



***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*

**April 2014
Vol. 13. No.2**

April, 2014

Dear Reader,

“But now is Christ risen from the dead” (1 Corinthians 15:20).

The Resurrection of Christ was miraculous and perfectly unique. It was God’s great approval to every word that He said on earth, every claim that He made, and above all it was the proof that the death of the Lord was accepted as sufficient atonement for sin.

The Resurrection of Christ is one of the great pillars of the Christian faith. If His Person was not all that the Scriptures claim it to be, His death must have been an immense failure and His resurrection an absolute impossibility. If His death had not satisfied God about the whole question of sin, then again, the resurrection was an impossibility. On the other hand, if His Person was all the Scriptures claim it to be, and His work that which satisfied God about the sin question, then the resurrection was a glorious necessity, the insistent demand of righteousness.

The Resurrection of Christ, is a central point of our faith. First, because it was testified to by men who had every opportunity of seeing and knowing, and whose veracity was tested by the most tremendous trials and severe pressures during their lives and saw it's impact on the world.

Second, because of its future effect. Death is the end of human life and hope; resurrection is the end of death, and the introduction of the raised one into a world where death shall be no more. Christ died and rose again, and it is in virtue of His glorious work that He has become for all His people the resurrection and the life.

Third, because of its present effect, and as JND put it best, **“The life of a risen man is not of this world; it has no connection with it. He who possesses this life may pass through the world, and do many things that others do. He eats, works, suffers; but, as to his life and objects, he is not of the world, even as Christ was not of the world. Christ, risen and ascended up on high, is His life. He subdues the flesh, He mortifies it, for in point of fact He is down here, but He does not live in it.”**

May the Lord use this issue of *Toward the Mark* to help you grow and be established as you read it. Thank you for your e-mails and notes of encouragement. Please keep us in your prayers.

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*"

HINTS FOR YOUNG CHRISTIANS

When first converted, we often suppose that the only difficulties we shall have to meet are those which may come from our old worldly companions; but this is not so. The coldest blast from outside, that ever blew upon a young convert, came from those who profess to be the Lord's, but who yet want to go on with the world. Such people find that their ways are rebuked by the faithfulness of an ardent heart, whose first love causes it to diligently follow Christ, and refuse things that worldly Christians can go on with.

The difficulties which we may have to face, whether from worldly companions or from Christians of a worldly mind, we may speak of as hindrances *from without*, yet neither of them can be compared with the difficulties and hindrances that proceed *from within*.

Ideals of what a Christian should be, and of what he should experience, are often entertained by the young, and yet they are unrealized! Perhaps they read biographies of excellent saints and servants of God, whose course has been run and finished, and then they compare their own experience with what they read. The result is very painful. Their lives seem to come woefully short of these dear saints, and so odious is the comparison that they are sometimes led to despair and tempted to doubt if they are Christians at all! **Their trouble does not spring so much from what they have done in the way of sins, but from what they are, and from the heart-sickening disappointment they feel when they discover that their conversion has not improved nor mended their old evil nature.**

The young convert has to make three discoveries before he proceeds very far.

1. He has committed sins against God.
2. He is thoroughly sinful in himself.
3. He is powerless in himself to do the right, and seems to do worst when aiming at the best.

The first discovery is very easily made: indeed he made it at the outset when he turned to God. The second and third are discoveries that we make much more slowly. However, he turns his eyes in two directions: first, outward, to what he ought to be for God as he sees it in the Scriptures; second, inward, to what he actually is in himself and in his practice. Then it is that these discoveries become real to him.

He started with the idea that conversion is a great inward change, whereby the old nature would be greatly improved; hence his trouble. He compares his experience with God's Word, and—poor wearied soul—he comes to the conclusion that he cannot be converted, for they do not at all tally.

There are three facts concerning the one that is born of God, very plainly stated in Scripture.

1. He “doth not...and he *cannot sin*” (1 John 3:9).
2. He “overcometh the world” (1 John 5:4).
3. He “keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not” (1 John 5:18).

Now, with 1 John 3:9 compare Romans 8:7–8, where we read of that which *cannot be subject* to the law of God, which *cannot please* God, which, in fact, *cannot do anything but sin*. Is there any contradiction here? There is not. But there is a tremendous contrast. What is the explanation of it?

