



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,

“Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all” (1 Timothy 4:15).

We lose considerably, both in reading and hearing, by not meditating, thinking, and storing up the truth we may have received and, at the time, felt was applicable to us. The ant is set before us as an example of one who prepares for the winter. We find that God supplies us with provisions for some dreary time that might come, but instead of being like the ant when winter comes, winter comes on us “as an armed man.” It is not only the harsh circumstances that feel like a cold winter, but we also have no food to strengthen us, to comfort us, and keep us warm, and all because we have been busy with many other things, neglecting to sit at His feet and meditate on His Word.

I believe the soul, when it takes in any truth, ought to say, someday I will need this; let me now see how it fits me and whether I have it from God. In other words, have I made it as much my own as any other material possession I have acquired?

Receiving without pondering only leaves the soul more barren in the end, simply because you will lose your appreciation of anything if you find that it had superficial charm but had no abiding use or benefit to you. A clean animal must be also a ruminating one! Good feeding alone will not do; “chewing the cud” must follow.

Meditate and find the true applicability to yourself of all you hear or learn from the Word of God; what you really learn, you never forget, and it will help you to live for our Lord until He comes.

May the Lord use this issue of *Toward the Mark* to help you grow and be established as you read it.

Thank you for the encouraging e-mails that we often receive. Please keep praying for the Lord’s blessing on *Toward The Mark*. Make sure that you visit our website to find many helpful articles.

Yours in our soon-coming Lord,

Emil S. Nashed

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Contents

I Come Quickly	1
“Dead in Sins” and “Dead to Sin”	3
Continuing in Prayer	7
Faith and Confidence of the Godly	9
Some Day!	14

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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"

"I COME QUICKLY"

The coming of the Lord Jesus occupied the minds of the saints of God down through the ages of the Old Testament, God Himself having first made the announcement when He spoke to the serpent in Eden of the seed of the woman who would bruise his head (Genesis 3:15). Among the many prophetic utterances concerning the coming of Messiah is that in Malachi 3, where, after having spoken of the messenger of the LORD who would prepare His way, the prophet writes, "And the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple" (verse 1).

How this prophecy must have cheered and exercised the hearts of the faithful and godly remnant of Israel amidst their many trials. The temple was for them the divine center of worship, but it now became also the place of hope, for it was there they were to find the long-looked-for Deliverer when He came. Moreover, He was to come suddenly to His temple, so that the godly would be ever on the tiptoe of expectation, waiting for the fulfilment of the divine promise.

In Luke's Gospel, when the holy Babe, Jesus, was brought by His mother and Joseph into the temple, there were those who were waiting and watching for Him. The aged Simeon had been brought into the divine secret, and it was revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death "before he had seen the Lord's Christ." Simeon and Anna were not only waiting for the coming of the Lord, they were also watching, and had the immense privilege of being in the temple to welcome the heavenly stranger.

There were others "that looked for redemption in Jerusalem," and the faithful Anna knew them all, and to them "spake of Him." But the privilege granted to these two aged saints of God surpassed that of the rest of the remnant to whom Anna spoke, for they not only looked for redemption in Jerusalem, but waited in the temple, for it was there the promised Messiah was to come.

As Christians, we are not looking for the Lord to come to His temple, we are waiting for Him to come from heaven to call us to be forever with Him, according to His own promise. “I will come again and receive you unto myself” (John 14:3). We are to meet Him in the air, and this blessed hope is to be the constant expectation of every true saint of God. We have not only the Lord’s own words of John 14, but also His words from heaven, “I come quickly” (Revelation 22:7, 12, 20), and like Simeon and Anna, we are to be constantly watching and waiting for the coming of the Lord.

For the remnant of His earthly people, the Lord came suddenly to His temple; for the church, He is coming quickly; and His public return to put the world right and set up His kingdom will be “as the lightning cometh” (Matthew 24:27). To the world, “the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night” (1 Thessalonians 5:2), but the saints of God are not in darkness to be thus surprised. Mere professors are neither waiting nor watching for Christ’s coming, and His word to the professing church is, “Remember...and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee” (Revelation 3:3).

