

THE WORD OF TRUTH

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"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"—Jno. 8:32.

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"Of His own will begat He us with the Word of Truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures" (James 1:18).

SET FOR THE DEFENSE OF THE GOSPEL

"Transforming Themselves"

The transformation of men is urged upon them by the Lord Himself; "Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind . . ." (Rom. 12:2). As a matter of interesting fact and awakening observation, this was spoken to the church and not to the world, as is commonly believed. God wants the church to continue the process of renewal, even as they continue to "die daily" (I Cor. 15:31). This transformation is one which finds men lifted from the rule of their own minds and hearts into the heavenlies, where Christ is "all in all" (Col. 3:11). However, this is not mere change, or simple transformation alone that is incumbent upon every disciple. This renewal is resultant in "proving (discovering through experience) what is that good and acceptable, and perfect will of God" (Rom. 12:2). This is no mere reformation, nor is it a casual, or even exuberant outward transformation. The change which God works in a man is inward, and though it may not bear all of the marks outwardly of maturity for a season, yet it is a real and effectual change; recognized by God, and honored through the Son. However, there are other kinds of transformation. Paul tells us that there were "false apostles" and "deceitful workers" who actually "transformed themselves into THE apostles of Christ" (II Cor. 11, 13). He marvels not at this, for Satan himself is transformed "into an angel of light", and therefore Paul concludes that "it is no great thing if HIS MINISTERS also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works" (verses 14-15). Is not this knowledge intended to awaken the lethargic church, lest she fall into the snare of these ministers from hell? Can any continue to judge outwardly when the Spirit has instructed us that such awful ministers are on the loose; yea, as is declared elsewhere; "many false prophets are gone out into the world" (I John 4:1). Those who insist on "leaning to their own understanding" (Prov. 3:5) will invariably become the victims of these wicked men. These pose as ministers of the Gospel and representatives of Christ. But, in the words of John; "They went out from us, but they were not of us, for if they had been of us, they would doubtless have continued with us: but they went out that it might be made manifest that they were not of us" (I John 2:19). In spite, however, of their damnable origin, "many shall follow their pernicious

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**"THE POWER AND ENSNAREMENT OF THE FLESH"
"OBTAINING"**

The Word of Truth

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"TRANSFORMING THEMSELVES"

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ways" (II Pet. 2:1-3), which shall lead to destruction. These false ministers of mere outward transformation are desirous to fatten their own bellies, and so use Christ and His holy word to that end, "wresting it to their own destruction" (II Pet. 3:16), and "making merchandise" of the sheep of God (II Pet. 2:3). These of whom I speak seem to labor, but rather loiter, or worse, seeking to set up themselves in the hearts of God's people. They are "deceitful workers" - not at all what they appear to be. It is quite fashionable among their number to be men of gleaming personalities and polished appearance; but it is deceitful!

How alert must you be, therefore, lest you be taken in by these who "transform themselves." They work upon the outward appearance, for that is all that they have to, or can, work upon. Those who are "of the flesh", and are "simple" will be impressed with their delusive presentation, and will follow them as blind goats to the slaughter. Try before you trust! Sectaries and seducers are very subtle and insinuating; know them and avoid them! Let Satan and his agents come never so much commended to us in their sugar allurements, yet he is the devil, and his ministers still belong to him! These love to intrude into things that are beyond the "word and the testimony" (Isa. 8:19-20). They will tantalize the appetites of carnal men with things that appear, while the man of God speaks of those things which do "not appear", upon which faith is fastened as a nail in the wall! Changed they are; but only for destruction to be made more sure! The child of God is changed into the image and likeness of the Lord who bought Him, and is so characterized by faith, and not by sight. Mark carefully those whom you hear, and prove their ministry, whence it hath come.

The world is not worthy of the presence of the saints of God (Heb. 11:34-40). Their location here is only God's means of preserving this sphere until His words are fulfilled. Were they at any time to be completely taken from the earth, the entire natural order, with which we are familiar, would collapse instantaneously. This realm is subject to God's immediate condemnation. It is only the presence of the elect that spares it.

