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Edit: Disillusionment vs. Certainty

Joel Portman

Nobody lives long in this troubled world without encountering disappointments. The frustration that arises when a promise made isn't kept, an appointment to meet results in a "no-show", or that 'dependable person' fails to perform responsibly. Astute citizens realize that the campaign promises that candidates for an office make are often only empty words, given to impress and sway the voters, but without any certainty of ever being carried out. Even though the often-criticized weatherman promises a beautiful day drenched with sunshine, the anticipated day may be marked by drizzling rain. This is our world! And if we never encounter those things that disappoint or disillusion us in life, then we are indeed very rare or isolated from others.

Israel had those experiences. They left Egypt with high hopes of marching into the land of promise without any delay, only to find that the long trek in the wilderness was before them, accompanied by all the difficulties and disappointments involved. That condition wasn't due to the Lord's failure to tell them what was in the pathway; rather it was their vain expectations that were not founded on reality. Later, in their history, they looked to Egypt to help them against the power of the Assyrian armies, only to be warned by Isaiah that Egypt was like leaning on a reed that had no strength and would break easily, as Rabshakeh also told them (Isaiah 30:7, 36:6). The pair on the road to Emmaus were dejected because they "trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel" (Luke 24:21). Their expectation was right but their interpretation of what they had seen had failed them.

It's so refreshing to us to reaffirm that our hopes and confidences are in a "God that cannot lie" (Titus 1:2), and in One who will not "fail nor be discouraged..." (Isaiah 42:4). Paul reminds us that "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us," (2 Corinthians 1:20). We read that, "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent:

hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" (Numbers 23:19). Our hope is certain, not like the hopes of this world that depend on the promises of men who may utter them without intention or ability to fulfill them. The believer's hope is based on the certainty that our God will always fulfill His Word and is not limited in His ability to do so.

Think of some of the amazing promises that we have! He has said that, "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also," (John 14:3). Though written at the end of the NT canon of Scripture, it is possibly the earliest definite statement of our Lord regarding His coming for His disciples. That promise of His return for His people has resounded through the centuries of church history and has been "that blessed hope and glorious appearing (appearing of the glory, lit), of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ", (Titus 2:13). The certainty of that coming cannot be verified by looking at "signs" in our world, conditions of our society, whether or not orthodox Jews have developed a red heifer or not, or on any other visible "evidence" in our lives. True faith depends on the certainty of God's Word and the faithfulness of Him who spoke it. Those in Hebrews 11 whose lives were marked by faith were those who received truth from God or a promise that He had given, and they simply believed it without outward evidence. Abraham and Sarah waiting for a son is an example.

It is a mistake for any of us to think that world conditions are an indication of the nearness of the Lord's coming. It should be enough that He has promised, and that the words with which our Bible closes are still true, "I come quickly." (Revelation 22:7, 12, 20). Faith should cause us to anticipate His coming at any moment and to live as if He could fulfill His promise NOW. How that expectation cheers the heart of the saints of God and makes us order our lives around that certainty!

Reading the words of the Lord in the Upper Room (John 13-17) reveals that those last words to His own in that setting are filled with precious promises. There is the promise of the Comforter and all that He will provide (John 14:16, 26, 15:26, 16:7-11, 13). The Lord gives the assurance of His own presence with them as well as that of the Father (John. 14:18, 23). He assures them of His peace that He was leaving with them in this troubled scene (John 14:27, 16:33). He manifests and declares His love for them (John 13:1, 15:9-10). These, along with many more words intended to comfort and assure them, are true for us as well so that in this disappointing scene, we can rest with quiet confidence on His Word through every disappointment of life.

Something that Vance Havner wrote can bring this to a close. He wrote, "Faith goes on from there ruggedly believing that what God has promised He will perform....It is a mark of unbelief, not of faith, when we uneasily look around us and keep reminding God that we are depending on Him....we should move on to do the thing and the next, counting it all as good as done...the longer you examine your faith, the sicker it will be." Just trust the Lord. HE IS FAITHFUL, always!

There was only one way for Noah to get out of the ark and that was "up". So we who are saved will yet go up. The only way we can cease to be saints on earth is to be saints in heaven. Donald Ross

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Our Unfathomable God

C. Jones (Wales)

God's Person is Unfathomable

It seems to be instinctive and inevitable for an ordinary, rational man to think about the existence of God and to wonder what He might be like. Without a revelation from God, man would worship some form of idol. Zophar asked "Canst thou by searching find out God?" (Job 11:7). Only God can reveal God and He has revealed Himself in that which is recorded in His written Word, the Holy Scriptures. The first written words of Scripture were written by God on two tables of stone, (Exodus 31:18; 20:1-17), and each and every Scripture is Divinely inspired, (2 Timothy 3:16). We read in 2 Peter 1:21, "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost".

The revelation in the written Word is gradual and piecemeal, the full and final revelation being in and through the Lord Jesus Christ, (Hebrews 1:1-3), for "no man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him" (John 1:18). The preeminence, power, supremacy, glory and all-sufficiency of the "altogether lovely" (Song 5:16), Lord Jesus Christ are brought before us in (Colossians 1:15-20). He is declared to be the image of the invisible God, (v.15); creator of all things, (v.16); upholder of all things, (v.17); Head of the Body, the Church, (v.18); the One in Whom all fullness dwells, (v.19), and the One Who made peace through the shedding of His blood on the cross and by Whom all things will be reconciled to God, (v.20). The Lord said, "he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). He was God "manifest in the flesh" (1 Timothy 3:16); "God with us" (Matthew 1:23), and all the fullness of Deity dwelt in Him in bodily form, (Colossians 2:9).

God's wonderful creation reveals something of His power and glory, (Psalm 19:1-6): the creation continuously provides evidence of the existence, creatorial power, wisdom and majesty of God. Mankind is without excuse in not worshiping and serving God. The witness to the invisible God, to His glory and eternal power, is all around us in the things we can see and hear. Paul wrote, "the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse" (Romans 1:20).

