

Grace and Glory

Declaring unto you the Whole counsel of God

Definite

SIGN POSTS Of The End

Gene Hawkins

“And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.”

Luke 17:26-30

Though the characteristics of two events presented above are almost identical, they are separated by a few hundred years. God's wrath was incurred in each case and Jesus uses both to describe conditions at this present hour. The days of Noah are summed up in Genesis 6:11 “The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence.” Genesis 13:13 tells us that “...the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly.” Examination of the days of Lot seems to define that wickedness as the debauchery that prevailed. “And they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where are the men which came in to thee this night? bring them out unto us, that we may know them. And Lot went out at the door unto them, and shut the door after him, And said,” I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly. Behold now, I have two daughters which have not known man; let me, I pray you, bring them out unto you, and do ye to them as is good in your eyes: only unto these men do nothing; for therefore came they under the shadow of my roof.” Gen. 19:5-8. Jude likewise emphasizes this same ungodly time and conduct. “Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange (altered) flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.” V.7 Paul describes this kind of degradation in Rom. 1:26,27 “For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet.”

The news of our day indicates that we have reached these ungodly days of

Lot. A headline out of Jerusalem reads: "Life becomes a real drag after city's gay bar closes." The article reports: "Shushan was one of the few places where we could feel that we were in a free world," said Van Carmel, 21, a Hebrew University student who is a member of a gay youth coalition." Further excerpts describe this establishment as "an isle in Jerusalem - an isle of tolerance and coexistence... .In Shushan, we were all like family " It is also reported that "Israel's gay rights legislation is seen as progressive: gay couples who marry abroad have the right to register their marriages legally at home."

Our own country has in no wise escaped this national and political hot button. Congressman Barney Frank, one of two openly gay members of congress, has endorsed Senator Hillary Clinton for president, hailing her for her support of gay and lesbian rights. He said that he is "convinced that Hillary Clinton is the candidate best equipped to pass laws that will treat all Americans with dignity, fairness and equality, no matter who they are or who they love." Likewise Tammy Baldwin endorsed Mrs. Clinton sometime ago and described her as "strong and vocal" in her support of ending employment discrimination against gays and lesbians. Though Mrs. Clinton and congresswoman Baldwin do not see eye to eye on the issue of same sex marriage, she said "I support full marriage equality. We will voice encouragement for (Clinton) to be open to changing her opinion."

Dennis Kucinich, a long time colleague of both Frank and Baldwin who is seeking the Democratic Presidential nod, has also been an outspoken backer of marriage equality for many years saying "This is really a question of whether you really believe in equality. When you understand what real 'equality' is, you understand that people who love each other must have the opportunity to be able to express that in a way that's meaningful."

The ideas expressed by these prominent politicians go far beyond the political realm. Today, there are many, who have adopted the mantra that came out of the Clinton era, a stance even the military has taken: "Don't ask, don't tell." We hear it often that what a person does in his own private life is no one else's business, and has absolutely nothing to do with their character or job performance. Sadly much of the immoral thinking proclaimed by the world has spread to the Christian community. Many have stated: "I do not have such deviant desires, but the sexual preferences of another person is none of my concern." In the past few years we have been absolutely bombarded with the gay agenda put forth in movies, TV and many other media, and those who would dare resist this onslaught are, more often than not, labeled simple, narrow minded, Puritanical and judgmental. Genuine preachers of righteousness are often accused of trying to "legislate morality" while various politicians have in some cases succeeded in "legislating immorality." Many celebrities have joined the fray, some of them using light hearted banter and comedy trying to "laugh off" the gravity of these ungodly deeds and excuse them with comedy. One such star has declared that he would not marry the mother of his children until the country recognized the validity of gay marriage.

