



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,

“Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me?”

John 14:9

There seems to be pain in the Master’s question. This disciple had been with Him for three years. He had seen His beautiful and gentle life. He had witnessed His works of power. Surely by this time, after such long and close intimacy, the disciple ought to have known Him. Yet the Lord Jesus tells him here that he did not really know Him.

We get this lesson: It is possible to be with Christ a long time, and to know very much *about* Him, without truly knowing *Him*. Philip knew the Lord Jesus as a man, as a worker of miracles, as having a very beautiful character, but he had never gone below the surface in understanding Him. He did not know Him as the revealer of the Father. He never saw divine glory in the radiance that streamed from that blessed life. And not to know Christ in this aspect, to know Him only as a man, is not to know him at all. To leave out the divine in our thought of Christ is not to have any Christ at all.

We may be quite familiar with the facts of our Lord’s life, from His birth in Bethlehem to His ascension from Olivet, and yet may not know anything of Him as a personal Savior, saving us from our sins, or as a Helper in our time of need. Such knowledge will do us no good unless it lead us to the true knowledge of Christ as Savior, Lord, and Friend.

There is something very touching in the thought that for so long the Son of God walked with His disciples, all the glory of divinity dwelling in His humanity, and that they did not recognize Him. But is it any better with us? The Divine love is close to us perpetually, flowing all about us, with all its infinite tenderness, but how unconscious we are of it!

May our prayer be in 2017, “Lord, make thyself known to us!”

Dear Friends,

Our hearts are full of thanksgiving to the Lord who is the Faithful and True for His good hand upon us in the past 15 years. To you, dear reader, who is praying for *Toward the Mark* and to those who are helping in producing this exercise, you are known by the Lord and He is the reward of your quiet labor of love. 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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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"

THE NEW MAN!

Man is so different from every other creature that God has made. There is with him an intelligence far beyond every other creature of earth, and a capacity for knowledge that has been divinely implanted. Besides, there is within man that which enables him to take account of that which lies outside the realm in which he lives. He has a mind that reasons about the vast creation, and moral sensibilities regarding his Creator and the creatures around him. Moreover, he has a spiritual capacity for communion with God: that which lifts the heart and mind above what is material and belonging to time and sense. Man has been made a little lower than the angels, but he is the greatest of all God's earthly creatures.

The First Man and the Second Man

Adam, the first man, "was made a living soul" (1 Corinthians 15:45), and God spoke to him saying, "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:16-17). There was everything to meet man's need, and to give him pleasure, in such a wonderful garden, and God, as the creator and owner of the world, only reserved for Himself one tree, which He forbade to man.

Whether man was deeply thankful to God for His great kindness, we cannot say, but if he was, such thoughts were quickly removed by the temptation of Satan, and in base ingratitude he disobeyed God, eating of the only tree that God had reserved for Himself. How very solemn were the results for man. The judgment of God was pronounced on him and he was expelled from fair Eden. Instead of remaining in the leisurely

enjoyment of the garden planted by the hand of God, he had to toil for his bread by the sweat of his face to await the sentence of death that God had pronounced for disobedience.

But the first man is of the earth, "earthy" (1 Corinthians 15:47), and, since his fall, his pursuits, habits, thoughts, desires and character have been centred in himself. God is not in all his thoughts; and having come under the influence of Satan, he hates God, and lives in self-will and sin. Not only was one sin put to man's account by his disobedience, but sin entered into his nature, making it a sinful nature; and he put himself at a distance from God. There was no power with man to do what was good, or to resist the evil; and he could neither regain his place in Eden nor remove from his nature the principle of sin that had entered there.