The explanation lies in the fact that there are two distinct natures in the believer. They can be seen very clearly in such a verse as Romans 7:25, where we read,

1. “With *the mind* I myself serve the law of God”;
2. “With *the flesh* the law of sin.”

Here the mind stands for the new nature, and the flesh for the old nature. And the real “myself” he identifies with the new nature and not the old.

It is most important that we should lay hold of the fact that *the old nature is not improved but condemned*. Sin, the evil principle controlling the old nature, is not affected by the forgiveness of sins, any more than the nature of a crab-apple tree is altered by knocking off the crab-apples. Our sins are forgiven, but “sin in the flesh” has been “condemned” (Romans 8:3).

The old order of man, born of Adam the first, has been condemned, just as the Lord condemned and cursed the barren fig tree, as recorded in Matthew 21:16 and Mark 11:20. A new order, connected with Adam the Last, has been commenced, as is indicated in 1 Corinthians 15:45. Now we no longer stand *in Adam* but *in Christ*.

What troubles many a new-born soul is that he cannot make the flesh in him to be what he knows a new-born soul ought to be. What a comfort it is to know that God has condemned the flesh, and is no more expecting any good to come from it. We should no more expect any good from it than He does.

Thus it is we learn that we are bankrupt, not only as regards *goodness* but as regards *power* also. Where then is power to be found?—we may ask. The answer is—we have a new power, and it is ours in the Holy Spirit .

Before conversion sin was our master. It is looked at in this way in Romans 6. In that chapter we read such things as:

“That henceforth we should not *serve* sin.”

“Let not sin therefore *reign*...that ye should obey it.”

“Sin shall not have *dominion* over you.”

“Ye were the *servants* of sin.”

“The *wages* of sin.”

And again in chapter 7, verse 14, we read, “I am carnal, *sold under sin*.” Sold under sin, just as a slave is sold, and thereby passes under a master. Well, how do we get free from the tyrant, SIN?

Romans 5 shows us the way of freedom when it says, “He that is dead is freed from sin.”

Death liberates from the master, no matter how firmly his fetters were riveted on. This has always been true, hence Job speaks of death as a place where, “the prisoners...hear not the voice of the oppressor...and the servant is free from his master” (3:18–19).

Here, however, a further difficulty may occur. How is it, we may say, that I am spoken of by God as dead, when I am not actually dead? It is because you have died *as identified with Christ*, and on this account you are to reckon yourself as dead to sin and alive to God. Were it an actual fact that you had died there would be no call to reckon yourself dead. **When a person reckons himself deaf to the call of his old master, it is because he is not actually deaf. He does not however respond to the call of his old master, and we are to reckon ourselves dead to sin in all its demands,**

Power does not come from death but life. It is necessary that we should reckon ourselves dead to sin, but the joy and power are found in reckoning ourselves alive unto God in Christ Jesus. And the Holy Ghost has been given to us to be the power of that life. Then it is that we can joyfully say, “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death” (Romans 8:2).

A. Cutting

MEAT

"Sanctify them by the truth"

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Luke 17:11–21; 18: 9–24

I desire by the help of the Lord, to bring before you a very important subject—an elementary subject, but an important one, “*The Kingdom of God.*” I am desirous to show you the practical import of the subject.

The expression “the kingdom of God” is found several times in the passages we have read. Indeed, in this gospel you find the expression frequently. It is also found in other parts of scripture—in Paul’s writings, and in the Acts of the Apostles.

Let me put this question to you: when you read a passage which speaks of the kingdom of God, or as your minds are now directed to the expression, what does it convey to you?

Give some account of it; not merely a theological account, or something you have read in pamphlets, but a spiritual account, as one who has tested what is involved in the expression.

In the first chapter of Acts the Lord spoke of these things during His forty days sojourn on the earth; He spoke of the kingdom of God. And at the close of the Acts, where you find the apostle Paul a prisoner at Rome, he preached to them the kingdom of God.

I desire to show you, beloved friends, from the history of the leper in Luke 17, how the kingdom of God is discovered. It is, I think, the mind of the Spirit in this well-known incident, to present to you, in figure, how the kingdom of God is discovered, and the result of the discovery.

I divide the subject into three parts:

1. The discovery of the kingdom of God, and its results.
2. What the hindrances are to our entering into God’s

kingdom.

