

To "... strengthen the things which remain..." Revelation 3:2

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Judgment Seat of Christ, pt. 2

Robert Surgenor

1 Corinthians 3:9–15 Building and Architecture

Paul relates his laying the foundation of the assembly at Corinth. He goes on to speak of putting good material into the assembly. This responsibility fell upon those who were teachers in the assembly. Their teaching was likened to either gold, silver, precious stones, or wood hay and stubble. The gold-silver-and precious-stone-ministry would be ministry that was greater in weight and more valuable than wood-hay-and-stubble-ministry. It would also be non-burnable, and would add strength and dignity to the house of God. Unlike wood, hay, and stubble, much digging would be needed to obtain it. Thus the teacher, if his ministry is to be valuable, he must labor to obtain it. Valuable truths of the Scriptures are not on the surface like wood, hay, and stubble, but the teacher has to dig for them through much toil. Men who give valuable ministry are those who **labor** in the Word.

Paul then states, "Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built there-upon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire" (1 Corinthians 3:13–15). All the teaching a man ever gave will be fully exposed as to its true value. The "day" is the Judgment Seat of Christ. "Fire" indicates the holiness of God and His judicial discernment and assessment. It matters

little what the saints think of one's ministry. What should concern the teacher is, how does God appraise his ministry? Foolish and theatrical preaching, that has impressed carnal believers, will undergo the divine test of fire, only to go up in smoke. Every man's work will appear in its true character. Even though the teacher is saved, yet the reward that could have been his, will be lost. The twisted teaching of the Church of Rome has applied these verses in a vain effort to support their false doctrine of purgatory.

1 Corinthians Book and Account

In 1 Corinthians 4, the truth of stewardship is brought before us, and the exposure of our account book. "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful. But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but He that judgeth me is the Lord. Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God" (vs. 1-5).

This portion of Scripture brings before us that there will be a time when ministers and stewards will be judged regarding their minis-

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try. Paul speaks of himself as a **minister**, that is, one who was a subordinate servant, entirely subject to his master, with no authority of his own, one who does what he is commanded. Those who have been gifted as pastors and teachers are responsible to fulfill this description. A teacher is commanded to declare the whole counsel of God and not cater to the whims of his audience. Paul also writes concerning stewards. The **steward**, was the master's agent in regulating the concerns of the family, providing food for the household, seeing it served out at the proper times and seasons. He was also responsible for all the cash in purchasing what was necessary for the support of the family. He also was required to keep exact accounts, which he was obliged at certain times to present to the master.

"The counsels of the hearts." Thus we have the purposes, designs, and intentions of men. All their plans shall be made known in that day. And it is a most fearful and alarming truth, that no man can conceal his purposes beyond the day of judgment.

God requires faithfulness in His saints. In a more comprehensive sense, all of us are stewards. God has entrusted to us the truths of Holy Scripture. We are responsible to hold those precepts fast, and faithfully commit them to the next generation. God has entrusted to some a commission to go into all the world and preach the gospel. That is why men are released from their responsibilities in the assembly, and commended to the Lord's work to preach the gospel. They are sent forth by the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:4). If their activities mainly involve visiting from assembly to assembly instead of laboring on new ground. they will be judged for their failure to fulfill the evangelist's commission at the Judgment Seat of Christ, and consequently suffer loss.

It was a small thing to Paul to be judged by mere men, for they were incompetent to sit in judgment. Men can only see the surface and surmise. Thus their judgment means little. Christ is the only competent Judge, for He knows the hidden things of darkness and alone is able to make manifest the counsels of the heart. Those secret desires and motives, shall in that day be fully exposed in the divine light of His awesome presence. All judgments by

man prior to the Judgment Seat of Christ are puny, partial and prejudiced.

Paul knew nothing against himself, regarding his labors for God. His conscience was clear. Yet he admitted that his clear conscience wasn't enough to clear him, but only the One who is omniscient could rightly judge and assess his motives of action.

