



TOWARD THE MARK

*“I PRESS TOWARD THE MARK FOR THE PRIZE
OF THE HIGH CALLING OF GOD IN CHRIST JESUS.”
PHILIPPIANS 3:14*

*A MAGAZINE FOR YOUNG CHRISTIANS
OF ALL AGES*

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Dear Reader,

“... I have chosen you and ordained you that ye should go and bring forth fruit...” (John 15:16).

Are we satisfied with knowing that the Lord has saved us and that we are going to heaven presently? **Are we such Christians as once it was said, “the root of the matter is in them, but they are all roots, and something else is wanted besides roots”? Our Lord said that we should bring forth fruit. Now there can be no fruit without the root, but who would care to have a garden full of roots that brought forth neither flowers nor fruit!** Let us beware earnestly that we are not roots of that kind. “Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit,” our Master said — may His words affect our souls. **Till the Lord comes and brings His glory with Him we must be strong in His grace and occupied; let us endure hardness, let us labor for the Master. Let us remember that we are not our own but we are bought with a price, and we are here to show forth the praises of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. Let us not forget in the few days we are left here on earth that we are ambassadors for Christ. May He grant to us grace to be fruitful for Him.**

As the year 2012 comes to close, it is our prayer that the Lord uses this issue of Toward the Mark to strengthen, encourage, and help you to be established to the end that Christ may be displayed in your life.

We are thankful to the Lord for the great number that have been visiting the *Toward the Mark* web site. Thank you for your prayers and notes of encouragement. We love to hear from all of you.

Please keep praying for the Lord’s blessing on Toward the Mark.

Yours in our soon-coming Lord,

Emil S. Nashed

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I have the pleasure to inform you that a mailing list has been set up for Toward the Mark. If you would like to receive an electronic version simply send an e-mail to toward.the.mark@gmail.com or visit www.towardthemark.org to be added to the mailing list. If you would like copies of older issues, please mention it in your e-mail.

Quotations from Scripture are generally taken either from the King James translation or the J.N. Darby translation.

MILK

"The truth shall make you free"

ADDRESSES TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES IN ASIA

REVELATION 2 AND 3

The Letter to the Church at Laodicea

Scriptures considered: Revelation 3:14-22, Colossians 4:16-18.

The letters to the seven churches of Asia, or Turkey as it is nowadays, have very serious lessons for all Christians. We must pay heed to them for ourselves, rather than applying them to others.

Spiritual decline

The Christian church was inaugurated on the day of Pentecost, the fiftieth day from when Christ was raised from among the dead. **Since that auspicious start, we Christians, as a whole, have become increasingly worldly and much less Christ-like or Christ-centred.** The letters to the seven churches give a prophetic outline of the history of the church, highlighting the origins and results of this spiritual decline. They trace things through from the day of Pentecost right up to the second coming of the Lord. **This last letter, to Laodicea, describes things as they are in the present day, at the very end of the Christian church period, immediately before the coming of the Lord.**

"The Amen"

We read in 2 Corinthians 1:20, "All the promises of God are Yea and Amen in Him." **As the Amen, everything that God has committed Himself to do is both affirmed and confirmed in Christ. He is the One on Whom rests all the stability and assurance of what God will ever do.**

"The Faithful and True Witness"

In Laodicean days, when the witness borne to God is worse than at any other time in the history of the Christian church, Christ is presented as the Faithful and True Witness. **Nowadays, the two marks of faithfulness and truth are largely missing from that which outwardly professes to be Christian. In such conditions, He Who is the living embodiment of faithfulness and truth can alone be relied on to maintain what is due to God.**

"The Beginning"

As the Beginning, **He is the true source and origin of everything that is of God and for God.**

"I know thy works"

The Laodiceans were not lazy. They were quite willing to work, and their works were not pagan works. They even had a veneer of being true and good. Yet, there is nothing that could earn a specific commendation from the Lord. He said two things that give reasons for this.

"Thou art neither cold nor hot" (v. 15)

"I will spue thee out of My mouth" (v. 16)

At Colossae, 9 miles west, the water was cold, refreshing, pure, derived from melting snow on the nearby hills. At Hierapolis, 6 miles north, there was an abundant supply of hot spring water at 35°C (95°F), full of beneficial minerals, especially calcium, and considered to be therapeutic. Local people still bathe their eyes in the water. Laodicea was built in the third century BC at a natural crossroads in a low undulating plain. It was a good site in strategic terms, but with no natural source of drinking water. Supplies were brought in from the south via a stone aqueduct, which terminated in a water tower. From this, the water was distributed to the streets via pipes. The water was neither cold and refreshing, as at Colossae, nor was it hot and therapeutic, as at Hierapolis. It was tepid and laden with

unpalatable minerals. Visitors not used to its flavour would spit it out in revulsion. The church at Laodicea was in danger of being rejected in the same way by Christ.