GIVING TO GOD

When it comes to us mortals giving to God, we are somewhat in the same position as a young child desiring to bear a gift to its father. The child has no natural resources with which to procure a gift. However industrious it may be, its funds are not appropriate to fulfill the desires of its heart! The child therefore approaches its father for some money with which to purchase a gift expressive of the love within its heart. The father graciously grants the money, and consequently receives the gift. He is glad to receive it, though it was procured with his own money. And, the child is thrilled at being able to present it, although it was obtained with its father's funds; so that both father and child are happy. So it is with our heavenly Father! We desire earnestly to bring gifts to Him, after that we have tasted of the joy of His salvation. But we do not possess the wherewithal to do it; so we must supplicate for grace to fulfill our heart's desire. When it is granted, we bring to the Father the gifts of praise and sacrifice, which are of great price before Him. He is well pleased with our sacrifices and offerings, although He has made them possible; and we are joyously uplifted by the knowledge of bringing such a gift. You see, then, how God has in great wisdom provided not only for His own satisfaction, but for the full satisfaction of the believer also; and this through His own matchless grace.

PUNGENT POINTS

Once a person comes into Christ, He has all of the Godhead available to him by faith. He is told of the possibility of being "filled with all the fulness of God" (Eph. 3:19). The tragedy is that so many spend their lifetimes filled with other things that are but momentary and fragmentary. Look often to the Lord and expect to be filled. Do not settle for a partial association with the Lord, for such a connection shall soon be severed by the strong winds and pressures of temptation and adversity God has made Himself available to us. By grace, let us avail ourselves of this gracious accommodation!

I have found that my most difficult days are when I almost unwittingly focus my attention on earthly matters. Surely there is a drawing power exerted upon the mind when the vision is filled with the temporal affairs of this life! "Set your affection on things above, and not on things on the earth" is the injunction of Scripture (Col. 3:1-3). The effects of failing to continually do this are sufficient proof of the necessity of it!

It appears to me that people that have to be begged to attend the weekly fellowship meetings are lacking some very necessary spiritual vitality. A casual fellowship with brethren will by no means cure this malady. The problem lies deep within the recesses of the heart which has been corrupted according to deceitful lusts (Eph. 4:22). It is there that the change must take place!

The best time to pray is when you are inclined to pray.

The Power and Ensnarement of the Flesh

"For we are THE circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and HAVE NO CONFIDENCE IN THE FLESH" (Phil. 3:3). It is imperative that every desired follower of Christ come to a conviction of these truths; (1. That there is a people whose hearts have truly been circumcised of the old nature Rom. 2:28-29). (2. There is a people whose worship is rendered God-ward, and to whom there is but "one God and Father" (1 Cor. 8:6). (3. That there is a people whose rejoicing is in Jesus Christ alone, whom they not yet see (I Pet. 1:8). (4. That there is a generation who possess no confidence in the flesh, who have seen its wily delusions, and have "crucified the flesh together with the lusts thereof" (Gal. 5:24). This is not a fable or an old wives tale! By the grace of God, many may so identify themselves; "For we ARE the circumcision . . ." Praise God for that reality! Those that have truly "tasted of the Lord, that He is gracious" (I Pet. 2:3) know what it means to have "old things pass away" and find "all things" becoming gloriously "new" (II Cor. 5:17). To them Christ Jesus is no longer "known after the flesh" (II Cor. 5:16); i.e., as a mere historical figure. He is rather become their very "life" (Col. 3:4), and it is no longer they that live, "but Christ that liveth in them" (Gal. 2:20). To these "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling" (Heb. 3:1), the flesh has taken an entirely different position in their life. Before coming to know the Lord, or rather, to be "known" by the Lord (Gal. 4:9), they served the flesh, together with its lusts, and were described as "walking after the flesh" (II Pet. 2:10). They "gloried after the flesh" (II Cor. 11:18), and had their joy in the "lusts and desires of the flesh" (Eph. 2:3). Appropriately, it is said: "That which is born of flesh is flesh" (John 3:6), and the truth was demonstrated adequately in the great spiritual limitations of those days of the flesh. In that state we were "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1-3), and "minded the things of the flesh" (Rom. 8:5), thus being in virtual and complete alienation from the God of heaven, and the Lord Jesus Christ. "They that are in the flesh cannot please God" testifies the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:8), and to the child of God, this has become very clear. "Such were some of you", is the testimony of the Apostle to the Corinthians, in reference to the baser sins of the flesh (I Cor. 6:11), and it is applicable to many of us also. Having lived in the "lust of concupiscence" (I Thess. 4:5), and been taken captive at Satan's will through the flesh, I have personally come to realize something of its deceitfulness. It would be thought by many that once delivered from the power of the flesh no further encounter with it would be expected. But such is not the case at all! We are exhorted to "abstain from fleshly lusts THAT WAR AGAINST THE SOUL" (I Pet. 2:11). Too, we are admonished not to "use our liberty for an occasion to the flesh" Gal. 5:13). The flesh is not to be trusted - not at all! Therefore, we are admonished to "put ye on the Lord Jesus, and MAKE

NO PROVISION FOR THE FLESH, TO FULFILL THE LUSTS THEREOF" (Rom. 13:14).

