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"As for Me. . ." pt. 2

Joel Portman

There are 8 times that we encounter this expression in the Psalms. Every one is a psalm of David, except 73:2, and they seem to especially designate his determined behavior as a godly, exercised saint of the Old Testament in contrast to the surrounding background of an ungodly society. It seems difficult for us to understand how during the time of these men, such as David, that there existed an element of violent unbelieving men who were opposed to the principles of God's Word and the exercise of a believer to honor God. Yet, while it is true for David, this can be seen descriptively of the breathings of a soul who is longing for different circumstances, and yet in the midst of opposition, has determined to live for God. Many Psalms are also prophetic, and these descriptive expressions of deep exercise of soul anticipate the anguish that the godly remnant will experience in the Great Tribulation period. They also give expression to similar desires that one might express in any period of time. In fact, they might be the deep longings of one who is reading this article. May they encourage you to be like David, Asaph, Jeremiah or Daniel, all of whom expressed similar longings. Don't be afraid to say, "as for me. . ." and carry through on that desire.

Psalm 5:7 Personal Piety

The psalm opens in vs. 1-3 with the cry from his heart at the time of the morning sacrifice (v. 3). This was the time when the priest laid the parts of the lamb for the burnt offering on the altar where it was converted by the flame into a form

of incense that went up entirely for God. Is David considering the lifting of his heart in worship and prayer as an activity similar to the offering that was directed toward God and entirely for God? He could join his prayer with that offering that spoke of Christ being offered entirely for the pleasure and satisfaction of God, and it was that which made his approach accepted in God's sight.

Turning our heart to God every morning should be the normal practice of every believer. What better way to begin a day, in which one will enter the kind of world that David describes in the verses that follow? To begin the day in this way is one way to give certainty and security to one's actions and steps for the entire day. More than that, God gets the first place in our lives, both in time and desires.

He knows that he is speaking to a holy God (v. 4-6). God cannot tolerate sin, whether in the form of wickedness or foolishness, even that expressed in lying ("leaving", v. 6). He demands purity and holiness in those who would seek to stand in His presence. So that in v. 7, when David speaks of entering God's house, it must be that he is consciously siding with God in His abhorrence of the evil practices, and for himself, seeking to refrain from and cleanse his life from all that would defile. Yet, it is in the "multitude of thy mercy," that he does so. Even one who is not conscious of sin cannot attain to a standard of holiness so as to stand

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in the presence of infinite purity and holiness. It is through the faithful and loving mercy of God that we can do so, and the believing worshiper is conscious of his personal unfitness to come near.

However, in the confidence of God's mercy, he can come near to worship, knowing that the burnt offering that was ascending on the altar provided for his acceptance, and it is in the value of the sacrifice that he, and we, can present our worship and praise to a holy God. Do we have that confidence? Are we able to present spiritual worship, being conscious of having been taken into favor in Christ and accepted on the ground of His work on our behalf? It is what He is and has done that makes it possible. How great and abundant are God's mercies toward us, moving on our behalf in His Son to bring purged worshipers before Him, complete in Christ and made fit for God's presence.

Therefore, David could say, "as for me, I will come into thy house. . ." Others likely had no thought of this need, nor desired to avail themselves of the privilege. His was a contrast with them, even as our personal desires should be in contrast to a world that knows not God, nor desires the knowledge of His ways (Job 21:14). The constant characteristic of a believer's life should be that it is centered on the reality of knowing God and seeking to honor Him continually. So we find that he adds, v. 8, his recognition of the need for divine guidance so that his life might be directed aright in the midst of surroundings that were adverse and contrary (v. 9). He ends the psalm by expressing his confidence in God's blessing and protection, being compassed, or crowned continually with the shield of God's favor. What a blessedness is the life of a child of God! Knowing God, trusting God, worshiping God! May we know the reality of this in our lives each day.

