we shall serve Him for His sake alone. "Ye serve the Lord Christ." Fellow-workers, we need to have this ever in mind. We are so apt to serve before others, to do our work in order to gain their approval. When this is the case the quality of the service is very poor indeed. But if, in the Sunday School class, or the weeknight service, we serve as under the eye of the One who reads the heart and knows the hidden motives we shall take care that the ointment of our service is free from the flies that give it an ill odour.

There are men today who preach to thousands. They are much before the public eye; their names have become household words, and they seem to be used of God in widespread blessing. But your service is hidden and unostentatious. Are you ever tempted to envy these servants who have a great name? Envy them not. Keep in mind that you serve the Lord Christ. He is taking note of every bit of true service done to Him. In His well-adjusted balances all service is weighed, and He knows its true value. Everything you ever did for Him has gone down to your credit in His book. You shall have your recompense—He will speak words of approval which you will treasure in your heart and memory for ever. How blessed to have a Master so

tender and gracious! May we be satisfied with His commendation. Those who are praised of men have their reward now; may we be content to wait for ours.

Now service amongst the young is pre-eminently a work of faith and labour of love. Patience of hope, too, is called for. You need these three Christian graces very much developed in your soul. It is a work of faith—you cannot count upon anything in the children, your faith must be in the Lord. It must be a labour of love, because the children are tiresome sometimes, and if love is not at the back of it, you will grow weary in the service. There must be the patience of hope, because you look forward to the result of what you are doing.

Secondly: *The material that we have to work with.* Children are, in the first place, empty vessels. Now, grown-up people are not empty, they are full of their own notions, and very well satisfied with themselves. But with children it is not so. They are empty, and it is our blessed privilege to fill them. Think of the water pots in the second chapter of John. You remember what the Lord Jesus Christ said to the servants, "Fill the water pots with water." They obeyed to the letter. There was a blessed enthusiasm about them, *for they filled them to the brim!* What did they fill them with? That which the Lord would turn into wine. It is your business also to fill the water pots to the brim. Fill them with that which the Lord can turn into wine.

I have heard it said that it is useless to teach children the Scriptures. It is all a dead letter to them, say these wise folks. My answer is, Paul said to Timothy, "From a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation." Your business is to fill the children with the water of the Word—the blessed truths of the gospel—which the Lord can turn into the wine of salvation. We may be sure that if we do not fill the children someone else will. The devil is looking out for water pots, and he will fill them with the poison



of infidelity and sensualism, which will kill and destroy. Let it be ours to fill them with the water of the Word.

We shall not be able to fill them with water unless we are first filled with the water of the Word ourselves. If we read trashy literature, we must not be surprised if our children turn to folly. You know better than to do that. You feed your soul upon the precious Word of God. Alas, there are those who take up the service amongst children who feed their souls upon mere garbage. No wonder if the children grow up for the world and the devil. Read, by all means. Read anything that can help you in your service, but feed upon the sacred Scriptures, and make the Bible your chosen book. And do not forget that you must also be in personal contact with the blessed Lord, of whom the Scriptures speak. If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink." Let us, then, be like the servants of John 2, who filled the pots to the brim and then brought them to Jesus. We cannot change the water into wine, nor could they. We must do what they did—we must bring them to Jesus; and that necessitates prayer. Oh, beloved fellow laborers, we shall not be successful unless we are found in dependence and prayer before Him.

**We have to remember that the children are not only empty, but they are every bit as much dead towards God as grown-up sinners. You will find it very instructive to search out in your Bible all the cases of children raised from the dead. Study them well, and they will yield you much profit. Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, put his hand to this work. Elisha said to him, "Take my staff and lay it on the face of the child." Ah, but Gehazi had not the spirit for this. He was a self-centred and an ambitious man. We can well understand his pride as he walked off with Elisha's staff—the staff that had smitten Jordan, and divided the waters—that mighty staff which had done such wonders! It was in his possession now! Doubtless he imagined he was going to do great things with it as he laid it on the face of the dead child! But there was neither voice nor hearing. Is it possible**

**for us to take the Word of God—that which is mighty to give life—and use it without effect, so that there is neither voice nor hearing? *It is possible.* If the staff is to be of any use we must be in touch with the One in whom is life and power. God grant that we may not be powerless, like Gehazi!**

Elisha was very different, and he acted in quite another way. He laid himself on the child, and walked about the house and prayed to God. His every movement denoted the intensity of his exercise, the earnestness with which he sought the life of the child and his dependence upon God. It will be well for us to learn the lessons, for these things are recorded in His Word for our learning.