The creation provides incontrovertible proof of the existence, power and glory of God, and meditation on the creatorial work of God will fill us with awe. The revelation of God in and through creation does not, however, give us an insight into the nature, person or character of God. Many of the attributes of God, such as His holiness, love, grace and truth, are not revealed by creation but are revealed in His written Word. The reve-

lation of God in creation will not of itself produce saving faith, but the Holy Spirit graciously speaking to an individual through the Word of God can reveal the holiness, love, grace and mercy of God, convict of sin and lead a sinner to repentance and saving faith in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. A sinner is not saved by believing that God exists but by saving faith in Christ, (Acts 4:12).

As a believer prayerfully reads the Word of God under the guidance and leading of the Holy Spirit, the wonder of God, and all He is doing, has done and yet will do, fills the believer with awe, for the facts revealed are overwhelming and stimulate a desire to worship and praise the omnipotent and omniscient God. "God is love" (1 John 4:8), and He is holy, (Leviticus 19:2). He is "the God of all grace" (1 Peter 5:10), and "rich in mercy" (Ephesians 2:4).

He is "the only wise God" (1 Timothy 1:17), and we read of the "depth of the riches of both of the wisdom and knowledge of God" (Romans 11:33). Being infinite in wisdom, knowledge, love and power, God always achieves His purposes in the best possible way: His "way is perfect" (Psalm 18:30). The world did not come to know God through worldly wisdom, "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1 Corinthians 1:21). The preaching referred to in this verse is the preaching of the message of the cross, and "the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:18). In the infinite wisdom of God, not many who are wise, mighty or noble in the eyes of the world are saved. God has often chosen those who are regarded as foolish and weak and are despised. In doing this, the wisdom of God is revealed and He is glorified, (1 Corinthians 1:26-31).

Believers can rest in the assurance that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28). God's purpose is that believers should become more and more like His only begotten Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, (Romans 8:29). Only God, in His perfect wisdom, knows what is best for believers, and He is able to order all things for their eternal good and His glory. All that God does, in His wisdom, love and power, glorifies Him, exalts the Lord Jesus Christ and brings peace and blessing to believers. Having been saved, believers should seek to serve God in accordance with the truths revealed in His written Word, and pray for the wisdom which is from above, which is "first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy" (James 3:17).

God has an un-derived, eternal existence and the cause of His existence is in Himself. He is the self-existent, self-sufficient, Holy One Who possesses eternal life in Himself. He is immutable, eternally unchanging, (Malachi 3:6). Being perfect and infinite in wisdom and knowl-

edge, God has never learned or forgotten anything. He has never had to experiment to see if something would work or develop, for He knows all things from their beginning. All His attributes are eternal and unchanging; what He always was He is, and what He is He always will be. His promises are unchangeable and, because of what He is eternally, their fulfilment is sure and certain.

Meditation on God and on the Person and work of His only begotten, eternal and beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, Who is co-equal, co-eternal and co-existent with Himself, will cause a believer to experience such overwhelming feelings of awe, wonder and love for the Father and the Son that the feelings cannot be fully expressed in human language, neither verbally nor in writing. Human language is perfectly adequate as a means of communicating information on finite, earthly matters and on earthly experiences. However, its inadequacies become apparent when dealing with that which is infinite and eternal; that is, with God and the things of God. Even the use of superlatives is not sufficient. One can feel more than one can express.

(Continued)

We will go up in a moment when the Lord comes, but I would like to have just a little time to shout, "Christ died for the ungodly."

This is not your Rest

Events of our time remind us of the solemn message God sent to Israel: "Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest: because it is polluted, it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction" (Micah 2:10). It is true that the words are not an exhortation to God's children to depart out of an ungodly world, but rather the announcement of His immutable purpose to cast them out of the land they had polluted by their iniquities, even as they had cast out others from their homes and possessions. Yet by way of application the language may be addressed to all Christians, reminding them that this polluted world is not their rest.

We read of a Creation rest, which was soon disturbed by the introduction of sin (Genesis 2:2, 3). We read of a Canaan rest, which was soon lost by the unbelief and idolatry of Israel (Joshua 1:13; 22:4). The former rest was never regained, for our Lord Jesus said to the Jews, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John 5:17). The latter rest could never be recovered except by the coming of One, of whom Solomon "the peaceable" was a type, and of whom Jehovah said to David, "Behold, a son shall be born unto thee, who shall be a man of rest" (1 Chronicles 22:9). There is a rest He bestows, blessed be His name, even amid the wild

distractions and tumults of earth; but it is still true that He says to His followers, "Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest."

First, There is a rest He gives. "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). It is a rest given, not sold, and it must be received as a gift, or it cannot be received at all. God gave His only begotten Son (John 3:16); the Father gave us another Comforter (John 14:16); Christ gives us eternal life (John 17:8); He gives repentance and remission of sins (Acts 5:31) He gives us everlasting consolation (2 Thessalonians 2:16); He gives Himself (Titus 2:14). All is a gift, and the soul never gets rest until it accepts as true, and true as meeting its own need, the testimony that "the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

Second, There is a rest found. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:29, 30). The only way to find real and permanent rest is to walk in fellowship with Himself, yoked in loving service, and walking side by side with our Lord, even as He walked. When we can say with Paul, "The love of Christ constraineth us" (2 Corinthians 5:14); "To me to live is Christ" (Philippians 1:21); "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Galatians 6:14), our peace shall be like a river, and grow deeper and wider as it flows on to the boundless sea of God's love.

Third, Rest is the portion of Christ's followers in the midst of service. "He said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile" (Mark 6:31). He did not send them away from Himself, but said, "Come," going before them and with them into a quiet retreat, where they were undisturbed by the confusions and strifes of men. Often the believer is ready to exclaim with the Psalmist, "Oh that I had wings like a dove, for then would I fly away and be at rest" (Psalm 4:6) but the Master ministers to him in his discouragement the consolations of the Holy Spirit so that he can truly say, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee" (Psalm 116:7).

Fourth, There is to be a rest from labor soon. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them" (Revelation 14:13). Of the righteous, who are taken away from the evil to come, it is written, "They shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness," or as it is in the margin, "before Him" (Isaiah 57:2); and to Daniel it was said, "Go thou thy way till the end be, for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days" (Daniel 12:13). Job too found comfort in the thought of the grave, for "there the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary be at rest" (Job 3:17).

