



TOWARD THE MARK

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

PHILIPPIANS 3:14

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OF ALL AGES*

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Dear Reader,

“I am crucified with Christ” (Gal. 2:20).

To participate in the life of Christ, we must first be identified with Him in His death. “For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection” (Rom. 6:5). Those of us who now have eternal life have died in the person of our sinless Substitute, Jesus Christ, just as surely as if we had consciously been present at Calvary. While in principle our crucifixion is thus an accomplished fact, in daily practice it should constantly mean “death” to the self-life!

A young man once approached an older Christian with the question, “What does it mean as far as this life is concerned to be ‘crucified with Christ?’” The believer replied, “It means three things: (1) a man on a cross is facing only one direction; (2) he is not going back; and (3) he has no further plans of his own. First, a crucified man is facing in only one direction. Too many Christians are trying to face in two directions at the same time. They are divided in heart. They want Heaven, but they also are in love with the world. They are like Lot’s wife; they are running one way, but are facing another. Second, a crucified man is not coming back. The cross spells *finis* for him; he is not going to return to his old life. Third, a crucified man has no plans of his own. He is finished with the vainglory of this life. Its chains are all broken, and its charms are all gone.” In the light of these three truths, would you say that you are truly “crucified?”

It is our prayer that the Lord will use this issue to strengthen you and help you to grow spiritually in your Christian life and walk.

Thanks again for your great response and encouragement to this exercise.

Please keep us in prayer.

Yours in our soon coming Lord,

Emil S. Nashed

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

MILK

"The truth shall make you free"

THE BLOOD OF CHRIST: ITS GREAT VALUE

Every animal sacrifice of the Old Testament adds its voice of strong insistence that apart from the shedding of blood there can be no true relationship with God at all.

Sin has caused a total barrier that only the blood of a perfectly acceptable sacrifice can remove. All of this pointed to God's one great provision of the New Testament: "You were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold... but with the precious blood of Christ" (1 Pet. 1:18-19).

What infinite value is in that blood, and what infinite blessing has been secured by it for the sake of innumerable sinners saved by the grace of God!

Let us consider some of the dreadfully devastating effects sin has caused, and the wonderful value in the blood of Christ that is sufficient to fully remove them all.

1. The **contamination of sin** has rendered us all unclean. For this reason **cleansing by the blood of Christ** is an absolute necessity. Only His blood can cleanse us in the eyes of God from such filth. Every believer may have the firm assurance that "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 Jn. 1:7)

2. Because sin is an **offense** against God, an insult to His supreme power and authority, therefore we require **forgiveness**; and forgiveness is impossible without a basis of truth when we have offended the Creator of heaven and earth. This perfectly satisfactory basis is "the precious blood of Christ." "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins,

according to the riches of His grace" (Eph. 1:7). But "without shedding of blood there is no remission" (Heb. 9:22). God forgives because He sees perfect virtue in the blood of Christ.

3. But sin has also brought all mankind into **bondage**; it has enslaved us. Therefore **redemption** is another great necessity. God's word says concerning believers, "In Him we have redemption through His blood" (Eph.1:7), that is, the complete setting free and bringing back by virtue of a price paid, that price the blood shedding of the Son of God. Only God can measure the greatness of that price, but believers can certainly appreciate the marvelous liberty it has brought them.

4. The **guilt** and stigma of sin is another of its dreadful consequences. For this we require **justification**. "Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him" (Rom.5:9). The true believer is "now justified by His blood:" he is completely cleared from every charge, and righteousness is imputed to him, that is, it is put to his account, though he has no righteousness of his own. It is a perfect justification because of the perfection of the value God sees in the blood of Christ.

5. Because sin has also affected us by **involvement with a world of evil**, a separation from this involvement is necessary. This is **sanctification**, or being set apart. We could never accomplish this, for we were hopelessly enmeshed and beyond all human help, but God has accomplished this wonderful work for believers, again by the blood of His beloved Son, setting us apart to Himself from the world and its evil associations. "Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate" (Heb. 13:12).

6. Sin has also caused **enmity** toward God; and though the need then for **peace** was great, no human effort could accomplish this. Not that God was our enemy, but we were His enemies. Only concerning Christ, the Son of God, could it be said, "having made peace through the blood of His cross"

(Col.1:20). This is the only basis of peace for sinful mankind; therefore all who receive Christ receive peace with God.

