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Psalm 1:1-3

Larry Steers

The Psalms contain many of the most beautiful words in the Old Testament. Saints when passing through the storms and trials of life or in the quietness of an hour of mediation have found peace, rest and comfort in the encouraging words of these beautiful Divinely inspired compositions.

The Psalms are divided into five smaller books. Book One (1 to 41), Book Two (42 to 72), Book Three (73 to 89), Book Four (90 to 106), and Book Five (107 to 150). Of all these 150 writings, Psalm 1 is unique.

This first psalm of the Psalter has no ascribed title. Of the 41 Psalms of Book One 37 do have an inscription which has often been used to relate the words to events in the author's life. This could suggest that the remaining four are not specifically linked to a definite time or event in the life of the writer.

Fifty one Psalms in the Book are anonymous. David, the sweet Psalmist of Israel (2 Samuel 23:1), wrote 73 Psalms.

However much like the Hebrew epistle where Christ is wonderfully presented to the reader, the author would not attach his name to the epistle. Similarly Psalm 1:1 to 3 touches on the wondrous person of the incomparable Lord Jesus Christ. "That in all things He might have the pre-eminence" (Colossians 1:18). One would suggest this is perhaps a reason why no author is identified as the writer.

Only the Lord Jesus Christ could be the perfect fulfillment of these three beautiful verses. Well might the readers of this introduction to the Psalter immerse themselves in meditation of these lovely truths.

A Unique Psalm

The old expression is so true here that the key lies at the door. Immediately the reader meets two men. First the "Blessed Man" who rejects all evil and rejoices in the word of God. What is recorded of this man could only be perfectly fulfilled

by our blessed Lord. While His was a pathway of rejection, suffering and trial it was also one of perfect faithfulness to God. Application could be made to every believer who should manifest a Christ likeness of the "Blessed Man".

The ungodly man found in verses 4 to 6 has no time for God and his destination is solemnly declared. He takes his character from Satan.

There is here a trinity linked to Satan identified as 1) ungodly 2) sinful and 3) scornful.

There is a trinity of character describing the "Blessed Man" as 1) blessed, 2) meditative and 3) fruitful.

A wonderful comparison can be suggested touching the first two Psalms. The "Blessed Man of Psalm 1" is the exalted, powerful sovereign of the second Psalm. "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion" (Psalm 2:6).

Notice again the uniqueness of Psalm 1 which could be called an ASHERITE Psalm because of the first word. "Blessed" is the Hebrew word "ASHERE" which means happy, contented. Asher was Zilpah's second son and Leah's eighth. Leah named him "ASHERE" meaning "happy" (Genesis 30:13). There are three Psalms in Book 1 of the Psalter which begin with "ASHERE"; namely Psalm 1, 32 and 41. Psalm 1 presents the obedient man, Psalm 32, the forgiven man ("Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven"), and Psalm 41, the compassionate man ("Blessed is he that considereth the poor" (Verse 1).

Undeclared Path of the Separated Man

This path is described in a negative sense in verse 1 but in a positive sense in verse 2. The clear manifestation of the perfect walk of this "Blessed man" is the subject of verse 3.

It was a lonely path. Our blessed Lord was "despised and rejected of men" (Isaiah 53:3). "He came unto His own and His own received Him not" (John 1:11). The

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Lord solemnly declared to His disciples, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you," (John 15:18).

The lonely man of this Psalm is seen in a vastly different world than what was Adam's in the garden. All was in Adam's favor. He was put by God in a perfect, unspoiled garden.

In the garden Satan challenged Eve, "Yea hath God said" (Genesis 3:1), a device he has used successfully innumerable times since to cause Adam's race to question and doubt the infallible authority of the Word of God. Eve first, and then Adam fell to the wiles of the enemy, disobeyed God and partook of the forbidden tree. In the wilderness, a vastly different scene than Eden, the impeccable Christ was challenged by Satan. Three specific temptations are recorded but He was "in the wilderness forty days tempted of Satan" (Mark 1:13). Beautiful words flow from the pen of the Psalmist to describe the earthly sojourn of the "Blessed man". While the words of verse 1 would describe the entirety of His life here, they would certainly be fully true of those forty days in the wilderness. All three verbs are in the past perfect tense and could be read "has never walked", "has never stood" and "has never sat".

The Hebrew writer in the New Testament emphasizes this when he writes, "He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners" (Hebrews 7:26).

A perfect sacrifice was required by God for the sinner to be forgiven. That solemn "all" of Romans 3:23 disqualified every member of Adam's race. Our Lord, the just one (1 Peter 3:18), the perfect man of Psalm 1, was alone acceptable to God, "To take the guilty sinners' place and suffer in our stead".

Undivided Devotion: The Sanctified Man

Never did our Lord seek the council of the ungodly. His delight was to perfectly fulfill the WILL of GOD. In the Garden of Gethsemane, with the shadows of the cross before Him and in deep contemplation of the indescribable sufferings He was about to endure He, "began to be sorrowful and very heavy" (Matthew 26:37). His words must touch very deep into the soul of every believer, "O My Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless not as I will but as Thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39). We are certain that when He prayed, "If it be possible let this cup pass from me" does not imply in any way that He was seeking a way to escape the cross, but they certainly convey the terror of that which was about to be His portion.