Fifth, There is to be rest from trouble. "To you who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels" (2 Thessalonians 1:7). "Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward" (Job 5:7), and especially Christians in a polluted world; but the time is surely coming when it shall be said to the tempted and tried believers, "The Lord shall give thee rest from thy sorrow, and from thy fear, and from the hard bondage where-in thou wast made to serve" (Isaiah 14:3). Like the apostle we may be "troubled on every side, yet not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair" (2 Corinthians 4:8), because we hear the voice of our unfailing Friend saying to us, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest" (Exodus 33:14); and again He says, "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me" (John 14:1).

Sixth, There is to be a glorious rest at His coming. "In that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek; and his rest shall be glorious" (Isa. 11:10). Then His people "shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwelling places, and in quiet resting places" (Isaiah 32:18). Then to the now downtrodden Jerusalem and oppressed Israel will be fulfilled the sweet promise, "The Lord thy God in the midst of these is mighty; He will save, He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love; He will joy over thee with singing" (Zephaniah 3:17).

Seventh, There is an everlasting rest that awaits the redeemed. "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from His. Let us hasten therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief" (Hebrews 4:9-11). Let us close the year remembering that "here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come," "a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:10; 13:14). It is a city where all is holy and happy and eternal, and where the ransomed sinner can say with Solomon, "Now the Lord my God hath given me rest on every side, so that there is neither adversary nor evil occurrent" (1 Kings 5:4).

Moses: The Man of God, pt 2

Alan Davidson

Moses and the Bondage

There were three reasons for the bondage in Egypt:

1. DIVINE: It was foretold in Genesis chapter 13. God's promise to Abraham was, "I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth" (v16). From a family of 70, Jacob's seed increased to about one and a half million in two

hundred years. It grew from a tribe to being “the congregation of Israel” (Exodus 12:6).

2. DISCIPLINE: His brethren sold Joseph and he was carried down into Egypt. Their descendants became slaves in the same land.

3. DISPENSATIONAL: The governments of earth are under God’s control. Israel delivered Christ into Gentile hands. Presently, we live in the “times of the Gentiles” and Israel will yet suffer the time of “Jacobs trouble”.

“Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph” (Exodus 1:8). A new dynasty came to the throne of Egypt resentful of the amazing growth of the children of Israel dwelling in the choice land of Goshen. The more Pharaoh afflicted them with hard bondage and bitter sorrows, the more they multiplied and grew. This new king was resentful of the previous Pharaoh and certainly would have had historical knowledge of his prime minister, Joseph. Joseph was raised up of God to preserve the children of Israel. Now God was raising up Moses to deliver His people.

There are practical lessons to be learned from the bondage:

1. Hard times do not erase God’s promises. Peter writes about persecution and dark misty days but also speaks about, “the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts” (2 Peter 1:19).

2. Harsh treatment does not escape God’s notice. “I have surely seen the affliction of My people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; And I am come down to deliver them” (Exodus 3:7-8). To persecuted saints of Smyrna, the Lord said: “I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty ... Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer” (Revelation 2:9-10).

3. Heavy tests do not eclipse God’s concern. “The trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:7). Beloved; does pressure press you down or does it press you nearer to the Lord?

Moses and the Burdens

“And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens: and he spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren. And he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand” (Exodus 2:11-12). Moses was “full forty years old” (Acts 7:23), when he slew the assailant of the Hebrew slave. “He defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed ... For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not” (Acts 7:24-25). Moses needed to learn, like Abraham, that premature efforts of the flesh, while well intended, end in failure. We need to learn to wait upon God. Spiritual ends are never achieved by carnal

means. We can do right things but not at God’s time. Leadership of God’s people is not self-assured. No one will be a leader without being a servant first. Moses acted rashly and hastily. He wanted to be a deliverer and to jump start a rebellion.

Looking this way and that way indicates that he was not acting before God. An exercise is not a call from God. Passion is not principle, impulse is not purpose. We must not just act upon a pious appeal or missionary enthusiasm. If we learn these weighty lessons about God’s call, an exercised young brother will be preserved from the embarrassment of going out for God and being called back home by his wife and family. We need to learn like Moses that the wilderness comes before God’s call, the sanctuary before the street, the private before the public, worship before work. May God preserve us from preachers that just talk. The warmth of God’s presence and the weight of God’s truth will deliver us from mere wind and words. A young brother seeking commendation declared that he would be original or nothing. He said that he soon found out that he was both. A zealous man, declared that God had called him to world wide evangelism. He said, believe it or not, that he had not as yet taught a Sunday School class.

Moses attempted to bury the Egyptian in the sand. When God buried the Egyptians, He buried Pharaoh, with his chariots and horsemen, all the host in the bottom of the Red Sea, so there remained not so much as one of them. Moses needed to wait upon God to judge Pharaoh. He was not looking this way and that way but he was looking in the right direction when, “He endured, as seeing Him Who is invisible” (Hebrews 11:27). He also had the added burden of seeing his brethren going back to the brick yards and enduring the task masters rods for another forty years. They said; “Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?” Like his blessed Lord, his own did not receive him. The people of Israel, served the gods of Egypt (Joshua 24:14). They were unfaithful and rebellious. God said; “In the day that I lifted up Mine hand unto them, to bring them forth of the land of Egypt ... they rebelled against Me, and would not hearken unto Me: they did not every man cast away the abominations of their eyes, neither did they forsake the idols of Egypt” (Ezekiel 20:6,8). Israel sighed, cried and groaned under their burdens. They were not ready to leave until they were sick of Egypt and repented and cried unto God for deliverance.

Moses learned to be a servant while in the desert at the well. In the school of God, he defended the oppressed women. He stood up to help them when the shepherds drove them away from the troughs which they had filled with water for their fathers flock (Exodus 2:17). These selfish, violent thieves were robbing the women by taking the fruits of their labour. Moses would have thoughts of the oppressed in Egypt and the failure of his own rashness.