It is a sad experience indeed when we are ensnared by the flesh, and brought "low" through its wretched deceitfulness. Too often does this happen to the child of God, and much to his dismay; "For I know that in me (that is in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil that I would not, that I do" (Rom. 7:18-19). Time and time again, it is established in the conscience of the child of God that the "flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are CONTRARY the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Gal. 5:17). So contrary to one another are the flesh and the Holy Spirit, that when under the influence of the flesh, we cannot act within the dictates of the Spirit; and when in the Spirit, we cannot fulfill the lusts of the flesh. As the Holy Spirit witnesses; "So then, they that are in the flesh CANNOT PLEASE GOD" (Rom. 8:8); and again; "This I say, then, Walk in the Spirit and YE SHALL NOT FULFILL THE LUSTS OF THE FLESH" (Gal. 5:16). Those who consistently underestimate the power of the flesh will find themselves continually thrown into the pit of despair and anxiety. The essential lesson to learn is that the flesh may not be trusted; it will drag us into sin every time it is given the upper hand. It must be "crucified", together with all of its lusts. Too many professed believers give much occasion to the flesh by reveling in its lusts and sensuality; making provision for it, that the lusts may be fulfilled. It is not necessary that an overt act of sin be committed; we are "drawn away" by lusts and enticed (James 1:14). For this reason, we are admonished to "cast down IMAGINATIONS, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought unto the obedience of Christ" II Cor. 10:5). Now, it is not often that supposed ministers of the Word exhort their constituents to engage in such holy activity, and I cannot but believe that it is because they themselves have not crucified the flesh, TOGETHER with the lusts and affections thereof! We call, therefore, upon all of God's people to earnestly seek grace to subdue the flesh, and to "keep under their body", buffeting it constantly (I Cor. 9:27).

What is the flesh?

Although that may sound like a trite question, it is one pregnant with hidden truths, if you be able to receive it. The flesh is not merely the physical body! It is the totality of our person apart from regeneration. All that came from Adam is gathered together in the term "flesh." This is all that came from the mothers womb - all that is natural about a man; his mind, his affection, his body, his spirit. This is what the Scriptures mean by being "estranged from the womb" (Psa. 58:3). It is the sum of that "nature" by

which we become "children of wrath" (Eph 2:1-3). This is the "flesh", concerning which we are taught by the Spirit of God to crucify and subdue; to mortify and reject; in which we are to have no confidence whatsoever. **That portion of man that is not regenerated (regardless of how respectable it may appear to be) is to be rejected as the subject of moral and spiritual appeasement!** It is not trustworthy, and is destined for corruption and mortality. It will not take the saints of God long to discover that this is one of the very essential differences in the world and themselves. The world seeks to pacify and nurture up what they have by nature, while the citizens of heaven (Phil. 3:20--ASV) seek to build up their faith, and strengthen themselves in the Lord (Jude 20). **What we have received from the world, from the domain of nature, from our first parents, Adam and Eve, is not only to be rejected, but verily, it is to be crucified and slain in the power of God.** Let us, then not be confused concerning the Scriptural reference to the "flesh." It involves infinitely more than some of you have been led to believe. This is very vividly portrayed in the eighth chapter of Romans; "For they that are after the flesh do MIND the things of the flesh . . . to be carnally MINDED is death . . . the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be . . . so then they that are in the flesh CANNOT PLEASE GOD" (Rom. 8:5-8). It is then that the Apostle summons our faith forward in these words: "BUT YE ARE NOT IN THE FLESH, BUT IN THE SPIRIT, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you . . ." (v.9). What glorious deliverance this is - to be liberated from the dictates of the flesh. **It is true; the children of God are NOT in the flesh! Whatever relationship they have with it, it is not an "IN" relationship!** They have a tabernacle of flesh (II Cor. 5:1-5), but it is not the arbiter of their lives! They have been set free from all that Adam brought upon us, through the glorious work of the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:15-21).

It may be interesting to observe right here some truths concerning the flesh, keeping in mind that the mind and heart of flesh are involved as well as the physical body. First, no flesh can possibly be justified before God; "Therefore, by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in His sight" (Romans 3:20). **There is nothing in the "natural man" (I Cor. 2:14) that can stand acquitted before the God of heaven.** All that is natural within man must be thoroughly repudiated, and the merit and life of Jesus Christ be received in its place. No longer must the man himself live, but Christ must live within him (Gal. 2:20). It is vain to attempt to reform the flesh; to school the natural man; to attempt to educate into him the mind of God, or to reform his actions by changing his environment. Man must be born again; born by the Spirit of God. "Except a man is born again, he cannot see (perceive) the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). Again, "That which is born of flesh is flesh" (John 3:6); and it might be authoritatively added that it may never be anything but flesh!