In the nature that God gave to man there is that which is lovely. Natural affection, in its purity, is most attractive; and in man's relations with his fellows, and with the creatures around him, there are expressions of natural goodness, kindness, and other traits that make relationships on earth not only tolerable, but also happy. Yet all has been spoiled by sin. Even the purist of natural affections have been affected, and ruin marks all that is best in man by nature. There were lovely traits in the young ruler who told Jesus that he had observed all the commandments from his youth up, and we read, "Then Jesus beholding him loved him" (Mark 10:21). **Beneath the ruin of fallen nature there can still be seen the lovely traits of the nature that God gave to Adam unfallen; but all lies in ruin and sin, and man of the first order can never please God.**

How very different is the Second Man from the first. The first man is of the earth, but the Second Man is out of heaven. In origin, there is an immense difference, as there is also in nature and character. Something of the contrast between these two men can be learned from Philippians 2:5-11. The first man, made of dust, was not content with the place of honour that God gave

him, but, at the instigation of the devil, he sought a higher place, to “be as gods.” In reaching for a higher place he fell into sin, and brought down with him all the lower creation. The Second Man could go no higher, for Godhead was His; but such was His lowly mind that He laid aside the form of God, and took upon Him the form of a Servant, and was made in the likeness of men.

But down to Manhood was not the full extent of the stoop of the Second Man, out of heaven, for “being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” **It has often been said that the first man was disobedient unto death, but the Second Man was obedient unto death. Because of his disobedience, the first man dishonoured God, and fell from his place of honour; the Second Man, because of His obedience unto death, has brought glory to God, and He has received a place of glory, for “God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a Name, which is above every name.”**

And how great a contrast there is between the traits of the first man and the Second. In the first man we see arrogance, pride, selfishness, and all the evil features of which the Apostle Paul writes in Galatians 5:19–21; but the traits of the Second Man are those which are given as the fruit of the Spirit, “love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.” These precious fruits are seen in their fulness and perfection in the life of Jesus here below.

The First Man Adam...and the Last Adam

It was not until Adam had sinned, and had been expelled from Eden, that he became the head of a race of men, all bearing his features and inheriting his sinful nature. Unfallen he was the head of the lower creation, but children were not born to him till he was outside the paradise of Eden. Those born under Adam’s headship share the results of his fall, and this is brought before us in Romans 5. Adam came under the sentence of death, and

“death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression” (Romans 5:14). Adam, we are told in this same Scripture, “is the figure of Him that was to come.” As the head of a race, Adam was the figure of Christ.

But death has “passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” It is not Adam’s transgression that brings death directly to us, but the possession of his sinful nature through which we have sinned and come under death’s sentence. Yet it was his offence that brought death upon himself, and upon all under his headship, for that offence made his nature sinful, and this he passed on to all his race. The dire effects of Adam’s sin cannot be escaped by any under his headship; all come under judgment, condemnation and death.

When the book of the generations of Adam was written, it is recorded, “And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image” (Genesis 5:3); and every child of Adam has been born in his likeness and image. We are naturally morally like him, and bear his image as representing him in this world, and as having the same physical resemblance, being made of dust. Flesh and blood were made for this world, and that condition finishes with this world; it has no relation or connection with the kingdom of God; it is born in sin, and leaves this world by way of death and corruption.

When the Lord Jesus entered this world, He came as the Second Man, but in resurrection He became the Last Adam. Historically, the Second Man follows the first, but is of an entirely different order. As the Last Adam the Lord Jesus not only follows Adam, but sets him aside; and being the LAST, there will never be another Adam. There have only been two races of men on this earth, and there will not be another; one race springs from Adam, the other springs from Christ.

We see the Last Adam as a life-giving Spirit in resurrection, when, as seen in John 20:22, He breathed on His disciples, and said unto them, "Receive the Holy Spirit." Here the Last Adam was communicating His own life to those who belonged to Him; and this is the life that has been communicated to every one who truly believes in our Lord Jesus Christ. It is because of this it is written in Romans 8:9, "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." Only those who have Christ's life, Christ's Spirit, belong to His race.

Romans 5 tells us of some of the things that Christ has given to those who are under His Headship. There is the free gift of grace, the grace of God that has justified us, who once were ungodly sinners and far from Him. Indeed, we have now "the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness"; we also have the life of the One in whom we have been justified, justification of life. Soon we shall reign in life with Christ and enter into the fulness of divine blessing when we have eternal life in the heavenly scene as brought to Christ's image and likeness.