In view of what we have just considered, let us be careful not to harshly judge others, for we cannot know their feelings and motives. Let us leave the judging to Christ, for all secret things will be brought forth at the Bema and righteously judged. At that time, every saint will receive justice. Remember, every one of us will give an account how we have handled the Word of God, and also, how we have spent our money. Was most of it spent on self, or was it spent for the furtherance of His kingdom?

"Then shall every man have praise of God" (vs. 5). Every man? Yes, those who were faithful servants. They shall hear a loud and clear acclaim of commendation from the Lord Himself. "Well done, thou good (useful) and faithful (trusty) servant" (Matthew 25:21). It is those who have been useful for their Master and trustworthy in following His commands that will receive His praise in that day.

"He is coming! Oh, how solemn
When the Judge's voice is heard,
And in His own light He shows us
Every thought and act and word.

Deeds of merit, as we thought them,
He will show us were but sin;
Little acts we had forgotten
He will tell us were for Him."

2 Corinthians Body and Appearing

Coming now to 2 Corinthians 5:9-10 we read, "Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him. For we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."

Paul had received a ministry from the Lord and he could truthfully say, "*we faint not*" He did not have spiritual heart failure, nor did he become weary. He relentlessly plodded on for God, knowing the day was coming when he

would appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ. The hidden things of dishonesty, which means disgrace, or shame, he had renounced. Not that he was ever guilty of such activity, but there were critics that insinuated this of him. How sad when evil is spoken of a respected saint. How much worse it is when a respected Christian hides something that is deplorable in his life, and then it is exposed to his shame. I believe that there are saints who have died with hidden secrets, but the Judgment Seat of Christ will expose all such hidden things to their loss. Paul's walk was not in craftiness, nor did he handle the word of God deceitfully, but rather commended himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God (2 Corinthians 4:1-2).

He mentions his sufferings and trials for Christ's sake and speaks of them as, "light afflictions." He recognizes that they are but for a moment, but also that those afflictions were working on his behalf, knowing that everything he endured for Christ would reap for him a reward in that day. He speaks of his future blessing as, "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (vs. 17). Paul had good foresight, and lived accordingly.

Paul also mentions his own believer's body, and his groaning with desire to be clothed upon with his house (body) which is from heaven (vs. 1). Paul was looking for the rapture! He knew the day of examination was coming, and confessed that in view of that day he labored in such a way as to be accepted of Christ. His desire was that Christ would be well pleased with his labors. Then comes the searching statement, "For we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ" (vs. 10). The word "appear" is "phaneroo," which carries the thought of being exposed to view, hidden things uncovered. Thayer's Lexicon states that the word "receive" has the idea of "receiving back," thus the thought of repayment. In other words, you will get what you deserve, nothing more and nothing less. Paul in writing the Galatians told them that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7). I believe that includes this life on earth and our coming life in heaven. You will receive the things done in your body, whether good or bad. "Good" means those things that have brought pleasure to His heart, while "bad" means those things

done in the body that were worthless and displeasing to Him. I wonder if there will be a reward for leaving in one's will a sum of money to be given to the Lord's work after their death. This is no sacrifice to the person, for the giving was not done while in the body.

A careful reading of Matthew 25:14-30 is very instructive as to stewardship. A man traveling to a far country delivered unto his servants his substance according to their ability. To one he gave **five** talents, to another **two** and to another **one**. Those servants were responsible to use those talents for his benefit upon his return. The man with five talents traded with the same and gained five more talents. The man with two talents did the same and gained two. However, the fellow with one talent was lazy. He hid the talent in the earth and gained nothing for his master. The servant who had five talents and the one who had only two talents, both doubled what was entrusted to them, and both received an equal commendation upon their master's return. The lazy man with the one talent lost it all and ended up with nothing. The lesson is this. Some saints have been entrusted with greater gifts than others. God knows each one's ability, and bestows upon them a gift they will have the ability to profitably use. It is not the greatness of the gift that matters, but rather the way in which the gift is used. An evangelist, or teacher, or shepherd may have a "five-talent gift." Other saints may only have a "two-talent gift," but if each finish their course using their gift to the best of their ability, their reward will be the same. "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more" (Luke 12:48).