The risen Lord commanded His disciples, “that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father” (Acts 1:4). The order of service, in the power of the Holy Spirit was to be, “witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8). The order will usually be, witness before relatives, school chums or work mates. Prove God in a little Sunday School class and the local assembly. Let your voice be heard giving public thanks to God for His Son, before attempting to preach to others about Him.

Moses and the Burning Bush

“Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the back side of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb” (Exodus 3:1). There were four great mountains in the life of Moses indicating the progress of his intimacy with God:

At Horeb; he saw LIGHT from the Bush.

At Sinai; he received the LAW from God.

On Pisgah; he saw the LAND of Promise.

On the Mount of Transfiguration; he appeared with the LORD of Glory.

“Moses, Moses” This is the Glory of God’s call to Moses. Exodus chapter 3 verse 4 to chapter 4 verse 17, forms one of the longest dialogues a man ever had directly with God. Moses was commissioned at eighty years of age when two thirds of his life was past. There is no substitute for experience. He was not an old man in decline. At one hundred and twenty years, “his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated” (Deuteronomy 34:7). John writes to little children, young men and fathers, giving advice about relationship, development and maturity.

God is the God of recovery to those who have memories of failure and disappointment. Jacob was a cheat, Jonah was a drop out, Peter denied the Lord, Paul said we are all earthen vessels. God does not give up on us if we turn to Him in humility and confession.

“I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush” (Exodus 3:3-4). The flame of fire flashing from the thorn bush was of concern to the diligent shepherd caring for his sheep. In the parched prairie, fire spreads rapidly endangering his flocks, yet Moses observed that the verdure was preserved and the branches of the bush remained unconsumed. When God desired to reveal Himself to Moses, He did not appear in a mighty oak tree in its strength, nor a cedar tree in its elegance, nor in a fir tree in its height, but in a humble common bush.

“And He said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground” (Exodus 3:5). Moses was given a vision of the emblems of Deity; The UNDIMIN-

ISHED GLORY; the UNREPLENISHED ENERGY; the UNRELENTING PURPOSE of the GREAT, “I AM”. This was the Call, the great crisis in the life of Moses. He stood on holy ground, naked in the open, having dealings with God. “Then Moses trembled, and durst not behold” (Acts 7:32). In the presence of God, the seraphim, high ranking executors of the decrees of the throne cry “Holy, Holy, Holy” (Isaiah 6:3). Moses was soon to be given the pattern of the sanctuary and later wrote about the glory above the mercy Seat. The Tabernacle, the house that Moses built was divided into the Holy Place and the Most Holy. The high priest wore a plate of pure gold engraved with, “Holiness to the LORD”. “Holiness becometh Thine house, O LORD, for ever” (Psalm 93:5).

The purpose of our salvation is “that we should be holy” (Ephesians 1:4). The key to our approach to God is the reverential fear of God. Holiness is moral likeness to God. The white robe of righteousness is ours by grace alone through faith in Christ. We cannot reach sinless perfection and at our best in service, we are conscious of weakness, infirmity and failure. Yet, we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, we are to be guided by the Holy Scriptures and the standard of the service to which we are called is to be holy. If we miss this standard our service is worthless. “But as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye yet holy in all manner of conversation (behaviour); Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:15-16).

This is the glory of God’s “call”; His setting apart; this separation unto Himself; is God’s character reproduced in His servant. This will be seen is separation from all that grieves God, unto a closer walk with God. We will never be as holy as He is, but we should be holy because He is holy. It is our privilege to appeal to God for help and aid in parental awe as unto our gracious Father, that we may win His approval.

“Moreover He said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God” (Exodus 3:6). The servant of God must be called and commissioned by God to a specific work for God. “The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham” (Acts 7:2). Jacob said; “God Almighty appeared unto me at Luz” (Genesis 48:3). How did Moses endure the murmuring and unbelief of Israel for forty years in the wilderness? “He endured, as seeing Him Who is invisible” (Hebrews 11:27). A man may have a degree in the school of men but not know the alphabet in the school of God.

Moses, at the end of his life, in his dying benediction upon the tribes had not forgotten; “the precious things of the earth and fulness thereof, and the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush” (Deuteronomy 33:16).

Moses learned three things at Horeb:

GOD’S PRESENCE “The LORD” Jehovah or Yehovah, compound of Yeh heh; “He will be”, “being” and “He was”

(Exodus 3:7), repeating the expressions “I am” in the dialogue, and “I will” seven times, giving a sevenfold guarantee to His servant, “I will send” thee (3:10); “Certainly I will be with thee” (3:12). “When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain” (3:12).

GOD’S POWER “What is that in thine hand? And he said a rod” (Exodus 4:2). The rod cut off from its roots, dry, sapless, no strength of its own, become a serpent, the symbol of Egyptian royalty until controlled in Moses’ hand. God’s power controlled a rod in the hand of Moses, a sling in the hand of David, a nail, an ox goad, a jawbone in the book of Judges; five barley loaves and two small fishes to feed the multitude. The sign of the hand leprous as snow that was healed, showing God’s power over the loathsome infection of sin in Egypt. When later, Moses was told to lift up his rod and stretch out his hand over the sea, he needed God’s power, not his own energy as he did in his first well-meant but ill-timed endeavours.

GOD’S PURPOSE “I will stretch out My hand, and smite Egypt with all My wonders which I will do in the midst thereof: and after that he will let you go” (Exodus 3:20). God’s plagues would make the Nile loathsome, smite the beasts of the field, torment the skin on their body and by frogs, flies, murrain, hail and locusts make the Egyptians abhor the vile objects of their idolatry, bring their sun god into darkness which may be felt, slay their firstborn and raise lamentations until Israel would be abhorrent to their oppressors and they would drive them out in haste. Exodus means, “The way out”; the word “out” occurs twelve times in Exodus chapters 12 and 13.