Matthew would tell us that He repeated the prayer three times. (26: 39, 42, 44). Matthew also tells us that the second time the Lord prayed He added, "Thy will be done" (26:42). The words of Psalm 40:8 parallel the Lord's prayer, "I delight to do Thy will Oh My God." The undeviating course of His sojourn here was the perfect fulfillment of God's purposes for Him.

He was the perfectly sanctified man.

Undistracted Attention: the Satisfied Man

Not only was His purpose to fulfill the WILL of GOD, but His delight was in the WORD of GOD in which He meditated day and night.

He found pleasure in the "Law of the Lord." This inexhaustible mine of precious truth He fathomed fully. He sought opportunity to be alone with God as Matthew records, "He went up into a mountain alone to pray and when evening was come He was there alone" (Matthew 14:23).

Even as a lad of twelve the learned doctors of that day had in their midst a young man who both heard them and asked them questions (Luke 2:46). They had never taught Him the law or the prophets yet His very questions indicated His knowledge of scripture. All that heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. (Luke 2:47).

Oh, to be in a measure like Him.

Unfailing Fruit: Servant's Provision

"He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water" (verse 3).

"Shall be" is in the perfect tense and indicates clearly no deviation from the path of fruit bearing. A tree planted has deep routes and can withstand the storms. When the awful, indefinable storm of Divine judgement with its terrible billows of the wrath of God rolled over Him in the hours of darkness, He was unmovable in His purpose. He "willingly humbled Himself and became obedient unto death even, the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:8). "Many waters cannot quench love neither can the floods drown it" (Song 8:7).

He is presented as an apple tree in the Song of Solomon. "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood so is my Beloved among the sons" (Song 2:3). One expects to find an apple tree in an orchard. It would be most unusual to find it in the forest which is not its natural environment. In the woods displaying its blossoms, the apple tree would stand out among the drab trees surrounding it.

Well might we sing the beautiful words of Samuel Stennet's hymn:

*"No mortal can with Him compare
Among the sons of men:
Fairer is He than all the fair
That fill the heavenly train"*

"Rivers" is in the plural and suggests manifold provision of rich blessing. He is the smitten rock in the wilderness from which rivers of water flowed (Isaiah 43:19-20). Meditation upon Him will bring rich blessing to the soul for the "river of God is full of water" (Psalm 65:9).

"His leaf also shall not wither." He is "Jesus Christ

the same yesterday and today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8). “Whatsoever He doeth shall prosper”. These are rich words which could never be penned about any of the sons of men. We are all failing creatures. He alone is the perfect Son.

God invites “Behold my servant, whom I uphold: mine elect in whom my soul delighteth” (Isaiah 42:1). The Saint of God responds “He is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend” (Song 5:16)

“I sat down under His shadow with great delight and His fruit was sweet to my taste” (Song 2:3).

Daniel made prayer and meditation of the Scriptures the chief business of his life; yet, if we consider the circumstances in which he was placed, we shall see that few ever had greater obstacles than he in the way of seeking God.

R. C. Chapman

12 Tribes

W. Hoste

“Thus saith the Lord, I remember thee, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown” (Jeremiah 2:2).

A gap of seventy years divides the ministries of Isaiah and Jeremiah; that of the former ending, we may suppose, with the close of Hezekiah’s reign, and that of the latter beginning in the thirteenth year of Josiah. This young king had already, five years before, carried out a reform of a negative character, consisting of breaking down idols in his own kingdom and in the deserted cities of Israel, a very important work surely.

Jeremiah was probably used of God in leading him on to more positive reform—the renovation of the Temple, etc. This would be naturally greatly helped by the providential finding of the book of the law in the temple, where it had no doubt been deposited according to Jehovah’s commandment in Deuteronomy 31:24-26.⁽¹⁾ The Passover which followed, was the most complete celebration since Samuel’s day, no doubt because they had the Scriptures in their hands, and followed them. True revival is always a return to the

Book. There is no other standard of excellence or order. The prophecy of Jeremiah begins with Jehovah’s call to the prophet to service, followed in chap. 2 by His call to His people to repentance, as in the words of our text. He does so by recalling the bright days of their first love, and how it led them to leave all and follow after Him in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. There was no promise of a future harvest, but first love is not much troubled with commissariat problems.