Be gone! then, thou contemptible sophist, that would teach men to adorn the natural man, to

place upon it the thin veil of religious pride and reform; that would lead men to believe that reformation may take the place of transformation (Romans 12:1-2)! There is no room for such teachers in the Kingdom of God! Allegiance to your flimsy and insipid religious institutions will not do the job that you claim it will do! Your very members and constituents prove that conclusively. Your services smack of the flesh, and your aims are to make a fair appearing and show of the flesh. I know you well! I was once in your company, and even then it was a stinch in my nostrils; and it has grown to be even more now. Refrain thou from blinding men's eyes to their natural repugnancy to God, and tell how that Jesus died to change men, so that "old things pass away, and ALL things become new." Then shalt thou have praise before God, and not the damnation that you justly deserve for your crafty and wily trickery by which you are leading men into hell! No flesh shall be justified before God - religious flesh, missionary flesh, preacher flesh, elder flesh, priestly flesh, deacon flesh -- "NO FLESH!" Praise God for that, for the flesh has abundantly demonstrated its total inadequacy to fit men for that glorious and heavenly kingdom in which there shall be nothing that offends.

Too, flesh cannot "inherit the kingdom of God"; "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (I Cor. 15:50). If you would enter that city foursquare, then you must have done with the flesh! Here you must be liberated by the power of God from its dominion; and there from its very appearance in any form! So beligerent is the flesh, together with its mind and affections, that it engages in a perpetual war against the Spirit of God (Gal. 5:17), attempting to interfere with the heavenly communication which comes through the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:26), and dragging the mind to wallow in the channels of lusts and lasciviousness. No, we are to hate even the "garment spotted by the flesh" (Jude 23) - and how appropriate is that admonition today, when men and women are displaying their flesh by garments tainted with its damnable colour of lust and sin! Now, these observations of the flesh are fundamental to a correct view of the Kingdom of our God. Restrain the impact of these truths upon your heart, and you shall be found experimentally out of the Kingdom, and at war and variance with God. **Flesh is the link to this world** - and friendship with the world is (in every sense of the word) "enmity with God" (James 4:4).

We must never underestimate the power of the flesh. It is potent, and may attack our spirits at many different levels. Often does the Spirit testify to us concerning the flesh, in order that we might be better equipped to fight it effectually. For instance, Jesus warned us of "judging after the flesh" (John 8:15). **OUR** view of things is not to be influenced by fleshly, carnal, or natural judgment! There are great underlying issues under each case before us; and they call for spiritual discernment, which every child of God potentially has. "The spiritual man judgeth all things; yet he himself is judged of no man" (I Cor. 2:16-17); "But ye have received an unction from the holy One, and **KNOW ALL THINGS**" (I John 2:20).

Proper discernment is something that is imperative for the child of God, else he will become ensnared by the craftiness of Satan. Fleshly judgment is NEVER justified, and we are explicitly taught to shun it and avoid it with zeal on every hand. The flesh, then, can effect our judgment, and thus cause us to fall into error of analysis, and consequent delusion. Beware, brethren, of this snare. It is powerful, and even now, many have fallen prey to this "fiery dart" of Satan (Eph. 6:17). Again, there is the matter of "walking after the flesh" (II Peter 2:10); of permitting our lives to be governed by that which is not regenerated within us - the "old man" (Eph. 4:24). **We dare not walk so as to appease our natural inclinations - which are set at variance with the Lord and His "eternal purpose" (Eph. 3:11).** This is called elsewhere, "minding the things of the flesh" (Rom. 8:5), and it is disastrous! I see much of the religion of today is patterned after this sort; after the flesh, minding the things of the flesh, and walking in its dictates. We are taught by the Lord to "let not sin reign in your mortal bodies, to obey the lusts thereof" (Rom. 6:12), and it is absolutely imperative that we hear that voice, and "harden not our hearts as in the day of provocation" (Heb. 3:8). Our battles are not to be fought according to the observations and scrutinizing of the flesh, for we "war not after the flesh" (II Cor. 10:3). **The war in which we are engaged as "good soldiers" (II Tim. 2:3-4) is not to be a mere battle of wits - the pitting of one mind against another. This is a holy war, in which strongholds are not to be confronted, but rather "thrown down" (II Cor. 10:3-5), and therefore call for the mighty weapons of the Spirit of God.** On several occasions I have been called upon to debate issues with those of other persuasions; but I have noticed that with great consistency, their approach is "after the flesh." On that basis I cannot war. We war in the power of God, and with spiritual weapons, and we shall win. We are fighting as "more than conquerors" (Rom. 8:37), and shall take the fort of the enemy in due time - glory to God! The child of God may not enter into a discourse on spiritual things as the world disputes the subject of the guaranteed annual wage, or some such thing! Since we "know no man after the flesh" (II Cor. 5:16), we may not meet them in such a way! Nay! Let us war befittingly of our sonship!