7. Closely connected with this is the fact that sin has caused **distance** between mankind and God. Humans in their sins do not like to think of being near to God. But **nearness** to God is what people need; and this too is accomplished only by Christ Jesus, through the shedding of His blood. Scripture says concerning true believers, “But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ” (Eph.2:13).

8. Because sin has caused the **false service** of dead works in our outward conduct, this required the blood of Christ to purge the conscience in order that one may do **true service** to God. “How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (Heb. 9:14).

9. Because sin has made man an **idolater**, worshipping almost anything but the true God, only the blood of Christ could change this, and transform one into a **true worshipper of God**. “Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus” (Heb. 10:19). Apart from that precious blood shed, one can never enter God’s presence as a true worshipper of the living God. But what a transformation, from idolater to worshipper!

These are some of the wonderful reasons we have for profoundest thanksgiving to God for “the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” And all of this is applicable to all those who have truly received Christ as Savior.

L.M. Grant

Meat

“Sanctify them by the truth”

THE BREAKING OF BREAD

PART 2

Read Luke 22:14-20

Each of the gospels describe the occasion when the breaking of bread was instituted; however, only the first three provide the actual details of the Lord’s Supper. As we review the separate records of this occasion, it is clear that the Supper was celebrated only by the Lord Himself and those of His own truly linked by His love.

John 13:30 clearly states that Judas was not present: “he then, having received the sop, went immediately out, and it was night.” The Passover was celebrated: any Jew who was “ceremonially clean” could participate, and Judas did so. Immediately after his departure, we see that only His own, those bound to Him by links of love, participated in the Lord’s Supper. Thus only those who are truly saved should partake in this, the Lord’s Supper.

It is in Luke’s gospel that we find the fullest account of this celebration of love. It is only in this account that the very personal character is given:

“This is *My* body, which is given for *you*. This do for a remembrance of *Me*.”

“This cup is the new covenant in *My* blood which is shed for *you*.”

This expression of the bond of love, established by the death of Christ, is surely the foremost thought in partaking of the Supper. It has been said that in Luke’s account we have the Lord Himself showing His disciples in what way He could still be with them after His departure; that is, in the Supper they

would “call HIM to mind.” **It is not simply recalling a mere historical event, rather in partaking of the bread and wine there is a calling to mind (literal meaning of remember) of Himself, in a very personal way.** The reality of His death would surely occupy the heart at such a moment, but at the same time, there is the full recognition of Him as the Living One, “alive for evermore,” the “firstborn among many brethren.”

The link we observe between the Passover and the Lord’s Supper is most touching. The Passover recalled the night “much to be remembered” when the blood of the slain lamb was sprinkled on the doorposts and the lintel of the house of those in Egypt who were sheltered from the judgment past upon the guilty around them. It was more for the Israelites the pledge of redemption, not only to bring them out of bondage but to bring them in to the good land of God’s purpose. **A type maintained for 1,500 years of our blessed Lord, the true Passover lamb, whose death is the basis and pledge of a redemption and deliverance far deeper and wider than any Israelite ever knew or dreamed of. Is it not wonderful to see the fulfillment of the type on the Passover day itself, “our Passover, sacrificed for us?”** Surely this touches the heart anew as the words of our Lord echo in our ear, “with desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer” (Lk. 22:15). In eating the Passover with His disciples, our Saviour associated Himself with the godly remnant of the day, taking care to eat it earlier than usual among the Jews. **It is clear that the Jews generally ate the Passover on Friday afternoon, as we would say, while the Lord ate on Thursday evening. The result being, that at the time when the Passover was generally eaten, the true Passover Lamb was offered.**

The Passover being eaten, the Lord formally sets it aside for the time being, with the declaration that He will no more eat thereof until the Kingdom of God should come. This is, no doubt, a reference to the establishment of the Kingdom in

display and power. It is the Lord’s own pledge that, despite the appearance of everything seeming to be closed by His rejection and death, nothing of God’s purpose will fail, every promise of God as to Christ will be fully realized. **In the meantime, a new order is brought in and instituted in the Lord’s Supper. This little company around Himself on that betrayal night represented the whole company who, by eating of the bread and drinking of the cup, show forth His death – that is His rejection here – until His coming again.**

How it captivates our hearts as we think of the Lord, who had full knowledge of all that would come out in His Own – their denial, forsaking, and flight in the presence of danger – expressing the yearning of His love for them; that love which would have them close about Him in that dark hour.