The question is often asked, "Will one's sins be exposed and judged at the Judgement Seat of Christ?" I do not believe so. Our sins were judged at Calvary. God has promised, "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more" (Hebrews 10:17). "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1).

In the eternal state there is no thought of brethren putting things right with brethren with whom they quarreled. There will only be the realization of suffering loss for their misconduct

while in the body.

When the flamboyant self-important preacher stands before Christ, he will see his unprofitable ministry go up in smoke, and will be in perfect agreement with the judgment, in bowing the knee. When the wealthy Christian who spent all of his substance on himself, never communicating with others of his substance, stands to be exposed, all his luxurious living will be burned up, and bowing the knee, he will say "amen." When the saint views all the times that they could have given a sinner a gospel tract, but neglected to do so, they will see what reward they could have had vanish. When some see the folly of wasting their money on something bigger and better, when what they had was sufficient, they will say amen at the loss of the reward they could have had, by living a different lifestyle.

It does not seem probable that the Judgment Seat of Christ will expose all the faults of the individual in the presence of the Church, for what would the object of that be? There would be no righteousness or profit in such treatment. The meeting will be private and confidential. You will personally stand before your Lord to see your loss and to receive your eternal reward.

Oh the loss that many of us will experience at the Judgment Seat of Christ! I look at that solemn event with mixed feelings, for over the past 60 years in Christ, I feel that I could have done much more. What my reward will be in that day, I do not know. However, I do know that my Lord is a righteous judge. His judgment will be done in love, and through His divine omniscience He will bestow upon me an eternal reward corresponding to the nature of my lifetime for Him, while in the body on earth. I am now weaving the garment that I will be wearing for eternity.

May all of us, in view of that coming day, be able to truthfully say like the beloved apostle, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing" (2 Timothy 4:7-8)

By and by when I look on His face,
Beautiful face, thorn-shadowed face;
By and by when I look on His face,
I'll wish I had given Him more.

More, so much more --
More of my love than I e'er gave before.
By and by when I look on His face,
I'll wish I had given Him more.

By and by when He holds out His hands,
Marvelous hands, welcoming hands;
By and by when He holds out His hands,
I'll wish I had given Him more.
More, so much more --
More of my heart than I e'er gave before.
By and by when I look on His hands,
I'll wish I had given Him more.

By and by when I kneel at His feet,
Wonderful feet, nail-pierced feet;
By and by when I look on His feet,
I'll wish I had given Him more.
More, so much more --
More of my life than I e'er gave before.
By and by when I look on His feet,
I'll wish I had given Him more.

The main thing for the lost is to be a Christian; the main thing for a Christian is to BE a Christian.

Sovereignty of God

W. R. Lewis (Believer's Magazine 1938)

The articles of the Church of England are moderately Calvinistic, but its liturgy is Arminian. Especially is this seen in its rite of Infant Baptism. Where is the sovereignty of God if, at the will of a parish priest, a child can be said to be born again through sprinkling a few drops of water upon him? Where is the Divine preservation, if the new life thus imparted can, as the theory contemplates, so easily be lost? The Scripture says "He that heareth My Word, and believeth Him that sent Me hath everlasting life, and cometh not into the judgment but hath passed out of death into life." Again, "I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch

them out of My hand." We can understand, then, that the Evangelicals are generally moderate Calvinists, whereas the Ritualists, like Romanists, are Arminians, if not Pelagians. Yet both are inconsistent, the one party using words in the baptismal service which they know are not true, the other subscribing Articles which they do not believe.

Happily it is possible to hold the Truth without having to take sides with either Calvinist or Arminian. Not that they are equally astray, but both sides have lost the balance of truth. Each has its stronghold of texts with arguments appealing to the conscience on the side either of Divine sovereignty or human responsibility, yet each goes either beyond the Truth or falls short of it; the one for example, in its doctrine of reprobation, the other in its denial of the eternal security of the believer, the one in its limitation of the scope of propitiation, the other in its idea of general redemption.

