



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,

“Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong” (1 Corinthians 16:13)

We have now entered a New Year, and the question in everyone’s mind,

“What will this year bring?”

It is not without reason that such a question arises, for the last few years have been filled with startling events. Never in the history of the world have things moved with such lightning speed. In the past decade, we have witnessed changes that we thought would take centuries for development. Man’s inventions and cries for speed and more speed have brought all the inhabitants of the world closer together. There are few “remote” parts of the world left. Jungles have been proved to be anything but “impenetrable barriers,” and wide oceans now afford scanty protection and comfort. People may well cry: **“What is next?” and “Where is all this leading?”**

In the light of the Word of God there is one sure and certain event of great magnitude that is coming soon—very soon. The Lord Jesus is coming! He will give that shout in the air which will call all who are sheltered by His precious blood, to meet Him in the clouds, and accompany Him to the Father’s House, to be forever with and like Himself (1 Thessalonians 4:16–17; 1 John 3:2).

Dear Christian, do our hearts thrill at the thought of seeing the One who loves us and died for us? Does the prospect that even “today” He may come lift our poor hearts above the world’s joys and sorrows?

So, as we walk in this world with all the responsibilities of school and work, we will find that there are certain occasions when we must “overcome” and others when we have to “stand” (Ephesians 6:13). **How do we spend the days that the Lord gives us?** To strengthen ourselves in the truths God has given us in His word, or to go to sleep amid comfortable surroundings, only to be unexpectedly awakened when Satan returns to the charge and to find ourselves powerless in the presence of the enemy?

Those who are not fed are not able to fight. Let us use the time the Lord gives us to grow in our personal knowledge of Him and walk in communion with Him. We then will have strength to resist fresh attacks and avoid falling into bondage crueler than that from which we have escaped.

It is the essence of the new nature for the believer to live in dependence on God! In the midst of trials, **we must have confidence in Him and rely on the power of prayer.**

While we wait, may we live more faithfully, and put Christ before others daily in this New Year until He comes, for He is worthy of all we have and are.

Thank you for your e-mails and notes of encouragement. 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 GOD THAT JUSTIFIES

“Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, Who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us” (Romans 8:33,34).

What comfort, what profound peace it brings into the life, what stability it gives to faith, when it is understood that it is God that justifies; that He is “just and the Justifier of him that believes in Jesus” (Romans 3:26); that He can take to Himself, in this bright gospel day, the title of “Him that justifieth the ungodly” (4:5); yea, that this title is His glory, the righteous triumph of His grace in a world where sin abounded.

It brings peace and gives stability because, if God justifies a man, then that man is justified, the case is closed, for none may speak after God: There can be no appeal from His verdict.

According to the law of this land, an action may be tried in the civil courts and go against a man; he may appeal that verdict to the Court of Appeals, it may also decide against him; he may carry his case finally to the Highest Court, the court of last resource, and, if the law give a verdict in his favor every other decision is annulled: if they justify him, it matters not that the lower courts have condemned, for he stands justified now in the final court of appeal.

It is even so with the sinner who believes: He can with triumph say, “Who is he that condemns?”

Satan—the foe—may still accuse, recounting sins which no mortal can number; but, if God has justified the man, he appeals in vain: There is no court in which his charges can be heard, for God has decided the case and there are none higher than God.

But this question of justification, which is dealt with so blessedly and completely in the Roman Epistle, is not a civil action, as of a man versus his neighbor: it is a criminal one; it is a question of God

and the ungodly; of God, who must judge the secrets of men by Christ Jesus, and the sinner who has sinned against Him. In this case the sinner has no defense, there are no extenuating circumstances, and it will not avail to plead ignorance. A plea of ignorance could not be admitted even in a worldly court of justice; upon this matter an authority has written, “Ignorance of law excuses no man. Every man must be taken to know the law: to hold the contrary would be to confer a premium on ignorance which would afford a defense to every possible transgression of the law.”

To plead guilty and then to be silent before God, to see what He will do and say, is the only honest, the only right course for the sinner to pursue. When this is done, then does God surprise us by the magnificence of His ways, for He declares His righteousness in justifying the guilty sinner, in justifying him freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (3:24); and, if it is God that justifies, who is he that condemns? There is no answer to the challenge, for every voice that had a claim to be heard has been silenced in the death of Christ; and so we are turned to that death and what follows as the basis upon which all rests.