The first of the three times the Lord’s quick return is mentioned in Revelation 22 is in verse 7, connected with the divine unfolding of this Book, and with the blessing of those who are obedient to God as walking in the light which it gives.

In verse 12, the promise of the Lord’s coming quickly has attached to it His reward for every man, according to his work. This is of great encouragement for every true child of God. When the Lord comes, the saints of God will enter into the full blessedness of all that God has promised, and there will be a rich reward for everything done in faithfulness to our absent Master and Lord.

In verse 20, there is no mention of blessing or of reward, but the Lord simply presenting Himself as coming quickly; and it is this that produces from the hearts of those who are watching and waiting, “Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.” May this be the response from our every heart as we look for Him whom, not having seen, we love.

MEAT

"Sanctify them by the truth"

"DEAD IN SINS," AND "DEAD TO SIN"

What an amazing difference these two conditions present. Few may be that thought of it, and yet each person is in God's sight either "dead in sins," or "dead to sin." Perhaps my reader has not yet solemnly considered these weighty points and would like to know what Scripture teaches concerning them.

"Dead in sins" is the divine estimate of every one of us in our natural condition. (Ephesians 2:1–5). Man, however amiable or virtuous, is spiritually dead. God speaks, but there is no response—man perceives it not. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God." Not a thought, feeling, or desire springs out of his heart that is acceptable with God. All the fruit he brings forth, religious or irreligious, is "unto death." He is "dead in trespasses and sins." What a dreadful state to appear in before God—"in sins," yea "dead in sins." And as a dead man neither feels, understands, nor sympathizes with the living round about him, so man in his natural state, educated, or uneducated, neither understands the living and true God, nor does anything according to His mind.

In these days, men do not object to be called sinners. They have become accustomed to it. Besides, what they understand by it is that they have a good nature and have only occasionally and accidentally done what is evil in God's sight, which a few good deeds may counterbalance. They thus deceive themselves. They do not believe God, who says that "we are all by nature children of wrath," that we are all "under sin," "alienated and enemies in mind." They do not see that their nature is bad. Hence, they speak of serving God and keeping His commandments; they like too to be told to keep commandments, because it gives importance to them as men in the flesh, but it denies the divine verdict, that they are "dead in trespasses and sins." The consequence is that they are further blinded by false hopes of improving men in the flesh, "raising the masses" as some call it, and the like, which give impetus to a multitude of schemes, all of which reflect more or less credit on man in the flesh, and bolster up the false

doctrine that, though man is a sinner, he is capable of being made subject to God; thus plainly setting aside the testimony of God that man is “dead in sins,” “not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.”

The Scripture, however, cannot be broken. God has declared what man is, and his whole history proves the truth of it. The fact is, what man needs is “life,” nothing less than a new nature capable of entering into God’s mind and enjoying Him. This is the starting point. Hence, we are told that when we were dead in sins, we believers were quickened or made alive together with Christ. (Ephesians 2:5). For this purpose, we also learn that “God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.” This is simple enough. Man is not only a sinner, but dead in sins—not only needs pardon, but life; and Jesus lifted up and crucified brings us all we need. The brazen serpent was a type of this. Hence, we read, “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” Life, observe, through looking by faith to the Son of God crucified for sinners.

To be “dead to sin” is a very different thought. The wages of sin being death, nothing short of death could meet the requirements of divine righteousness. Righteousness demanded death for sin. In fact, there is no deliverance from sin in any other way than by death. Divine mercy brought in a Substitute; one able, because a man, to stand in man’s stead, and because He was God, able to meet every demand of divine righteousness. Thus Jesus the Son of God died—the just for the unjust. “He died unto sin once”; not for Himself, surely, for He was without sin, but for us, who were “dead in sins.” Hence it is that we died unto sin. Blessed, precious truth—“dead with Christ.” The cross shows us this. There we find that “our old man is crucified with Him.” There righteousness is maintained as to God’s dealing with sin, and grace abounds. God is just, as well as rich in mercy. Grace reigns “through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.” God has, then, met sin judicially with death on the cross. He spared not His own Son. He “condemned sin in the flesh.” Therefore the believer is free, delivered from condemnation. He has been judged, condemned, crucified with Christ; and being thus made free from sin, he becomes a servant to God. He is made free and is now at liberty to serve God. And

if Christ is risen, then he is risen. Christ is alive again, on the other side of death—alive from the dead, and Christ is our life.