The path of truth is always a narrow one, and the Holy Spirit's teaching alone can keep us in it. Whenever we allow the mind to begin to work, and to form its own conclusions, we either go too far to the right, or too far to the left. The logical corollary of "election" would appear to our finite minds to be "reprobation," but Scripture teaches that the opposite to election is not reprobation, but God's enduring with much long-suffering vessels of wrath (not "afore prepared" by Him, for their destiny as are the vessels of mercy but) "fitted" (i.e., by themselves, as the grammatical form indicates) for destruction (Romans 9:22, 23).

How needful then to adhere to Scripture! We are safe in our conclusions only as we let it speak for itself. When we depart from Scriptural expressions we soon depart from Scripture itself, and if we attempt to interpret Divine mysteries in human language rather than in God's, we are sure to err. Instead then of seeking to justify God to human reason, let us rather, like the Apostle, quote Scripture (as he does in Romans 9) and leave it to God Himself to interpret His ways. He is righteous in all He does, and is never arbitrary or capricious. His reasons for a time may be concealed, but they are always worthy of Himself, and will assuredly draw forth eternally our approval and our praise. It is in the Scriptures in all their breadth,

not in Theology, with its narrowness, that the true balance of truth is found. The Lord Jesus, when here below, could rejoice in the Divine decrees (Matthew 11:25), and yet could shed tears over self-willed Jerusalem. (Luke 13:34; 19:41). When our hearts are opened by the Spirit of God, there will be compassion for the lost but never any quarreling with Divine sovereignty, for apart from that all would be irretrievably condemned. "All His ways are judgment, a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He." (Deuteronomy 32:4). He always acts on the principle of His own inflexible justice, never by arbitrary impulses. There is perfect harmony, absolute precision and perfect balance in His every act, both in blessing and in judgment, and, in all His ways of wisdom, power and holiness, whether in relation to the whole universe or to the individual, "there is no unrighteousness in Him."

He "willeth to have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4, R.V.). There is no contrary decree of God hindering the salvation of any, as "reprobation" would imply. To charge God with the damnation of the lost is blasphemy. He does not even simply abandon to their evil way all but the elect, for, in one way or another, the Spirit of God is said to "strive" with men, and they on their part are said to "resist" Him. If, at last, He withholds His gracious dealings and gives them up to a reprobate mind and to strong delusion He acts thus judicially and penally only when man has hardened his own heart.⁽¹⁾ He never says "Let them alone" till they are joined to idols. He never gives men up to their own hearts' lust that they may walk in their own counsels till they would have none of Him (Psalm 81:12). The universal testimony of Scripture is that God retributively allows the persistent wickedness of man fully to develop itself in the face of the strivings of His love, in order to show in their case His almighty power and that He might be sanctified before the eyes of all. None are forced to reject the Saviour, no Divine decree necessitates it. If any are lost, they alone are to blame. Man decides for himself, for without this freedom there would be no responsibility, though men can deprive themselves of freedom and yet remain no less responsible.

But on the other hand if any are saved, they owe it entirely to God's sovereign and electing mercy. No one was ever born of his own will. Those who believe on His Name "are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (John 1:13). If man was left to his free will for blessing there would be no hope for him. The "I will" of the natural man always leads him away from God, and defiance of His ever-loving, wise, holy and righteous rule must bring him sooner or later under the crushing stroke of Omnipotence. Happy are they who let Him do what He wills in sovereign mercy and undeserved grace. It is when we are brought down in confessed impotency and sinfulness and yield to His blessed will that we are blessed and receive the uplifting that is always given to those who voluntarily humble themselves under His mighty hand. Then the "I will" of submission and faith brings untold blessing (Genesis 24:58). Rest can only come where He sets up His Throne.