“It is Christ that died.” Here we are carried down into depths deeper than which nothing can be, and here in these depths was laid the foundation, broad and immovable, upon which every act of God, in grace or judgment, is righteously built. Death was an intruder in God’s domain; sin opened the door for it to enter in devastating power; it lay upon all men as the judgment of God because all had sinned; it was the evidence, beyond all other, of the utterly lost condition of men; it was also Satan’s power, and by it he hoped to keep men forever from the heart of the God who loved them. But God has taken it—the enemy, the invader—and has made it, in that hour which appeared to be its crowning victory, to declare all the glory of His love. Goliath, in the fullness of his strength, has been slain with his own sword.

The sinless One, instead of the sinful, submitted Himself to sin’s penalty, and thus was eternal justice vindicated and the righteousness of God established beyond dispute; so that He can justify whom He elects, and do it in such completeness that none can lay a charge against them.

“Yea rather, that is risen again.” We pass on and up, carried, as it were, upon a rising cadence, for this is a psalm of triumph, it is the music of the gospel of God. The resurrection from the dead is the vindication of Him who died; it is the seal of God upon the work accomplished in those mighty depths; it is victory, the victory of the divine purposes over all the efforts of the devil to thwart them.

“Who is even at the right hand of God.” In the lowest depths, when He died for us, Jesus glorified God about our sins; in the highest height in resurrection life God has glorified Him, evidence of His satisfaction in all that He has accomplished; and the glory secured in the depths, and the satisfaction declared in the heights, are the measure of the justification in which the believer stands:

It is absolute and eternal; and he is not only justified, but he stands now where no charge can be advanced; he is in Christ Jesus, and “there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1).

This is how God acts for the glory of His grace and the blessing of His own.

J T Mawson

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES!

1. Who planted the first garden?
2. Which man had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand donkeys?
3. Which assembly wrote a letter of commendation for Apollos?

MEAT

"Sanctify them by the truth"

THY KINGDOM!

There are many Scriptures in the Old Testament that speak of God's kingdom and God's throne, both as subsisting at that time and to be taken up by Christ in the coming day. In Psalm 45 we read, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the scepter of Thy kingdom is a right scepter" (v. 6). This verse evidently speaks of the eternal throne of God, and the second clause would seem to have in view the reign of Christ on earth. Solomon is viewed as sitting on the throne of Jehovah in 1 Chronicles 29:23, a type of the Lord Jesus as the true Son of David and Son of God.

The Kingdom of God

This aspect of the kingdom is the most comprehensive, every other presentation being some particular view of it. This is borne out by a comparison of Matthew 13:11 and Luke 8:10, where in the former the Lord says to His disciples, "it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven," while in the latter He says, "unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God."

God's eternal throne implies that His kingdom is eternal, and in relation to men we hear the Lord say to Samuel regarding Israel, "they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them" (1 Samuel 8:7). As we have seen, Solomon sat upon the throne of Jehovah, for God had given His authority to David and to his Son. When the Lord Jesus was on earth He said, "If I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you" (Matthew 12:28). God was present in the Person of the Son; therefore, God's kingdom was here. The Lord showed this to the Pharisees who demanded when the kingdom of God should come, for He answered, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation...for, behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you" (Luke 17:20,21). There was nothing to attract the natural eye, nor was there need to go anywhere else to look for it, because the kingdom was among them in the Person of the Son.

The Lord Jesus gave Nicodemus to understand that to see the kingdom of God a man must be born again; and to enter the kingdom of God there must be a work of God in the soul produced by the Spirit of God through the word (John 3:3–5). Natural vision cannot perceive the things of God. The learned men of Israel could not see the kingdom present in the Son: They had not the eyes of their heart opened; they were not born again. It is still the same today. No matter how well educated a man may be in natural or religious matters, he cannot discern the kingdom of God without spiritual vision, and this vision only comes with a divine work in the soul. Nor can any enter God’s kingdom unless they have been born of the Spirit.

Paul went about preaching “the kingdom of God” (Acts 20:25), and he wrote concerning it, “For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost” (Romans 14:17). The practical results of being in God’s kingdom are evinced in the lives of God’s saints. Judaism had much to say regarding what should be eaten and what should not be eaten, but Christianity is not occupied with prescriptions and prohibitions: It consists of what is moral, of what is pleasing to God in the lives of His own. We are to manifest what is right in the eyes of God, all our steps are to be marked with peace, and our joy is to be from the Holy Spirit who gives us to enter into what is found in Jesus.