“The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” The believer then has life, life in Spirit, life in Christ risen from the dead. As a matter of fact, he feels flesh in him, its affections and lusts working; he is enjoined, therefore, to reckon himself to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God in our Lord Jesus Christ. This is liberty indeed, based on every claim of divine righteousness having been met, and redemption accomplished. The delivered soul is able therefore to look up to Christ at the right hand of God, as his life, righteousness, redemption, strength, and source of every good. Such have no longer the false idea of improving the “old man,” but seeing that completely and judicially set aside in the cross, they practically “put off the old man,” and live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved them, and gave Himself for them. On the cross, it was Himself instead of myself; in the glory, it is myself in Himself, “complete in Him, who is the Head of all principality and power.”

The doctrine of the believer being now “dead to sin” and “alive unto God” is set before us in Scripture both for peace and for power. As to peace, it shews us that every question as to flesh and its doings, sin and its workings, has been already judicially met for us in Christ, who was “made sin for us.” Every exercise of conscience which we have of the evil nature in us is answered by the fact that it has been judged, condemned, and crucified with Christ. Faith therefore reckons it dead. Experience says, “I feel its dreadful lusts.” True, and Scripture recognizes that “the flesh lusteth against the Spirit,” but calls on us to reckon it judged and dead. When the conscience is so troubled that the inward cry is raised, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” The Spirit, through the written word, directs us to Him who was crucified for us. Faith, therefore, looks to Jesus, and says, “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

The power over sin, and for practical holiness, that this truth gives is also most blessedly set forth. If our old man is crucified, we cannot but deny all its reasonings, its claims, and its resources. We have “no confidence in the flesh.” This is an immense clearing away of hindrance to practical godliness. Then, if we have life in Christ risen,

life in the Spirit, and the Spirit is in us, we can have fellowship with the Lord Jesus, and power of testimony for Him in this time of His rejection. Our eyes, therefore, by the sanctifying action of this truth, are turned outward and upward to the Son of God Himself, the true and only source of joy and strength. In this way we are above the atmosphere of self and sin, we are able to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, we are willing to suffer with Christ, and, if need be, for Christ, and wait patiently for His return from heaven. It gives true rest of soul, and deep joy to our hearts thus to enter into the divine teaching that we are dead; that Christ is our life; that at this moment God can speak of us as not in flesh, but in Spirit. But we need watchfulness lest we get away from the enjoyment of this liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and the eye gets turned inward, so as to give importance to self—the old man, instead of reckoning ourselves to have died indeed unto sin, and to be alive unto God in Jesus Christ our Lord. May all true believers enter into and enjoy their blessed new-creation place in Christ!

Hugh Henry Snell

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES!

1. Who is the first woman that went to inquire of the Lord?
2. Which prophet saw a vision of the Lord standing on the altar?
3. How many false witnesses were finally found to accuse the Lord Jesus before the high priest, the scribes, and the elders?

EXERCISE

"Exercise thyself unto piety"

CONTINUING IN PRAYER

God exercises our hearts and our faith by sometimes delaying giving the answers to our prayers. The earnestness of our prayer will be according to the depth of our need and the consciousness that He alone can give the answer. The heart is exercised and kept in dependence, waiting on Him for the reply. Faith is kept alive. Other sources are not looked to when the soul has learned that He alone can do what is needed. God's mighty power is called on through prayer. Prayer is a fitting expression of the newborn soul's dependence on God, in contrast to that nature that always wants to be independent of Him, though it cannot escape His righteous judgment.

Daniel had to wait in fastings and mournings for three full weeks at one time before he received the reply (Daniel 10). At another time, "While I was speaking," he says, "the answer came" (Daniel 9).

We are not indifferent to the result when the heart can in earnest entreaty wait upon God.

We may find, like Paul, that it is better for us that our desires are withheld. He learned the reason why they were withheld after his thrice-repeated prayer; thus he could boast in that which was the taunt of his enemies and the trial of his friends (2 Corinthians 12).