Then we remember the gracious words of the Lord in that upper room and on the way to Gethsemane in John 13–17. It would appear that as the pressure grew, His heart found relief in bringing out the riches of divine love. These riches, no doubt so precious to those around Him that night, have cheered the hearts of all the saints who have been brought into this circle of divine love.

J.A.P

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES!

1. Who had the only birthday mentioned in the New Testament?
2. How many times is Eve’s name mentioned in the Bible?
3. What woman was the first Christian convert in Europe?

Exercise

“Exercise thyself unto piety”

DID YOU KNOW?

Let us begin with what you do know, or should know. The Lord Jesus in the Scriptures is presented to us, amongst His other names, as “the Word” (John. 1:1). **What perhaps you do not know is just how frequently the Lord, while here, quoted from the Scriptures, the very words which we have in our Bibles today.**

Let us look at some of these briefly. **“Abraham rejoiced to see My Day,” “Moses wrote of Me,” “David called (Me) Lord,” (John. 7:19; 5:46-47; Mark. 7:13; Matthew 8:4).**

In the temptation, three short words from Deuteronomy, like the small stones in David’s sling, brought down to the ground the enemy of our souls, the giant Goliath. Later he cut off his head. Similarly when the Lord quoted from Deuteronomy to counter the Devil’s suggestions, Satan was banished from His presence for a season. Starting His public ministry in Nazareth He quoted the Scripture from Isaiah (Luke 4:18-21). The sequel is interesting and instructive (v. 22-30).

In the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:17-19) He said, “I am not come to destroy but to fulfill...Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled.” **If you continue these studies you will discover (if you don’t know it already) just how abundant are His quotations from the Old Testament. He refers to about 20 Old Testament characters, and quotes from about 19 different books.** Try it for yourself and see how many you can find and when you are short in your count, ask your father or your mother. But remember your minds are younger and

fresher than theirs and perhaps they don’t have as much free time. **Listen to our Lord’s words, “Have ye not read,” “It is written,” “The Scriptures testify of Me,” “The Scriptures must be fulfilled,” “Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures,” and “Have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God?”** In Matthew 22:29-32, our Lord speaks to the Sadducees who did not believe (and many today say the same) that there is a resurrection. God is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. Solemn thought for the unbeliever.

As the Cross drew near, listen to our Savior’s words, “Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished” (Luke 28:31). “For I Say unto you, that this which is written must be fulfilled in Me, ‘And He was reckoned with the transgressors,’ for that which concerned Me hath fulfillment” (Luke. 22:37). On the night of His betrayal, He three times points to the fulfilling of scriptures concerning Himself (Matthew 26:31, 54, and Mark 14:48-49). Three of the seven sayings from the Cross are the very words of Scripture, and He died with one of them on His lips.

This pattern continues unchanged after the resurrections. On the Emmaus road, to the disconsolate disciples, “O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory? And beginning in all the Scriptures, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself” (Luke 24:25-27). **It was His pattern before the Cross, and the same after the Cross.** There is one slight addition when He appeared to the gathered company in Luke 24-26. Have you noticed it? On the Emmaus Road their Lord drew upon Moses and the prophets. In the upper room He added the Psalms. Why was it that He added, on that occasion, the clear testimony to His session at the Father’s right hand? He must have been quoting from Ps. 110. How

beautiful are these delightful little touches as we pay careful attention to what the Lord says.

But there is another Scripture, this time from the glory, “Fear not, I am the first and the last. I am He that liveth and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore. Amen; and have the keys of hell and death” (Revelation 1:17-18). And again, “He that hath the Key of David, He that openeth, and no man shutteth, and shutteth, and no man openeth” (Revelation 3:7). These are direct quotes from (Isaiah 44:6, 22:22).