In 1 Corinthians 15:50 we have the expression “the kingdom of God,” referring to what belongs to heaven, for, says the Scripture, “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.” We shall enter God’s kingdom in this aspect when our bodies are changed, and so made meet for the presence of God above. Our bodies of flesh and blood, which are mortal and corruptible, are suited for our present place of testimony, but not for our eternal dwelling with God in heaven. Verse 54 of this same chapter shows the condition of the new bodies that are suited for our being with Christ; they are incorruptible and not subject to death.

The Kingdom of Heaven

This term is used by Matthew and comes before us in the preaching of John Baptist who said to those before him, “Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 3:2). The kingdom of heaven was not yet present but was at hand. The Lord Jesus preached the same thing

(Matthew 4:17). Nebuchadnezzar had to learn “that the heavens do rule” (Daniel 4:26), and this is what the kingdom of heaven teaches. At the present time the Son of God is in heaven, He has not yet taken His kingly power on earth, and while the Lord is in heaven God’s kingdom is viewed as the kingdom of heaven.

After the Lord Jesus had spoken the parable of the Sower, the disciples asked Him, “Why speakest Thou unto them in parables?” and the Lord answered, “Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given” (Matthew 13:10,11). The parables unfolded to the disciples the secrets of the kingdom, and these same parables hid the secrets from the people who had rejected the Lord and His testimony. The disciples were privileged to apprehend in some measure what the prophets and righteous men of earlier generations would gladly have known.

Some of the wonderful secrets of the kingdom of heaven are then spoken of by the Lord in the six parables that follow, each one beginning with the words, “The kingdom of heaven is like.” The first three parables that were spoken to the multitude—the tares, the mustard seed, and the leaven hid in three measures of meal—tell of what marked the profession of Christianity. There was the sowing of the enemy of that which looked like that which was true, but which when it appeared was seen in its true character by the servants of the Lord. The tree was a monstrosity, not a herb; it gave shelter to many evils, as the profession of Christendom gives today. The leaven corrupted the whole system, and this is what we see around us: a corrupt profession that has a form of piety but denies its power (2 Timothy 3:5).

The last three parables were spoken in the house after the multitude had been sent away (Matthew 13:36), and it was then the disciples asked to be instructed in the meaning of the parable of the tares. To secure the church for the joy of His heart, a treasure hid in the field of this world, the Lord Jesus sold all that He had and bought the field. The treasure was for His heart’s affection (Ephesians 5:25), the pearl of rare beauty that he could admire and use to reflect His glory (Revelation 21:21), and if in the parables He impoverishes Himself to procure the church, in reality He “gave Himself for it.” At the present time the good fish

are gathered into vessels by the servants of the Lord; the mere professors are cast away as worthless.

“The Kingdom of His Dear Son”

God in His sovereign goodness has “delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son” (Colossians 1:13). If in certain aspects of the kingdom of heaven we see the working of the enemy, in this aspect in Colossians there is nothing but the working of God, and those who are in the kingdom of the Son of His love are those whom He “hath made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light” (1:12).

True believers in the Lord Jesus Christ have been brought by God under the authority of His own Son, the One in whom all that He is has been, and is, set forth. Under Christ’s authority, there is divine protection for us and divine direction. It is through Him we learn the mind and will of God, and we also learn the love of the Father as knowing that the affection of the Father rests upon the Son. Only One who is so dear and so near to the Father could bring to us the Father’s thoughts and desires for those He has entrusted to Him.

The Kingdom of the Son of Man

In Daniel 7 the prophet saw in vision the four great empires that have followed the removal of God’s authority from the kings of Judah; the fiery stream came forth from the throne of God destroying the fourth empire; the other three “had their dominion taken away; yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time” (vv. 9–12). Then Daniel saw One “like the Son of Man” coming with the clouds of heaven, and to Him was given universal and eternal dominion, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

This aspect of the kingdom is clearly that of the future day, when Christ will be seen as “King of kings, and Lord of lords” (Revelation 19:16), and when there will be the fulfilment of what is written of the Son of Man in Psalm 8. The Lord referred to His kingdom as Son of Man when, in Matthew 13:41, He spoke to His disciples of gathering “out of His kingdom” by angelic means “all things that offend, and them which do iniquity.” Again, in Matthew 25, the Lord speaks of the Son of Man coming in His glory and sitting on the throne of His glory to judge the sheep and the goats (vv. 31–46).