Lot was a very carnal, fleshly, worldly man, but Peter tells us that those around him "vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds; II Peter. 2:8. It seems to me that many Christians of our day are no longer vexed by the gross immorality that prevails. If one is vexed (labor down, wear with toil, harass) he can in no

wise simply excuse the ungodly conduct of which Jesus prophesied, under the guise of "human rights." Many actually proclaim that God created them with these ungodly desires. If that were so, then any rapist, fornicator, child molester, or any other deviant can claim the same justification because they too are just following their own "sexual preference."

The major problem with all the ungodly activities, both in days of Noah and the days of Lot, is complete disregard of God's Word. We see it in our own society and around the world. The Scriptures have no quarter among men. It is not the standard by which they measure themselves. Our day is as the days of the Judges when every man did that which was right in his own eyes. Men truly believe that if they can convince enough people that something is right, that makes it so. God however will have the last Word and He has declared this ungodly conduct an abomination worthy of death. Lev. 18:22, 20:12,13. Paul likewise condemns these desires as being "vile affections." Rom. 1:26,27.

Man's pursuit of ignoring God's ways of righteousness to pursue his own, has been devastating every time it was tried, whether on a national or personal level. A man who was simply "gathering sticks on the Sabbath" demonstrates the exacting demands of Moses' law in Numbers 15. He perished for that error, "Because he hath despised the word of the LORD, and hath broken his commandment, that soul shall utterly be cut off; his iniquity shall be upon him." V. 31 The real offense is not just the act of "defiling the Sabbath," but that "he hath despised the word of the LORD." In these last days, it seems that men have absolutely no trouble doing that, but as in the days of yore, God's judgment will once again prevail, and for the same reason.

Some of our day have seemingly ignored all the rest of the ways in which God's decree has been violated, singling out the single issue of homosexuality as being the culprit for the various forms of devastation around the world. Some have fallen into the trap of violence as they supposedly go forth as God's avenging angels of righteousness. Make no mistake. Judgment is coming on this world and none can stop it, but that day has not quite arrived. Though many point to the devastating "natural disasters" around the globe as being God's judgment, the truth is "we ain't seen nothin' yet," compared to the fury that will be unleashed after Israel signs the infamous covenant with the anti - christ, in fulfillment of Dan. 9:27.

There are those who truly believe that if America and the rest of the world would "clean up their act", God would be merciful and put aside His wrath. Scripture teaches otherwise, and there is at least one example where God carried out His decree regardless of reformation. Manasseh was one of the most wicked kings in Judah. It hardly seems possible, but he was the son of Hezekiah, a king likened unto David. The legacy left by Manasseh was that he "shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another; beside his sin wherewith he made Judah to sin, in doing that which was evil in the sight of the LORD." His successor was Josiah, "And like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the LORD with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him. Notwithstanding the LORD turned not from the fierceness of his great wrath, wherewith his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations that Manasseh had provoked him withal." II Kings 23:25,26

I am persuaded that according to God's Word, no amount of man's righteous display, or humanitarian efforts around the world, is going to deter the decree of Jesus. Our world is filled with violence and ungodly immorality and rebellion, rising up as an absolute stench before God. Jude sums up God's judgment as well as the reason for it. "To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against HIM." V. 15

In the midst of such devastating facts there is good news even today. Peter uses Lot as an example. The fact that "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished:...". II Peter 2:9 Lot was delivered before he perished in the overthrow of Sodom and he is very much typical of the carnal Church today whom God will literally have to extricate from the total devastation that is yet to come upon this world. Gen 19:16 tells us that Lot was delivered "the LORD being merciful unto him:..." There is even better news and even more mercy or grace for those who would dare to ally themselves with God in the midst of the atmosphere with which we must contend today. The promise for us is found in Revelation 3:10. "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." Let us get hold of those words. Lot was graciously delivered out of the midst of the overthrow, but we still have the opportunity to fully submit our hearts to His ways and He will "keep thee FROM that devastating hour of temptation, (tribulation)". Now, even in the midst of these heart rending signs of the end, is the time to look up and rejoice for your redemption draweth nigh.