Here we see how Jehovah takes pleasure in the affections of His people; it is a wonderful thought, that we can give positive pleasure to our Lord: “His delights are with the sons of men.” “Israel was holiness” to the Lord and the first-fruits of all His increase,” as believers are today (James 1:18). First-fruits have a special value, because they are the first reward of labor, and give promise of a harvest to come. But alas! “Israel had committed two evils, they had forsaken the Fountain of living water, and hewn themselves out cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water”—the idols of the heathen. No doubt all this represented the general condition of the people, but as a fact Judah alone was in her land at this time. Ninety-three years had elapsed since the ten tribes had gone into captivity in the ninth year of Hosea. Since then had intervened twenty-three years of Hezekiah’s reign, all Manasseh’s and Amos’, and now thirteen years of Josiah’s. No doubt the events of those far-off years had faded from the memory of the rank and file of Judah. They probably were not much concerned at any time as to what became of their brethren of the rival kingdoms, more, it is to be feared, than to-day. Many are much perturbed by the fate of believers elsewhere; but here and there were found men of God who remembered the ten tribes—King Hezekiah was one of such: He had lived through the crisis of the captivity of Israel, when the sister kingdom had disappeared over the northern horizon, and later in his reform we read “the King commanded that the burnt offering and the sin offering should be made for all Israel” (2 Chronicles 29:24). To faith, the blood of atonement was still for them; and they might still be brought back into their land (chap. 30:9). Indeed, he gathered in Jerusalem as many as possible of the remnant of Israel to keep the passover (chap. 30:11). The same thing, demanding still more energy of faith, was seen in the remnant of Judah on their return from Babylon in Ezra’s day. Not only did they think of their brethren in Babylon, but of Israel as well (Ezra 6:17; 8:35). Later on James addresses his epistle to the “twelve tribes which are scattered abroad.” He knew many thousands of Jews at Jerusalem that believed. Why should not all the tribes embrace the same blessed faith, and so He addresses them as actual or potential believers in the Lord Jesus (chap. 2:1, 2).

Perhaps the most striking case of all is that of the Apostle Paul before Agrippa, who when referring to “the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers” could

with prophetic eye add: “unto which promise our twelve tribes constantly serving God day and night hope to come” (Acts 26:7).

Christians in the scattered and feeble condition of the church in our day should have a similar exercise to discern, in spite of all, the true unity of the body, and realize our need of all saints for the understanding of the truth (Ephesians 3:18), and the need of all saints of our supplications for them in the conflict (chap. 6:18). We need all the saints; all the saints need us. But however little His people may enter into His sympathies, He does not forget His whole church; but if He remembered Israel in the day of her espousals, did He in the day of her calamity? Certainly the twelve loaves of shewbread continued to be spread before Him, and the twelve names were never erased from the high-priest’s shoulder-pieces and breastplates during the separation of the two kingdoms; but did He remember them in their exile in far-off Assyria? Chapter 3:6 shows us that He did. All their past history lay open as in a book before Him; and let treacherous Judah know that all that happened to her sister, backsliding Israel, was as a warning to her. But instead of giving heed she had done worse. If it be asked why these epithets, treacherous and backsliding, are applied four times indiscriminately to Judah and Israel, it is, I suggest, because Israel had never ceased to backslide from Jehovah after Jeroboam’s calves, whereas Judah had never gone after them at all, and had professed to reform herself in her worship of Jehovah, but it was only feignedly. A hypocritical return is worse than none at all. Both will return in truth from their backsliding and treachery in the day that Jehovah brings them back. Then the ten tribes will once more be joined to Judah in the land.

But some will tell us that there are no lost tribes today.⁽²⁾ It is true that in the course of the years many of the Northern Kingdom had merged with Judah. But that kingdom still remained as a separate power to be reckoned with, and was able under King Hosea to resist a three years’ siege by the greatest Gentile power of the day—the Assyrian (2 Kings 17:8). No general return of the ten tribes known to history ever took place, and they are probably now in the spacious regions to which they were taken captive. It is sure they will never be reunited till the last times revealed to Ezekiel in the parable of the two sticks (chap. 37:15-22)—“I will make them (Judah and Israel) one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel, and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into kingdoms any more at all.” Then the “outcasts of Israel” and “the dispersed of Judah” will be reunited permanently (Isaiah 11:12), and this time now seems rapidly approaching. It might have happened then and there had Israel in far Assyria given heed to the gracious proclamation which Jehovah sent them through Jeremiah (vv. 12-14), but clearly they would not obey. But in His own time and way He will bring them back, and when

they are once more in their land, they will no longer use the old rallying cry of “the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord, neither shall it come to mind, neither shall they remember it, neither shall they visit it” (v. 16). The former place of gathering, the old center will give place to a new, and yet not new but the Lord who to faith gave value to the old, will now be seen in a new way—visible and glorified—in their midst. “At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of Jehovah, and all the nations shall be gathered into it to the name of the Lord to Jerusalem” (chap. 3:16, 17), around the Person of the Messiah.

Often we remind ourselves as we gather around the symbols of His death, in which we witness to the unity of the outwardly divided Body of Christ, that we are only doing so, “Till He come.” Then the Visible, Glorified Person will replace the symbols; but let us not forget that while that coming speaks of the rapture of the church, it will also speak in its completed stages of the blessing of Israel, united in their land as witnesses of His glory to the ends of the earth. So that we may sing with quickened intelligence:

*“Thy sympathies and hopes are ours;
Oh, Lord, we wait to see
Creation all below, above,
Redeemed and blest by Thee!”*

1. To look for a thing where we left it is a sound method of search. Had the Higher Critics realized this, they might have spared us the foolish theory that Hilki-ah must have forged the copy of the law, for how else could the book of the law be found in the temple.
2. I think it is clear that it is quite a mistaken way of meeting the Anglo-Israel delusion, that the Anglo-Sax-

There is a faith unmixed with doubt,
A love all free from fear;
A walk with Jesus, where is felt
His presence always near.
There is a rest that God bestows,
Transcending pardon's peace,
A lowly, sweet simplicity,
Where inward conflicts cease.