3. The elements which compose it.

In the passage referred to, there are ten men who are lepers. Leprosy is a type of that awful moral disease with which men are afflicted, "the disease of sin." These lepers are sensible to their condition, and they cry for mercy. Jesus is there, and they cry to him, "Jesus, have mercy on us." He is always ready to hear a cry. That is very comforting. He is always ready to answer a cry, and always does. Now mark the passage, "Go show yourselves to the priests." Go show yourselves was the command, and off they go, and as they went they were healed. *Not when they got there.*

One man was on the eve of a grand discovery. One man out of ten stops—he is arrested—he is about to discover the kingdom of God. They were on the way to a system represented by the priests, a system marked by demand, but which never revealed God. Now, this one man having stopped can say, as it were, "What is the good of going to the priests?" he would the rather go into a system marked by that sweet and precious word, "grace." He goes back to the Deliverer—to the Healer, and falls at His feet. Dear Christians, the Lord "does what He does, and gives what He gives, in order that we may know what He is."

The influence produced upon this man sets forth very beautifully the results of entering God's kingdom. He glorifies God, he falls at the Lord's feet, and he gives thanks.

In God's kingdom God is glorified, man is effaced, and your heart is thankful. The leper has discovered the kingdom of God. Immediately the Spirit of God tells us (and all is put together in moral order) that the Pharisees ask the question, "When shall the kingdom of God come?" The Lord replies, "The kingdom of God does not come with outward show." And He also says, "The kingdom of God is in your midst." Where was it? In His blessed Person. Although God had come out in

Christ in this wonderful way, yet they were unacquainted with Him.

The Lord is showing what the leper has discovered. The leper was cleansed to discover the kingdom of God. Oh! the self-righteous people of that day! they missed it. They did not get low enough to find it. It is when we are subjects of sovereign mercy and grace that we come to the kingdom of God.

If you are to be a happy Christian you must know the kingdom of God. There are very few happy Christians. Christians have a right to be happy, but it is a rare thing to find one. You cannot sing yourself into happiness. Scripture tells us to sing when we are happy. I want you to get rid of what I call “evangelical sentiment.” I love to sing, but scripture says, “If any be merry, let him sing.” Not “let him sing to be merry.” God’s way for you and me to be happy is found in His kingdom.

I will now give you a definition of the kingdom of God: “It is the moral apprehension which you have by the Spirit of what is suitable to God known in grace which governs you”; being governed by what is suitable to God, you are a happy Christian. Do you know what mars our lives? It is *self-consciousness*. Do you know what will brighten your lives? It is *God-consciousness*. Do you know what would deliver us from the influence of what people think of us—from sensitiveness? It is what God thinks of us.

“To be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.” That is God’s kingdom. The whole subject is gone into in detail in the epistle to the Romans.

Let me try to give you an idea of Romans in three sentences: “I am a justified man, set up in the power of the Spirit to walk in God-consciousness.” “The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.”

I would greatly desire for every young Christian to walk in God-consciousness. That will save you from being merely religious. You love to hear the gospel, because it assures you all is right. You love to sing about Jesus on Sundays, but what about the rest of the week? No touch with God? No touch with Him in your business? No touch with Him when you are walking on the street, in your goings out and your coming in? I am speaking now of what is individual, of the elementary part of Christianity. What is the result of God-consciousness? You disappear, you cease to be big. You are blotted out practically.

*“O keep us, love divine, near Thee,
That we our nothingness may know,
And ever to Thy glory be
Walking in faith while here below.”*

This sets forth the kingdom of God.

Now we come to the hindrances. From verse 22 of chapter 17 to verse 9 of chapter 18 is a dispensational parenthesis. The Lord returns to the subject in verse 9 of chapter 18. The Pharisee says, *“God, I thank Thee.”* That sounds like the leper, when he gave God thanks. Now, continue: *“God, I thank Thee that **I**.”* **That is self-consciousness. That “I” sticks to us like pitch. The self-righteous have no place in God’s kingdom.** Now look at the narrative. Children are brought to Jesus. The disciples are too big for children. The Lord says, *“Bring them to Me and I will teach you, Unless you become like a little child you can in no wise enter the kingdom.”* **In natural things you must understand to believe; in divine things you must believe to understand. The mental I has no place in God’s kingdom.** You must become as a little child. A simple child! there is nothing more charming! Mentally we have no place in God’s kingdom. **The self-righteous I, the mental I, are excluded.**