Truly the Lord Jesus Christ is the Key to all Scripture. But some brothers will say to you and to me, it is not Scripture in the head that we need. “Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against Thee” (Psalm 119:11). This is true, **but how do we get the word down from the head to the heart? Only by faith.** And where does faith come from? “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17). This would suppose that the normal route for the word is from the head to the heart. **Hence the Lord says to us all, “Search the Scriptures and they are they that testify of Me” (John 5:29).** If your father has in his library our brother Darby’s lectures on “The Hopes of the Church” (Geneva, 1840), you will find in those lectures that almost every page is given up to the quotation of Scripture (from the lecturer’s memory, it would seem), and what an impact those lectures have had since then! You and I do not pretend to be in the same class as J.N.D., nevertheless, we can learn not a little from his method.

How precious is God’s Holy Word! Let us value it above everything else in this world, except, of course, the Lord Himself.

D.W. Paterson

REST

“Shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee?”

FRUIT OF HIS RESURRECTION

“MY BRETHREN”

“Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God”

(John 20:17)

The incident from which our scripture is taken opens with Mary Magdalene standing outside the empty sepulcher in which the body of the Lord Jesus had lain. The rest of the disciples had all gone home. She is found there alone, weeping in her sorrow as she supposed she had lost the Lord Jesus, whom she loved dearly for ever. As the subject we are considering brings before us the highest Christian privilege and blessing, we may wonder why this communication was given to a woman.

I believe that one of the reasons for this is that in Mary Magdalene we see one who had been marvelously delivered from her previous life when she was completely dominated by demons. Consequently her whole life from that moment was taken up with the blessed Man whom she loved dearly.

If we are to enjoy the greatest Christian privileges, then we need to be delivered from everything in our lives, which would take the place that Christ should have. Our affections need to be centered on Him, as He is the centre from which all these blessings flow out.

It may not be necessary to know and understand all the doctrines of Christianity. If it were so, many of us would be excluded from the enjoyment of these things. It is rather to do with our love for the Lord Jesus and being prepared to put all else aside for Him.

Mary obviously did not believe that the Lord Jesus was raised from the dead. She was seeking for His dead body. Her little world had suddenly all gone wrong as she thought she had lost Him forever. But her love for Him was so great that she wanted to bestow all the honour that she could even upon His corpse.

The two angels who were sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet where the body of Jesus had lain, caused her no fear. They asked her,

“Woman, why weepst thou?” They could see her tears but could not enter into what was in her heart that caused her tears. She turns round, having found no comfort from the angels, and sees Jesus standing but does not recognize Him. He not only saw her tears but His question probed her heart. “Woman, why weepst thou? Whom seekest thou?” Her sorrow was caused by what her heart had lost. We may wonder why she did not recognize the Lord as, apart from the wounds of crucifixion, I believe He would have looked just the same. But unbelief will often blind the eyes. It was so with those two who were going home to Emmaus; they also did not recognize the Lord when He drew near and went with them.

This has a word to us surely. Unless we have the faith to believe what the Bible tells us, how can we enter into the enjoyment of the blessings that it tells? The Lord Jesus is indeed raised from the dead and has gone back to heaven as a man. It is from that place, in the presence of His Father, that He would bring you and me in fellowship with Himself and His Father. How can that be, if we do not believe that He is there?

The Lord Jesus not only saw the tears of Mary, but also knew why she wept. He wanted her to tell Him, “Sir, if thou have borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away.” In her answer Mary laid bare what was in her heart and the Lord Jesus appreciated it. **I wonder if we have ever had an experience like this. Have you ever told the Lord Jesus how much you love Him? He, of course knows it, so it is no good saying things that we do not mean. But He loves to hear us tell Him. If we do we can be sure that a real blessing will flow from it.** In thinking of the Lord’s next word to her, I am reminded of His words in John 10:3, “and the sheep hear His voice: and He calleth His own sheep by name, and leadeth them out,” and the end of verse 4: “and the sheep follow Him: for they know His voice.” “Jesus saith unto her, Mary.” The use of her own name immediately causes Mary to recognize Him and she calls Him “Rabboni” which really means “My dear Master.” The Shepherd calls to one of His sheep and the sheep responds to the Shepherd, because there was a mutuality of love between them. Every thing for Mary at that moment changed. Her tears were wiped away. Her sorrow was gone! He was alive!