“I am rich”

The Lord says, “Thou sayest, I am rich and increased with goods.” Laodicea had access to tremendous assets and resources. **The city was a rich banking centre, controlling the finances of a large, commercially vibrant region. It wasn’t vulnerable to the fluctuation in market trends by being over dependent on any one commodity or trade. Among its diverse trading activities, it had a thriving woollen trade. Warm cloaks, made from local wool, of exceptionally high quality, from a special breed of long-haired black sheep, were ideal for both shepherds out in the country and also fashion conscious business people in the commercial centre. There was also a healthy export trade.**

“You say you have need of nothing”

This would certainly register with the Laodiceans. **In the year AD 60, the city was declared by the imperial authorities in Rome to be a disaster area, after a severe earthquake devastated the city. The Roman authorities offered grants and subsidies to help with the reconstruction. The Laodiceans declined the offer, stating that they were quite capable of funding the project themselves, without outside help. They were extremely proud of their self-sufficiency. The same spirit evidently marked the local church.** The Christians at neighbouring Colossae were happy to be told, “Ye are complete in Him” (Colossians 2:10). The affluent Laodiceans seemed to consider themselves to be complete in themselves, rather than in Christ.

“Wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” The Lord’s assessment of them was completely opposite to what they thought of themselves. Wealthy, well clothed, haughty, self satisfied Laodiceans would feel grossly insulted to

be described as wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.” The Lord was, of course, speaking about spiritual and moral values, not financial and economic ones.

It is significant that the Lord attributes blindness to the Laodiceans. God always delivers blessing in pristine beauty and condition. Committed to man, things soon deteriorate and fall away. **Eventually at the end of every phase of God’s revelation to man, blindness is seen to set in. The last judge, Samson, ended his days in blindness (Judges 16:21). The last priest, Eli, was blind (1 Samuel 4:15). The last King of Judah, Zedekiah, had his sight taken away (2 Kings 25:7).** How salutary that the last condition of the Christian witness immediately before the coming of the Lord is described as including the distressing, helpless condition of blindness. The lesson is clear. None is so blind as he who doesn’t want to see.

“To him that overcometh”

Notwithstanding the appalling general condition, **the Lord does not give them up. He calls for overcomers, even in Laodicea. If the Lord appeals for an overcomer, there must be the prospect of there being at least one. But how can it be done?**

“Buy...”

Everything that is valuable costs you something. And from Whom could they buy what they needed? “Buy of Me,” the Lord says. **He is the holy One Who is able and willing to help. No one else can do so.**

“Gold, tried in the fire”

What were they to ask for? “Gold, tried in the fire.” In the Bible, gold is used as a picture of things that are considered valuable by God. The most precious resource and asset at God’s disposal is the Person and work of His beloved Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. **“Gold, tried in the fire,” suggests that which is of Christ, proved in personal soul experience in the presence of God.**

“White raiment”

The Laodiceans were used to preening themselves in their rich black cloaks. The Lord directs them to acquire, from Him, white garments to cover their naked shame. **The allusion is clear. Clothing is what people first see of us. White is always a picture of purity and righteousness.** Chapter 19 verse 8 tells us that the church, the Lamb’s wife (not by then on earth, but in heaven with Christ) will be clothed in “fine linen, clean and white, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.” The righteous deeds of the Christian believers will be on display, as clearly as though they were worn as a suit of clothes. The Laodiceans were directed away from flashy clothing to doing what is right in the sight of God.

“Anoint thine eyes with eyesalve”

Laodicea had a famous medical school, specialising in the treatment of eyes. Their surgeons were skilled in eye operations, including the removal of cataracts. Additionally, much revenue was gained locally from the sale of eye ointments and eye salves. Local factories made good use of the nearby mineral salt deposits, which research had determined to be beneficial over a wide range of eye conditions. They would know full well what the Lord was talking about when He said, “Anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.” Only something Christ can give them can enable them to see clearly.