As a quickening Spirit the Lord Jesus not only gives us divine life in our souls now, soon He will quicken our mortal bodies, "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming" (1 Corinthians 15:22-23). This quickening includes the changing of the living, and the raising of the dead, even as it is written, "the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (1 Corinthians 15:52). It is then that we shall "also bear the image of the heavenly" (1 Corinthians 15:49).

The Old Man and the New Man

Romans 6:6 tells of "Our old man," the order of man to which we belonged as in Adam. Now we are enabled to look at ourselves as belonging to another order as being in Christ, and so freed from the old order of man that God has finished with in

the death of Christ. The old man is the embodiment of every feature found in the human race, the development of every evil trait of human nature personified in the man that has been crucified with Christ. In the old man every shade of evil has come into evidence, the violence and corruption that filled the earth in the days of Noah, the evil lust that is in every human breast, and the falsehood to which all are naturally prone.

The truth that is in Jesus teaches that we have "put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts" (Ephesians 4:22). Our former manner of life, before we accepted the Gospel of God, was spent in the distance from God, and in the manifestation of the features of the old man that God ended in the cross. In Christendom the gross features of the old man are often hidden beneath a veneer of respectability, but among the heathen the horrible traits of the old man are more often evident to all.

Colossians 3:9 exhorts, "Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds." Here we learn that falsehood, one of the traits of the old man, is apt to be seen even in those who have, in the acceptance of Christ, virtually rejected the old man and all that marks him in his life of sin. **Our confession of the Lordship of Christ is tantamount to saying that we have finished with the life that we formerly led, the life that is marked by the features of the man crucified with Christ. Baptism also signifies the putting off of the old man; but it does not mean that every one that is baptized has finished with the old man, or even realizes the meaning of his baptism.**

If God finished with the old man in Christ's death, He had another man in view, a new kind of man altogether, different in nature and character, with traits that are pleasurable to Him. In the Jew and in the Gentile different features of the old man were found; for the old man could be religious like the Jew or lawless like the Gentile. These two men were at enmity with each other,

the law keeping them separate, and at enmity. But when the old man was crucified with Christ, there was also “abolished in His flesh the enmity,” so that He might “make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace” (Ephesians 2:15).

Instead of two men at enmity with each other, there is now but one man, and that an altogether new kind of man. None of the features of the Jew or of the Gentile are found in this new man. Some would have the best of both preserved, but the best in God’s sight is only evil. What things are highly esteemed by men are abomination in the sight of God. But the features of this new man have been exhibited here on earth in the Person of Jesus, and believing Jews and Gentiles have been made “in Himself” one new man. This is a new creation work attributed to the Lord Jesus; and all who have part in this new man are “in Himself,” that is a new creation “in Christ.”

Something of the character of the new man is brought before us in Ephesians 4:24, where we have him presented as “after God...created in righteousness and true holiness.” Righteousness and holiness of truth were never found in the old man; they were seen in their perfection in Jesus here in this world, and God has created a new man with the features that belong to His own nature, the nature revealed in His Son in Manhood.

In Colossians 3:10, we are viewed as having put on the “new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him.” There are none of the racial, religious, cultural, or social distinctions in the new man that are to be found with “Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond and free.” Nor are there any of the features that are found in any of these men, “but Christ is all, and in all.” Christ is everything to those who form this new man, and He is in every one who, by grace, is there. Christ is the object and the life of every Christian: and every feature of the new man is to be seen in Christ.

A Man in Christ

The new man gives an abstract presentation, and also a collective presentation, of what God has formed for His pleasure; a new kind of man, entirely new, a new creation, with the features of Christ. **A man in Christ is an individual aspect of God’s new creation, for “If any man be in Christ, it is a new creation” (2 Corinthians 5:17). How blessed it is for every Christian to be able to take account of himself as being “in Christ.” Looking upon Christ in the presence of God we see One who is altogether pleasurable to God; and we can say, That is how God sees me, in Christ; and that is how I can take account of myself. Paul took account of himself in this way.**

In 2 Corinthians 12:2 he writes, “I know a man in Christ.” It was himself he was writing about, and of the experience he had as caught up to the third heaven, into the paradise of God; but he does not view himself in his mixed condition, but tells of his experience as “a man in Christ.”