If flesh ever assumes the upper hand, it will make the child of God to be cast down and weary, sapping him of all his spiritual energy and power. When this comes to pass (and it does come to pass all too often for the child of God), we must take advantage of the uncomely circumstance to learn a comely lesson; namely that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." See how grossly inadequate it is! **When in the flesh, we simply cannot fulfill the desires of the Holy Spirit.** We walk in darkness and stumble, and are in alienation from the Lord. We cannot please God, nor are we subject to His law! May I say here that unless we begin now to incessantly "look to Jesus, the Author and the Finisher of our faith" (Heb. 12:1-2), we shall continue to suffer these periods of weakness, and miss the vital lesson that is to be derived from it; namely that the flesh is

THE SALT OF THE EARTH

"Ye are the salt of the earth. As salt keepeth flesh from putrifying, so do the saints the world: and are therefore sprinkled up and down (here and there one) to keep the rest from rotting. Swine and swinish persons have their souls for salt only, to keep their bodies from stinking above the ground. Christ and His people are somewhere called the soul of the world. The saints are called all things; the church, every creature, Mark 16:15. Tabor and Hermon are put for east and west, Psal. 89:12, for God accounts of the world by the church, and upholds the world for the church's sake."

Bro. John Trapp, 1647

potent; crafty; delusive! Observe that when you are "minding the things of the flesh"; when your judgment is "after the flesh", that there seems to arise within your breast an ungodly sympathy for fleshly things. Oh, how dangerous is this, and how ought we to zealously avoid this path that leads to certain destruction! **Flesh cannot enjoy the benefits of God! The fleshly mind cannot enjoy the things of God! Likewise, the Spirit cannot revel in the things of the flesh!** They are separate, the one from the other! Crucify, then, the flesh in its entirety! We are to "cleanse ourselves from ALL filthiness of the flesh" (II Cor. 7:1). Those who refuse to pursue this course with the utmost diligence will find increasing difficulty in appropriating any true benefits in the Lord. Permit your affections to be set on things beneath, in the world of flesh and blood, and I will tell you that the things of the Spirit of God will lose their preciousness to you, and you will not press toward the mark of the prize of your high calling in Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:14)! Therefore, trust not the flesh! Beware of its cunning traps, lest it catch you unaware and rob you of the comforts of the Spirit. Be numbered, by grace, among those who "have no confidence in the flesh" (Phil. 3:3).

The flesh with all its wily charms
ensnares the simple one
But within everlasting arms
protected by the Son
The mind of Christ doth overcome
what flesh presents to saints
With them the battle will be won
with vict'ry Christ acquaints.

Let it be stamped deeply upon your conscience that the flesh is potent! **You cannot experiment with it.** It is not just a throwing of words into the air when Peter admonishes: "I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims to abstain from fleshly lusts that WAR AGAINST THE SOUL" (I Pet. 2:11). **How we ought to learn to quarrel with our faults, and not with our friends, as was the motto of Ortho II. These lusts all stem from the unrenewed mind; and every single thing that generates from that mind is to be zealously avoided, and with all diligence!** Abstain from these lusts; that is one type of abstinence that is absolutely imperative. Trust not the flesh nor any of its deriva-