“As many as I love, I chasten”

What we do doesn’t alter what He is. Although the state is judged, the persons are still loved. **All discipline has a positive aim. It is administered with a view to correction and restoration to full joy and fellowship.**

As He says, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.” He so loves us and cares for us that He must at times discipline us. This does not make it any easier at the receiving end (cf. Hebrews 12:11).

“Repent”

The Lord makes the matter perfectly plain. “Repent.” Unless our hearts are right before God, we will never take the right action. **Repentance must precede the answer to the Lord’s knocking. There must be a real change of mind before God. We must agree with God about the poor spiritual condition in which we are. Each individual is responsible to the Lord to do so on a personal basis.** In verse 20, a tremendous opportunity opens up. The Lord makes His appeal to any individual who is willing to listen: “Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to Him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.” There is always room for recovery, and there is some response from individuals. The Lord, in His patience, is knocking, but from the outside. We will not hear the Lord’s voice until we have repented.

“I stand”

Not a casual stance, but one which is adopted continually until the object is achieved. That is, the personal response of the individual overcomer. **An “overcomer,” is any individual who refuses to be swept along by the tide of unfaithfulness rampant just before the Lord’s coming, and is determined to seek help and grace from God so as to remain true to his Lord and Master, at whatever personal cost.**

“I am knocking”

Why refer to a door, or gate? **As part of the reconstruction of the city after the earthquake mentioned earlier, a local wealthy benefactor paid for the erection of an impressive new “gate” for the city. Nocturnal visitors to the city found the gate locked, so as to safeguard the city’s wealth and treasures. They had to knock and be subjected to close scrutiny before gaining admittance. They were treating the Lord in the same way, keeping Him outside.** Individuals responding to His knocking would themselves gain access to and receive all the spiritual treasure they would ever need or

could enjoy. The Lord is calling attention to the fact that He is there, knocking, but from the outside. **The Laodiceans had shut themselves in to themselves, without Him. They were so busy with their own activities that they could not even hear the knocking that was going on on the outside. They were not only going on without Him, they were not conscious that He was outside.**

There is always room for recovery, and there is some response from individuals. But, we must hear His voice. If consciences are awakened, repentance would be brought about.

“If any man”

The mass will never turn. **The response must be individual.**

“Open the door”

The overcomer must open the door for himself. The knock is imperative. The voice is appealing. If there is no response to this appeal, there can be no more. “I will come in to him.” How gracious the Lord is. He expresses His willingness to come into our hearts, our lives, **but He doesn’t force Himself upon us.**

“I will sup with him and he with Me”

What joy, what communion, is available to us if we allow Him to have His true place, the chief place, in our plans, our ambitions, our motives.

He comes to our side, that we might enter into His side (“I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with Me”; cf also John 13:8).

“With Me on My throne”

Rewards are granted to those who make room for Him in this way: “To Him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne.” **Here again we have a reference to a well-known local practice. Public thrones, there and then, were not designed for single occupancy. They were more like benches, with sufficient room for those summoned by**

special invitation of the occupant of the throne. Such dignitaries, selected on account of high office or spectacular achievement, were summoned to sit on the throne alongside the visiting sovereign or president of the function to view the proceedings of the day at the arena, theatre or stadium.

As always, the Lord Himself is both the source and the standard for everything He offers us. When He lived on the earth, He was always faithful to His Father in heaven, whatever the opposition, whatever the personal cost to Himself. Having gone back to heaven, He is now seated in honor alongside His Father, awaiting His day of glory, when He shall sit on His own throne, and receive universal honor and acclaim. He now says to those who have committed themselves to be faithful on earth to Him while He is in heaven, “When I appear in power and great glory, you will be alongside Me sharing that glory.” (See also 1 Samuel 2:30).

Closing remarks

If the Laodiceans had read The Epistle to the Colossians, and taken heed to it, they would not have needed this letter. For us, it is safe to look for a Philadelphian in the saints, and keep guard against Laodicean tendencies in ourselves. The obvious remedy and preventive to Laodicean conditions is Colossian ministry (affections set on things above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God, Colossians 3:1-4).

Christ is coming again. He has left Christians on earth until then with the privilege and responsibility of being true and faithful to Him while we wait for Him to come. We must be good stewards of whatever has been entrusted to us in the meantime. May we seek grace to do so.

Ernie Brown

MEAT

“Sanctify them by the truth”

THE GLORY OF GOD AND JESUS

“But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God” (Acts 7:55).