Psalm 17:15 Personal Anticipation

Psalm 17 seems to be the final one of a series that began with Psalm 14, which is called the Psalm of the Ungodly Man, a man who feels no need for God, and who actually rejects God from his life. Psalm 15 is rightly called a Psalm of a Righteous, or Godly Man, and ultimately is speaking of Christ, since He is the only one who

fits the qualifications that the psalm describes. Psalm 16 is quoted regarding Christ in Acts 2:25-28 when Peter first preached on the Day of Pentecost. It depicts Christ as the completely Satisfied Man who found all His joy and delight in that which was of God and linked with His saints. But Psalm 17 present to us a truly Dependent Man, who again is our Lord Jesus Christ, living in a constant condition of true dependence on God for all that He needed or received. These psalms should also describe a child of God who is living righteously, who is satisfied with the abundance of God's house and God's people, and who realizes his total need of and dependence on God. These are also characteristics that are foreign to the man of the world, for they are not righteous positionally nor practically. They are never satisfied, neither do they desire the things of God. And finally, they are independent and self-sufficient in their own thoughts, not acknowledging that all their good comes down from above.

The opening of the psalm echoes the opening of Psalm 16, for his great desire is for preservation, so he asks that the LORD might hear his prayer, being uttered from true lips. Feigned lips would be those that say one thing to God, but then act completely contrary to their utterance. Not so the psalmist (32:2)! What he spoke to God was what he knew to be true in his life. Of course, this was perfectly true of our blessed Lord (1 Peter 2:22).

Without looking at details of the psalm, we see in the first part that he knows the need for preservation from evil tendencies from within (v. 3-4). We need this first of all and most of all. Our greatest problems don't arise from temptations from without, but from inward tendencies. We all have a heart that is yet prone to stray and decline to self-will instead of trusting in the Lord.

From v. 9-14, he pleads for preservation from the evil that surrounds him on every hand. He speaks of the "wicked that oppress me," and illustrates them as a "lion that is greedy of his prey," and from "men of the world, which have their portion in this life." He is fully conscious of those who would seek a moment of weakness, some opening that could be used for his destruction. It reminds us of the enemies of our Lord who were constantly look-

ing for ways to destroy Him, but couldn't because of His perfect life.

During one's life there is constant need for preservation, and that is not through keeping ourselves, though we have a responsibility to do so (Proverbs 4:23), but it essentially depends upon our sense of reliance on the Lord to preserve. Like the psalmist, we are weak in ourselves and unable to properly guide our own steps, but "my help cometh from the Lord." (Psalm 121:2). However, the confident anticipation of the dependent man is that he will arrive at full satisfaction at the end of this life, awaking to behold our blessed Lord's face in perfect righteousness, then to be like Him. That will be true satisfaction that was never possible amidst all the trials and difficulties of the way. May we live with that constant anticipation filling our souls!

Psalm 26:11 Personal Integrity

Once again, David expresses his determination to live and act differently from the ungodly world around him. He can say that his life is open to the LORD's examination, knowing nothing against himself and having sought to distance himself from all who work evil (v. 4-5). With clean hands, he could confidently approach God's altar that demanded holiness (v. 6). His longing and desires were constantly directed toward the place of God's dwelling (v. 8). All of these expressions indicate a soul that is longing for God and wouldn't let anything or anyone deter him from that pursuit. It should be the deepest desire of every redeemed heart! So that in contrast to the evil men around, David could say, "As for me, I will walk in my integrity." Integrity is uprightness, completeness in being united toward one goal. It doesn't mean that he was perfect, but that his whole being was directed God-ward, and that he was pressing toward that one goal of pleasing God. What is our purpose? Is our life divided, having many different and conflicting objects for which we are living? Oh, to live a life that stands in contrast to the world with its deceit, ambiguity and unfaithfulness. This is the man, (perfectly true of Christ in His earthly walk), that can honestly stand in the congregation of the upright to bless and praise the Lord (v. 12). May it be ours also! (continued)

Seeing God's Face

Blair

Read Psalm 28:1; 143:7. Here are two things that we, the people of God, need to keep us from becoming like them that go down to the pit. It is true we can't go down into the pit, but if these things are not true of us we will be like them that go down to the pit. Let us ask ourselves the question, "When did I last hear God's voice speaking to me?"

There are some Christians in whom only God can see a difference between worldlings and them. The people of the world know what a child of God should be and they would not give ten cents a dozen for those who are not living for God. The only ones that the world has confidence in are those who are living for God, for they know that such have something which no others have. "Christ in you the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27). God wants Him to be manifested in us. When He was here He could not be hid. No child of God can keep us right and separated for God. We must hear His voice and see His face to be kept separated. There is only one kind of separation that God recognizes.