We now come to the next incident. **Here we have the wealthy I—the I of acquisition, and this, also, has no place in God’s kingdom.** “How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God.” Man loves riches because it gives him a place, but riches are a positive hindrance to entering the kingdom. It is quite possible, however, for a man to have a large amount of money and to be quite clear of its influence—to walk in the Spirit, and others may have only a small sum and think a lot of that. It is the *I* of acquisition, it is the principle, the disease—the desire to acquire, which is the hindrance. “I speak as to wise men.” Does it touch you?

The mental I, the wealthy I, the self-righteous I are the three great hindrances.

Now we come to the elements which go to compose the kingdom of God. **There are five great elements.**

The first is *relief*, then *revelation*, *resurrection*, *realization*, and lastly, *relationship*.

Relief: There must be relief first. Relief and revelation are seen in the death of Christ. That which relieves me, reveals God. I ask, “Has the Lord Jesus Christ relieved you? What is the nature of the relief? My sins and iniquities are remembered no more.” There could not have been relief had not Christ died. But the relief is not merely that my sins are gone. It is *myself*. I know what it is to be justified, but the next question is far more terrible, the discovery of the “**Me**.” Mark it well! There must be an experimental journey to appropriate the second point in relief. The “**Me**” is gone. Let me refer to Psalm 139: “Lord, Thou hast searched me, and known me.” I cherish that verse. **The place where I was searched out; the place where I was exposed, is the place where I was disposed of. The death of Christ is God’s own absolute answer to the “Me”. He has judged it. He has effaced it from the root up.**

Peter said, “Lord, look at the fig tree that Thou cursedst.” But

the Lord looked there yesterday; He will never look that way again. God never looks that way. In the yesterday of the death of Christ He looked that way. **The “Me” is withered, in the sight of God, from the root right up. Thank God! That is your title to turn away from it all, and never to expect any good from it.**

Revelation: There are three ways in which you can learn your bad nature:

1. In the practice of sin.
2. In the effort to be good.
3. In the presence of goodness. There it is without a bit of anguish.

The first way is the most superficial way. People have an idea that the man who has led a foul life has consequently a deeper sense of sin than others. I do not believe it. I do not think a man picked up out of the gutter has a deeper sense of sin than a child brought up in a godly household, for the child will have the deeper sense of sin in the effort to be good and in the discovery of the impossibility of being what it ought to be. The third point is that sin can be learned in the presence of Jesus without a bit of anguish. As our hearts take in His glory, His beauty, His moral excellency, we begin to learn that no other man would do for God. Now we begin to prove in a deeper way the death of Christ that has relieved us. We can sit and bask in the sunlight of His moral glories and beauties, and that is the deepest way in which to learn our own badness. It is in the presence of perfect goodness. **The death of Christ has revealed God in the place where I lost the “Me.” I have found God.**

Christ has lit up all that dark and distant spot with the brightness of the glory of God, and He has gone up on high. There He is, and there in His blessed face shines the glory of God. And gazing there we can say, “Thou art there”—*God is*. There is the revelation in His own blessed face of what He secured in death as the Mediator of the new covenant. What He secured in death

He livingly presents. He has revealed Himself, and I am relieved of myself and my sins in the death of Christ. It is His own perfect answer to everything that would hinder my enjoyment of the revelation of Himself.

When the apostle was writing to the early converts at Thessalonica, he sums up the effects of his preaching, “They turned to God from idols.” He did not say they had their sins forgiven, which of course they had, he did not say they had peace with God, that is detail. He did not say “you are justified.” No! What then does he say? “Ye turned to God from idols.” In the gospel the apostle so presented God to them in the fullness of His grace and love that they turned to Him from idols. And what to do? “To serve the living and true God.” That is God’s kingdom. They were so living in God’s kingdom and in the power of it that they looked out for its public display. It was no sentimental thing with them. They were living in God’s kingdom; they were serving the living and true God, and looking for His Son from heaven. **No one can be in the hope of the Lord’s return if he is not in the kingdom of God. How could you be looking for the Lord if you are living a life of self-will! You are not morally suitable.**