Search the Scriptures!

1. Who was the first daughter mentioned by name in the Bible?
2. What is name of the prophet who saw a vision of a valley full of dry bones?
3. Which Gospel mentions Susanna, who, among other women, was healed by the Lord Jesus?

MEAT

"Sanctify them by the truth"

TALITHA CUMI, EPHATHA, ABBA AND ELOI ELOI

One has often pondered over the question as to why the Spirit of God has left on record, in the gospel of Mark, these four occasions where the words of the Lord Jesus are preserved for us in the actual language that He spoke. I have recently realized that each one of them are incidents of intense intimacy. Let us consider them.

- *"Talitha cumi."* In Mark 5:35–43, we have the death and raising of Jairus's daughter. As soon as the awful words "Thy daughter is dead," are told to Jairus, the Lord Jesus is immediately right by his side with words of comfort and encouragement, "Be not afraid, only believe." This reveals that in moments of extreme sorrow and anxiety we can experience the nearness of our Savior, and receive from Him the support that will sustain us through those circumstances.

He goes with Jairus right into the scene of death after having put out every element of unbelief and scorn, but takes with Him the father and mother and three privileged disciples. "He took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi."

Under the law, for a Jew to touch a dead body, and she was dead as her spirit had left her (Luke 8:55), would have rendered the person unclean for seven days. Nevertheless, not so the Savior, as He could never be contaminated by sin and its consequences, but in infinite grace, He came down to where sin had brought us, even to taking hold of death on the cross. This beautiful act of taking hold of that young girl's hand is one of intense intimacy and demonstrates the words in Luke 10:33, "as He journeyed, **came where he was.**"

- *"Ephphatha."* In Mark 7:31–37, we have the healing of the man who was deaf and had an impediment in his speech, a pitiful physical condition which has sad moral implications, which were typical of the nation of Israel at that time, but also true of everyone who does not know the Saviour. Israel, under the law, was greatly privileged to have been given the "words of God," but they had become deaf through unbelief, and so there was no response to God in praise and worship. So it is with us if we have not heard and believed the gospel, because, "without faith it is impossible to please Him" (Hebrews 11:6).

"And He took him aside from the multitude, and put His fingers into his ears, and He spit, and touched his tongue; and looking up to heaven, He sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha." Again, He takes the poor man away from the unbelieving multitude, because this is not a public matter but one that is private and intimate. Then the Lord Jesus puts His fingers into the man's ears. This is the only mention of the Lord's fingers in this gospel; in fact there is only one other, in John 9. How impossible it is to speak adequately of this incident, to picture in our minds the Son of God, putting a finger into each of the man's ears, and then spitting and putting His spit on the man's tongue, associating Himself with the condition with His fingers, and putting on his tongue something of Himself. I cannot think of anything more intimate than this: It calls forth worship and adoration. Then it says "He sighed." A word that expresses deep sorrow, as He feels how sin had spoiled everything for God, and then says "Ephphatha, that is , Be opened."

- *"Abba"* In Mark's account of the Lord's sufferings in Gethsemane, when He addresses His Father He uses the word "Abba" (14:36). This form of address, "is the word framed by the lips of infants, and betokens unreasoning trust" (W. E. Vine). In verse 33 we read that He "began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy." The word amazed comes from a root meaning to become "immovable" and is often associated with "terror"; being very heavy is an expression of deep distress. I hesitate to comment on these words that the Holy Spirit uses to

describe the effect the contemplation of what was before Him had on His holy person, as they involve such extreme depths of emotion that is beyond our comprehension.

So “He went forward a little, and fell on the ground.” This reminds us of His word to Peter, “Ye cannot follow me now,” as He was entering that final pathway that led only to the cross, upon which no one could accompany Him. Yet He then in speaking to His Father does so in terms of the sweetest simplicity and intimacy.