Propitiation and Substitution

Propitiation is to be distinguished from Substitution. Scripture teaches that the whole world lies within the scope of Propitiation: that the atoning death of Christ is universal in its provisional efficacy, the while in Substitution it is particular in its application. It is universal in its propitiatory efficacy, for "He gave Himself a ransom for (huper ⁽²⁾ on behalf of) all" (1 Timothy 2:6) and "is the propitiation for (the sins of) the whole world" (1 John 2:2). We are not to think of an exact equivalent, of so much suffering for so much sin, as though Christ has died and suffered more than He need have done, if he suffered and died on behalf of those who after all reject Him. Nor was it the sins only of the elect that came within the scope of His propitiatory sacrifice. Had never a soul been saved, His distress under the judgment of God against sin, would surely have been not one whit the less. Sin had assailed the very Throne of God and the Son of God has so satisfied every claim of Divine holiness in respect of sin, has so disposed of every barrier necessitated by Divine righteousness, has so made peace at infinite cost, has so infinitely glorified God in the very place where sin found

its climax of rebellion, that the Message of Peace, on the basis of Divine righteousness, can now go forth into all the world, and to every creature, (2 Corinthians 5:20).

Sin is not only rebellion, lawlessness, high treason and affront to the Most High, involving guilt only possible of expiation by the blood of Christ, but it also partakes of the nature of debt. We have defrauded God, and have failed to make our due return and He is not indifferent whether these obligations are met or not. There must be full restitution before there can be forgiveness. This is impossible to a sinner for he can neither undo the past nor make amends for it, but through Christ the guilt-offering, satisfaction has been made, and this not by a convenient legal fiction, but by HIS obedience unto death. (Romans 5:9). Only that which satisfies the justice as well as the love of God brings peace to the awakened conscience.

In the sin-offering of old there was, in type, the expiation of guilt, while in the trespass-offering satisfaction and reparation were made for the wrong committed. We may be greatly burdened about a debt due to men, but who thinks, as he ought, of his indebtedness to God? Even if there were some apprehension of the guilt, it was never left to the offerer to estimate the wrong; that must be definitely appraised by God Himself (Leviticus 5:15). When we have a right view of the holiness of God, and see ourselves beneath His searching gaze, how little then appears the censure or the approbation of men! God searches us through and through, and enters into the intricacies of every hidden principle, and weighed in His balance all are found wanting, and only the infinite sacrifice of Christ can make due reparation.

So infinite and exhaustless is the value God sets upon the death of His only-begotten Son that if every bankrupt sinner who has ever lived had come in to have his debt discharged, the satisfaction Christ has made would more than suffice for the reparation of every wrong committed and the satisfaction of every obligation unfulfilled. How "the fifth part added thereto" speaks of this! (Leviticus 6:5; Romans 5:15-19).

But while the death of Christ is universal in its provisional efficacy, it is particular in its

application, and if the sinner avails not himself of this provision, his guilt has not been expiated—he is still guilty before God—his sins have not been borne away, his transgressions have not been removed, his debt has not been discharged, and, if he dies in his sins, he will be answerable not only for the rejection of Christ, but also for every other sin he has committed (Revelation 20:12; Ephesians 5:6). God has “set forth Christ Jesus a propitiation by His blood,” but it is “through faith” in Him on our part that we are justified. (Romans 3:25). Only those who believe can say “He bore our sins.” For them alone is He the Substitute or Surety. The language of Isaiah 53:5, 6 is the language of faith, and it is wrong and can only lead to confusion to apply these words universally and indiscriminately. But how often when quoted in the hearing of a convicted soul have they been the revelation of the blessed Surety, who was made a curse for (anti, in the place or stead of) the believing sinner! On the other hand, the sins of the wicked dead have not been borne but will be brought up again at the Great White Throne, and the dead who will be there will bear forever the punishment due to those sins in the Lake of Fire.

(1). Note the gradation brought out in the R. V. of “hardening” in Exodus 7:13, 7:22, “made heavy” (a stronger word) in 8:15, 32, and “stubborn” in 9:7, all acts of Pharaoh himself. Then a climax seems to be reached and henceforth we read that “the Lord hardened” (9:12, 35; 10:1, 20; 11:10; 14:8).

(2). Where substitution is in view, “anti” (instead of) is used.