The third point shall be, *The spirit in which we serve.* The one who deals with children must be like his Lord if he is to be successful. There was Peter, he could stand up on the day of Pentecost and preach so that 3,000 souls were converted; but Peter, in earlier days, had driven the children away from Jesus. We must be very careful that there is nothing in us to drive them away. They doubtless shrank in fear from the disciples, but can you not imagine how eagerly they would run to the outstretched arms of the Savior? Do you think the children were afraid of Jesus? Was there anything in Jesus to drive the children away from Him? You know that Mark's Gospel sets the Lord Jesus before us as the true Servant, and in the tenth chapter we see how He dealt with the children. He put His hands upon them, drew them to His arms, and blessed them. They had a place in His heart. Have the children a place in your heart? If you are like the Lord they will have. Then they will feel that we love them, and we shall seek, in dependence on the Lord, to communicate to them the blessed things that have made us happy—the things of Christ. The Lord grant that we may be able to do that. But we must be near to Him, for it is at the feet of the blessed Lord that we learn and are trained for service.

Lastly, let us think of *The result of your service*. a prestige school headmaster once said, when he looked upon the faces of the boys in his school, that he felt there might be among them a future prime minister—a future commander-in-chief—a future leader of the thoughts of men. But you can say something better than this, as you look on the faces of the children. Yours may grow up to serve the Lord. Who can tell what may come out of your class? Here may be a soul-winner; there, one who shall be a constant comfort to the people of God; another who, perhaps in an obscure place, shall shed the light of the life of Jesus, and last of all and best of all shall shine in the glory of God for ever. This is the great and ultimate end of all our service. If we keep this in view, how earnestly we shall seek that all the children may be the Lord's. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

J.T. Mawson

### Search the Scriptures!

1. What is the name of the king of Tyre who sent cedar logs and craftsmen to king David?
2. What prophet mentions a voice crying in the wilderness?
3. Which apostle shaved head at Cenchrea?

### REST

*"Shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee?"*

### WHAT MANNER ?

**Matthew 8:27; Luke 7:39; 9:55, 2 Peter 3:11–12; 1 John 3:1**

In each of the five scriptures above, we have the words "what manner." Sometimes when we pick out a particular word and link it with other verses where the same word occurs, we may find that in the original language in which the scriptures were written, it is not the same word, **but in the five verses quoted above, they are the same word in each case.**

It is a word used by the Holy Spirit to draw attention to the character of a person. It has been said that it is wrong to use this word as regards the Lord Jesus, because in our use of the expression today we are pointing out the outstanding feature of a person, whereas every feature of the Lord Jesus was in perfect balance, for example, his kindness and love to all those around Him was always balanced by His faithfulness to God. Again, "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." We usually emphasize one or the other, but with Him, they were always in perfect harmony with each other.

- **When the disciples saw the Lord Jesus walking on the sea, they said, "What manner of man is this that even the winds and the sea obey Him!"** Truly they wondered at such a demonstration of His power which shewed indeed who He was as to His person, but even here He was coming to them because of their plight, to strengthen their faith and to relieve them of their danger. In our circumstances, the greater the sense we have of the power and glory of the person who is our Savior, the more our faith and grace will be sustained.

- **In Luke chapter 7**, Simon the Pharisee, referring to the woman who was at the Lord's feet weeping says, "This man, if He were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of

woman this is that toucheth Him: for she is a sinner.” Simon may have known some of her sins, and this was what so outraged him, if such a person could touch the Lord Jesus how could he be a prophet. His self-righteous mind not only judged the woman, but the Lord Jesus also. How little he understood the heart of Jesus! The Lord knew every one of her sins, He soon was to bare them in His body on the tree, but He knew also her repentance and her love for Himself as she washed His feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair.

- **In Luke 9**, the Lord Jesus uses the word in reference to His disciples as He rebuked them for wanting to bring fire down upon those who were refusing the Lord Jesus, “Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are off. For the Son of Man is not come to destroy men’s lives but to save them.” The disciples here were quite wrong in seeking the destruction of men who refused the Lord Jesus because they were not acting as He was, they had been with Him for some time but had not taken on the same spirit as was seen so perfectly in the Lord. Sadly, how often it is so with us. If we were more occupied with the grace and kindness of the Lord Jesus perfectly balanced with the truth as seen in Him, then we would be more formed to His likeness.

- **Peter in his second epistle** uses the word in regard to the “manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God.” Peter here tells us of the tremendous events that will take place when the day of the Lord will come, which will bring to an end the whole sphere of creation and usher in the day of God and a “new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.” The believer as knowing these things ought to walk and live in a way that is in keeping with such events.