“The glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God,” and a man upon earth full of the Holy Spirit, unafraid of that glory and in living union with the Man exalted there—**this was the revelation of an entirely new order of things, a heavenly order of things, which can only be known on earth by the Holy Spirit who has come from that glory. Let us diligently seek to understand this—and it is only by the teaching of the Holy Spirit that we can understand it—**then we shall understand Paul’s gospel and “the mystery” of it (see Ephesians 6:19; Colossians 1:25-27).

The *truth* of the assembly, the body of Christ upon earth, really commences with this that Stephen saw. **His eyes were turned away from the world; he probably never was held by the gross things in it, but he had had his part in the religious side of it; but now we see him separated from it, the temple, the priests, the learned leaders of the Jewish system, all have faded from his view; even an earthly kingdom with the divine Messiah at its head is surpassed and entirely eclipsed by that which now enthralls him—the glory of God, and a Man at the right hand of God.** This wonderful revelation is the more arresting in that the Man who could stand at God’s right hand, in the presence of that glory before which the highest angels fall prostrate with covered faces, was the One whom the world had judged to be only worthy of a malefactor’s cross, but it is not that which we wish to emphasize here.

It is the fact of the glory of God and Man being in absolute consonance. **We know that that Man was “Christ, who is over all, God blessed for ever” (Romans 9:5), but that is not the point of this passage. The Lord is spoken of by His personal human name. It was JESUS whom Stephen saw, the One who was born in the manger at Bethlehem, who died upon the cross of Calvary, who was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, and who had ascended bodily to that glory.** He was and is for ever absolutely agreeable to that glory, nay, altogether necessary to it, and that this might be known the heavens were opened, and Stephen, full of the Holy Ghost, saw by the power of the Spirit that to which he had to bear witness ere he died, and that which was to be the beginning and body of all Paul’s ministry. **The glory of God has found a Man; apart from this the purpose of the glory in regard to men could never have been fulfilled, and itself must have remained hidden from the universe for ever. That Man is Jesus, who loved us and died for our sins, and consequently we cannot be indifferent to this great fact.** Our hearts are glad because of what this means for our Saviour; we have often considered Him as the despised and rejected of men, “the shame of the cross and Jesus” we often think of together, but now it is “the glory of God and Jesus”; we cannot but be glad and rejoice as we consider this.

This is only one side of the new order of things which here comes to light, and yet we must dwell further upon it, for everything takes character from it. **We must not confine our thoughts of the glory of God to the *place* of exaltation into which Jesus has gone, that is described as “the right hand of God”; there is much more in the expression than the thought of locality. It is the shining out of what God is in His very nature.** The expression has its own special significance. Moses desired to see the glory of God, but the time had not then come for it, though God gave to His servant a partial revelation of it, proclaiming His name as **merciful and gracious.**

These two qualities are an integral part of that glory, as the prominent place that they occupy in the Epistle to the Ephesians proves; **but the glory of God—the full display of His nature and ways—could not be revealed until He had a Man in whom it could shine forth and who could maintain it in all its radiance, undimmed and untarnished by any failure for ever.** That God has secured this now is proved beyond doubt by the fact that He has thrown open the heavens and shown to us “the glory of God and Jesus.”

The other side of this new order is more surprising and, perhaps, more difficult to grasp, but just as real and true. It is that the Holy Spirit has come down from the exalted Man, our Lord, bringing with Him the full knowledge of the glory of God, for He is the Spirit of that glory, and that He now indwells believers on the earth and unites them in a vital union with Christ who is exalted at the right hand of God. Stephen is a pattern of this, for he was not only a witness to what his divinely-anointed eyes beheld, but he became descriptive of Christ in the midst of the most adverse circumstances. **It was not in the fact that his face shone like an angel’s that he was descriptive of Christ, for the glory of an angel is not the glory of God, and his face shone in this manner before he looked up steadfastly into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus; but it was in that most wonderful grace that made him pray with his last breath, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.” Thus was the life of Jesus made manifest in his mortal flesh.** But this could not have been had he not been a member of the body of Christ, and he could not have been that had not the Holy Spirit come from Christ to make him so. What else but Christ, morally, could the Holy Spirit bring from heaven? Nothing. What other business has He but the displacement of self and the forming of Christ in the lives of those whom He indwells? None. And Stephen is the pattern of it. **In him we see a man upon earth brought into perfect accord with the glory of God, and this not only in**

the fact that the glory of God and Jesus filled his eyes objectively, but that the life of Jesus was formed in Him subjectively, and manifested itself practically in the very world out of which Jesus had been cast.