Moses was learning that in all his service, it must be by God’s presence and power, and that God will have all the glory. “Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth” (Numbers 12:3). In meekness, prayerfulness and humility, Moses suffered their murmurings in the wilderness for forty years. When the people corrupted themselves in their worship of the golden calf; “The LORD said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people: Now therefore let Me alone, that My wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation” (Exodus 32:9-10). In this, Moses was prepared to deny himself, knowing that if he accepted such an offer of exaltation, it would be in denial of the glory and purposes of God Who had called him to be His servant.

Moses had four excuses for refusing God’s call at the burning bush:

Personal Inadequacy: “Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt? (Exodus 3:11). God said, “Certainly I will be with thee” (Exodus 3:12).

No Authority: Moses said the people will ask who sent me. God said; “I AM hath sent me unto you” (Exodus 3:14). God offered no legal formula or system of religion. The presence of the Almighty “I am”; the LORD God of the Hebrews, the living God will answer the tyranny of Pharaoh, the trickery of the magicians and the treachery of Egyptian idolatry with their many gods.

No Conformation of his Call: “They will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice” (Exodus 4:1). God graciously met this reasoning of Moses by showing him the miracles and plagues which He would perform in Egypt with the shepherd’s rod in his hand. A simple rod with God’s power is mightier than the subtle venomous serpent like Pharaoh or the leprous corruption of the flesh pots of Egypt. God does not always need a king with a royal sceptre but a humble servant with a shepherd’s crook, to stretch out over the Red Sea, to smite the flinty rock or to win victory over the host of Amalek.

Moses returns to his own complete incompetency; “Slow of speech”, “slow of tongue”, “not eloquent” (Exodus 4:10). God says, “I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say”.

Finally Moses says, send someone else (Exodus 4:13). Moses, one of God’s choicest servants did not want to go. Isaiah said, “Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am man of unclean lips” (Isaiah 6:5). Jeremiah said; “Behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child” (Jeremiah 1:6). Paul also learned the lesson of human insufficiency; “Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ” (Ephesians 3:7-8).

We often make the same mistakes as Moses. We *run* before we are sent, we *retreat* before we are beaten and we *resist* when we are called. God will patiently teach us. A call from God does not involve one mighty leap in our own strength unto the throne of great ambition. It does not involve outer constraint or inner impulse. Pride, arrogance and self-exaltation are a weariness before the people of God. In the school of God we will be taught that we cannot run away like Jonah or Mark. Moses ran away at the first difficulty. Now, “the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses” (Exodus 4:14). God did not abandon him but graciously provided Aaron, his elder brother to be his spokesman.

Moses could not successfully excuse himself. He must obey God, it was an irrepressible must, it was clearly the will of God. The Divine pattern is established in the Supreme obedience seen in Gethsemane, when the Lord Jesus said; “nevertheless not what I will, but what **Thou** wilt” (Mark 14:36).

This must be kept before us in all aspects of the Service of God whither on the mission field, the locality, the local assembly or in basic day to day testimony. God must have all the glory. We should never prepare a message, just because our diary says we have arranged to preach on a specific date. We should preach because God has given us a message and it would not be right to withhold it. Moses set out, with a vision of the glory of God given to him at the burning bush with nothing but a rod in his hand.

The Swallow's Nest

F. W. Grant

THE Lord will give grace and glory:" this is the characteristic verse of the eighty-fourth psalm. And what is "glory," beloved reader? What does your heart connect with that word, or link with the thought of all the blessedness that is before your soul in that eternity into which we are so soon to enter? It is not a question of mere accuracy as to a word. Words mean things: and the question is really important, yea, of the deepest importance for our souls. What attraction is there in the prospect before us? What makes heaven bright? What quickens our steps toward it? That, which— controls our hearts, reveals them too. What then do we count glory?

It is plain that the mere deliverance from pain and sorrow and toil and care is not that; nor even from the sin which has brought in all this.' It is positive blessing far beyond what is implied by freedom from all ill. What then is the blessedness before us, I again ask? "It is to see Christ and to be with Him," many of my readers will at once reply; and where it is not mere knowledge, but wells out of a full heart, thank God for that answer. Closely connected it is, moreover, with the true thought of glory. Glory is divine display.—"In His temple doth every one speak of His glory," (Psalm 39:9.) or, as it should be rather, "doth every one say, 'Glory.'" It is to the tabernacle, not the temple, that the Psalmist refers; but whether tabernacle or temple, in the place of God's presence gold covered everything. From the ark of the covenant to the boards over which hung the beauteous curtains, and even in the curtains themselves, gold shone everywhere. Outside, in the court, the brazen laver and the brazen altar had their place: inside, there was no brass, but only gold.

Gold has, I believe, its interpretation given us by the apostle, where, speaking of the golden cherubim overshadowing the mercy-seat, he calls them "the cherubim of glory." The aptness of the figure, one would think, should strike one at a glance; much more so when we consider the things themselves which were made of gold, or which it covered. All these were Christ, and Christ in that which is His distinctively, the manifestation of God to man. His glory is just Himself displayed. You cannot put

glory on Him; on Him no other light can be made to shine. All true light is His light—is Himself, for "God is light."

When we speak of God seeking His own glory, or glorifying Himself, what do we mean by it? If a man seeks his own glory, it is pride or selfishness that acts in him; and do not the thoughts even of God's people sometimes almost confound man's thought in this with God's, however much they would abhor the inference? But as God is the opposite of fallen man in all things, so it is here. Man in seeking his own glory claims and craves, but God in seeking His but loves and gives; for His glory is Himself displayed, is the blessing of His creatures: His glory is His goodness; what the angels' words unite is pledged by the Babe born in Bethlehem never to be sundered—"Glory to God in the highest," and "on earth peace, good pleasure in men."

Can we add, indeed, to His infinite riches? Does He whose are the cattle upon a thousand hills demand our sacrifices because He is hungry? The voice that said "Give Me to drink" to the woman of Samaria, was it that of the poor stranger merely that it seemed? Ah, what should make our praises matter of concern to Him with whom all the nations are counted as grasshoppers, and who taketh up the isles as a very little thing?

It is love to which we are of account,—love alone that seeks to have our hearts (and thus our praises) full of Himself. And the method of His love is to make known what He is, to display His ways, His character, His perfections, to us, that the eye opened to behold might affect the heart, and the heart satisfied might give us competency to be 'His witnesses, not only among men, but "that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."