- **In John’s first epistle** he writes to draw our attention to the “manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God.” It is impossible for us to fully take in this manner of love as it involves the purpose of

God in eternity when, “He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world,” **the coming into manhood of His beloved Son, His lowly birth, His perfect life, His suffering in the garden and the rejection and abuse of men, Calvary and all that it meant to Him during the three hours of darkness, then the laying down of His life in obedience to His Father’s will, His taking His live again in resurrection and ascension as a man to the right hand of God and the gift of the Holy Spirit. All of this was to accomplish what the Father’s love had planned for us.**

Jeffrey Brett

### *Answers to Scripture search!*

1. Hiram (2 Samuel 5:11)
2. Isaiah (40:3)
3. Paul (Acts 18:18)

## GAZING SKYWARD!

“He knows the number of the stars; He calls them all by their names. Great is our Lord, and of great power” (Psalm 147:4-5).

The darker the night, the better we can see the stars, all of them vast distances away. Some of them are hundreds of trillions of miles away. King David enjoyed gazing at them and wrote: “The Heavens declare the glory of God” (Psalm 19:1). Do you enjoy them too? How strange that some people try to figure out how the starry skies came into being when the answer is found in many places in the Bible. Here is one: “The worlds (stars) were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear” (Hebrews 11:3). The stars came into being at God’s command!

Astronomers admit they have not been able to find an end to the stars and are increasingly amazed at what they discover with electron telescopes. They report that the galaxy called the Milky Way, of which our world is a very tiny part, has an estimated 200 billion stars in it, and that there are at least 175 billion galaxies with a total number of stars so large that it is impossible for our minds to grasp the number. Yet, as our opening Bible verse tells us, God knows the exact number of stars, and even more amazing, He has a name for each one of them! Actually, there is no point in trying to count them, for God himself declared, “The host of heaven cannot be numbered [by man]” (Jeremiah 33:22). We are also told, “one star differeth from another star in glory [beauty]” (1 Corinthians 15:41). No two are alike. What pleasure our blessed God must have had when He stretched “out the heavens like a curtain” (Psalm 104:2).

Here is an example of how the Creator made each star different from all others. Earth’s diameter is 7,926 miles, compared with the star Betelgeuse’s diameter of 540,000,000 miles and the star Aurigae’s diameter of 750,000,000 miles. Our sun is 865,000

miles in diameter, or more than 100 times Earth’s size. If we were to compare others within reach of telescopes, we would be astounded to discover what great differences the Creator has made in all of them.

**It has been calculated that our fastest spaceship traveling from Earth would take 40,000 years to reach the star known as Alpha Centauri, which is 26,000,000,000,000 (26 trillion) miles away from us. (Even at that distance, it is the third brightest star in the night sky.) Yet, for all these great distances, which boggle the minds of astronomers, the Creator has each heavenly body under His constant gaze and keeps each one in its proper orbit. Only He could make them, place them in their orbits in space, and keep them in order.**

**We sing a hymn that states it so well, “Isn’t He wonderful!”**

## GEORGE WILSON REFUSED A PARDON!

In about 1830, a man named George Wilson killed a government employee when he was caught robbing the mail. Wilson was tried and sentenced to be hanged. However, the President of the United States, Andrew Jackson, sent Wilson a pardon. Then George Wilson did a strange thing: he refused to accept the pardon. No one seemed to know what to do, so Wilson's case was sent to the U. S. Supreme Court. Chief Justice Marshall wrote his opinion: "A pardon is a slip of paper, the value of which is determined by the acceptance of the person to be pardoned. If it is refused, it is no pardon. George Wilson must be hanged." And he was.

The cross of Christ is a revelation of God's love for all people. We may do cowardly and disappointing things and bring deep pain to God's heart, but in the cross we see that He never gives up on us. Something happened that day on Calvary that forever makes a difference in the relationship between people and God. Even when the love of Jesus was thrown in His face with spitting, mocking, and cursing, it remained unbroken.

The death of Christ on the cross is the pardon God has sent. There on the Cross He, because of His great love and grace, paid for the penalty of our sin. But before it becomes a pardon, we must accept it in faith and obedience. It is through the cross, and only through the cross that we can be saved from sin and its consequence of eternal separation from God in hell.

Here is what God, who cannot lie, says:

1. Every human is a sinner (Romans 3:23)
2. God's penalty for sin is death (Romans 6:23)
3. In His great love, God has made provision for the salvation of sinners (Romans 5:8)
4. Each person must put his trust in the Lord Jesus Christ who offers free salvation for those who accept His gift of love (Romans 10:9–10, 13)

When the director walks onto the stage, the play is over. When the Lord returns in judgment, what is the good of saying you are on His side then, when you see the whole natural universe melting away like a dream and something new coming in? This time it will be God without disguise; something so overwhelming that it will strike either irresistible love or irresistible horror into every creature. It will be too late then to choose your side. Instead, it will be the time when we discover which side we really have chosen, whether we realized it before or not. Now, today, this moment, is our chance to choose the right side.

**"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son SHALL NOT see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36).**  
*Have you accepted God's pardon in Christ Jesus the Lord? If not, will you?*