Stephen may have been an amiable man or the reverse, it matters not; what he may have been naturally had no place here; he was full of the Holy Spirit, and Stephen was displaced and Christ shone out. “I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live. Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” Beholding the glory of the Lord he was transfigured into the same image.

But the Holy Spirit who filled Stephen did not dwell exclusively in him. He dwelt in Stephen because he was a member of the body of Christ on earth, and every believer in the exalted Lord Jesus is equally a member of the body of Christ; and, consequently, the Holy Ghost dwells in each and all. And the body is to be descriptive of Christ. This is the great theme of the Epistle to the Colossians, and to this end we who “were sometime alienated and enemies in our minds by wicked works, now hath He *reconciled* in the body of His flesh through death, to present us holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in His sight” (Colossians 1:21-22), i.e., in the presence of that glory we are as Christ is, for we are part of Him, and He is in us as His members, and consequently we are to be as He is in the place where He is not. Nothing in which men can boast or contribute can help the body of Christ. **The best that man can produce belongs to the world that is passing away, for *the glory of man* is as the flower of the field. But the assembly, which is His body, has its origin in and takes its character from *the glory of God*; the Man who is entirely agreeable to that glory is its Head and life; and the Holy Spirit who has come from that glory is its unwearyed power.**

And we are looking for the glorious day when the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church will be finished, and when it, as the holy city, shall descend out of heaven from God, having *the glory of God* (Revelation 21:10-11).

That which she will be then, when her light shines forth like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal, is being formed in her now by the Holy Ghost. She is being fashioned according to the glory of God and the Man who is at the right hand of God, and while failure proclaims itself wherever the eye turns in that which professes the name of Christ on earth, there is no failure in this work of the Spirit; and there shall yet be displayed to the universe the triumph of God in His counsels of blessing, and He shall have glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

J.T. Mawson

Exercise

“Exercise thyself unto piety”

WALKERS AND TALKERS

Two or three days ago, in our visiting, we came across a woman of scarcely middle life, with a spinal complaint, which prevented her walking.

During our conversation she said, *“I can’t walk much, but I can talk.”* Now, considering she had kept up an incessant talk for some minutes without any signs of weariness, we thought she spoke the truth.

When we left her cottage we could not help thinking how truly many of us could have repeated her words, in regard to our Christian life, *“I can’t walk much, but I can talk.”*

Now *talkers* should be *walkers*. It is sad, and humbling in the extreme, where there is *“high talk”* and *“low walk.”*

In the offerings in Leviticus, the inwards and the legs go together; that is to say, **the affections, and will, and all that was hidden—open only to the eye of God—expressed itself in the wondrous, perfect walk of the Lord Jesus Christ**, and found its highest expression in His offering Himself up to God without spot.

The Pharisees, in scorn and hatred, **could demand of Christ, “Who art Thou?” He could answer, “Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning.” His talk and walk—be it said reverently—ever agreed. There was absolutely no discrepancy between His speech and His life. He was what He said He was.** What a testimony!

So it should be with us. And just in proportion as our *words* lead people to think we are more perfect than we really are—more devoted, more intelligent in the things of God—just in that proportion are we Pharisees, and just in that proportion our talk and our walk do not agree.

Talking without walking is powerless, nauseating cant. It finds its full-blown expression in mere profession.

Talk without walk breeds more infidels, casts more stumbling-blocks in the road of anxious sinners, and does more harm to the Church of God, than any outward attack.

A body of consistent, earnest Christians, is the complete refutation of all the infidel arguments that were ever spun out of the depraved heart and head of man. **A young man told his minister that it was not his preaching that had been used to his conversion, but his own mother's practising. In the long run the life tells more for God than the lip; and the lip only gains its authority and force when the life is behind it. Let us be more careful that walk and talk agree, so that in dependence upon God, by the Holy Spirit, we may be here wholly for His glory and use.**

A.J. Pollock

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES!

1. What judge built an altar and called it "the Lord is peace"?
2. Who was told by God to name his son Mahershalalhashbaz?
3. Which Gospel records the Lord Jesus saying "Remembers Lot's wife"?

Rest

"Shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee?"

LOOK UP!

"If the outlook be dark, try the uplook."

Good advice this for the sad and the sorrowful in a day of difficulty.