OBTAINING

tives! It is not trustworthy at all! **I do not know why so many professed Christians depend upon their fleshly judgment; their fleshly inclinations; their fleshly proclivities, unless it is because they are fleshly.** If this be the case, they are at enmity with God! "They that are in the flesh CANNOT please God!" **External privileges, honors, and achievements are traps of Satan, in many cases.** Many are there that have been bitten by the serpent of fleshly lusts, and before they have realized it, they have been thrown into the pit of bitterness and sorrow of heart; robbed of fellowship with the Lord, and their iniquities gone over their head (Psa. 38:4). **It must be observed that much, if not the majority, of current conservative religion is nothing more than a pacification of the flesh.** With the religious doctors and theologians; the stately cathedrals and the ornate choirs; the pompous ceremonies, and the stilted anthems, the flesh is placed on parade, and the "people love to have it so" (Jer. 5:31). Has not the flesh gripped great portions of the "church"; and is not this adequate proof and abundant demonstration that there is a great danger in being ensnared by its cunning desires? I know of many individuals and several institutions that began very nobly, desiring to propogate and promulgate the will of the Lord, that were soon overcome by the lust of the flesh. Oh, that the alarm would everywhere be sounded to "be sober" and to "watch", lest we be caught unawares! Focus your attention upon the Lord and His Christ; "**Looking** unto Jesus, the author and Finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of God" (Heb. 12:2). Our sight must be lifted from the plain of this earth or we shall perish! Affections are to be set on things above (Col. 3:1-3); and minds are to be "transformed" and "renewed" (Rom. 12:1-2). The true children of the Lord "have no confidence in the flesh" (Phil. 3:3). They have served their term under it, and have seen the end of it - separation from the Lord and His power.

And now, dear brethren; "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey the lusts thereof" (Rom. 6:12). Muster up the resources that have been provided by the Lord, and seek "grace to help in the time of need" (Hebrews 4:16). This calls for diligence, and for a real pressing forward by faith. Be not slothful in this matter; the flesh will surely overcome you if you are! Yield not "your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin . . ." (Rom. 6:13). When you walked after the flesh, fulfilling the "desires of the flesh" (Eph. 2:3), "what fruit had ye in those things?" (Rom. 6:21). Ought you not with great eagerness and zeal now "yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness" (Rom. 6:19)? Aye, and "this shall we do, if God permit" (Heb. 6:3).

Learn from this afresh the lesson that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (I Cor. 15:50); either now or in the "regeneration" (Matt. 19:28). May the grace of God be with all those brethren who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.

It is interesting to observe that, for the most part, the conservative religions of our day have very little to offer. With fine appearances, and tokens of prestige, they lure the simple minded into their traps and secure for themselves great riches and gain. It is a truth that one of the most thriving businesses in our land is that of religion. Budgets of gigantic proportions are set up and adhered to faithfully. Millions of people are making great sacrifice to contribute to these financial enterprises; but are not seeing much in return for their investment. The idea is clearly promulgated in religious circles (and that without almost any equivocation at all) that the church desires to obtain what you have. People are hounded incessantly about GIVING, but never seem to receive much instruction on RECEIVING, or OBTAINING. It is fundamental to learn that "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that HE is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; **neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though He needed anything,** seeing He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things." (Acts 17:24-25). Yet, this is precisely the kind of religion that the masses have accepted; and that without virtually any question at all. But, is this the "truth as it is in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 4:20-21). Are we not explicitly taught in Scripture that the **Giver is God,** and that we are primarily receivers, not givers. This is not to teach us that we are not to render gifts and offerings to the Lord of our possessions. Indeed, the Word of the Lord speaks plainly that those who withhold such offerings are guilty of robbing the Lord (Mal. 3:8-10), and is thereby rendered a "covetous man", whose soul the Lord hateth (Psa. 10:3). **God's program, however, is not fundamentally that of receiving from man, but rather of giving to man!** Man is placed in the position of the receiver; and God as the "giver of every good and perfect gift" (James 1:17). God blesses man; man is blessed of God! Oh, that many would lay hold of this truth! **Paltry gifts of money and service to God cannot cover up for the filthiness and corruptness of your own heart!** God is not served with men's hands! He does not need such service. **He desires the hearts of men, that He might diffuse Himself into them, and make them a "partaker of the Divine nature"** (II Peter 1:3-4). That is the purpose of God's work! He is so great, so large, so Infinite, that He has designed to make the fulness of His glory known by indwelling His chosen people. He will give them of His own fulness (John 1:16), and join them to Himself as "one spirit" (I Cor. 6:17). **God has, then, undertaken the great work of Redemption in order that we might be made fit to receive from Him.** God cannot channel His blessings into an unregenerate heart! The "carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." It is veritably "enmity against God" (Romans 8:7). Again, the "natural man receiveth not the things of God: for they are foolishness to Him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (I Cor. 2:14). The work of Christ, then, may be described as that work whereby God's people were

rendered fit and worthy to receive from God those things "pertaining to life and godliness" (II Pet. 1:3). They are made qualified to OBTAIN! Once a person has truly tasted of the benefits of redemption, and has obtained from God those things proffered in Christ, there is no longer difficulty involved in desiring the whole person to be presented unto the Lord as a "living sacrifice" (Rom. 12:1-2). Would you, oh man, receive from God? Then you must first be "born again" (John 3:3-5), and be "made new" in Christ Jesus, "putting Him on" (Gal. 3:27-28), and be made a "member of His body, of His flesh and of His bones" (Eph. 5:30).