"There is a service God-inspired,
A zeal that tireless grows,
Where self is crucified with Christ,
And joy unceasing flows.
There is a being right with God,
That yields to His commands
Unswerving, true fidelity,
A loyalty that stands."

ons are the lost tribes which can be sufficiently negative on historical, ethical, linguistic and scriptural grounds.

GOD will put up with many things in His children. He bears with their mistakes, and even their waywardness; but there is one thing He will not put up with, and that is a **second place**. He must be **first**. How vain, then, must be the efforts of those who would fain please Him, while they give Him only a second place. The Lord does not want us to do great deeds—bold exploits that make everybody wonder. He wants just to reign in our hearts; and then all the rest will come right. The question with us then comes to be simply this. Are we willing that the Lord should take the helm? Are we agreeable that He should be **first**? We are here reminded of a little girl who puzzled her teacher by telling him there was a place where God was not. "Where is that?" he asked. She answered, "God is not in the divided heart." Let us remember this. Our God is a jealous God, and will not have a rival in our hearts.

Discipline in God's School (2)

Joel Portman

Last month we noticed the reality of discipline in the life of a child of God and the forms that it can take. Our purpose is to encourage and strengthen each saint, especially those who are passing through similar times of great distress or difficulty. They are personally drinking a bitter and difficult cup that can be made more difficult by wrong attitudes toward the experience of discipline and chastening by God's hand. However, such an experience of trial should be an encouragement, for it proves the reality that such a one is a genuine child of God (Heb. 12:6). All who belong to the Lord will know His hand on them in some way, and each experience is under Divine knowledge and control. He is One who knows each of His children perfectly and discerns what is needed to form His purposes in our lives for His glory.

Purposes of Discipline

Discipline in our lives can take many forms and can have various purposes. Remember that discipline is a term that includes all the various dealings of God by which He seeks to train and develop us as believers and to produce in our lives the character that is most pleasing to Him. It is "Christ-likeness," conformity to His own person, and subjection to His perfect will that He desires to produce in each one. The purposes of discipline can be seen under several headings:

1. Educative

To teach us spiritual lessons, or, to build spiritual character. We can study the principles of Scripture and learn from the examples of others (and we should seek to study these continually), but the reality of such development is only expressed through the trying experiences that remove the dross of fleshly reactions and produce a spiritual character that corresponds to God's purposes. God told Israel (Deuteronomy 8:2-5), that they were to remember all the way that the Lord had led them in the wilderness and to remember the purpose that He had for every step of that way. Here are some examples:

JOB: Trial was allowed by God to reveal the nature of his heart and to magnify His character. There were aspects of Job's inner thoughts concerning himself and God that were not revealed and corrected until God allowed him to be tried by Satan's hand.

JOSEPH: Trial developed patience to wait God's time, and see God's hand working through adverse conditions. This period of trial was part of God's purposes to develop him as a leader and deliverer, not only for Egypt, but also for the brothers (and the nation) who had hated him.

MOSES: His exercise to deliver his own people from oppression and to adjudicate their problems was too hasty. It is clear that his fleeing Egypt, along with the subsequent, trying times of caring for sheep in the backside of the desert, was an integral part of God's education of one who God used to deliver and lead His people from their bondage.

2. Preventive

To preserve us from difficulties that might develop later if those conditions are unchecked, so as to preserve one's life for God. There may be elements that we fail to recognize or deal with personally that God sees and determines to keep from hindering our usefulness for Him. Examples:

JEHOSHAPHAT: God allowed his ships to be broken, causing great economic loss, no doubt, but it preserved him from further involvement in unequal yokes that were harmful to his life and testimony as a righteous king. (1 Kings 22:48-49).

PAUL: The thorn in his side was intended to prevent exaltation of fleshly pride through revelations that he had received.

3. Punitive

As punishment for sin committed under judgment of God. This is not always the cause for trials and others should not assume this to be the case. If this is the reason for the trial, it would seem that God would make it evident to the individual in the trial that He is dealing with him because of definite reasons. This seems to be clear in James 5:13-15 with regard to the sick man. Examples:

DAVID: His adultery resulted in the death of the child, his sons killed, concubines taken. His later numbering of the people cost the lives of many of Israel (70,000 men).

SAMSON: Failure in separation cost him his eyes, his freedom, suffering abuse by Philistines, and eventually the loss of his life.

4. Corrective

To produce an attitude of greater desire toward God. God desires to deal with attitudes or wayward conditions that need correcting through discipline. His desire is to produce repentance that will result in restoration.