We look around and see the effects of sin on every hand; suffering and trial are known by those who love the Lord, even as by others who love Him not. Looking forward, there seems no way of deliverance.

"Broken, lies creation,
Shaken, earth's foundation,
Anchorless, each nation."

Little wonder is it if men's hearts are "failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth." That which seemed sure and stable is tottering to its fall. The day when all things shall be shaken appears to have reached its dawn. **Disruption of kingdoms, disturbance of republics, discontent among the peoples on every side. Where shall the Christian turn? He seems walled around with difficulties. His "flesh" and his "heart" fail.** At such seasons of perplexity he is happy truly in being among the children of God, for of them it is written, "His children shall have a place of refuge." Yes, "God Himself is a refuge for us." "Trust in Him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before Him" (Psalm 62:8). There is our resource! "The devil can wall us round; he cannot roof us in," it has been said quaintly by one, and another has put it:

**"If you want to be distracted – look around
If you want to be miserable – look within
If you want to be happy – look up."**

“The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patience of Christ” (2 Thessalonians 3:5).

**He is love, He has loved us, He is loving us, He will love us.
In a coming hour we shall read clearly all that which tear
blinded eyes could not discern.**

**“We cannot always trace the way
where Thou, our gracious God, dost move;
But we can always surely say,
that ‘God is love.’”**

I. Fleming

ANSWERS TO SCRIPTURES SEARCH!

1. Gideon (Judges 6:24).
2. Isaiah (Isaiah 8:3).
3. The Gospel of Luke (Luke 17:32).

LORD JESUS COME

LORD Jesus, come,
Nor let us longer roam
Afar from Thee, and that bright place
Where we shall see Thee face to face;
Lord Jesus, come.

Lord Jesus, come,
Thine absence here we mourn;
No joy we know apart from Thee,
No sorrow in Thy presence see;
Lord Jesus, come.

Lord Jesus, come,
And claim us as Thine own;
With longing hearts the path we tread,
Which Thee to heavenly glory led;
Come, Saviour, come.

Lord Jesus, come,
And take Thy people home;
That all Thy flock, so scattered here,
With Thee in glory may appear;
Lord Jesus, come.

G. Jeckyll,

“YOU HAVE FLAMES BEHIND YOU...”

On July 25, 2000, Air France flight 4590 from Paris to New York crashed less than two minutes after takeoff. Speeding down the runway, the Concorde supersonic jet had run over a small piece of metal which cut a tire and sent debris into the left wing, where it ruptured a fuel tank. A devastating fire followed, which shut down two engines and brought the plane to the ground, killing all 109 people on board and four others on the ground.

The flight voice recorder revealed two very striking statements made during the short flight. First the flight controller in the tower says, “Concorde zero...4590, you have flames...you have flames behind you.” One minute later, just before the plane crashed, the pilot is heard to say, “Too late.” **“you have flames behind you...”** Anyone who witnessed the crash, or who has seen pictures of the accident knows what an unbelievable sight it was. Did you know that you may have flames ahead of you? When you pass from this earth, what awaits you is either the peace or joy of an eternity in heaven with those who have believed in Jesus for salvation (I Peter 1:3-5), or the torment and grief of an eternity apart from God in the “lake of fire” with those who have rejected Christ (Revelation 20:15). Just as those in the cockpit of flight 4590 could not see the severity of the flames behind them, do not be blinded to the reality of the flames that may be ahead of you. Do not take this warning lightly. **“...too late...”**

As the plane was going down, an effort was made to divert it to a nearby airport, but it was already too late to change the outcome for the wounded craft and the souls on board. Likewise, if you are without Christ, it will soon be too late for you to divert from the terrible end that you are speeding toward. We have no guarantee about how long we will live before we meet our Creator. If you have not trusted Christ, the Bible says that your unbelief has already set your course: “He that believeth on Him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already” (John 3:18).

A small strip of metal on a runway may seem like an insignificant thing – until we see the tragic end of flight 4590. Likewise, until we understand the absolute holiness of God and the sinfulness of man, it may seem that God is being unjust or unfair to make a “big deal” about what we think is just a “little sin.” God’s holiness prevents Him from allowing even one sin to enter His presence. This is why the Bible says, “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). However, His great love and desire for us to be with Him has provided the way by which we can have our sins taken away, be washed completely clean, and be made fit for His presence. The Bible simply says, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31). Escape the flames before it is too late!