And the glory to which we are going is a scene in which God will be everywhere beheld, everywhere enjoyed, everywhere adored. The madness of infidelity that scoffs at the ceaseless worship of heaven does not understand this worship to be just the witness and pledge of its endless felicity, while of the divine goodness thus revealed it is necessarily ignorant.

All man's good is in the manifestation of God thus to the soul. In a world which His hands have made, and into which, though fallen, still His mercies come continuously, where His sun shines on the evil and the good, and His rain falls on the just and on the unjust, men vainly deem that they can do without Him. Alas! with the goods of his father in his hand, man can enjoy his pleasure in a far-off country, disregarding the famine that will surely come. They can think of doing without God in a world from which, though hidden, He is not withdrawn. Once withdrawn, they will find too late what they have chosen; for as heaven is God's dwelling-place, hell is the place whence He is forever absent: if God is light, hell is the place of utter and unimagined darkness.

In this eighty-fourth psalm, it is God Himself that is the object of the soul's desire: it is for the living God that flesh and heart cry out; Jehovah's tabernacles, Jehovah's courts, Jehovah's altars, Jehovah's house. Nor is it a feeble desire after this,—the soul longs and faints: "How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." This is the breathing of a saint in Old Testament times, beloved reader,—one by whom necessarily Christ was seen afar off, and the glory of God was connected with an earthly tabernacle, not with the heaven opened now to faith. And we, to whom so far greater a revelation has been vouchsafed, have our hearts gone out with even equal longings after the Father's house, after the place of His presence? Is this indeed the glory for which we yearn as we rejoice in hope of the glory of God?

That expression, "the living God," gives a connection with the second part of the psalm, which speaks of the way by which the end here contemplated is reached; as for Israel the way to Canaan was through the wilderness, so for us also our inheritance is similarly reached. And our wilderness, as theirs, barren sand and rock though it be, has yet for faith its harvests. How glorious to see, in the glisten of the morning dew, the manna—the mighty's meat! How wonderful to see the flinty rock pour forth water! How blessed from day to day to realize in the constant guidance of the cloud and fire, the tender care of the Lord their Shepherd! For us, how much more blessed to see in all these things the shadows of which we have the substance! In all these, the living God it is who is discovering Himself to us; the God who, unlike the gods of the heathen, has eyes to see, and ears to hear, and heart to feel for us, and strong arm to save. The wilderness has thus its harvest of rich experiences stored up for that time in which—

"He who to His rest shall greet thee
Greets thee with a well-known love."

Guided by His hand, watched over and tended by His unfailing goodness, the heart that realizes it all longs after Himself. And this one thing lacking in our cup of blessing gives us the character of pilgrims, not carried on simply by the resistless stream of time, but oared forward by their hearts,—by the faith which is not alone "the evidence of things unseen," but also "the substance of things hoped for." And thus the path of the just becomes "as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day,"—the glory awaiting us ever brightening more our path as we approach it. There alone is our home—the place of our affections, the land of rest.

"Yea, the sparrow hath found a house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young." The sparrow and the swallow are here our emblems; the sparrow, the social bird,—the sparrow alone upon the housetop, the perfect figure of desolation; the swallow, "the bird of freedom," as its name implies, the restless

bird, ever on the wing, but which finds too its place of rest, tamed by the power of love.

Thus will heaven be to us: the sparrow's house, the swallow's nest. God has formed us for social affections, and in heaven they shall be fully satisfied. We may be solitary in the wilderness, in heaven never. He who "setteth the solitary in families" has prepared for us a city. Cain's thought was not the original, and was only wrong in the endeavor to realize in separation from God, and in rebellion against Him, what can be enjoyed aright but from His hand. Of the city which hath foundations, the builder and maker is God. And that city is the heavenly Jerusalem, not a city of earth.

This city is His "for whom are all things, and by whom are all things." The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; the glory of God shall lighten it, and the Lamb is the lamp thereof. How that sweet penetrating light permeating the whole place with its pure radiance tells of what the joy of the presence of God shall be! Of this glory the Lamb is the lamp; and the city is the bride, too, of the Lamb. We cannot wonder, for "for Him were all things created, and by Him were all things created." And He it is who is the "Father of Eternity," as the prophet calls Him: the One through whom all things get their eternal shape. (Isaiah 9:6: not the "Everlasting Father;" of which phrase, in our common version, much mischief has been made).

In the hundred and thirty-second psalm is written: who "swore unto the Lord, and vowed unto the mighty One of Jacob; Surely I will not come into my house, nor go up into my bed; I will not give sleep to mine eyes, or slumber to mine eyelids, until I find out a place for the Lord, a habitation for the mighty One of Jacob." Yes, if Jacob's mighty One is to dwell in grace among men, Christ it is who alone, at His own personal cost, must find Him a habitation. The psalm speaks of Israel indeed, and of God's dwelling-place on earth, but how fully is it true of the heavenly city! The Son has provided a resting-place for the Father's heart; and it is the Father's voice which says, "This is My rest forever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it."

But the Father's rest is the place of the Son's affection and delight—eternal delight, for He changes not. The city is the Lamb's bride, won for Himself, as the title implies, in the hour of His sacrifice, purchased by the shedding of His precious blood. Here He sees the fruit of the travail of His soul. This is the home, beloved reader, that God has provided for His own. Well may we long for an inheritance such as this. Here the sparrow will find a house. The ties of affection which unite us here will there receive their full interpretation, refined and spiritualized into links by which the redeemed will be held indissolubly to one another. The all-enveloping love of Christ to each and all will unite all in a tender and complacent delight which will be the reflection and response to that love of His. Yes, the sparrow will find a house indeed.

And the swallow will find a nest also. The bird of freedom, none the less free, held fast by the same cords of love, will spend her unwearied energy in the joy of service: she shall have a nest where she may lay her young. What man calls freedom is commonly, alas! but independence, and thus selfishness and mere unrest. The swallow's restless wing may well be its type. But the swallow serving at the nest is God's image of freedom, and of satisfaction, surely, too. Such service eternity surely will not divorce us from, or we should in one respect fail in likeness to our blessed Lord. He is a servant forever; and service never can be lacking to the kings and priests of God.