How amazing it is then to read in Romans 8:15, “But ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” As we have been brought into the relationship of sons and have the nature of that relationship in the power of the Holy Spirit, we can enter into the intimacy that was His, as a man here below, and can address the Father with this same word, “Abba.”

- *"Eloi, Eloi"* Finally, in Mark 15:34 we read, “And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani.” In the previous verse, we read of the darkness that was over the whole land for three hours, because no human mind can enter into what was taking place between that perfect man and His God during those hours. Verses 1 and 3 of Psalm 22 help us to understand a little what caused Him to utter those words of extreme emotion, as well as the intense physical suffering He was enduring. Why was His God, whom He had served so faithfully, forsaking Him? In verse 3, He gives the answer to that profound question, “But thou art holy.” So, in perfect righteousness, He justifies God in forsaking Him, as He was “made sin” and was bearing our sins in His body on the tree.

Again, I believe the preservation of the very words that came from His mouth during those hours of deepest suffering conveys to us the intimacy that the Holy Spirit would bring before us, as solemnly, but with adoration, we contemplate those holy sufferings.

Jeffrey Brett

EXERCISE

"Exercise thyself unto piety"

THE PATH OF OBEDIENCE!

As a creature, man has been brought by God into the place of obedience, and the present condition of men as alienated from God springs from the disobedience of the first man. In lowly grace the Lord Jesus, the Second Man, the Man out of heaven, came into the place of obedience. Ever commanding in His rights as God, in stooping to Manhood He learned obedience by the things that He suffered. His was a path of perfect obedience: “Becoming obedient even unto death, and that the death of the cross.” **The first man became disobedient unto death; the Second Man became obedient even unto death.**

Nothing less than the obedience manifested in Jesus is that to which God has called His people; we are sanctified by the Spirit unto the obedience...of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:2). The Lord Jesus views our obedience as proof of our love to Him, even as He said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15). Again in verse 21 of the same chapter He says, “He that hath my commandments and keeps them, he it is that loves me; but he that loves me shall be loved by my Father, and I will love him and will manifest myself to him.”

First of all, we have to challenge our hearts as to whether we are really acquainted with the commandments of the Lord; for how can we keep them without really knowing them? His commandments must be learned, and how else can we learn them but by becoming acquainted with the Scriptures. There are the individual commandments given in the Gospels and Epistles telling us what the Lord desires us to do. He instructs us in this Gospel to wash one another’s feet (John 13), to love one another as He has loved us (John 13:34), and to abide in Him (John 15:4). In Matthew 5 He tells us to let our light shine

before men, not to resist evil, to love our enemies and to be perfect as our heavenly Father (vv. 16, 39, 44, 48); and many such commandments are given for our obedience. After writing many commandments in the First Epistle to the Corinthians the apostle says, "If any one thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him recognise the things that I write to you, that it is the Lord's commandment" (14:37). So that it is not enough to regulate our conduct in individual life by the Lord's commandments, we must learn so that we may keep His commandments in relation to His will in the assembly.

Having learned the commandments of the Lord we are to obey Him in keeping them, for obedience is the proof of love. **Some would plead their love to the children of God as an excuse for walking in a wrong path, but this will never do;** "Hereby know we that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments" (1 John 5:2). **Simple obedience to what God has commanded is the proof that we love God and also His children. Is it love to the children of God either to lead them or to follow them in a way that is contrary to the expressed commandment of the Lord?** His commandments are not grievous (1 John 5:3), but they rather manifest the way for the divine nature to express itself in righteousness, holiness and love.

Obedience to the Lord's commandments calls forth the expression of the Father's love. Every member of the divine family is loved by the Father, but special circumstances and occasions enable the obedient child to learn and taste in a fresh way that precious, wonderful love. Even in human families a father's love is drawn out to the obedient child, while acts of disobedience not only hinder the expression of the love in a way in which the child can find pleasure, but rather compel the righteous father to chastise the child for its good. The expression of our love to the Lord Jesus gives us the realization of the Father's love, even as the Lord said to the disciples, "The Father Himself loveth you because ye have loved me" (John

16:27). No doubt the disciples could not then appreciate the full blessedness of the Lord's words, not having the Spirit; but now, by the indwelling Spirit, how sweet and precious is the thought that we are the loved objects of the Father, and that His love is practically realized as we walk in the path of obedience.