We need to be "filled with the Spirit." We need to have our faith grow. Many are the needs of our hearts, and if God is pleased to bless His people, He exercises their hearts in prayer. Paul was indebted to some praying sister, perhaps, who could agonize in prayer before the Lord for those gifts with which he carried on his service in the gospel field. He could agonize in prayer for those he never saw (Colossians 2:1), and Epaphras too could labor earnestly in prayer for those he knew and loved (Colossians 4:12).

In the midst of our cares and conflicts we have "to be careful for nothing," but let our "requests be made known unto God." God, who

has no cares, keeps our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. But we need to “continue in prayer.” We also need to “watch in the same” and “with thanksgiving” for His ear which is always opened. One of the exhortations in Romans 12:12 is “continuing instant in prayer,” that is, to persevere in prayer.

The very “importunity” of the man at the unseasonable hour of midnight was the occasion of his obtaining the loaves (Luke 11:8). One can lay down no rules in such cases. The truly exercised heart gets its own answer from God. At times we can with simple confidence “make known” and commit the request to God. At other times the heart is conscious that it cannot but cry to God until the heart is at rest as to the petition. He will not give it till His own time, and meanwhile the soul is kept in earnest exercise; faith is tested, and patience tried, and the heart watches and waits on Him. Again, such is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us, and if we know that He hears us, we know we have the petitions that we desired of Him (1 John 5:14, 15). He listens to everything which is in accordance with His will. He cannot fail in power, and we get the reply. The true heart would ask nothing contrary to His mind and will.

ANSWERS TO SCRIPTURE SEARCH!

1. Rebekah (Genesis 25:22)
2. Amos (Amos 9:1)
3. Two (Matthew 26:57–66)

REST

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

FAITH AND CONFIDENCE OF THE GODLY

PSALM 17:15

The seventeenth Psalm is entitled "A Prayer of David," and in it we have the exercises of the godly man in the midst of the wicked. David speaks to Jehovah of his own integrity and desires to be kept by Him, as the apple of His eye, from the wicked who compass him about. The oppressors of the godly are "the men of the world, which have their portion in this life, and whose belly Thou fillest with Thy hid treasure: they are full of children and leave the rest of their substance to their babes" (Psalm 17:14). Such is man without God. He thinks only of present things, living in that which is to pass away, without a thought of God and of eternity beyond the grave.

"As for me"

In contrast with the men of the world, the Psalmist tells God of His convictions. He is affected in this life with what is to be his portion in the life to come. This is an altogether personal matter. He cannot speak for others here; it is what affects his own soul before God, but he would have others understand his exercises before the LORD. There were not the crystal-clear revelations of Christianity upon which to rest his soul, but there was evidently light from God to David as to the future, and his faith laid hold upon that which God had revealed; and the Spirit of God through David, in this portion seems to have given light beyond his dispensation.

"I will behold Thy face"

God had appeared to the Patriarchs, to Moses, and to others, and had said to Moses, "I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob," and the commentary of the Lord on this is, "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living" (Exodus 3:6; Matthew 22:29–32). This Scripture makes known that the saints of God would rise from the dead, and also that they live before the face of God in heaven. Indeed, in Luke's Gospel, the Lord shows us that

Abraham is alive there (Luke 16:22–31); and also, that Moses is alive, for he appeared with Elias on the glory mount in the company of Jesus.

If David apprehended the force of God’s communication to Moses in Exodus 3:6, we can understand how his soul laid hold by faith on the prospect of seeing Jehovah’s face. Whether this was so, or not, the Spirit of God gave him this deep conviction, which enabled him to say with such certainty, “As for me, I will behold Thy face.” Nor can we doubt for a moment that David was thinking of what lay beyond death, for he had just been speaking of the men of this world, who had their portion “in this life.” He was clearly thinking of the life to come.

With the Christian, there is not only the dim light of the Old Testament on this matter, but the crystal-clear light of the New Testament, in both the words of the Lord Jesus Himself, and in the words of the Holy Spirit come down from heaven. Having this light, the Christian can speak with the same conviction as David, and as having faith and hope in the word and promises of God.