From 1 Corinthians 15 we learn that this is the mediatorial kingdom of the Son of Man, everlasting in the sense that it will never be succeeded by another, yet everlasting in another sense, as we shall see later. Christ's kingdom in relation to the millennial day is the answer to His rejection by men, God's answer to the cross. He will indeed reign as the true Son of David over Israel, but as Son of Man His dominion, as seen by Daniel, is universal. The mediatorial kingdom lasts for a thousand years, then is given up by the Son to the Father, that God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, may be "all in all" (1 Corinthians 15:28).

It is regarding His coming kingdom that the Lord says to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne" (Revelation 3:21). Then too will be fulfilled the promise of the Lord to His twelve disciples, "when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matthew 19:28).

The Father's Kingdom

The prayer for which the disciples asked the Lord begins with the words, "Our Father...Thy kingdom come" (Matthew 6:9,10). In this the Lord was teaching His disciples to look for the day when the saints would be with the Father in His house in heaven. From this and other Scriptures we can gather that the Father's kingdom has to do with heaven. In that day His will will be accomplished on earth even as in heaven under the reign of the Son of Man. When the saints are glorified with Christ, the light of heaven shedding its beams over the earth, then "shall the righteous shine forth as the sun," sharing the glory of Christ, the Sun of righteousness, "in the kingdom of their Father" (Matthew 13:43). Heaven is again brought before us when the Lord, after instituting His supper, said to His disciples, "I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" (Matthew 26:29). In Mark 14:25 the words "kingdom of God" are used, confirming that the term "kingdom of God" embraces all, the others being special features of God's kingdom. In Luke 11:2 some translators give, "Father, Thy Name be hallowed; Thy kingdom come," omitting the words "which art in heaven." It is also interesting to see that in Luke 22:18, after partaking of the Passover, where we may view the disciples as representing the remnant

of Israel, the Lord says, “I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God shall come.” For the remnant of Israel on earth in the coming day it will not be the Father’s kingdom in heaven but the kingdom of God on earth.

The Everlasting Kingdom

We have seen from 1 Corinthians 15 that the Lord Jesus will give up His mediatorial kingdom in which He rules overall, heaven and earth, as Son of Man. When the earth, as now formed, has passed away there will be no need for the kingdom in this aspect anymore. It will have served the purpose of subduing all things to Him, of bringing in the reconciliation of all things (Colossians 1:20). There is, however, an aspect of Christ’s kingdom that will never pass away, even as it is found in 2 Peter 1:11: “the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” Was it not to this that the Apostle Paul refers when he said “And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work and will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory forever. Amen” (2 Timothy 4:18)? The wearied, aged Apostle, about to seal his faithful testimony with his blood, looked for the eternal glory of his Lord in His heavenly kingdom. Long before, Nebuchadnezzar had addressed “all people, nations, and languages, that dwelt in all the earth,” telling them of “the high God” whose “kingdom is an everlasting kingdom” (Daniel 4:1–3). During the millennium the heavenly saints are in the heavenly paradise, serving God and the Lamb, and “they shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads” (Revelation 22:1–4).

Added to these wondrous words are these, “and they shall reign for ever and ever” (v. 5). Here we see the heavenly saints reigning for the ages of ages, and we know that it is as sharing the kingdom of Christ, His “everlasting Kingdom” as both Nebuchadnezzar and Peter testify, and the “heavenly kingdom” for which Paul looked. So that after the mediatorial kingdom has been given up, all things having been secured for the divine will, the heavenly side of the kingdom of God, the heavenly kingdom of our Lord, will continue for all eternity. All evil will have been done away, so that the eternal kingdom will be unclouded bliss for all who will be privileged to have part in it under Christ.

EXERCISE

"Exercise thyself unto piety"

THE WAITING ONES

Most beautiful and complete is the portrait drawn by the Apostle Paul of the Thessalonian Christians. Most effectively are their peculiar features set before us. The mind at once receives the impression his words are meant to convey: "They themselves show of us," he says, "what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come." With what bold and striking clearness are the figures of these early Christians struck out into relief upon the dark background of the surrounding idolatry by a few strokes of the divine pen.