It is impossible to describe the joy of a believer when he or she realizes that Jesus is alive now. Though we may not be able to see Him, the Holy Spirit brings Him consciously before us and the heart is set free from every other object to be centered on Him. But Mary had further lessons to learn. She would have held Him. She thought that every thing was to be as it was before He was crucified. But the Lord says in v. 17, “Touch Me not; for I am not yet ascended to My Father.” He was in effect saying,

“Mary, you cannot have Me as you had Me before.” I am reminded of the words of Paul in 2 Cor. 5:16-17, “Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”

Mary had known Christ “after the flesh” and she would have liked to have Him still in that way, but “all things had become new.” He was now in resurrection; everything connected with things after the flesh had ended in His death. But a new order of things had begun in resurrection. It is in that sphere of life that we can now know Christ. We can have no relationship with Christ, as He was as a man down here. That order of manhood into which He came and which in us was under sin and death has been terminated in His death. But His resurrection has opened out the sphere of new creation, and it is in that life that we are in relationship with Him now and will be for eternity. Sin and death will never have any power over that life, because it is the life of God Himself.

He was about to ascend back to His Father, to that place that was ever His in eternity before He came here as a man. In John 17 speaking to His Father, He says, “I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was.” The words “with Thee” are really “along side of Thee” and refer to that position of being with the Father. He demands to be reinstated in that place but now as a man. Mary, of course, could not know or understand this. But her love for Him was about to lead her into the profound blessing that He was about to communicate to her and to His disciples. “Go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God.”

The Lord Jesus had never before called His disciples “My brethren.” They were brethren according to the flesh as they all sprang originally from Abraham. **This word “brethren” is used in the Scriptures to denote persons who are all of the same stock or lineage. It is very important to understand this if we are to know what the Lord Jesus meant when He called His disciples “My brethren.” We have already seen that in resurrection He commences a new creation.** The “seed,” from which that new generation has sprung, is Himself in resurrection life. You remember His words in John 12:24, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” As a man down here the Lord Jesus was alone.

Mainly because of His sinless perfection. But even His disciples misunderstood Him. None of them could enter into His sufferings in the garden of Gethsemane. In fact, eventually they all forsook Him and fled. On the cross when “bearing our sins in His own body” He is even forsaken by His God. His words, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” illustrate how completely alone He was. He dies and is laid in a tomb. But He rises again. Paul says in 1 Cor. 15:23, “Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s.” T. Willey’s hymn says,

“Thou wast alone, till like the precious grain,
In death thou layest, but did’st rise again;
And in Thy risen life, a countless host are ‘all of one’
With Thee, Thy joy and boast.”

The joy of Mary in finding Him alive could not be compared to the joy that was His. He was bringing His disciples into a new relationship. He ever was in that relationship to His Father, but He was now sharing that relationship with His own, and was about to impart to them the life to enjoy that new relationship. This is true of every believer today. When the Lord Jesus said to Nicodemus in John 3:7, “Ye must be born again,” He was in fact saying that the old nature is incapable of receiving anything from God. Sin has ruined us and it is only by the work of the Spirit of God that we can receive blessing from God. So God begins anew with us in new birth. This gives us a new nature that is able to respond to God. So we read in John 1:12-13, “But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” These verses make it so clear that the reason why any of us believed on the Lord Jesus was because of the work of God by His Spirit in new birth.

New birth gives us a new nature that responds to God, but it is by believing on the Son that we receive eternal life. These two things are distinct but intimately connected. Having then a new nature and a new life we are able to enter into the new relationship that the Lord Jesus delights to bring us into by knowing His Father as our Father, and His God as our God. So He calls His disciples “my brethren.” To this company He delights to reveal the Father and to make His name known. He says in John 17:6, “I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world,” and again in v. 8, “For I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me; and they have received them.” Finally at the end of that chapter He says, “And I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them.” So the knowledge of the name of the Father is that whereby we come into the

enjoyment of that love that ever existed eternally between the Father and the Son.