The things that are obtained in Christ Jesus are not to be compared with anything derived from the natural order. They are supernal in their very nature, and designed to satisfy the heart of the child of God. There is no indication that these things may even be received by the world, to say nothing of the world enjoying them. **They appeal to those whose hearts have ravished with grace, who are "poor in spirit", and who "mourn" for their wretchedness before the Lord (Matt. 5:1-11).** See with what joy the heart of the redeemed leaps when it is reminded that they have obtained FAVOR: "For whose findeth me (wisdom) findeth life, and shall obtain the favor of the Lord" (Prov. 8:35). What marvelous herald is this! Favor with the Lord! The "apple of His eye" (Psa 17:8), protected diligently by the Monarch of all creation. Blessed be the name of the Lord! Was it not a most blessed announcement to the virgin Mary when it was told her; "Thou hast found FAVOR with God" (Luke 1:30); and is it any different with those today who hear the whispering word of the Spirit declaring the same truth. This speaks of God's selection; "Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our own works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was GIVEN US in Christ Jesus before the world began" (II Tim. 1:9). He has "set His love" (Deut. 7:7) upon His children, and has determined through Christ to "bring them to glory" Heb. 2:10. How we are reminded that in the favor of God it may be boldly asserted: "If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him freely GIVE US all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (Rom. 8:31-34). **To find favor with God is to find an exemption from wrath, from condemnation, from death and hell.** What an obtaining, then, is this; the obtaining of FAVOR! May the Lord give each of you an earnest and lawful coveting for this most esteemed benefit.

Too, in the Lord, we obtain JOY and GLADNESS: "And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall OBTAIN JOY AND GLADNESS, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away" (Isaiah 35:10). To the children of Israel, this spoke of a restoration to Divine favor with the Lord, from whom they were estranged

by their most contemptible actions, and denial of the message of the prophets. But, to the real "Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16), this speaks of that "joy unspeakable and full of glory" (I Pet. 1:8) which comes from believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, though we "see Him not." Such joy there is in believing; "And the God of all hope fill you with all JOY and peace in believing . . ." (Rom. 15:13). This is one of the main evidences and substances of the very Kingdom of God; "And the kingdom of God is not in meat and drink but in . . . JOY . . ." (Rom. 14:17). **This joy is "OBTAINED"; it is not within ourselves.** We do not possess by nature the seeds of joy, only to be developed by a sort of sanctified effort. This joy comes from without our persons; **it is the joy of Christ Himself:** "These things have I spoken to you that MY JOY might remain in you . . ." (John 15:11). This is that very "Joy" that was "set before Him", for which He "endured the cross, despising the shame . . ." (Heb. 12:2). **It is that blessed portion of the "fruit of the Spirit" (Gal. 5:22-23) which makes tolerable, and even pleasant, the cumbersome trials and sufferings which are allotted to the saints in this life.** I do not know that we fully appreciate this great provision of joy and gladness, wherein we are made, by grace, to rejoice in the accomplishments of another; the work of our Lord, by which we have been thoroughly reconciled to God. Praise God for such a wondrous benefit as this!

There is another substance, now seen by faith, which the elect of God shall obtain, and which they do have now in its firstfruits. When I think of this great blessing, my mind is staggered with the immensity of it. Jesus speaks of those that "are counted worthy to OBTAIN THAT WORLD" (Luke 20:35). Oh, and what of "that world"? Is it not the "new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness" (II Pet. 3:13); the "new heavens and the new earth" (Rev. 21:1-3) that was seen of that beloved disciple John as he peered into glory from the isle of Patmos!

This is a portion of that great "prize" for which we are to diligently run (I Cor. 9:24-27). Jesus declared from that blessed mount: "Blessed are the meek, for THEY SHALL INHERIT THE EARTH" (Matt. 5:5). Now, the canker and the worm gnaw at the earth as we know it. Decay is seen all about, and yet the world madly lusts after it, and desires to fill its coffers with its passing riches. Well may they have their fling at these things, and may they possess them to the full; I care not for that. The Lord shall bring the earth out of its mortal dust, and clothe it with glorious immortality at the "manifestation of the children of light" (Rom. 8:19), and shall give it to His children; pure and clean from sin and the taint of unrighteousness. We are looking "for a new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (II Pet. 3:13), praise God! And that shall be ours; we shall obtain it in the Lord. Praise His holy name!