NAOMI: She departed from the land with her husband against the mind of God in self-will. She returned empty, but with far deeper character (Ruth 1:20-21).

JOB: Anticipated result of his trial was his coming forth as fine gold for God (Job. 23:10).

Possible Attitudes in Discipline

What is important in discipline is the attitude of the one who is experiencing God's dealings. In Hebrews 12 we notice that there are various attitudes that one might have. Our attitude or response will play a large part to determine what blessing we receive from the experience. We could possibly,

1. Make Light of it or Not see God's hand in it (v. 5). To despise it seems to indicate that one would act as if it were not important, not worth consideration, not a matter to be concerned about it. One might do this, possibly, by acting as if the occurrence were just a happenstance, an accident, just something that happens to everyone. This indicates a lack of exercise and failure to discern that God is able to use even the elemental and often, what may seem to us to be inconsequential, things of life to work out His own purposes. The man of the world considers a difficulty, a sickness, or a calamity as "just something that happens to everyone," whereas the believer exercised by the Spirit of God would seek to discern if the Lord is seeking to teach him something through it.

2. Faint under it or Not appreciate God's heart. (v. 5). This would indicate an attitude that thinks that God doesn't care, that He is against me or being severe. It would seem difficult to think that a child of God would react this way, but possibly so. To faint would also mean that the person is overcome in his weakness by the adversity as if

God is not able to support and give strength in every trial He brings our way. There is no temptation or trial that is greater than we are able to bear, for God does not try His children beyond their capacity or beyond His ability to minister grace to their need. Note 1 Corinthians 10:13, James 1:2-4.

3. Endure it or Not see God's purpose in it (v. 7). This may be only suggested from this verse, but it is possible that one might simply determine to "wait it out" and hope it will soon be over without seeking to gain any blessing from the trial. If this is our attitude, then we will not realize that God has a purpose in every experience He brings our way and we will fail to make spiritual progress in our lives as He desires.

4. Exercised by it or Appreciate God's Mind (v. 11) We should all have this attitude in any experience of trial, to seek to understand God's purpose in it, to yield to His hand in it, and to progress in our spiritual life as a result. In this passage we find that there are results, and that they are desirable for each one of us. To experience the "peaceable fruit of righteousness," (v. 11) as a result of the trial and to be "partakers of his holiness," (v. 10) would make it worth all the difficulties that are involved. God has an infinitely wise purpose in every manner in which He deals with His own children. He is not like us in our disciplining of our own in the flesh, when we make mistakes and fail to direct our actions toward our children as we ought. He knows exactly what is needed in every case and will not use any means unnecessary to accomplish His gracious ends.

May we realize the value and preciousness of God's discipline in our lives, recognizing that such events of any nature are a clear indication of our position in relation to a heavenly Father, and of His unfailing love toward us. All that He does is for our good, for His glory, and is intended to produce the resulting character that in some measure conforms to that which was displayed so clearly in our blessed Lord.

(to be continued)

"He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty." We can't all be exclusively engaged in gospel work, but in this way we can be mighty. Mighty is subduing the many passions us.

The Old Gospel Sufficient

C. H. Spurgeon

Are you afraid that preaching the gospel will not win souls? Are you despondent as to success in God's way? Is this why you pine for clever oratory? Is this why you must have music, and architecture, and flowers, and millinery? After all, is it by might and by power, and not by the Spirit of God? It is

even so in the opinion of many.

Brethren, beloved, there are many things which I might have allowed to others, which I have denied myself in conducting this congregation. I have long worked out before your eyes the experiment of the unaided attractiveness of the gospel of Jesus. Our service is severely plain. No man ever comes here to gratify his eye with art, or his ear with music. I have set before you, these many years, nothing but Christ crucified, and the simplicity of the gospel; yet where will you find such a crowd as this gathered together this morning? Where will you find such a multitude as this meeting, Lord's Day after Lord's Day, for five-and-thirty years? I have shown you nothing but the Cross, the Cross without the flowers of oratory, the Cross without the diamonds of ecclesiastical rank, the Cross without the buttresses of a boastful science. It is abundantly sufficient to attract men first to itself and afterwards to eternal life!

In this house we have proved successfully, these many years, this great truth, that the gospel plainly preached will gain an audience, convert sinners, and build up and sustain a church. We beseech the people of God to mark that there is no need to try doubtful expedients and questionable methods. God will save by the gospel still: only let it be the gospel in its purity. This grand old sword will cleave a man's chin and split a rock in halves. How is it that it does so little of its old conquering work? I will tell you. Do you see this scabbard of artistic work, so wonderfully elaborated? Full many keep the sword in this scabbard, and therefore its edge never gets to its work. Pull off that scabbard. Fling that fine sheath to Hades, and then see how, in the Lord's hands, that glorious two-handed sword will mow down fields of men as mowers level the grain with their scythes. There is no need to go down to Egypt for help. To invite the Devil to help Christ is shameful. Please God, we shall see prosperity yet, when the Church of God is resolved never to seek it except in God's way.

A spiritually minded man is a riddle to the carnal man, but not to God or to himself.