Sunk in sin, serving divers and revolting lusts, while "carried away unto dumb idols," the Apostle had come into their midst with the gospel of the grace of God. He had told them of Jesus the Son of God. Into their ears he had poured the wondrous tale of that life of love that had closed on the cross, as an atoning sacrifice for man's sin. To their wondering souls he had explained the value and efficiency of that blood through which we have redemption, "the forgiveness of our sins." He had declared to them, how having died and been buried, this Jesus had been raised from the dead by the living God, and how, after having been seen on earth after His resurrection by many witnesses, He had been carried up into Heaven, and seated at the right hand of God. He had taught them that, if they would "confess with the mouth this Lord Jesus Christ and believe in their hearts that God had raised Him from the dead," they would be saved from the impending storm of divine judgment, which he affirmed was about to overtake the world. But he assured them that before this storm burst forth, with its terrible and destructive energy, the Son of God would come again and receive to Himself in glory all those that believed in Him. So the Apostle had preached to them, and so they had believed. "For this cause," says he, "thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye heard of us, ye

received it not as the word of Men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God which effectually worketh also in you that believe.” He had not brought them a cumbrous ritualistic system of forms and ceremonies, with law-keeping as a condition of blessing. He had not taught them a skillfully constructed plan of salvation or an elaborate scheme of theology, which little by little they were to receive, and be saved by. Much less had he gone amongst them to civilize them and instruct them in better morals, by which their present earthly condition might be improved, and in virtue of some moral change in themselves be entitled “to indulge a humble hope of salvation,” when they could stay on earth no longer.

No, without any of this kind of thing, and in contrast with much of what prevails in our day, he had brought them the truth of a Person living in heaven at God’s right hand who once on earth had died for sinners. This Person and His work, with the announcement of His speedy return to bless those that believed in Him and judge those who did not, formed the sum and substance of the Apostle’s preaching to these poor dark idolaters. With this blessed gospel of the grace of God he had not failed to declare most solemnly and faithfully the realities of eternal judgment, escape from which there was none, save by simple faith in Jesus the Son of God.

They had been left in no uncertainty as to what awaited them as sinners, and they were perfectly assured, upon the authority of God’s word, of the blessing they stood possessed of now as believers in Jesus, the full enjoyment of which they would have when He came, for whom they waited. Doubts as to their salvation they had none, for they waited for that very Jesus who, by His work for them on the cross, had already “delivered them from the wrath to come.” Once, in common with all others, they had been “appointed to death, and after that the judgment,” but now they could say, “God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.” **They were not looking to die at all, even though by death they might go to be with the Lord. They no more looked for death than for judgment. They waited for God’s Son from Heaven, as One who might come in their lifetime, and hence they could say, as thinking of those who had died as believers in Jesus, “we which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of**

the archangel, and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

It was this waiting for Jesus to come and take them up to heaven that characterized these Thessalonian Christians, and it was this, more than their having ceased to be idolaters, that made the world around talk so much about them. People then, as now, understand a change of religion and morality, but to be waiting and longing for some One to come and take them away from earth to heaven, their neighbors could not understand. Even the religion of the Jews had spoken of no such thing, though they were expecting a Messiah to come, according to certain prophecies that their books spoke of, and bless them on earth by delivering them from all their enemies, but for some One to be coming from heaven to take His followers up to heaven was indeed a strange and new doctrine. Yet, this was the doctrine taught the Thessalonians, and it is the doctrine the whole New Testament teaches, as the proper hope of believers now in the Lord Jesus.

Nothing so tells the tale of where the heart really is as this waiting for “God’s Son from Heaven.” A faith that has not this marked and characteristic element in it is not properly Christian, and the Apostle contrasts the profession of Christianity without this hope in this way: “For our conversation is in heaven from whence also we look for the Savior the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body according to the working whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself.” The Lord grants that all of us may be rejoicing in this blessed hope, and assuming clearly before the world the attitude of “the waiting ones.”

From Sound Words

ANSWERS TO SCRIPTURE SEARCH!

1. The LORD God (Genesis 2:8)
2. Job (Job 42:12)
3. The assembly at Ephesus (Acts 18:27)

REST

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

THUS FAR THE LORD HAS LED US

Thus far the Lord hath led us on—in darkness and in day,
Through all the varied stages of the narrow homeward way.
Long since, He took that journey, He trod that path alone;
Its trials and its dangers full well Himself hath known.

Thus far the Lord hath led us—the promise has not failed;
The enemy, encountered oft, has never quite prevailed;
The shield of faith has turned aside or quenched each fiery dart;
The Spirit's sword in weakest hands has forced him to depart.

Thus far the Lord hath led us—the waters have been high,
But yet in passing through them we felt that He was nigh;
A very present helper in trouble we have found—
His comforts most abounded when our sorrows did abound.

Thus far the Lord hath led us—our need has been supplied,
And mercy has encompassed us about on every side;
Still falls the daily manna, the pure rock-fountains flow,
And many flowers of love and hope along the wayside grow.