Men reveal their character most clearly by what they think is funny.

Counsel to Young Christians

Walter Scott

The Start; Neither Doubt nor Fear

Is there a lurking suspicion in the soul, a shadow across the heart, a quiver of con-

science? If so, you are not perfectly clear as to your acceptance by God. Now, dear young Christian, to grasp the breadth or fathom the depth of God’s mighty work of redemption, you must turn to the Cross. That is earth’s and heaven’s lesson for eternity. But there are three divine statements, which, if you grip, or rather if they grip you, doubts and fears are gone forever.

First. “When He had by Himself purged our sins, He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Hebrews 1:3). The purging of our sins was part of His divine glory. It is a divine work to create worlds and to sustain them. It was as truly a divine work to purge our sins from the face and memory of God. It is done. He has done that very thing. Your sins are purged, forgiven, forgotten, and blotted out. Why question it? You may justly fear and tremble, but only when the throne of the Eternal totters; only when the royal diadem falls from the brow of the Mighty One, Who, in love, grappled with our sins on the Cross, and there purged them once and forever from before the face of God.

Second. “The worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins” (Hebrews 10:2). Now, through faith in the testimony of God, every believer, young and old, weak and strong, is once purged. Sins are purged from the sight of God, and purged from the conscience of the believer. This latter is an act within, as the former was an act without. Both are of present and eternal value, and never need to be repeated. We are conscious of sin within and without, but once purged there is no more conscience of sins. This is enough to dispel every doubt, and set the troubled conscience at perfect rest. Your sins purged once by the blood of Christ, and your conscience once purged by faith are enough! God’s eye is on the blood, and His Word is in your heart (Ex. 12:13). The former is for security, and the latter for confidence. Every young Christian needs to start with these lessons of priceless value.

Third. “By one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified” (Hebrews 10:14). The one sacrifice of infinite value to God has righteously enabled Him to set the weakest believer in His presence perfected

forever. This is what God has said of you. You are not perfected forever because of your faith, or service, or walk, but simply and absolutely because of the infinite value of the one offering of Christ for your sins. It is by one offering He has perfected forever them that are sanctified or set apart to God. It is not a sinless state, but refers to God's absolute dealing with sin at the Cross, so that in all its worth, God views every believer perfected forever, made fit to stand before His throne in perfect peace.

Those three passages form a rock to which, if you anchor your soul, you will ride triumphantly over every wave of unbelief. Grip God's Word; get on the rock of imperishable Scripture; then all is well.

The Two Natures and the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit dwells in every Christian (1 Corinthians 6:19), as also in the Church (1 Corinthians 3:16). He is the power within (Ephesians 3:20), while God is the power without (Romans 8). Now when you were saved, the old nature, which is in everyone, was not sanctified nor removed. It is in you; but a new nature was given. Thus in every Christian there are two natures, the old and the new. The old is condemned, crucified, and in opposition to God (Romans 6; 8:3, 7, 8). The new is holy, created, and delighting in God (Romans 7:22; Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10). Now these two natures in each believer are necessarily in opposition, as Romans 7 shows, which describes a past condition when the apostle wrote, and is in no wise the normal Christian state of believers. The Holy Spirit is the only power to repress the workings of the flesh, or sin within us (Galatians 5:16-18). The new nature, while holy in its tendencies and desires, is yet weak and powerless. It wills to do right, but lacks the power to accomplish it (Romans 7:15,16), hence the Holy Spirit is the power which enables one to overcome the working of the flesh. No Christian is in the flesh, but the flesh is in him. How very important and practical for all to be clear on these truths so vital to Christian life and practice!