Christ : Image and Firstborn.

E. W. Rogers

Any interpretation of Scripture which does not give due regard to precise accuracy in the matter of inspired words and tenses is certain to be inadequate, if not erroneous. It becomes, indeed, specially serious when it has to do with the Person of the Lord. By reason of His inscrutability, strict adherence to the statements of Scripture

is imperative.

It will be observed that in Colossians 1:15 the present tense of the verb "to be" is employed—He "is the image of the invisible God," and in Hebrews 1:3 the present participle is used, "Who, being the brightness of His glory," etc. Each statement denotes what Christ is essentially and eternally—the former passage presenting Him as possessed of that glory which He had with the Father before the world was; and the latter passage stating that which was eternally true as to the unoriginated glory of the Son.

In neither case should the verbs be read in the sense that although there was a time when He was not so He is now the Image of the Invisible God, and the Express Image of His Person, for then the verbs required would have been "He became" and "Having become."

The context of Hebrews 1 is plain. "Who being the brightness of His glory and the express Image of His Person": the one verb "being" is thus attached to both items, "brightness" and "image," and indicates what He essentially, unchangeably and eternally is. Therefore, it must not be asserted, as some have done, that the "brightness of His glory" relates to what He eternally was, and "express image" to what He ultimately became. Such an interpretation fails to take cognizance of the fact that the two phrases are linked together by the one verb.

Furthermore, the terms of Scripture should not always be explained by the modern equivalent of the same words. We must not "try to interpret the heavenly and eternal in terms of the earthly and temporal." It is failure here that has resulted in the recent errors concerning the Eternal Sonship of Christ. Bible terms must be interpreted in the light of Bible doctrine and analogous usage in other parts of Scripture.

Thus the term "image" (although in modern usage and in some parts of Scripture it denotes that which does not perfectly represent the original) in relation to Christ stands for that which renders visible the invisible, and gives the observer to see the unseen archetype. A reference to Hebrews 10:1 will show that "image" sometimes denotes "no mere outline or projection of the form but the full and perfect representation of the substance." Colossians 1:15 affirms that Christ is the Image: God is the archetype. So that when Christ was on earth He could say, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father."

The Greek word translated "image" in Colossians 1 is altogether different from that translated "express image" in Hebrews 1:3. This latter denotes the impress that is made by a seal "showing only, exactly and fully what the seal is as to its device. Thus the Lord Jesus, not only in incarnation but eternally, was the Image; the Impress, showing not partially but fully, not approximately but exactly and completely, what the Father is."

It is true that the Lord Jesus manifested God in Incarnation, but it would not be in agreement with the verbs

used in these two verses to say that that manifestation began with such incarnation. Whatever manifestation of God there has been at any time has always been through the Son. No man hath seen God at any time: He dwells in light unapproachable; but the Eternal Son has always been and ever will be the Declarer of God.

Creation itself, as to which the Son was the Divine Agent (Colossians 1:18) is part of the manifestation of God's power, for it should be well noted that verse 16 is explanatory of verse 15, as is shown by the word "For." This verse explains not merely the fact that Christ is the Firstborn of all creation but that He is also the Image of the invisible God. Creation, the Theophanies, the various appearances of the Divine glory in Old Testament days, etc., are all included in God's manifestation through the Son.

If Adam was made "in the image of God," that image must have then existed; that Image was Christ, thus showing that He was, as such, eternally, prior to creation.

Now concerning the term "Firstborn." A reference to Deuteronomy 21:16 and Psalm 89:27 will make it plain that the meaning of this term is not primogeniture, but "priority and superiority."

"Firstborn of all creation" does not mean that Christ is part of creation, seeing that "by Him" it was all brought into being (Colossians 1:16), but that, as to it, He was before it and above it (v. 17).

The term does not apply to the Lord, therefore, as some have supposed, exclusively in Incarnation. It is true that when He became man He came into His own creation as Firstborn, but that position did not originate with His manifestation here. It existed before He created anything; it would have been true that He was First-born of all creation had He not become man. It was a position given Him by the Father, so that we may say that had He not even created anything at all, He would still have been the Father's Firstborn. Creation and redemption have each served to display that position of superiority and honor which is held by the Son. As to creation He is Firstborn, and as to His brethren, who have been redeemed by His blood, He is also Firstborn among them (Romans 8:39).

If the Bible is uniquely and inerrantly inspired, then we have certainty; we may know real truth about God, about man, about origins, about morals, about the race's future, and about human destiny on the other side of the grave But if the Bible is not the uniquely and inerrantly inspired Word of God, then (let us be blunt) we do not have certified truth about God, about man, about origins, about morals, about the race's future, or about human destiny in the hereafter: we are only groping.

Hypocrisy

Andrew Stenhouse (formerly of Chile)

Read Matthew 23, verse 1 to end

I CALL attention to this portion of the Word of God, not so much to be occupied with the characteristics of the Scribes and Pharisees (verily, they have their reward) but to enter a plea for more reality among the people of God. This chapter deals with the subject of hypocrisy. Call it not "highpocrisy" as is the manner of some—there is nothing high about it. Pretending to be what you are not is the lowest practice that can be found among the people of God. It must be confessed that there is a great deal of practical hypocrisy among us, and I am going to invite you to a little self-examination on this subject.