A man once asked me this question: “Is it well with you?” I said to myself, “Is it well with Christ?” If it is well with Him it is well with me, because He is my Head. If it is well with the Head it is well with me. That is *resurrection*. Remember this, “He took your place in death that you might have His place in life.” You are on the same footing as Christ is, and you receive the Spirit that you may live of His life. The result of receiving the Spirit is that you are taught to love God. The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts. You are upon the resurrection platform. You have the power of the Spirit to enable you to enjoy the revelation. You are endowed with that marvelous capacity from Christ, your Head, having received the Spirit that you may live of His life, and bask in the sunshine of the revelation which He has made of God, and this becomes life to

you. I know God and love Him.

Realization: We now come to **realization**. Love is in the Spirit. You have received the Spirit from Christ, and you love God. There is your happiness. I do not now desire gold. I know now my happiness, my heart is responding to His love. Let Him, dear Christian, love you into loving Him.

Relationship: I pass on to the **relationship**. It is this: we are children with the Father, in God's kingdom. We are translated into the kingdom of the Son of His love. This is the climax, you are there, loved by the Father. You are loved as Christ is loved. It very closely touches the family, but yet we are children in the kingdom. As you walk down here with your heart responding to the love of God, you bear the character of Christ in this world. **To be Christlike is to love God.** I often say, would to God we were more charmed by what is Christlike than by doctrine merely. **Not simply to be a lecturer but to be a liver. If your heart is under the influence of the love of God, it will exclude the influences of evil, the very feelings, and this is holiness.**

May God bless this subject to you, and may each of us desire a larger entry into the kingdom of God! The reason people are unhappy is on account of the working of their own wills, but the only thing that can conquer our will is the love of God. I do not take so much account of what a man says; it is the spirit of the man which shows what he is and where he is. "Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty; neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, like a child that is weaned of his mother; my soul is even like a child weaned" (Psalm 131:1-2).

That is God's kingdom, and the first great mark of a man being in that kingdom, is that he is broken in spirit.

JH

EXERCISE

"Exercise thyself unto piety"

GROWTH OR BACKSLIDING

In all creation growth always indicates the presence of life, and whenever this ceases, the reason is certainly either disease or death. This is also the case with those who, in Christ, have part in new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). All the children of God are born of water and of the Spirit, and in this way enter into the Kingdom of God, as we learn in John 3. God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has chosen them in Him before the foundation of the world, having predestinated them unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto Himself. They are accepted in the Beloved, in whom they have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. Having trusted in Christ, they are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the earnest of the inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession. Thus, having been made children of God, they become His heirs, and joint-heirs with Christ, and members of the household of God.

But as in natural life, in which all human beings commence their earthly career as babes, and gradually grow into mature age, so the believer is first seen as a babe in Christ. We read in 1 John 2 of little children, young men, and fathers. This implies steady growth, "till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man" (Ephesians 4:13). The apostle adds: "That we henceforth be no more children...but grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ." On all sides the Christian is surrounded by the adversary and his servants, seeking to overthrow him, and thus bring dishonor on Christ; therefore the apostle bids him put on the whole armor of God, in order that he may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

As long as the Christian is in this world, warfare never ceases. To enter into a truce with the enemy is fatal; spiritual growth then ceases, for the soul never stands still, and backsliding inevitably takes the place of growth. This is a most solemn truth, and every believer should earnestly ponder over it, and take it to heart. A most important piece of the armour of God is the shield of faith, wherewith we shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

The young Thessalonian Church had taken earnest heed to this, since the apostle writes: “We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly.” Peter, writing to those who had obtained like precious faith, warns them lest any, being led away with the error of the wicked, should fall from their own steadfastness, and urges them to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. **Growth is always the proof of a healthy state of soul.** John, writing to the well-beloved Gaius, says, “Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.”

Seeing then that growth in grace should be the normal condition of every believer, and indeed the proof of spiritual life in his soul, let us see what the Spirit says to us with regard to our daily life, and how we should walk so as to avoid the terrible danger of backsliding.