The Christian knows what it is to be brought before the face of God, accepted in Christ, and he can say with the writer to the Epistle to the Hebrews, “We see Jesus...crowned with glory and honor”; and can also say, “We all, looking on the glory of the Lord with unveiled face” (2 Corinthians 3:18); and it is our present privilege to possess the “knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:6). By faith, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, it is the Christian’s privilege to say with the Psalmist that we behold His face.

We can also say with the Psalmist, “I will behold Thy face” if it is the Lord’s will to take us to Himself before He comes for His church. To the dying thief, who said, “Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom,” He replied, “Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:42–43). It is no longer to Abraham’s bosom that the saints of God go when released from the earthen vessel, but to the Lord Himself in the heavenly paradise.

Through the Apostle Paul, the Holy Spirit confirms to us the words of the Lord. Paul had been caught up into paradise, had learned the unspeakable bliss of the Lord’s presence there, and could therefore say, “I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with

Christ; which is far better” (Philippians 1:23). Had he only thought of himself there would have been no strait, he would only have desired the far better portion, but when he thought of those who were leaning on him, and requiring his tender care, he was willing to continue in his path of trial and suffering for their sake. The Spirit of God also tells us through Paul, in 2 Corinthians 5:8, “We are confident, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.”

Blessed as it is to behold the face of the Lord in the unclothed state referred to in 2 Corinthians 5, it will be yet more blessed to see the face of Jesus when all the saints are gathered home, even as we read in Revelation 22:3–4: “And His servants shall serve Him: and they shall see His face; and His Name shall be in their foreheads.” So that the saints of the present dispensation know what it is to see the unveiled face of Jesus now; they have the prospect of seeing Him and being with Him if called to pass through death and will also see His face in the day of coming glory.

The writer of Psalm 49 contemplated the end of the men of this world who trusted in their riches, saying, “Like sheep they are laid in the grave...and their beauty shall consume in the grave” (verse 14). With the godly there was hope, even as the Psalmist writes, “But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave: for He shall receive me.” How very blessed was this confidence that looked beyond the grave to be received by God into His presence.

“In righteousness”

If David was to behold Jehovah’s face, he realised it would be in righteousness, for God must ever act in consistency with His holy nature, with the claims of His throne regarding sin perfectly met. Since Christ has died, and in His death meeting every claim of the divine throne in relation to our guilt, we can clearly see how we can behold His face in righteousness. Abraham was accounted righteous by God through faith in Him, and we, too, have righteousness imputed to us “if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification” (Romans 4:22–25).

Besides, as being in Christ, and having the life of the One in whom we have been justified, God says we are “constituted righteous” (Romans

5:19); and this is the portion of all who truly come under the headship of Christ, the last Adam. Like the prodigal in the best robe, we even now are graced in Christ before God, even as it is written, “For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Corinthians 5:21). We are God’s righteousness in Christ now and shall be displayed as God’s righteousness in Christ in the day of His glory.

“I shall be satisfied”

Even now, as having drunk the “living water” (John 4:14), the Christian knows what it is to be satisfied with Christ. Christ is enough to satisfy every desire of the heart that grace has produced in us. And if the believer is called to pass through the article of death and has the “far better” part with Christ in the heavenly paradise, the spirit will find satisfaction in Christ in that blessed place. But here the Psalmist is looking further ahead, as the Christian also does, to the time when every longing will be fully satisfied, and that for all eternity.

“When I awake”

When on earth, the Lord Jesus said, “Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep” (John 11:11). When death comes to the Christian, it is but sleep, sleep for the body till awakened by the Lord at His coming. Therefore, it is written of Stephen, “And when he had said this, he fell asleep” (Acts 7:60). Paul, by the Holy Spirit, speaks of the saints who die as in sleep (1 Thessalonians 4:13–15; 5:10; 1 Corinthians 15:20, 51), and it is also written of David in Acts 13:36.