Read Exodus 33:14-16. Notice verse 16. This is the only kind of separation God wants from us—that which has God in it. It is a great thing to have God with us. We can't have Him if we don't hear His voice. We read His Word every morning but do we hear His voice speaking to us? If we don't there must be a cause. It is not God's fault, but something has come in between us and God that must be removed. This should exercise our hearts. 1 Corinthians 11:28, "Let a man examine himself." Don't leave it all to the Lord's Table. We should examine ourselves every day and we can only do it by His Word and in His presence. We can't get on without examining ourselves and keeping short accounts with God. Cut at the root of the backsliding, confess it and get it put right.

The devil is busy when we are on our knees and we need to fight to get into God's presence. The devil would have our thoughts wandering until we get to God but when we get to Him there are no more wandering thoughts and we can really pray, and go on praying. We must fight the devil and ourselves. When God gets hold of us and we of Him, we are not so

liable to do wrong things. The thing is to hear His voice for ourselves. When was it true that we heard His voice and saw His face? There is not a syllable of God's book that we can give up. There is a tendency on the part of some to knock down the wall of separation and go in with the world.

Read Matthew 5:8: "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." Some people like to put this off to a coming day. We will see God then, but He wants us to see His face now. Who can see Him? The pure in heart. This is inward purity which no one but God can see. The heart will not be empty. If it is filled with God we will be happy, but it may be filled with other things and "the backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways," (Proverbs 14:14). It does not say backslider in life, but before that, when it is yet in the heart, he is filled with his own ways and is miserable. See John 20:20, "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord." There is nothing that will rejoice the heart like the sight of the Lord.

Read Matthew 6:31-33: Do not seek after food and raiment, as these are merely the things added. We are not only to seek, but to seek first, God and the things of God; they are to get first place. Every morning we rise we should begin with God and then everything else will get its right place.

We are always asking God for things but what is He getting from us? The only thing that God is getting from this earth is what He gets from the hearts of His people. A heart out of touch with God is doing nothing for Him. If we don't get up in time to read His Word and pray, God gets nothing from us. "Will a man rob God?" (Malachi 3:8). There are many at the Lord's Table who are robbing God—not giving Him what they should. It is only praise and thanksgiving that comes from the heart that goes up to God. He should not only get praise at the Lord's Table, but every day. If this is not the case we are not right with God. We go to the remembrance feast and profess to worship God, but is it real praise? After all God has done for us, may we be revived and stirred up to get into His presence and stay there, with our hearts occupied with Himself; and then He will get something from us.

The Preacher and His Pupils, pt. 2

H. Rhodes

4. Conscience, 1 Thessalonians 2:5, 10

Several times over does Paul refer to his behavior while among them, reminding them of things they knew, but when speaking of the hidden things that they couldn't know, he calls God to witness, v. 5 and v. 10. A good conscience, while not infallible as a guide, contributes a great deal to one's freedom and effectiveness in preaching. "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience that in simplicity and godly sincerity, we have had our conversation in the world." (2 Corinthians 1:12), and again, "I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day." (Acts 23:1), and again, "Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and men." (Acts 24:16). How often has some sin or misdemeanor in the life of the preacher veiled the message?

The import of a good conscience may be better judged if we consider the exhortations to Timothy (1:5, 19). It is one reason why he writes to this young man, and encourages him to always maintain it. If not, the danger is a denial of the faith leading to "making shipwreck" as Hymenaeus and Alexander. The Christian is to be a good sailor as well as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Ministers of the word are to be men of conviction, holding the mystery of the faith under the protection of a good conscience. I Timothy ch. 3 v. 9. May we ever keep the window of the soul open toward heaven.

From the inward state we turn again to the outward and note the preacher's

5. Compassion, v. 7.

"We were gentle among you as a nurse cherisheth her own children. We comforted and charged every one of you as a father doth his children", v. 11. This idea of parental care and concern reveals just how much Paul loved these young believers and desired their spiritual growth and development. The same language is used by Paul of Christ himself in His relation to the church in Ephesians 5:29. A baby

demands food in order to grow. To be undernourished is to be deprived of that which is vital to healthy development. To cherish, is to draw to one's bosom. For illustration see 1 Kings 1:3. The thought is to comfort and love, which Paul was always ready to do. Our risen Lord has made full provision for his church, and under Him the preacher too should attend to the needs of young converts, "so that they may no more be as children tossed about by every wind of teaching", (Ephesians 4:14).

Finally, the preacher's

6. Conduct

Generally it is spoken of in verse 10. "Ye are witnesses, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe. In all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God." 1 Corinthians 6:14: "Renouncing the things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God", 2 Corinthians 4:2, so much so He could say "be ye followers of me as I also follow Christ."