The Apostle Paul, writing to the Galatians, says, “I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” Again, in Colossians we read: “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above...set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.” “But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof” (Romans 13:14). There are many other similar verses, but the great point constantly urged by the Spirit is

occupation with Christ, so that the blessed Man in the glory may become the one object of the heart, even as the Apostle Paul says in Philippians, “But this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” And a little later he adds, “Brethren, be followers together of me.”

Minding earthly things is one of the greatest dangers in these last days: it is indeed the very opposite of seeking those things which are above. And we can only be pre-served from this by constantly using the shield of faith.

We have great need to “be sober, to be vigilant; because our adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour,” but whom we must resist, steadfast in the faith.

The words backslider and backsliding are not found in the New Testament, but as applied to Israel are frequently used in the writings of the Prophets. One verse, however, I think we should meditate upon, namely: “The backslider in *heart* shall be filled with his own ways” (Proverbs 14:14). **Our blessed Lord Jesus specially craves the love of our hearts; has He Himself not proved His heart’s love by laying down His life for us? Shall we then let our hearts be taken up by the things of this world which has cast Him out, and still despises and rejects Him? The time is indeed very short, and now only can we prove that our love for Him is true, by taking our stand faithfully by His side in the day of His rejection.**

G.F. Barlee

Search the Scriptures!

1. Who were Puah and Shiprah?
2. Who, besides Isaiah, saw the Lord sitting on His throne?
3. What Gospel records the graves opening after the Lord Jesus’ death on the cross?

REST

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

CHRIST 'S PRESENCE WITH THOSE WHO LOVE HIM

When the Lord Jesus passed through this world as Man for the accomplishment of the will of God, His Father was ever the object before Him, and He constantly counted on His support, even as He said in spirit in Psalm 16, "I have set Jehovah always before me; because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved" (v. 8). How comforting and sustaining for the Lord to have ever the sense of the Father's nearness in His path of obedience and submission to His will. It was the knowledge of the Father's presence with Him that sustained Him as He contemplated that even His disciples would forsake Him, even as He said, "Behold the hour cometh, yea is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me (John 16:32).

"I will manifest myself to him."

This is a precious promise from the Lord to His own: even if isolated, or left alone, they can have the comfort and joy of His own company. Those who delight in the will of the Lord, and in simple obedience seek to do it, will have the sense of His presence with them, even as we read, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him" (John 14:21).

Earlier, the Lord had promised His presence to His own collectively, saying, "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you" (John 14:18); now the promise is to *the individual saint*. So often down the centuries, as in these last days, devoted saints of God have been isolated and left alone

because of their fidelity to Christ; if deserted by others, or unable to meet with the faithful, they can still have the companionship of Christ. What they lose of Christ's company in the midst of His own because of faithfulness to Him, or because of circumstances ordered by Him, can be compensated by the sense of the manifestation of Himself as promised.

After the Lord rose from the dead, He thrice manifested Himself to His disciples collectively (John 21:14); but before doing so He manifested Himself to Mary Magdalene. **When promising to manifest Himself to the individual, the Lord plainly stated that it would be to the individual that loved Him;** how blessedly this was fulfilled in the manifestation of Himself to Mary. It was love to Jesus that took her to the tomb; her words to Him, while thinking Him to be the gardener, disclosed that it was Himself that absorbed her heart and mind. As she wept, she said, "Because they have taken away *my Lord*, and I know not where they have laid *Him*"; and again, "If thou have borne *Him* hence, tell me where thou hast laid *Him*, and I will take *Him* away." How deep was her affection for Christ! It was indeed her love for Him that gave her this precious manifestation of Himself.

Special seasons of trial will prove our affection for Christ, and will manifest our obedience to what He has asked us to do. **These testing will bring the special sense of His presence, even as the more constant walk in obedience to Christ's commandments will bring the more constant sense of His presence with us.**

To Mary, the Lord's manifestation of Himself was a special one, even as was that to the disciple whom Jesus loved who, at Patmos was a prisoner for "the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ." To John, that peculiar manifestation brought rich unfoldings of the truth, not only for himself, but also for the whole church of God.

It was a special manifestation of the Lord to him of which Paul speaks in Acts 22:17–21; in which he was warned of the Lord that the Jews would not receive his testimony. Later, when Paul returned to Jerusalem, and proved the truth of the Lord’s warning, “The Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome” (Acts 23:11).