What took place as recorded in John 21 we can refer to as happening in the past. But the expression “My brethren” is used in Heb. 2:11-12 as to what is a present thing. “For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one; for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare Thy name unto My brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto Thee.” The expression ‘all of one’ means again that they are all from the same seed, so the Lord is not ashamed of us. Rather He delights to lead us in response to His Father. The verse actually is a quotation from Psalm 22 where the intense sufferings of the Lord Jesus on account of His bearing our sin, is described. In v. 21 of the Psalm, He says, “Thou hast heard Me from the horns of the unicorns,” or from the place of “impalement,” a reference to the death of the cross. Immediately He says, “I will declare Thy name unto My brethren.” He then takes up the position of leading the song of praise to His Father. **You and I can join in this because we know His Father as our Father. I believe this is the greatest joy of the Lord Jesus, that of leading His own in responsive worship to His Father.**

The matter of singing is very important for believers. We can consider this in three ways. We can sing about the Lord Jesus and what He has done for us. Then we can sing to the Lord Jesus in praise and thankfulness for what He has done for us. But I believe the greatest privilege is to sing with the Lord Jesus. You may notice that in Ps. 22 the response to God widens out in ever increasing circles until it fills the entire creation of God. But the theme of praise commences with the Lord Himself and then by those that are nearest and dearest to Him, “My brethren.” The seed of Jacob, that is the Jews, also take it up and then finally in v. 27, “All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before Thee.” So I think you can understand why this is the greatest privilege and blessing that we can enjoy. Christ is the theme and the centre of it. It is His greatest joy.

But there is a future aspect of the term “brethren.” It is in Romans 8:29, “For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.” This takes us back into eternity to the purpose of God before the foundation of this world. Then the “many brethren” who would believe on the Lord Jesus were marked out for a place with God’s beloved Son. And not only given a place, but also to be conformed to His image, that is made like unto Himself with a glorified body. So is formed that vast company composed of every saint of God from Pentecost to the rapture who

would surround the Lord Jesus in order that He might have the place of pre-eminence in that glorious scene. The word “firstborn” in scripture is a term of rank; it could be translated “chief” or “prince.”

The way that God brings this about is explained in v. 30, “Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified.” We have moved on from what God purposed before the world ever existed, to how He has accomplished His purpose. Everything in these two verses is what God is doing. It has nothing to do with our responsibility. If it had then there would be the possibility of it failing. But this will never fail because it is God who does it. Those that He marked out, He called by the gospel. Those who believed through the operation of new birth, He justified by the death and resurrection of His Son. Every one of these will eventually be glorified and made like to His Son in heaven. In that glorious scene the Lord Jesus will be supreme.

The words of J.N. Darby’s hymn sum it up,

“Nor we alone, Thy loved ones all, complete
In glory round Thee there with joy shall meet,
All like Thee, for Thy glory like Thee, Lord,
Object supreme of all, by all adored.”

Then, too, will be fulfilled the desire of the Lord Jesus in His words to His Father, just before He went to the cross, “Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which thou hast given Me: for thou lovest Me before the foundation of the world” (John. 17:24).

Jeffrey Brett

ANSWERS TO SCRIPTURES SEARCH!

1. Herod (Mark 6:21)
2. Only four times
3. Lydia (Acts 16:14)

AN ANSWER TO PRAYER

Chaplain Johnson was serving as chaplain on an island in the South Pacific during the Second World War. While the soldiers returned to their base after a successful mission, their army plane began to lose altitude. As the engines seemed to fade out, the crew found themselves over an island on which they were able to make a safe landing.

Later the men learned that the enemy was just half a mile in each direction, yet their landing had not been discovered. The staff sergeant approached Captain Johnson, and said, “Chaplain, you have been telling us for months of the need of praying and believing that God will answer our prayers. Now is your chance to prove what you have been preaching. We’re out of gas for our plane. The base is several hundred miles away. We are surrounded by the enemy.”

Captain Johnson immediately begun to pray and claim promises from the Scriptures such as, “Before they call I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear” (Isa. 6:24). Would God help them?

All afternoon Captain Johnson was on his knees, and as he prayed he was assured that God would work a miracle – send them gas and get them free from enemy territory. Night came and the crew slept, but Johnson continued to pray.

About two o’clock in the morning the staff sergeant was strangely stirred. He got up and walked to the edge of the water. There on the beach he discovered a barge which had drifted into shore. On it were fifty barrels containing high octane gasoline! A few hours later the crew reached their base safely.

Later the crew found out that some time before, the skipper of a U.S. tanker, finding his ship in submarine-infested seas, removed his gasoline cargo so as to minimize the danger in case his ship was hit by a torpedo. The barrels of gasoline were put adrift 600 miles from where Captain Johnson and the plane crew were forced down. God had navigated one of the barges through wind and current for 600 miles and beached it fifty steps from the stranded men! What a miracle!

“Stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God” (Job 37:14).

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Q: Acts 8:13 tells us that Simon believed Philip's preaching concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ; however, in 8:21, Peter tells Simon that his heart is not right in the sight of God. Is Simon a true believer? Because it would be simple if v. 13 read, "Simon *said* he believed," but it doesn't. And what does v. 23 mean when Peter tells Simon he is in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.

Luke C.

A: The simple answer to your question is "no" – Simon is not a true believer. It is helpful when reading the book of Acts to keep in mind that it is a transitional book, from Judaism to Christianity. We do not look for doctrine in this book. At the beginning of Acts the Holy Spirit was received by the laying on of the hands of the apostles (8:17), whereas today He indwells the believer upon salvation. The people of Samaria believed when Philip preached the glad tidings concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ and were baptized. Baptism is the way of entrance into the sphere of Christian profession; the possession of the Holy Spirit is the evidence of new life. Simon does not have the Spirit and so is not saved – does not have eternal life. So his belief, like all "professers" is intellectual and without reality. There are many who believe with the head, but not the heart (Rom.10:9); the demons also believe (Jam. 2:19). During the ministry of the Lord Jesus Himself we know that many believed, but He did not commit Himself to them (Jn. 2:22-23). Peter's response makes clear that Simon could repent, but that he was still in bondage and money was controlling his life. Simon is looking for a man to intercede for him before God, rather than turning to the Lord Jesus, who alone gives faith for belief.

J.A.P.

THE MAN OF SORROWS

PART 2

A child in growth and stature,
Yet full of wisdom rare;
Sonship, in conscious nature,
His words and ways declare.

Yet still in meek submission
His patient path He trod,
To wait His heavenly mission,
Unknown to all but God.

But who, Thy path of service,
Thy steps removed from ill,
Thy patient love to serve us,
With human tongue can tell?

Midst sin and all corruption,
Where hatred did abound,
Thy path of true perfection
Was light on all around.

In scorn, neglect, reviling,
Thy patient grace stood fast;
Man's malice unavailing
To move Thy heart to haste.

O'er all, Thy perfect goodness
Rose blessedly divine;
Poor hearts oppressed with
sadness
Found ever rest in Thine.

The strong man in his armour
Thou mettest in Thy grace,
Did'st spoil the mighty charmer
Of our unhappy race.

The chains of man, his victim,
Were loosened by Thy hand;
No evils that afflict him
Before Thy power could stand.

Disease, and death, and demon,
All fled before Thy word,
As darkness the dominion
Of day's returning lord!

The love that bore our burden
On the accursèd tree,
Would give the heart its pardon,
And set the sinner free!

Love, that made Thee a mourner
In this sad world of woe,
Made wretched man a scorner
Of grace - that brought Thee low.

Still in Thee love's sweet savour
Shone forth in every deed,
And showed God's loving favour
To every soul in need.

J. N. Darby

THE CHRISTIAN AND THE EMPEROR

Theodosius the Great, who lived in the fourth century, embraced a certain heresy, and therefore would not acknowledge the Lord Jesus as the eternal Son of the Father and as God manifest in flesh.

On one occasion he was waited upon by a deputation of Christians. One of them, an aged man, was very careful to pay due respect to the emperor; but when the emperor's son, Prince Arcadius, was introduced, the bishop treated him with great familiarity, as though he were but an ordinary boy.

Much annoyed at this disrespectful behavior, Theodosius ordered the attendants to turn the aged man out of the palace.

Noting the emperor's anger, the old Christian fearlessly said, "If you are angry because a slight is put upon your son, so will God the Father be angry with those who refuse to His Son the honors which they pay to Himself."

This noble reply much affected the emperor, and happily led him to perceive the error of this heresy and to renounce its profession.

Great is the folly of the man who refuses Christ as Savior and yet hopes for the favor of God. "He that honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father which hath sent Him."(John5:23) The Lord Jesus says, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me."(John 14:6)

God will have nothing to do with the sinner that will not approach Him in the name of Jesus. "Go to Joseph" was the word long ago. Now God's command is, "Go to Jesus." Every knee must bow to Him. God is determined to exalt His Son, for, when here, man abased Him. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not he Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36).