The standard is certainly a high one, but unless we as preachers approximate to this, we can hardly expect blessing, such as Paul did, or get the same response from his pupils, of which, here are a few.

They received it.

They revered it.

They rejoiced in it.

They reflected it.

They repeated it.

The first thing about these pupils of Paul was their preparedness to hear what he had to say, and having heard they accepted it, "not as the word of men, but as it is in truth the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever, which also worketh effectually in them that believe", (1 Thessalonians 2:13). As he planted the good seed God gave the increase. It is not for us to analyze the soil, but to sow the seed, being assured that some will fall into good ground and bring forth fruit a hundredfold.

The parable of 'The sower' (Luke 8:4-15). seems intended to assure the disciples that though there may be disappointment at men's attitude to the gospel generally, some will fall

on good ground, and bring forth fruit a hundredfold, which will more than recompense the laborer in the day he stands before the judgment seat of Christ. This cheered the heart of Paul (Romans 1:13, Colossians 1:6), and his joy is expressed in verse 9 of this chapter to the Thessalonians. "Ye turned to God from idols to serve the living God, and to wait for his Son from heaven." So be of good cheer, dear Sunday school teacher, and tract distributor. Your labor is not in vain. You shall reap if you faint not.

Closely allied to this truth of receiving is that of reverencing the Word of God. Referring again to the book of Nehemiah, we are informed in chapter 8 and verse 5 that when Ezra opened the book of the law all the people stood up, and though he read from early morning, v. 3. (marg.) until noon, the ears of all the people were attentive to the book of the law. So Paul in writing to Timothy exhorts him to give attendance to reading (1 Timothy 4:13). To the Colossians he writes "When this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea". It is a joy to every spiritually minded person to hear the scriptures read nicely in public, but when did any of us last hear a whole New Testament letter read in the assembly gathering. To our shame, be it said, that so often our reaction to lengthy readings is one of restlessness, and marked irreverence

The third thing to observe in their attitude toward the scriptures, is given in verse 6 of chapter 1. They received it with joy of the Holy Ghost. Whoever penned the 119th Psalm knew something of this, for in verse 162 he says, "I rejoiced at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil." Isaiah also declares "With joy shall ye draw water from the wells of salvation." (12:3). One of the key words of the Acts of the apostles is Joy—scripture references Acts 8:8, 39; 13:48; 16:34: and in all his epistles Paul expresses his "joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ", (Romans 5:11). See also Philippians 4:4. John too in his first epistle informs his readers, that the ultimate design of the apostolic testimony is to bring men into fellowship with God, that their joy might be full. (1 John 1:1-4). Happy are the people that know

the joyful sound.

Verse 7 tells us that they not only rejoiced in it, but they also Reflected it. Their manner of life paid tribute to the transforming power of the gospel. They became imitators of Paul and his companions v. 6 and thus of Christ himself. Inseparable to this is the final thought of Repeating it. "From you sounded out the word of the Lord," v. 8. Of the early Christians it is said, "They went everywhere preaching the word" (Acts 8:4). To Timothy Paul writes. "Preach the word, in season, out of season" (2 Timothy 5:2). Every Christian church should be a center of evangelism, giving evidence of its new life in Christ.

The essence of all sin, and the source of all misery, is opposition to the will of God.

The Judgment Seat of Christ

Robert Surgenor

We have all heard the little saying, "Only one life, 'twill soon be past, Only what's done for Christ will last." Have you ever considered the man who wrote it? Let me tell you about C. T. Studd, and then perhaps you will appreciate the saying to a greater degree.

Charles Thomas Studd was nurtured in the lap of luxury, and was educated at Eton and Cambridge, where he acquired a degree in law. He also rose to fame in the sports world, becoming the most outstanding and best known cricket player in England. By 1882 he was considered one of the best cricket players in the world. After one "long blaze of cricketing glory," the hero of the British sport-loving public created a stir in the secular world of his youth by renouncing wealth and position to follow Christ. By this time, he had been saved six years, but was in a backslidden condition. However, gospel meetings held by Moody and Sankey in 1882, restored him to the Lord and greatly burdened him to enter missionary work in China. Arriving in Shanghai on March 18th, 1885, he and others with him, at once began the study of the language seven to ten hours a day, donned Chinese garb, and ate with and like the Chinese.