From these and other Scriptures we learn that in manifesting Himself to His own, the Lord not only brings comfort and cheer, but makes known His mind for us in relation to the details of our path, warning and instructing, so that we might not be turned aside from the path of obedience. What joys too are to be found in such manifestations of Himself! Joy in communion regarding Himself and His interests, which sustains for whatever trials we may be called upon to face.

“The Lord is near.”

Having learned for himself the reality of Christ’s presence in His life of service, the apostle Paul was able to encourage the saints at Philippi with the exhortation, “Let your gentleness be known of all men. The Lord is near” (Philippians 4:5). The Christian has not been called of God to assert himself before men, either in endeavouring to put this world right, or to claim rights for himself in a world where his Master is rejected.

We are to be like Christ; manifesting His gentleness, meekness, and lowliness; for He has given us an example that we should follow in His steps. Walking in Christ’s steps, we need not to trouble about the opposition of men, for “The Lord is near.” He will sustain us with His heavenly grace, and give the sense of His own nearness.

Right to the end of his course the apostle proved the reality of Christ’s presence with him. His fidelity to Christ, and devotion to His interests, had caused “all they which are in Asia” to turn

away from him; and concerning his appearance before Nero he wrote to Timothy, “At my first answer no man stood with me”; but he could add, “Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me” (2 Timothy 1:15; 4:16–17). How near the Lord was to His faithful servant; standing just beside him when he felt the need most.

“Lo, I am with you alway.”

These words, spoken to His disciples by Jesus shortly before His ascension to heaven, have been of the greatest comfort to His servants since that time. Who but the Son of God could have spoken such words? The promise of His presence with His servants has been realised as the source of their strength at all times. What deeds have been wrought in the conflicts of the Gospel because of the assurance that Christ was with His servants!

The same faith that laid hold of Christ’s presence in the midst of two or three gathered to His name, and that has apprehended His presence in times of isolation and loneliness, has known His presence in times of service and conflict for His testimony. Faith apprehends Christ’s presence, but it is consciously enjoyed in the power of the Holy Spirit.

As we have seen, the lonely prisoner of Patmos was sustained in the sense that Christ was with him; as was also the great apostle to the Gentiles in his conflict for the Gospel. Simon Peter had once walked on the water when conscious of the presence of the Lord; and because of the Lord’s presence with him in his testimony, he could stand and preach before the multitudes of Israel, and witness with boldness to Jesus before the rulers and elders of Israel. Israel’s rulers “took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus”; but did not know the further secret of the boldness of the disciples was that Jesus was with them.

Apostolic days have gone, but the Lord still vouchsafes His presence to His servants, for His words were, “Lo, I am with

you *always, unto the end of the age.*” The promise remains for us today, and it remains for the faithful servants of the Lord who will be raised up after the church has gone to heaven. When the church is raptured home to heaven, the Gospel of the kingdom will go forth by chosen servants of the Lord, and He will be with them, to sustain them in their trials, and to provide for them in their needs (Matthew 25:44–45).

Answers to Scripture search!

1. Hebrew midwives (Exodus 1:15).
2. The prophet Micaiah (2 Chronicles 18:18).
3. Matthew (27:52–53).

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q-1: Could you help out with answering and proving from the Scriptures that our Lord did not descend into hell?

**In Christ our very life,
Kelly**

A: Dear Kelly,

Sadly the translators have used the word “hell” for three different Greek words, so we must be clear about the differences. One is better translated as “hades,” the second as the “hell of fire,” and the third—only found in 2 Peter 2:4—as the “pit of gloom” (special place reserved for angels who had sinned, prior to final judgment). The “hell of fire” is found twelve times in the New Testament: eleven times it is used by the Lord and is characteristically descriptive of the final destination of those who do not repent, where the worm does not die, and everlasting fire is prepared for the devil and his angels. The other occasion (James 3:6) connects the misuse of the tongue to hell as the source of the evil.

“Hades,” by contrast, refers to the temporary state of departed spirits or the unseen world. In the Old Testament the word is “sheol.” It is said prophetically of the Lord in Psalm 16:10: “for thou shalt not leave my soul in hell [sheol or hades]”; although going into death he would be raised triumphantly out of death. Immediately after his death, His soul was in paradise (Luke 23:43), His body in the grave, but held by divine power for His resurrection and glory. The word is used in the New Testament only by the Lord, save in the quotations from Psalm 16 (in Acts 2:27,31) and in Revelation where the Lord has the keys (1:8), it is personified as the temporary pace of the doomed (6:8), and will give up the dead therein (20:13), and finally be cast into the lake of fire (20:14).