First of all, in the eyes of God, hypocrisy is certainly abominable. If you doubt it, think for a moment of our Lord's treatment of the different people with whom He came in contact here on earth. We may take a certain amount of comfort to ourselves . . . we may consider that we are not sinners of the grossest type . . . we do not kill, lie or steal, etc. . . . but this is small comfort to us if we are guilty of the hideous sin of hypocrisy.

You will remember that a sinful woman was brought into the presence of the Lord, and when her accusers heard that word of Divine wisdom they slipped away, and the Lord Himself, in the presence of that sinful woman, had no word of condemnation— "Neither do I condemn thee. Go and sin no more." What wondrous grace He shows in His dealings with fallen creatures! We see Him on the cross, and to that thief at His side He could say: "Verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." We think of the Lord in His dealings with confident Peter, who says he will never deny His Master; but the Lord, Who knows him well, tells him that before the cock crows he will deny Him thrice. Yet, in the presence of that consciousness of Peter's infidelity the Lord could say to him: "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." Again, we think of the Lord in the Garden, and there comes to Him that false disciple who kisses Him; yet the Lord only says: "Friend, wherefore art thou come?" He always acted in that same calm, gracious way in the presence of all kinds of sin, yet when He is in the presence of hypocrites, how different is His tone! "Ye fools and blind!" Think of the difference in the Lord's attitude between this sin and other sins—and then tell me, if you care to, that hypocrisy stands for nothing in the eyes of God!

We often act in a hypocritical manner, and if we gave ourselves time to think and meditate, and turn the Word of God over in our minds, we would surely realize that every such procedure must come up and be exposed at the Judgment Seat of Christ, if not before. Only downright, rock-bottom reality reality will pass with God. If we want to be a help in the Assembly, or among our fellow-travelers to Eternity, if we want to be of any service to God, we must—above all

things—be REAL.

Suppose we just pass, in a brief survey, the most outstanding features of our Christian lives, especially our Assembly lives. We make a special profession of being a people who gather in the precious Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, in distinction from other people who, although they may be true believers, do not carry out God's Word in its entirety and simplicity. We think that this is a very wonderful thing, and of course it is. At the same time we should ask ourselves this question: Suppose we have occasion to bring before some child of God this precious truth; suppose we seek to show him that the only way of meeting, is to meet in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ. He listens with attention, becomes very much interested, and then comes to meeting with us. Does he find among us what he expected to find after all our wonderful description of the meaning of gathering to the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ?

We profess to meet in the Name of the Lord Jesus. Do we ourselves know what that means? It means much more than a mere form to put on the notice-board on the outside of the Hall. In the Word of God we find that gathering unto the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ produces certain positive results. We read: "There am I in the midst of them." If an inquiring visitor should come among us, would he find the reality of the Lord's presence in our midst in a definite, unmistakable way? Would he see the difference between our gathering, and the gathering of others where no such claim is made? We should desire a greater measure of reality among us—a measure of reality that will convince others that God is in us of a truth.

Meeting in the Name of the Lord Jesus means, among other things, that we meet by His command, in His interest, and because it is His will for us to do so. We meet because He has revealed His plan in the Scriptures, and we meet in submission to His will. We meet by His authority. We meet not because we have a desire to meet, and not because it occurs to us that it might be beneficial or profitable—but because the One in Whom we have yielded ourselves desires that we should so meet. The local Assembly is a Divine institution, and when we meet to honor the Lord, to interest ourselves in the things that concern Him, and to carry out His will, then we meet in His Name. Is it always with us? It is very easy to tell other people that we meet in the Name of the Lord Jesus, but are we conscious of that blessed reality, or is it only the talk of the lips with us? The Lord help us to examine ourselves!

Sometimes we attend the meetings, and sometimes we do not. Sometimes we stay at home simply because we want to stay at home. Perhaps we go because a visiting brother will be present. In this way, coming together is merely a matter of our own convenience. If we do meet in this way, let us not say that we meet in the Name of the Lord Jesus, for it is certainly not for Him that we come, if we come just to hear a visiting brother. It is wonderful how plain it is to others (if not to ourselves) that this is hypocrisy. If we go

to hear Him, to be conscious of His presence, we will be present on all occasions.

We also have another wonderful feature of Assembly life. We do not have a salaried preacher, nor a human president. We have the Holy Spirit of God. Wonderful—if we realize it! When we meet together, do we really look for the guidance of the Holy Spirit? We ask for it in prayer, but do we really wait for the Holy Spirit, and make certain, every time, that He has revealed to us His will for that occasion, before we give out a hymn, pray, or speak? Is it a reality with us, or is it not?