On his 25th birthday, December of 1885, Studd inherited \$145,000. In today's money that would be over \$1,450,000. Upon receiving it, he determined it would go into the work of the Lord. Contacting various Christian organizations he gave all but \$17,000 away.

Just before his marriage to Priscilla Livingstone Steward, in 1888, Studd presented his bride to be with the \$17,000 remaining from the inheritance. She said, "Charlie, what did the Lord tell the rich young man to do? Sell all. Well then, we will start clear with the Lord at our wedding." They wrote General Booth on July 3, 1888, and told him the Salvation Army would receive this last amount of funds. They left Tientsin with \$5 and some bedding and for the next 41 years of marriage together God provided for them.

In 1896 he came to the USA and stayed for 18 months, speaking as much as six times a day, seldom under an hour. While in Liverpool, England, in 1908, he saw a sign, "Cannibals want missionaries." On December 15, 1910, he left for Africa, sailing alone, and leaving his wife behind. After four years he returned home to an ill wife and stayed with her about two years then returned to his field of labor in Africa for 15 more years, which during that time, only saw his wife for two weeks. She was in full agreement, for she had her work for the Lord in England. He was 53 when he left. Those who questioned the wisdom of his action were told that he found a postcard on his desk which stirred him, for it said: If Jesus Christ be God, and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him. In 1929 she died while on a visit to Malaga, Spain, and he soon followed her to be with the Lord he had so faithfully served. Before departing for heaven, he said, "I am getting desperately afraid of going to heaven for I have had the vision of the shame I shall suffer as I get my first glimpse of the Lord Jesus; His majesty, power and marvelous love for me, who treated Him so meanly and shabbily on earth, and acted as though I did Him a favor in serving Him! No wonder God shall have to wipe away the tears off all faces, for we shall be broken-hearted when we see the depth of His love and the shallowness of ours."

Only one life, a few brief years,
Each with its burdens, hopes, and fears;

Each with its days I must fulfill,
 Living for self or in His will;
 Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
 Only what's done for Christ will last.

When this bright world would tempt me sore,
 When Satan would a victory score;
 When self would seek to have its way,
 Then help me Lord with joy to say;
 Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
 Only what's done for Christ will last.

Give me Father, a purpose deep,
 In joy or sorrow Thy word to keep;
 Faithful and true what e'er the strife,
 Pleasing Thee in my daily life;
 Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
 Only what's done for Christ will last.

Oh let my love with fervor burn,
 And from the world now let me turn;
 Living for Thee, and Thee alone,
 Bringing Thee pleasure on Thy throne;
 Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
 Only what's done for Christ will last.

Only one life, yes only one,
 Now let me say, "Thy will be done";
 And when at last I'll hear the call,
 I know I'll say 'twas worth it all;
 Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
 Only what's done for Christ will last.

Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
 Only what's done for Christ will last.
 And when I am dying, how happy I'll be,
 If the lamp of my life has been burned out for
 Thee.

Thomas Charles Studd
 BORN: December 5, 1860
 Northallerton, England
 DIED: July 16, 1931

Ibambi, Africa

LIFE SPAN: 70 years, 7 months, 11 days

Quite a number of years ago a young believer came to me concerned about John 5:24. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not

come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." He knew that the word "condemnation" was "judgment," and that posed a problem for him, for he also had read that we who were saved would stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ (Romans 14:10; 2 Corinthians 5:10). He wondered how this could be since believing on Christ was a guarantee that he would never come into judgment. I explained to him that the word translated "condemnation" (judgment) in John 5:24 was "krisis," and that it meant a crisis, a judgment with a view to eternal punishment. I then explained that the word "judgment" in Romans 14:10 and 2 Corinthians 5:10 was "bema," a word used in Paul's day to describe a raised place where judges sat and viewed the contestants in a race. Then when the contest was over, the runners would appear before the bema to be judged how they ran the race, and what reward (or prize) they would receive. He gave a sigh of relief and thanked me.

There are three future judgments in God's program – the judgment of the saints, the judgment of the living nations, and the judgment of the wicked dead. The Judgment Seat of Christ will take place immediately after the rapture, prior to the marriage supper of the Lamb. The results of this judgment will determine the believer's status and position eternally with Christ. Seven years after the rapture of the saints, the Lord will return to righteously judge the earth dwellers (Matthew 25:31–46) and establish His millennial kingdom on earth. Satan will be bound and confined to the bottomless pit.