There is an everyday benefit (if I may so call it) which may be obtained and used constantly. It is necessary to the victorious living of the saint, and full provision has been made in Jesus to OB-

TAIN it. The writer of Hebrews declares: "Let us therefore come boldly to the Throne of grace that we may OBTAIN MERCY, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16). **There is not a child of God who feels not his great need for mercy; and it is his for the obtaining in Jesus' name!** The writer has made this exhortation after establishing the comforting thought that Jesus is most assuredly an High Priest which can be "touched with the feelings of our infirmities; in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15). The feeling and weight of your infirmities sometimes drag you into the slough of despond, and throw you into the pit of despair; but Jesus has been that way before, and has mercy for you to OBTAIN! Seek it out, and find if it is not sufficient for every need. Did not the Lord testify to Paul that His grace was "sufficient" (II Cor. 12:9); and is it not sufficient for you?

There is mercy for everyone
 who thus comes pleading to the Son
 No need to be weighed down with care
 when Jesus Christ can give grace there!

And Oh, among the many things which we receive and OBTAIN in Christ Jesus, there is that blessed "faith once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). How blessed to obtain that! Possessed of unbelief, and alienated from God in our mind through wicked works (Col. 1:21), hateful, and hating one another (Titus 3:3-5), and consumed with lusts and passions for the seen, together with an abhorrence of the unseen: who will not marvel and give glory to God for the reception of faith. Oh, says one! faith is not given to us, it comes from hearing; and hearing by the Word of God. Aye, and that it does (Romans 10:17); but **WHERE DOES IT COME FROM?** It is sent from heaven; a measure to every man (Rom. 12:3, according to the good pleasure of the Lord. Does not Peter warm our hearts as he writes to us in these words: ". . . to them that have OBTAINED LIKE PRECIOUS FAITH . . ." (II Pet. 1:1). Oh, so precious it is, better than gold that is tried with fire, for gold perishes (I Pet. 1:6-7), but faith grows into the mustard tree, and fills the life; praise God! Without faith, it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6); little wonder, then, that it is held in such high esteem by those who possess it. Was not faith "IMPUTED" (reckoned) to Abraham and in the stead of righteousness, and for righteousness (Rom. 4:22-25), and is it not declared that it shall also be imputed to those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. God "deals" a "portion of faith" (Rom. 12:3), and we are ex-

horted to carefully maintain that faith, and fight the good fight of faith; yea, to "keep the faith", as did our beloved brother Paul (I Tim. 6:11; II Tim. 4:7). It is the faith "delivered" (Jude 3), and is the "fruit of the Spirit" (Gal. 6:22). Again, Jesus is described as the "Author and the Finisher of our faith" (Heb. 12:2), and thus is He viewed by those who have truly "OBTAINED LIKE PRECIOUS FAITH." We cannot think of faith without recalling that we are "kept by the power of God THROUGH FAITH unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time" (I Pet. 1:5). This is the Divine connection between heaven and our hearts; between the Throne and our spirits; between God and our minds! It is the channel through which flows that blessed life of God, and thus it is to be protected with all vigilance, and kept with all perseverance. If you have obtained faith, then thank God for it, and ask Him to "increase" it, as did the disciples (Luke 17:5).

There are many other things of which we could speak that are OBTAINED by the child of God in Christ Jesus. We obtain salvation (I Thess. 5:9; II Tim. 2:10); an inheritance (Eph. 1:11), and finally glory (II Thess. 2:13-14). God, richly pouring within us of His own blessings and nature, in order that we might be "one spirit" (I Cor. 6:17) with Him. What matchless wisdom is seen in this; but greater still; what grace! To contemplate the God of heaven, enthroned over all, with our Lord Jesus Christ at His right hand; all power being given Him in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18), distributing blessings and honors to the sons of men that have grievously rebelled against Him, and "sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23): this is incomprehensible, but it is true; praise the Lord!

To think that to a worm like me
 doth come abundance great
 To contemplate the grace of God
 that never doth abate
 To see what marvelous great love
 is conveyed to my heart
 Is too magnanimous for me
 to through my lips impart.

What can we do but praise the Lord, who "daily loadeth us with benefits" (Psa. 68:19), and hath "blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 1:3). **From without they came; from within they flame! OBTAINED!** Rich with meaning; resplendent with glory; supernal in strength; glorious in meaning. Let these sayings sink down into your ears, and give God the glory! He is still blessing His people!

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