The mother who puts her babe to sleep does so in view of its awakening. So with the believer, whether of the Old Testament days or of the days since: those put to sleep by Jesus will be awakened by Jesus. It was David’s confidence and hope; it is ours also. Resurrection was the hope of the saints of old, as seen in the words of David and of Job (Job 19:26, 27). The New Testament abounds with this precious truth. The Lord speaks of “the resurrection of life; and...the resurrection of judgment” (John 5:29); and Paul before Felix spoke of “a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust” (Acts 24:15); and other Scriptures show that there are two distinct resurrections, with a thousand years between.

“With thy likeness”

Man was made in the likeness of God, but alas, he soon lost this: but it is the privilege of the Christian to come out in the moral likeness of Jesus here (2 Cor. 3:18). David, by the Holy Spirit is confident he will rise from the dead with the likeness of Jehovah; but the New Testament sheds abundant light on this blessed subject for the Christian.

We shall indeed be like Jesus, whether it be coming out of death, or having our mortal bodies changed, if alive at the coming of the Lord, for, says the Apostle John, “We shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2). Paul joins with John in this glad theme, writing, “Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself” (Philippians 3:21).

Well might the Psalmist speak of being satisfied when he awakes “with Thy likeness.” He could not then understand this precious truth as we do now, but faith laid hold of it, even if only known in a dim way. David will indeed be like Jesus; with us, he will have a body of glory, like the body of Jesus, a body suited to the heavenly place where the heavenly saints, in their different families, shall dwell before the face of the Lord, in the Father’s house for the ages of ages.

Our every desire will then be satisfied to the full, for all that God has promised us will then be possessed when we are with Jesus and like Him, sharing His place before the Father’s face, knowing the Father’s love resting on us as it rests on Him, being in the same relationship with the Father, where He is the Firstborn among many brethren; and the church forming the body and bride of Christ, to have His love lavished on her, and being the vessel for the eternal display of the glory of God.

W. C. Reid

SOME DAY!

Someday upon our raptured sight will dawn
The perfect day;
Some day will break the bright and cloudless morn
When Christ shall say,
“Amid the shadows of the desert wide,
No longer stay;
Arise my love, my fair, my longed-for Bride,
And come away.”

Someday upon our listening ear will fall
His voice of love;
Someday He'll come into the clouds and call
His Bride above;
With all His own to meet Him in the air
To see His face.
To pass into those heavenly scenes so fair,
And praise His grace.

Someday we'll be with Christ forever nigh,
No more to stray;
Someday we'll reach the heavenly home on high.
Perhaps today!
Oh, then to join the heavenly host to swell
The Savior's praise;
Oh then, of His redeeming love to tell,
Through endless days.

H. Smith

INSTANT ACCESS

What marvels the ads for new mobile phones offer! Access—instant access—anywhere, anytime. (Of course, there must be a phone at the other end!) But...instant? One may be able to “call home” from a moving car or plane or while hiking in the woods miles away but try a simple call to an office in the same city!

A Real Listener

You will often meet the familiar “press one, press two” set of choices, followed by a long and tiresome explanation of what a great company it is, interrupted by a different voice insisting, “Your call is important to us; please hold.”

Contrast that with the clear promise in the Word of God: “Before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear” (Isaiah 65:24). Incredible! “Before they call,” the answer is on its way. Then “while they are yet speaking,” He hears. There is no “voice mail”—nothing between the listening God and the praying soul. Truly, “My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8-9).

Caller ID

Then there is Caller ID. A glance at the ringing phone and one knows whether to pick it up and say, “Hi!” or, if the number is strange to you, just ignore the call. God has Caller ID, too. He says of His own, “I know them...” and their calls reach Him at once. But there are others to whom He will one day sadly say, “I know you not....Depart from Me.”

Activation

And then your new cell phone must be “activated.” It is not enough to have the phone and to know all about its use—what buttons to push, what procedures to follow—you must have it “activated.” That is somewhat equivalent to “connection” for wired phones. Otherwise, the phone will be just dead and useless.

That is most important and so easy! The Lord Jesus paid the “activation fee” when He gave His life on the cross of Calvary. Now one simply has to accept—believe and receive—His sacrifice personally, that is, for yourself: for “as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name” (John 1:12). The activation—the connection—the power—is now the right of every believer, with all the everlasting benefits that accompany it.

“Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand and rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Romans 5:1-2).

“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved” (Acts 16:31).