After one thousand years of blissful reign under the kingdom of Christ, Satan will be released from his prison (the bottomless pit), and will go out to deceive the nations, and they will respond, rebelling against the throne of God. Then the end will come and "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (2 Peter 3:10). Upon this tremendous dissolving of the universe, God will set up His Great White Throne of judgment, and all the unsaved of humanity will be judged to be judged for their sins. This judgment (crisis) will determine the intensity of each individual sin-

ner's eternal torment in the lake of fire (Revelation 20:11-15).

Coming back to the young brother who asked me the question, even though he gave a sigh of relief, I wonder if more intelligent Christians could give a sigh of relief when they consider that they shall stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ to give an account of themselves? I have mixed feelings about that day, do you? Just think, nothing of your whole life here will be hidden, all shall be brought to light. Think that sobering fact over carefully.

Regarding that tremendous event, to be forewarned is to be forearmed. I believe an intelligent knowledge of the Judgment Seat of Christ will help us curb our sinful passions, and keep ourselves pure. After all, the exposure day lies before all of us that are Christians. The Judgment Seat of Christ should be an incentive to work like a slave for the Master, knowing that He will reward for all labor done in His name.

The Judgment Seat of Christ is mentioned and indicated mainly in four portions of Scripture, namely Romans 14:10-13; 1 Corinthians 3:9-15; 4:1-5; and 2 Corinthians 5:9-10. In Romans 14 we will consider brethren and their attitude. In 1 Corinthians 3, we shall look at the building and the architecture. In 1 Corinthians 4, we shall observe the book, and one's account. Finally in 2 Corinthians 5 we shall examine the body, and His appearing.

Romans 14 Brethren and Attitude

In Romans 14, we find saints bowing the knee, confessing, and giving an account. In 1 Corinthians 3, we notice the fire trying one's work and the thought of receiving reward, or suffering loss. Moving on to 1 Corinthians 4, we discover the hidden things of darkness brought to light, and a manifestation of the counsels of the heart. In 2 Corinthians 5:10, we see the Christian receiving the things done in his body. I am sure that a thorough investigation of the Judgment Seat of Christ will produce in us a careful attitude as to our lifestyle here.

Romans 14 is an interesting chapter in that it deals with two types of brethren, the weak and the strong. The weak brother had never totally escaped Judaism. He had a tender conscience regarding keeping certain Jewish days, and abstaining from eating meats that

had been offered to idols. The strong brother saw no need of keeping Jewish religious days and had no conscience about eating meats that had been offered unto idols. He believed that, "every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer" (1 Timothy 4:4). There was a tendency on the part of the strong to despise the weak, and a tendency on the part of the weak to judge the strong. This produced a very serious condition in Rome - disunity!

Thus Paul writes, "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself" (Romans 14:7). We have a responsibility to God. Paul goes on to say, "But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at naught thy brother? for we shall all stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way" (vs. 10-13).

In verse 14, Paul agrees with the strong, but warns the strong about grieving the weak and the danger that by continuing in their liberty, ultimately destroying the usefulness of the weak. He then states, "It is good neither to eat flesh (a sacrificial animal), nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak" (vs. 21). How can we relate to that today in our culture? Let me put it this way. You might feel at liberty before God to engage in some activity that may stumble another Christian. What should your attitude be? Would you say, "There's nothing wrong in what I'm doing, and if they don't like it, that's too bad?" Well my friend, if that would be your way of thinking, remember this, you are going to stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ and give an account of yourself. You will bow the knee in submission to Him, and you will confess (give Him praise in agreement) to God. Regarding similar behavior, Paul writes "that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way" (vs. 13). The bottom line is that every saint should consider the conscience of

his fellow believers, doing nothing that would stumble them in any way. If you violate this spiritual code of ethics, you will suffer loss at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

(continued)

“Who is on the Lord’s Side?”

By A. McShane (AT, Apr/May 1952)

Exodus 32:26. The Occasion of the Call

Moses, the Mediator of the legal covenant, had been on the cloud-covered mountain of Sinai, receiving from God the tables of the law and the instructions for the building of the tabernacle. His long delay had removed from Israel’s hearts all hope of seeing their leader again. Being a people who had little confidence in the Invisible, they desired to have a god both tangible and visible. Aaron, in his weakness acceded to their request, and with fire, tools and material soon produced the Golden Calf, fashioning it after the model of the idols of Egypt, from which they had but recently departed. Thus the people, who but a short time before had promised to obey the Lord, deliberately lapsed into gross idolatry. They displaced the Invisible Creator by a dumb idol. The new worship was inaugurated by a specially appointed feast-day. “To-morrow,” said Aaron, “is a feast to the Lord,” thus revealing how little scruple or conscience either he or they had about linking the Lord’s name with this vile invention.