With obedience there is also the realization of the love of the Lord Jesus in its special expression towards us. There can be no doubting the love of the Lord Jesus to all His own, but we must understand that apart from the wonderful expression of His love in His death upon the cross, which nothing should be allowed to dim in our souls, there is the expression of love in relation to our being in the world for Him. **Look at the difference between John 13, where the Lord washes the disciples' feet, and Revelation 1:13, where He is girt about the breasts with a golden girdle. In the former He is expressing His love towards His own, the love that could not be affected by all that was immediately before Him, for "He loved them to the end." In the latter His love is restrained because of the state of the assemblies. Sometimes the Lord has to restrain the expression of His love towards us because of unjudged sin: It is His advocacy we then need; but again, when we are obeying His commandments His love can flow out unhindered.**

W. C. Reid.

TO MY SON !

Paul Gerhardt's Will and Testament to His Son, Paul Friedrich:

After reaching my 70th year and truly having the joyful hope that my loving and gracious God will in a short time deliver me from this world and lead me into a much better life than I have had so far on this earth, I thank God for all His kindness and faithfulness which He has given me. Then...I will awaken to see my precious Lord Jesus Christ in whom I have believed.

To my only son whom I am leaving behind, I will bestow on him very little worldly goods, but at the same time an honest name of which he will never need to be ashamed. My son knows that, from childhood, I gave him to the Lord that he might become a servant and preacher of God's holy Word. He should stay with that and not be concerned if he has only a few good days. Because our loving God knows the solution and can change the outer distress to inward joy of the heart and happiness of the spirit.

In your life...follow the wishes and commands of your God:

1. Never do anything bad in the hope that it will not be discovered, because nothing is ever woven so fine that it will not be found out.
2. Do not let yourself be provoked to anger outside of your office and profession. If you notice your anger inflamed, keep a profound silence and do not say one word until you have prayerfully gone through the Ten Commandments.
3. Be ashamed of the carnal sinful lusts and if you, someday, come to such years that you can get married, then marry with God's wisdom and good advice from pious, faithful, and intelligent people.

4. Do good to people, even if they do not reward you immediately, because what man does not reward has been rewarded long ago by the Creator of heaven and earth when He created you, when He gave His loving Son, and when He took you upon Himself as His child and heir at your conversion.
5. Avoid covetousness like hell; be satisfied with what you have, with what you acquired with honor and a good conscience, even if it is not much. If our loving God should shower you with much more, then entreat Him that He may guard you against the loathsome misuses of temporal goods.

To sum it all up: Pray diligently, study what is honorable, live peacefully, serve honestly, and remain steadfast in your faith and confession. Someday you will also die and leave this world willingly, happily, and blessedly. Amen.

Contributed by Kevin G.

Answers to Scripture search!

1. Naamah, daughter of Lamech (Genesis 4:22)
2. Ezekiel (Ezekiel 37:1-14)
3. Luke (Luke 8:3)

REST

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

REST AND PEACE !

When the Lord Jesus said, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28), He was addressing those who were labouring to find divine blessing on the ground of law, and who felt the oppression with which the law burdened them. In natural things a man expects to find rest after his labours are ended, but there was no rest for those under law, for there was no end to the requirements of the law, “for the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth” (Romans 7:1). **The law burdened the spirit with its demands, and sin, which the law could not take away, burdened the conscience.**

The careless and ungodly would not feel the burden, for man is naturally indifferent regarding God and His blessing, but the pious in Israel were labouring and heavy laden, and to such the words of the Lord would bring cheer and encouragement. Here was One who was able to remove the heavy load, and was willing to do it, to set the heart at rest from the burden upon the conscience, and to give rest in the knowledge of what He had brought of the Father’s grace. God was no longer demanding from men; He was seen in Jesus as a giving God. The scribes bound “heavy burdens and grievous to be borne” upon the shoulders of Israel, and would not move them with one of their fingers (Matthew 23:4), but the Lord Jesus came to relieve men, and to remove the heavy burden.