Thus far the Lord hath led us—and will He now forsake
The feeble ones whom for His own it pleaseth Him to take?
Oh, never, never! earthly friends may cold and faithless prove,
But His is changeless pity and everlasting love.

Calmly we look behind us, on joys and sorrows past;
We know that all is mercy now, and shall be well at last.

Calmly we look before us—we fear no future ill;
Enough for safety and for peace, if Thou art with us still.

Jane Borthwick

THE SUN

“The heavens declare the glory of God....” Psalm 19:1

Without the sun, all life on earth would cease. It is the source of all energy, starting with photosynthesis (the process by which plants use the energy of sunlight to produce their own food) produced in green plants and trees and the food they supply. It evaporates water from the oceans. This vapor fills the air, providing humidity to keep living things from shriveling, as well as providing moisture for rain. The sun’s heat produces winds, refreshing the air. These winds stir up the oceans and lakes, adding oxygen that freshens them also. It is the source of light for an otherwise dark and dead world.

The sun is almost 93 million miles from the earth, but it takes only 8-1/2 minutes for its light to reach us. The composition of the earth and its distance from the sun are exactly right for the forms of life the Creator has placed here. To provide the fullest benefits, God has tilted the earth’s axis by 23 degrees. This exposes various parts of the world to the sun’s radiation in such a way as to make possible the cultivation of twice as much land as would be possible if the earth were always at the same angle to the sun.

This is very important because all of man’s food originates from plants.

In space there are stars estimated to be two billion times brighter than our sun, but God has made the sun just right for our needs. It is 860,000 miles in diameter, and, if it were hollow, it could contain over a million earths! It is a huge nuclear furnace, changing four to five million tons of its matter into energy every second. Yet it does not burn itself out, nor become smaller in size. Who but God could provide such a furnace as this!

The sun dominates the nine planets of our solar system and is responsible for holding each one in its course. No collisions are possible, because the speed of each planet as it travels in its orbit, together with the gravitational pull of the sun, makes it maintain a uniform distance at all times.

Who do you think put these heavenly bodies in such a precise pattern? Who set their speeds through space and established their travels around the sun so accurately? Only God, who put all this in motion, could have kept them in the same circuits and timetables ever since they were created.

The author of Psalm 84, impressed with the majesty of the heavens, referred to the Lord as his sun and shield. “The Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly. O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in Thee”

SINKING IN PELICAN BAY

“It was a dark and stormy night,” as the old stories used to begin. But this was not a story; this was true—and in our modern times—and in “Pelican Bay,” not far away. It was about 10:30 at night when a towboat crew reported to the Coast Guard that they had found a capsized dinghy floating in the bay. There was clothing and other debris floating, and they knew there was something wrong.

Nearing the site, the Coast Guard found another boat, a sailboat, also sinking. This boat held a survivor, Jean-Francois Duplaa, the owner of both boats, still clinging to the mast. As he struggled to climb the wet and slippery mast, four- and five-foot waves continually crashed down on him. A very little more would wash him away.

No time was wasted! The Coast Guard radioed for a helicopter and a rescue swimmer, Petty Officer First Class Curt Rohrich. He quickly fastened the harness from the helicopter to the struggling man, wrapped his arms around him, and they were hoisted into the helicopter together. The rescued man was taken into a hospital for evaluation. A happy ending to an unexpected adventure! The sailor’s life was saved, and even the sailboat may be salvaged.

It could easily have ended so differently. What if there had been no Coast Guard crew? no rescue swimmer? no helicopter? What if all his struggles to climb ended with him alone on the “dark and stormy” water? There would have been no hope for him when the mast slipped under the waves. No help, no hope—even if he reached the very top of the sinking mast. No matter what his efforts to save himself, he soon would have vanished beneath the tossing, tumbling water. What a tragedy for him!

If we only look around, we can see the same story being reenacted in many, many ways. So many of life’s sailors are really struggling to “climb the mast” and reach a higher level of “goodness” to get to heaven. But if the ship is sinking, what will the effort be worth? **Help and rescue must come from above, from One who is able to save you from Hell. The Lord Jesus Christ is One—the only One—who came all the way from heaven at immense cost and suffering to Himself, to lift us up to heaven and out of the deadly waters. You have probably heard about Him for years, but you must accept His salvation so freely offered, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:8,9). Please do not reject this offer of salvation “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved” (Acts 16:31).**