Amusements

We can prescribe no rule. The buoyancy of youth demands a certain amount of liberty

which needs to be kept within godly limits and controlled by godly principles. For our own part we have no desire to visit exhibitions save for instructional or educational purposes, not on the ground that these are sinful, but simply because we are satisfied without them. We find Christ and His interests enough for us. Besides, souls are perishing, eternity is nearing, and we have neither time nor inclination to mingle with the world in admiring its toys and sharing in its pleasures. The youngest believer is made independent of the world. He has in himself a well of living water which is ever sparkling, perennial, and springing up for his soul's enjoyment (John 4:14). "Never thirst" and "never hunger" is the twofold description of every child of God. Instead, too, of the world ministering to our enjoyment, we minister to its need. "He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" (John 7:38). Let the rivers flow, and thus serve your generation. There are many games and amusements of an innocent character which may be enjoyed at home. We like to see young people happy, and hear their merry laugh. Our homes should be bright, happy and attractive.

Prayer

Pray at all times, and under all circumstances. Neglect of private prayer is the certain path to a complete breakdown. We have followed the course of many saints and servants of the Lord. We have marked the progress and success of some, and mourned over the failure of others, and we can trace, to a large extent, these results to the use or neglect of closet-exercise (Matthew 6:6). The commencement of the Lord's personal ministry was marked in prayer (Luke 3:21). The ministry of the twelve was preceded by a night of prayer (Luke 6:12). The mighty work of God in Europe may be traced to a prayer meeting at the side of the river (Acts 16:13). The extraordinary ministry of Elijah, a service in which heaven and earth were made subservient to the man of God, was due to prayer (James 5:17). The conversion of 3,000 souls followed ten days of prayer (Acts 1 and 2). A man of prayer with one talent may accomplish the mightiest results; while the prayerless servant, however gifted, is powerless and weak. A man of prayer is almost

omnipotent. Who or what can touch him? In himself he is weak and defenseless, but the Eternal God is his strength and bulwark.

Young Christian, begin and close each day with God in prayer. Speak to Him often. Speak to Him at all times. Speak to Him under all circumstances. See that you keep short accounts with God. Never neglect personal, persevering, believing prayer. If necessary, curtail public engagements, but not your private devotions. Rest assured the more you give yourself to prayer and supplication, your life and service will have a corresponding character stamped upon them. Christians characterized by "one thing I do" are in great demand, people of purpose. The age is one of ceaseless activity. Time spent on your knees is regarded by some as wasted moments! It will be found in the coming day of trial (1 Corinthians 3:13) that much now regarded as Christian work "shall be burnt," and the workman "suffer loss" (verse 15). It is not the amount, but the character of the service that is in question in the judgment of works. "Well done, good and faithful servant" is the Lord's word of welcome then (Matthew 25:21). Work! Pray! Watch! are not merely catch-words, but contain in themselves the moral elements of true success in Christian life. We cannot dispense with them.

He that commands us to be patient, will give us occasion to be so; for He will make us wait, lead us around, let loose our foes, and increase our burdens; but when things are at the worst, to the patient soul deliverance is nearest.

"As for me. . ."

Joel Portman

Mercy, instead of Retaliation

Psalm 35 has many descriptive aspects that can only be applied directly to our Lord Jesus Christ. The theme of this psalm is the suffering believer in the midst of his enemies

and opponents. We can clearly see the humble, suffering humanity of our blessed Lord as He moved in this world amidst those who sought His life at every point. Yet, despite their connivings and intrigue, He displayed nothing but mercy and kindness to all.

It seems that this psalm was written during David's time of fleeing from Saul. We can see the unceasing determination of Saul to destroy him, and yet our minds also recall those events when David displayed mercy to him (1 Samuel 4:4-15, 26:5-25). Yet, sadly, Saul failed to permanently respond to David's acts of mercy and kindness. Neither should one expect the wicked to appreciate the kindness of the merciful (Matthew 5:7).

The tendency to retaliate against those who persecute a believer (or any other person) is normal and instinctive, but to display the truth of the Lord's command to "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; (Matthew 5:44), is to manifest the character that the Holy Spirit desires to reproduce in us. Retaliation against enemies is as old as man's history on earth. In Genesis 4, Lamech boasted to his wives, in his song (4:23), that he had avenged himself seventy seven fold on a young man who had hurt him. This is always the result of sin that is lurking in our natures and which has been the cause of much evil and suffering during centuries of man's history. Many wars and "vengeance killings" that are prevalent in some parts of the world result from this same motive.