After 40 days of communion with the Lord, Moses at last descended the mount and

witnessed one of the saddest and basest scenes in all Israel’s history. Great indeed was the people’s defection. They had lost the fear of God’s displeasure, for they were playing before the Calf. They had lost all spiritual discernment, for they were attributing their deliverance from Egypt to their new god. They had lost their testimony before the nations, for they were naked to their shame. Worst, perhaps, than all, they had forfeited the Presence of the Lord, for He had withdrawn from their camp. In these circumstances, Moses’ course was clear. He could not be associated with a pleasure-seeking, idolatrous camp, which had so wickedly profaned the Name of the Lord. He, therefore, separated himself from the apostasy, took his stand at the gate, and with clarion voice shouted, “Who is on the Lord’s Side?”

When we remember that these things were “written for our admonition,” we do well to enquire if there is anything around us today which resembles Israel’s defiled camp. Our search need not be a long one. The great mass of religious profession, usually called Christendom, has, alas, much in common with it. In its circles the truth of the Lord’s coming again is neglected and, indeed almost forgotten, just as Israel gave up the hope of Moses’ return. Extensive schemes are devised and huge sums invested for the future, as though there were no such thing taught in the Scriptures as that of Christ’s Second Advent. Further, its leading positions are mostly occupied by men who, Aaron-like, have no will or power to do aught but submit to the demands of their congregations and cater for their changing, carnal tastes. Moreover, in these systems the evidence of the engraving tool, which fashions according to the art and device of man, can readily be detected. The stately buildings, the stained glass windows, the peculiarly garbed ministers, the musical instruments, the sanctimonious rituals, the altars and images, copied from paganism or antiquated Judaism, all play an important and imposing part in the religious systems around us. But no attempt whatever is made by them to conform to the simple principles of the New Testament. In order to raise funds and foster activity of a kind, various stunts and

It is natural to compromise conscience and follow the social and religious fashion for the sake of gain or pleasure; it is divine to sacrifice both on the altar of truth and duty.

forms of worldly amusement—socials, guest teas, sales of work, concerts, bazaars, juvenile games, debating societies, and often even dances are promoted by leaders who know little or nothing of the fear of God. The sham of it all is that over this unhallowed mixture the Lord's holy Name is proudly gilded. What travesty of truth! But there it is. Yes, the camp is still with us, and the call comes as of old, but now from a greater than Moses, "Who is on the Lord's Side?" let him come unto Me."

The Effect of the Call

We are not to conclude, however, that all in Israel were carried away by this new religion. Many, doubtless, had their scruples about the shameful behavior of their fellows. Notable amongst these objectors were those of Aaron's own tribe, i.e., the Levites, who distinguished themselves by an immediate and unanimous response to the summons. Moses, by taking his station at the gate, made the issue clear. Every man then had either to rally to the banner of the Lord or stay in idolatry. The test for the nation was similar to the one in Elijah's day, when he on Mount Carmel, asked an equally vital question—"How long halt ye between two opinions?" No excuse could be offered for remaining in the camp and at the same time professing loyalty to the Lord Who had righteously withdrawn from its unholy din and taken up His abode outside its confusion. Therefore to remain within was to forsake Him, to disobey His call, and to be exposed to His righteous judgement.

In view of all this, we do well to remember that the Lord has not changed. If His holiness caused Him to forsake the camp of Israel, how can it allow Him to associate with the religious confusion of the present time? Is not His call relevant to-day: "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord" (2 Corinthians 6:17)? and again, "Come out of her my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (Revelation 18:4)? and has not the writer to the Hebrews said, "Let us go forth (lit. "come out") therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach" (Hebrews 13:13)? Nothing surely could be clearer than these appeals. But what is our response to

them? Remembering that our Lord Himself has said, "He that is not with Me is against Me," let us face the issue. Have we gone out to Him? And are we content to stay out with Him? "Who is on the Lord's Side?"