What about our singing? God's people were intended to be a singing people. Very often their singing is nothing more than an exercise of the vocal chords. We sing:

*Lord Jesus Christ, the thought of Thee
With sweetness fills our breast.*

How many of us really sing that hymn in the consciousness that the Lord is near us? Or do we sing the words, allowing our gaze to wander around the room? It is a very solemn thing to profess to worship and praise the Lord if we are not honestly doing it.

I think, if we examine every phase of our lives, we will find that there is an element of hypocrisy in each one. In our Gospel meetings we often feel like telling the unsaved one not to sing certain verses because they are not appropriate or true on the lips of an unsaved person. There are many words which are not appropriate on our own lips if we only stop to think what we are singing. How often we sing:

*Were the whole realm of nature mine
That were an offering far too small—
Love so amazing, so Divine,
Demands my heart, my life, my all.*

And yet we haven't the slightest intention of giving our all! We show it when the collection plate comes around.

The Lord's most scathing words are directed toward those who are hypocritical. Even in our prayers hypocrisy enters. We have some wonderful prayers at times, but when you hear our conversation after the meeting is over you know just how devoted we really are. It is surely a solemn thing when we carry our hypocrisy right into the presence of God.

Brethren, let us be **REAL**. God will not, God cannot, honor us if we do not really mean what we say. We preach about wonderful things. Do we really believe them? Theoretically we do. When we preach the Gospel we speak of the glories of heaven and the torments of hell. We try to persuade our unsaved friends and relatives that these things are real, but we are so unreal ourselves that they hardly believe that we really believe what we preach. You will remember the story of the preacher who went to an actor and

asked him why he had such success in holding large crowds spellbound. The actor replied: "I act unreality as though it were reality. You preach reality as though it were unreality." We should allow those eternal realities to get down into our souls so that they become a part of us, and when we preach them, people will know it. Do we really believe that the unsaved around us are going to hell? Do we ever pass jokes with them, so that they believe we are pretty much as themselves? Every man and woman among us has the sole responsibility imposed upon them of carrying the Gospel to some. You have a little circle of relatives and friends, and only YOU can touch precisely that circle. Are you doing your duty?

We profess to have a great interest in the unsaved, but how little we really do for them after all. Let me prove it: Let us suppose that we established the simple rule of each brother and sister seeking one unsaved person—only one—to bring him to Christ in the course of a year. One year is a long time, and that is a small task, surely, for one who knows the realities of God's salvation, to bring this one person to the meetings, pray for him, and show an earnestness in his salvation. If only one sinner were brought to Christ each year by each of us who know the Lord, what would be the result? Let us suppose that there is only one saved individual in the world, instead of hundreds of them, and that one saved person follows the above rule. At the end of one year there would be two saved, at the end of two years four would be saved, then eight, sixteen, thirty-two, sixty-four, until you arrive at over a million in a period of twenty years. Now let us suppose that out of the two hundred millions of Protestants in the world, only one million is in the real Body of Christ, so instead of spending twenty years to get that million converted, we step that million up and in eleven years the whole world would be converted! I am not proposing any such thing because it is not in the Word of God, but I only cite this to show you that we are certainly not even beginning to do our duty.

The Lord brings a solemn charge against the hypocrites: "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye shut up the Kingdom of Heaven." Hypocrisy has this effect—it keeps people out of the Kingdom of God. Do we have to lament a dearth of conversions among us? Do we have to lament the non-conversion of our own sons and daughters? May not one of the reasons be that we, by our actions, by our manner of life, by our conversation, fail to convince them of the reality of those things that we want them to believe?

There is another characteristic of the hypocrite: this question of squabbling about the altar and the gift. How much we are concerned, and what a flame we set blazing over trivialities! It is a solemn thing when you stop to think how you may influence others. How many camels have we swallowed while straining out a gnat! What tremendous beams some of us have in our eyes! We want to put our brethren right. The Word of God does not simply say that it is necessary for us to **see** the beam that is in our own eye. Let us not simply recognize and

confess our own faults, but get **rid** of them, and then we shall be ready to help our brethren.

The last few verses are a fitting conclusion for the chapter, for it shows us the final end of the hypocrite ... a great city, and the Lord weeping over it. Do we see among us any indication of barrenness; any indication of departure from the godliness which once characterized our Assemblies? God grant that we may never get to a place where the Lord will look down upon us and say: "Your house is left unto you desolate".

God help us to face this solemn question and to be done with our hypocrisies once and for all.

(Quoted from WIS May/June 1940)

Ps. 73

(anon)

Lord, what a thoughtless wretch was I,
To mourn, and murmur, and repine,
To see the wicked placed on high,
In pride and robes of honour shine!

But oh! their end, their dreadful end!
Thy sanctuary taught me so;
On slipp'ry rocks I see them stand,
And fiery billows roll below.

Now let them boast how tall they are,
I'll never envy them again;
There they may stand with haughty eyes,
Till they plunge deep in endless pain.

Their fancied joys how fast they flee,
Like dreams as fleeting and as vain;
Their songs of softest harmony
Are but a prelude to their pain,

Now I esteem their mirth and wine,
Too dear to purchase with my blood;
Lord, 'tis enough that thou art mine,
My life, my portion, and my God.