The Lord did not descend into hell, but as indicated he went to paradise—referred to as “Abraham’s bosom” in Luke 16—that part of hades (the place of departed souls) separated by a great gulf (v. 26) from where the rich man was in torment. **JAP**

Q- 2: Could you also explain 2 Peter3:19?

A:

The scripture makes clear that it is the Spirit of Christ who preached. Now what does this mean?

If we read 1 Peter 1: 10 and 11 we learn that in Old Testament times the prophets spoke as having the Spirit of Christ in them and therefore He testified through them. Here is the key to the expression the Spirit of Christ, as we know that Christ had not been seen on earth in those days, but the “Spirit of Christ” spoke, that is, the Holy Spirit spoke through them.

Now in 1 Peter 3:19 and 20 we can see that “the spirits in prison” heard the preaching of the “Spirit of Christ” and rejected it when they refused to hear Noah and were lost in the flood.

Noah was the one who preached to those people and did so, as seen above, under the leading and direction of the Spirit and thus the “Spirit of Christ” preached. Note well, the preaching was before the flood, they rejected the preaching and they are now held “in prison” or Hades. What a solemn warning for persons today who reject the preaching of the Spirit through the believer in the gospel, and are in danger of the same doom, that is Hades until the Day of Judgment at the Great White Throne (Rev.20:11-15), and consequently spend eternity in the Lake of Fire.

The same picture of the “Spirit of Christ” is used in Ephesians 2 when we read of Christ Jesus who “had preached to you who were afar off” (Gentiles) and “to those who were nigh” (Jews). We know that the Lord did not personally preach to the Ephesians, but the Apostle and others indwelt by the Holy Spirit did so and thus Christ Jesus preached, that is the “Spirit of Christ”.

May we be encouraged today, for we too are vessels for the preaching by the “Spirit of Christ”.

JAP

SMART WORM!

A Chief of a tribe in the Amazon jungles, who had been by grace led to see Jesus as His Saviour, was one day asked by Western explorers, who were amazed at the kindness the Chief had shown to them, what he had done to become a Christian. "I did nothing," he replied. "Well, tell us how it happened, then, that you are so changed." "Come into the woods with me and I will show you," said the Chief. "I can't talk but I will show you." They went with him into the woods, and the Chief busied himself in clearing a place in the ground all round a little hole in which a worm burrowed. He next took some small dry sticks, and with these he made a circle about two feet from the wormhole. Then he asked one of them to light a match and set the wood on fire. This was done, and presently there was a hot ring of fire all round the wormhole. Soon the worm came out of the hole and seemed not to know what to do, for as it turned round it saw that the fire was on every side. The Chief now put forth his hand, but the worm would not crawl on it, and he took his hand away.

Presently, as the fire grew hotter and hotter, the poor worm crawled in every direction, and each time returned to its hole, finding no outlet, no way of escape from the flame. At last it seemed to have found out that it could not save itself for it now remained quite still in the centre of the ring, while the fire came nearer and nearer. At the last moment, before the fire touched it, the Chief put out his hand again; and now the poor worm crawled on to it and he lifted it out of the burning circle and placed it safely on the ground, far away from the danger.

"Now, said the Chief, "I was the poor worm; I could not get out of the fire; I crawled every way, but I could not save myself." Then, raising his eyes upwards, he said, "But the blessed Lord Jesus, He lifted the poor jungle man out of the fire. I the poor Amazon man crawled into His hand, and He lifted me out of the fire and set me down in safe place."

Poor lost sinner, come to Jesus *just as you are*. Now is the time. He in tender love is waiting to save you. Come now, for now is the *accepted time*. Jesus is soon coming to take all His saved ones to be forever with Him. Come while yet there is time, and remember there is nothing for you to do. Nothing.

"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Timothy 1:15).

"If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart, that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be SAVED" (Romans. 10:9).

Do not keep trying to reach God in your own way, for it will lead you nowhere. In faith take that step and receive Jesus into your heart by faith.