The Characteristic Marks of being on the Lord's Side

With so much confusion around us, many young believers want to know how they can be sure they are on the Lord's side. They are faced with the problem that many different companies of professed Christians claim to be on it and that all others are wrong. How, then, can we know the Lord's side? What are its distinguishing features? Here are a few simple tests which may prove helpful to the honest enquirer.

First, the Lord is always **ON THE SIDE OF HIS WORD**. Therefore all our associations ought to be tested by the Scriptures. Is my ecclesiastical position in accordance with New Testament teaching? "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20). Moses could have had no doubts about the wrong of the Golden Calf, for the law he carried in his hands forbade the making of such idols. And can not the same be said about many of the practices of the religious world to-day? Are they not mere inventions of men which find no support by either precept or example in God's Guide Book—the Scriptures?

Secondly, the Lord is always **ON THE SIDE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS**. He will not have fellowship with sin to please even His choicest saint. "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5). Unjudged sin has cost many a saint, and many a company of saints, the loss of His Presence. Shiloh, in which the Lord chose to place His Name when Israel first settled in Canaan, had to be forsaken for this very reason.

Thirdly, the Lord is ever **ON THE SIDE OF THE LOWLY**. "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My Word" (Isaiah 66:2). "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble" (1 Peter 5:5). It is as we walk in simple dependence upon Him, that we can be

sure that we are on His side. High, pretentious claims, engendered by pride of position or condition, ever lead to the loss of His Presence and Power.

Fourthly, history proves that the Lord is usually **ON THE SIDE OF THE MINORITY**. Whether we think of Noah and his family against the world; of Joshua and Caleb against Israel; of David and his followers against Saul and his armies; of the Lord and His few disciples against the Jews, or of Stephen against the Sanhedrin, the right side in each case was the one which was in the minority and therefore was unpopular. Now let us apply to ourselves these four important tests.

1. Is the Word of God my sole guide?
2. Have I separated myself from all unrighteousness (2 Corinthians 6:14)?
3. Am I clothed with humility, and do I walk with the humble?
4. Am I on the side of that which the world counts unpopular?

The Wisdom of Being on the Lord's Side

The passage we are considering illustrates the well known principle of Scripture that God honors them that honor Him, for the special favor granted to the Levites in recompense for the stand they took was the service of the Tabernacle. We can rest assured that the path of separation with our rejected Lord, while in some respects costly, is nevertheless strewn with blessings which more than compensate for the paltry price to be paid. Fellowship with God brings a joy to the heart known only by those who have experienced it. Then, what an honor it is to march under His banner! If He is our Beloved, surely we do not wish to court the friendship of the world which crucified Him. Moreover, His is the victorious side, for, "He always wins who sides with God." The temporary set-backs in the struggle do not affect the final outcome. Those who oppose Him will ultimately be the losers. Just as the gold invested in Israel's calf, was never used in the construction of the Tabernacle, but became a total loss, so all that is expended in building up what is not according to the pattern of Scripture will prove to be but "wood,

hay and stubble" at the Judgement Seat of Christ (1 Corinthians 3:12).

The time is at hand when the final Call will be heard. The shout at our Lord's Coming again will rid Christendom of all who are truly His own. They will then be separated, but not without loss for having evaded His reproach. The camp, of course, will carry on without them and will quickly develop into "BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS" (Revelation 17:5). Since this is to be the final development and end of the unscriptural religious systems around us, may we be given grace in every circumstance of life and in every aspect of our testimony for God, to manifest that we are "ON THE LORD'S SIDE." While many for the sake of a little gain, or popularity, or wider sphere of service, unite with the apostate camp, may we evince toward our beloved Lord the spirit of Amasai, who, in the day of his master's rejection, cried, "Thine are we, David, and ON THY SIDE, thou son of Jesse" (1 Chronicles 12:5). Let us not stoop to borrow Babylon's inventions, steal its garments, or share its empty pleasures, but being satisfied with "the simplicity and the purity that is toward Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:3. R.V.), let our portion be to watch with Him outside the camp until He returns to bring us Home. His "Well done" will more than compensate for any little reproach that we may now bear for His worthy Name.

"My Lord, my Master, help me
To walk apart with Thee
Outside the camp, where only
Thy beauty I may see:
Far from the world's wild turmoil,
Far from its busy din,
Far from its praise and honor,
Its unbelief and sin."

Truth has been out of fashion since
man changed his robe of fadeless
light for a garment of faded leaves.