But this sparrow's house, this swallow's nest, where is it? How strange, at first sight, the answer! "Thine altars, O Lord of Hosts, my King and my God!" Yet this is but the first thought, to which we return, and which puts the seal of perfection on the whole picture. God's altars were two, in those tabernacles to which of course the Psalmist refers here: there was the altar of burnt-offering in the outer court, the altar of incense in the sanctuary itself; the one was the atonement-altar, the other the praise-altar: we must look at both.

The altar, in every case, is Christ; the altar that sanctifieth the gift—all and every gift—could be no other. And it is simple that in Him the soul rests, and forever rests. But it is clear that not merely Christ in His own person is intended, but Christ in connection with that of which the altar in its purpose speaks.

First, then, the atonement-altar calls back our hearts to that which is the basis of all our blessings. If forever we are to enjoy a scene in which our hearts shall find joy multiplied as many times as we shall find others to share with us in it, we shall, then at least, forever realize how this is for us the result of that unequalled sorrow, when the accumulated sins of generations were borne by one solitary Man. The blessedness of communion with God and with one another springs out of the forsaking by God of Him whom all else had either rejected or forsaken. Upon this foundation shall we build forever, and here will our hearts adoringly and forever rest. The sparrow will find a house.

That service of love, too, will it not be the basis of all other service, even as our freedom will be the fruit of His purchase?—"O Lord, doubtless I am Thy servant, and the son of Thine handmaid; Thou hast loosed my bonds." Yes, surely, in the altar of sacrifice the swallow will find her nest.

The praise-altar is itself the fruit of the altar of atonement; in sign of which, the blood was put upon the horns of it: and this is the altar with which the priests in the sanctuary had to do. Our altar of praise is that upon which our whole life is to be offered, and this in the fragrance of the incense, which is Christ Himself. If already our life here, how much more the life to come, of which indeed the present is but the beginning "Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house; they will be still praising

Thee." There we shall rest, where they rest not day or night in the chorus of universal praise. Even now, true service is that; then, it shall be the whole outcome. "To me to live is Christ," says the apostle.—"The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." If of Jerusalem below it be true, how much more of the heavenly city, shall her "gates be called Praise"!

The Christian's hope is sound because it is founded upon the character of God and the redeeming work of His Son Jesus Christ. For this reason Peter could call it "a living hope" (1 Peter 1:3). It is living because it rests on reality and not on fancy. It is not wishful dreaming but vital expectation with the whole might of the Most High behind it.

What's Next?

Joel Portman

Followers of the political scene know that a few have predicted a "Golden Age" following the election of Mr. Trump as president of the United States. Those who are more astute realize that such enthusiasm is usually misplaced and doomed to be revealed as a sad mistake. More sane economists and political analysts who are familiar with historical precedent know that such prophecies are never realized and that our world is quietly slipping downward toward a future that is uncertain and unknown to most. Men of this world live, for the most part, in obscurity, only guessing what the events of the present will produce in the future.

But believers in Christ and those who truly believe God's Word know that there is a coming moment of glorious transformation for some and infinite disaster and suffering for others. We believe God's Word that tells us that we have a "blessed hope" that is linked with the appearing of the glory of our Savior Jesus Christ (Titus 2:13). It is the hope that "looms with beams most cheering, the hours of night" (#152 BHB, Margaret Carson). It is the coming of our Lord Jesus for His church, His redeemed people, His purchased possession, and cherished beloved. Our Savior comes! And the church says, "Amen, even so come.." (Revelation 22:20).

Many might ask if God will ever intervene to deal with the wrongs and evils that abound in our world today.

Believers suffer persecution in many parts of the world. Lethargy seems to dominate Christians in other areas. Degeneration seems to be the tendency among the majority. Yet, the answer is that God has repeatedly revealed that at the present, He is allowing world affairs to continue but that He will definitely intervene, even as He did in those wicked days of Noah.

This present interval is often called the Day of Grace, the Church Age, or some other name. It is clearly a period of time that was unseen in the Old Testament. The prophets saw the "high spots" of the future and pondered what much that they wrote meant (1 Peter 1:11). They wrote of the sufferings that pertained to the Christ and the glories after these but in between was an unknown that they didn't see. We are in that period as we look back to the sufferings He endured and what others have suffered for His sake and onward to the glory that shines before. Some question why the prophets didn't see this gap in prophecy. Perhaps it is because God's dealings with the Gentile world through the church don't pertain to Israel and its destiny directly. We know that Paul describes the Jew-Gentile composition of the church as a mystery (Ephesians 3:9) that was hidden in God from the foundation of the world. So we understand it being unrecognized.

That interval, we believe, began on the Day of Pentecost with the coming of the Holy Spirit to continue God's work in this world (John 16:8-11) and complete that which was begun and is founded on the work of the Lord Jesus. It will continue until the church is completed, the last stone is laid in the spiritual building that continues (Ephesians 3:21), and the last soul is saved in this dispensation. After that, though others will most certainly be saved during the great tribulation, they will not be part of the church. The actual duration of this period is never given to us in Scripture. Many have tried to give dates or estimate the day of the Lord's coming by observing world events and conditions, but it is this writer's opinion that all of those attempts are misguided, ill-conceived, and doomed to fail (Matthew 13:33, 35).

Characteristics of the Present Day

We live in a day that is marked by unique and distinct characteristics. One of the major ones is the absence of our Lord physically, during which His Name is reviled by many and revered by the few. It is pictured by some of the Lord's parables, such as in Luke 19:12-27 and predicted by His words in John 14:2-4. The Holy Spirit is presently working, not from heaven as is normal, but from this earth where He dwells (John 14:16-18) and is associated with the church as the Restrainer (2 Thessalonians 2:6-7) of the manifestation of the Man of Sin.

It is marked by the longsuffering of God as in 2 Peter 3:9, when man is being allowed to continue in sin without divine judgment falling immediately, during which

God "giving them up" (Romans 1) is resulting in increasing degeneracy among society.