Freed from the yoke of the law, the Lord invited the godly to take His yoke upon them, and to learn of Him. He was not a hard Master, and had Himself come under the yoke of service to God, and in His service was “meek and lowly in heart.” As the

servants of the Lord they would find His yoke easy, and His burden light, and have rest for their souls.

The Lord only asks us to do what the divine nature finds pleasure in, and what we see perfectly expressed in Himself.

The Lord not only gives rest to His people, He also gives peace, for He said to His disciples before leaving them, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you” (John 14:27). In a life of unwearied service to His God and Father there was everything around to disturb and distress, but amidst all, His heart had an undisturbed peace, and this is the peace He gives to His own. The disciples were about to be deprived of their Master who had constantly cared for them, but He said to them, “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace” (John 16:33). Our peace is in Him, and it is His own peace.

In Philippians 4:6 we are exhorted to “be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.” This will bring to us the “peace of God, which passeth all understanding,” a peace that will guard the entry of every avenue into the heart, and keep out every disturbing thought. **This is the peace that leaves God’s throne undisturbed amidst all the conflicts of the nations of the world.**

Moreover, if our thoughts are on the beautiful features that are seen in Christ, and if we are walking in the light of God’s word, seeking His will, we can ever count on having with us “the God of peace,” the One who is the source of peace, and who can keep from us all that will disturb the heart and mind.

AMAZING GRACE !

Where in the world did we get this song? How does its story relate to you and me?

The story of John Newton's life is the real story behind "Amazing Grace." One would be hard pressed to imagine, let alone live, a blasphemous life equal to Newton's early years. In his youth, he became the captain of a slave ship, landing at least one load of human cargo in Charleston, South Carolina. It is reported that at times he was so drunk and destitute that even his crew regarded him as little more than an animal. Once he fell overboard and his crew refused to drop a boat to him. Instead, they threw a harpoon at him, with which they dragged him back into the ship. He seemed oblivious to the plight of the poor Black souls chained in the hold of his ship.

His complete disregard for all that was right and holy led him into a life plagued with despair, dangers at sea, abuse, public floggings, destitution, and depression. During those years, Newton often entered into a state of spiritual awakening. Those times were short-lived, and he invariably lapsed into a more wicked direction. However, the Lord used one harrowing experience at sea to cause young Newton to consider seriously his standing before a holy God. After being at sea for several months with a load of lumber, livestock and beeswax, the ship ran into a violent storm. So severe was the gale that the vessel was in danger of sinking. After the livestock were washed overboard, the crew tied themselves to the ship to keep from being swept into the sea. For four weeks, because of damage to the ship, the sailors despaired of life, spending most of their waking hours at the pumps to remove water. Rations were so low the men feared starvation. When they finally reached a port in Ireland, Newton began a sincere effort to become right with God.

During that experience, Newton became acutely aware of four things taught in the Bible:

- (1) **I must realize that in my present condition I am a sinner before God. "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).**
- (2) **I cannot save myself from eternal punishment in hell. "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23).**
- (3) **Jesus has paid for my sins and my punishment with His death on the cross. "But God commend his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).**
- (4) **I must accept His crucifixion as payment for my sins, personally. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved" (Acts 16:31).**

Two years later John Newton married his teenage sweetheart. During the following fourteen years, he continued to study the Bible, to serve His Lord and Savior, and to witness to His grace. In 1779, Newton published a hymnal "The Olney Hymns" in which he placed 281 of his own works, including "Amazing Grace." The next time you hear the hauntingly beautiful "Amazing Grace," remember that you, too, can experience the same saving grace as John Newton. **In fact, you can do that right now! Just read over the Scriptures listed above, bow your head wherever you are, and ask Christ to come into your heart and be your Savior.**