But this is not the character of Christ that should be seen in a believer! True, He will come to avenge Himself on His foes (Psalm 2:9, 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10, etc.), but this is different from revenge or retaliation. It will be the righteous expression of His judicial dealings as God with those who have rejected and spurned His grace. Man's revenging is intended to inflict suffering on those who have caused one to suffer. It is to "get back" at those who have wronged us. But we are exhorted by Paul in Romans 12:14-15, to "Bless them which persecute you: bless and curse not. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep." This is the evidence of the truth of

Romans 12:1-2 expressed, in the believer having presented his body as a living sacrifice, conformed to the good, acceptable and perfect will of God. Anything less is to be that much unlike our Lord Jesus Christ.

Such mercy is displayed in ways that the psalmist describes. He humbled himself on their behalf before God ("clothing was sackcloth") and showed his personal concern for their welfare. That action was accompanied by fasting, an indication of the reality and depth of his exercise on their behalf. Instead of rejoicing over them, he interceded for them before God. He behaved himself as if that enemy was his own personal, close friend or brother and mourned because of their sickness. That is a response that is completely contrary to human nature, but it is the demonstration of a spiritual believer. Despite his concern for them, they only continued their opposition and evil. So there was no recompense from men for his mercy, but without doubt, the Lord was honored and would render a full recompense for his behavior. This will also be true for every child of God who seeks to faithfully follow the steps of our blessed Lord.

Confidence amidst Uncertainty

Psalm 41 is the last of the Genesis section of the Psalms. Psalm 1 begins by expressed the blessedness (or, happinesses) of the godly man; this psalm is occupied with the blessedness of the merciful man. Since this psalm seems to have been written during the time of Absalom's rebellion, we can relate this merciful man to those who came with Barzillai, to minister to him in his affliction (2 Samuel 17:27). What a contrast they were to Absalom and Ahithophel, who were plotting to destroy him! Those were very uncertain times for David. It is amazing that David, that great king, experienced so much that was contrary to what he should have received; but how perfectly that illustrates the experience of our blessed Lord, from those who should have received Him.

Those were uncertain times for David. He told Zadok and others, "If I shall find favor in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again and shew me both it and his habitation: but if he thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto

him." (2 Samuel 15:25-26). His destiny as king was in the hands of the Lord, for all depended on the faithfulness of his people and that of His God. It seems from v. 3, that Absalom and his followers rebelled during a time of David's weakness through sickness, so that all he could do was call on the Lord for His mercy.

Enemies and supposed friends were against him or were undependable. Who could he turn to? None other than the one who has promised to be a "friend that sticketh closer than a brother," (Proverbs 18:24). His own familiar friend (likely Ahithophel), had turned against him and was a counselor to Absalom. However, forsaking all unfaithful friends, he expressed his confidence in the Lord, "But thou, O Lord, be merciful unto me and raise me up."

Such was his confidence in God that he could write, "As for me, thou upholdest me in mine integrity and settest me before Thy face forever." (v. 12). In saying this, he was expressing his complete assurance in God's knowledge of his own condition spiritually, and recognizing the character of his life, as well as being assured of the Lord's care and provision for him. Of course, this was only perfectly true of the Lord Jesus, who lived a life of perfect purity and holiness, manifesting true integrity. Like Job, He, and believers, were excoriated and accused as being unrighteous, unholy, and without true integrity, when the opposite was the case. This was and is the confidence of the godly man, and it fittingly closes the first section of Psalms that begins with that man described.

Believers should have the same confidence in God. He is not unfaithful to forget the life of righteousness and labor of love for Him, as assured in Hebrews 6:10, there in contrast to the ones who fail to go on in a life of faith. There are great benefits in living a life that seeks to please the Lord and honor Him, and one is the assurance of His sustaining mercy and grace with the confidence of being with Him eternally. This should be our fervent desire as well, and the results will be worth all given up for Him.

(continued)

The saint trusting God in adversity has more joy than the wicked in prosperity.