During this period, God is gathering, by His Spirit, a people out of both Jew and Gentile who are forming the Church, Christ's body. That expression indicates its unique relationship to Him with Him as the Head, even as the Building suggests the individuals as living stones who are being added to it (1 Peter 2:5). While the Holy Spirit is continuing this work, there is also increasing departure from the truth and a rejection of God's principles that will culminate in the great apostasy (2 Thessalonians 2:3, 2 Timothy 3:1-5).

Why the Removal of the Church?

Many deny or doubt the truth of the rapture of the church, but those who accept a literal interpretation of Scripture and, using the help of understanding the dispensations of God's varying dealings with mankind, recognize that such a sudden taking up is not only anticipated but is also necessary.

One reason is that the Great Tribulation is coming to try "earth dwellers" (Revelation 3:10). Some try to put the church in that period of intense suffering but they misunderstand the purpose of the time of trial. It is not for the church but for Israel's restoration and God's poured out judgment on an ungodly world. In addition, we have pictures of that event in the Old Testament. Enoch is a prime example, being suddenly taken out from a world moving rapidly toward God's judgment in the flood. We see that he is a picture of the church at the end of this age while Noah and his family picture God's preservation of the faithful remnant during the Great Tribulation. Lot was delivered out of Sodom before God's judgment fell; the angel told him that he could do nothing until that "righteous man" was safely taken out.

2 Peter 2:9 gives us a promise that likewise, "the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation" making a difference between them and the ungodly. His purpose is to have us with Himself to enjoy His presence during the day of Christ while on earth, the judgmental aspect of the Day of the Lord will begin.

Predictions?

It seems that it's contrary to Scripture for any of us to tie the Lord's coming to any present condition on earth or even a general state of world society. There never has been any element that has existed that would make it possible to predict a date when He will come. Some have said that He couldn't have returned while Peter was living, based on His words in John 21:18, 23. However, those words that John wrote were written after Peter had died! And Peter could have died long before since His times were in the hands of the Lord in any case. We all have a tendency to look at our world, its events, political states, moral decline, spiritual darkness and indifference, and many other such things and then (too) readily say

that this all indicates that the Lord's coming is near. Beloved, His coming is ALWAYS near! We should live each day with the joyful anticipation that He could come at any moment.

It is a mistake to associate His coming for the church (not His second coming to earth) with the signs that we find described in many of the Lord's parables. It is clearly the Lord's expectation that His servants should be found faithful to Him in life and service with the expectation of His return at any moment. This is a motive for our constancy and devotion to Him, whatever we may be doing.

Rapture of the Church

Some object to the use of the word, "rapture" by saying that it is a word not found in Scripture. That is partially true but not entirely. Other occurrences of the Greek word, "harpazo" are translated, "take by force", "caught away", "pulling" (them out of the fire), and "caught up". "Rapture" is the English translation of "rapere" (Latin) that is found in the Vulgate translation of the Bible, so its use is clearly justified. The same objection could be made against words such as "trinity" or other theological terms. It signifies a sudden removal by force from a location, possibly of danger, to another place. That is what takes place in the rapture.

We believe that 1 Thessalonians 4:13- describes that event for the assurance and comfort of saints whose loved ones have died. The Lord is coming to the air, the domain of Satanic forces, displaying His commanding presence by the great shout and archangel's voice. Without examining details of the event, including 1 Corinthians 15:51-57, we simply say that those who have died believing in Christ will be raised to ascend to heaven along with the living believers to join our Lord in the air and ever be with Him. That event will include ALL who have trusted Christ. Scripture does not support the false teaching of a 'partial rapture' that will only include those who are faithful (the degree of faithfulness is never defined by those who support that teaching). It is not our faithfulness that qualifies a believer to be with the Lord; it is His work trusted in that qualifies a believer to be taken.

That coming is, we believe, pre-tribulational. The teaching of some that confuses this coming with the second coming of Christ to the earth or joins the two with only a brief interval between allows no time for the Great Tribulation with its terrible events. Nor does it permit the heavenly events, including the judgment seat of Christ and the marriage of the Lamb. When Christ returns in glory, the Church entire will come with Him, made ready and suitable to radiate His glory and accompany Him when He comes (Revelation 19:14). That will be the result of His assessment of our lives at the great tribunal in heaven.

Associated events

Sad events that will be associated with His coming for the church will be the closing of the opportunity for salvation to those who, being responsible, have refused the message of salvation through faith in Him. Many will be saved post-rapture during the Great Tribulation, but many will believe "the lie" (2 Thessalonians 2:11-12) and be eternally lost. That lie is not defined, but many suggestions could be made, all of which result in spiritual deception of those who are lost.

Another event will be the commencement of the Day of the Lord. Some believe that there is a short interval between the rapture and the Great Tribulation, but that is difficult to accept since God has never had a time when He wasn't providing a witness to men on earth. It seems that the Day of the Lord describes events of judgment on earth that are intended to bring Israel to repentance so they will be ready to recognize and receive their returning Messiah. They will also be directed toward an unbelieving world that has continued to reject Christ and blaspheme His holy name. The events that will follow the rapture are not our consideration in this article, only the rapture and a desire that we might all be stirred to live in the constant anticipation of His coming at any moment.

The sad description of the church and its degeneration in Revelation 2-3 indicates that nearing the end of this era, the church will be marked by lethargy, self-complacency, desire for comfort, and ignorance of its true condition. It is only the constant realization that He could come at any moment and then every one of His people will give account to Him at the Judgment Seat that will serve to keep our souls fresh and with a clear, honest assessment of our true state as believers. May the knowledge that He is patiently waiting for that moment when the Father will say that word for Him to come keep our own souls fresh and devoted to Him and faithful in service for Him.

HUMILITY is both a grace and a vessel to receive grace. There is none that prizes grace like humble souls. There is none that improves grace like humble souls. Therefore God singles out the humble soul to fill him to the brim with grace. He does not drop grace into the humble heart but he pours it in, but the proud is sent empty away.