FINE LINEN FOR THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

(Reprint from Oct. 1982)

The wedding of Christ and His Bride is an occasion of great joy for all heaven. And there is particular interest in how the bride is dressed for the occasion.

We read in Rev. 19:7,8: "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness (righteous deeds) of the saints."

From all the fabrics in the world, why would the Lord select fine linen for Christ's Bride? What can we learn from this symbolism?

The spiritual preparation of the bride for this wedding is the very heart of all New Testament teaching, and the emphasis on this truth is given constant repetition. Even before the birth of John the Baptist the angel announced that he would be the forerunner of Christ - "to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." Luke 1:17.

The preparation of fine linen aptly illustrates this spiritual readiness. Linen was made from flax, and there are about 90 kinds of flax plants. They are small herbs or shrubs with various colored leaves and flowers, and the plants usually grow from one to

four feet high. They grow best in rich soil and in a cool, moist climate. In the ancient method of processing, from 18 months to two years were required from harvesting to marketing.

The garment-symbol of fine linen appears frequently throughout the Scriptures, and the Biblical history of the subject contains many figurative details.

Fine linen was the clothing of kings and queens. Their coronation robes were made with it. It was used in the hangings of the tabernacle, and the high priest was attired with it on the Day of Atonement. Vestments worn for special occasions were made with it, and it was the clothing of the wealthy.

When honors were bestowed upon persons, they were given robes of fine linen to wear at the ceremonies honoring them. Wedding robes for both bride and bridegroom were made with it. The Levitical choirs were robed in fine linen, and with it "garments of glory and beauty" were made for the Aaronic priests. The white-robed throngs in Revelation are dressed in linen. It was an expensive fabric of high quality, and, as an article of merchandise it ranked with gold, silver, and precious stones.

In the ancient method of preparing flax for the weaver, the stalks were soaked in water and then put through a process called "breaking." This crushed the stalk to separate the fibers from the coarse, woody bark. Tools called "beaters" with flat wooden blades were used to hit and scrape the crushed stalks.

After the soaking, beating, and crushing, a comb-like tool was used to remove other coarse parts. This combing was repeated again and again. A thorough work was necessary to produce "fine linen." The finished product that came from the loom would only be as good as the preparation made for it.

The spiritual truth drawn from this emphasizes our separation or consecration to the Lord, a major Bible doctrine but widely neglected today. God separated Israel from the heathen to be His chosen people, and they were consecrated to His worship and service. Paul applied this to the Christian Church in 2 Cor. 6:17: "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you."

There is a vivid description of the harlot church in Rev. 18:4, where God commands: "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues."- This is God's warning to multitudes today. And many are obeying God's command of separation as the Holy Spirit in His worldwide operation is preparing the bride for the Bridegroom. This separation is "the righteousness of the saints."

After combing, the flax was put through repeated washings. If the washings were not thorough, spots and blemishes would show up later and mar the quality of the linen. It could not go to the next process until all impurity had been washed out.

At each point of our spiritual preparation we must yield to the Holy Spirit's efforts to create in us the righteousness of Christ. A defective preparation of the flax produced a defective result. Old carnal habits and the old self-life continually reappear if there is not a thorough cleansing of the soul. "Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." James 1:4. The word "perfect" here means 10 "complete." We are to obey the Lord as He works out His will in our lives unto the completed end.

Paul had this final completion in view when he wrote that Christ died for the Church, "that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." Ephesians 5:26, 27.

Our Lord told Peter, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me" - John 13:8. We can have no part with Christ, no part in the Bride, without this "washing of water by the Word." This washing through faith in Christ produces "the righteousness of the saints."

The next process was sun bleaching. The washed flax was exposed to the sun for curing and bleaching. The sun's fiery heat and penetrating rays gave it the bright luster and snowy whiteness emphasized in Scripture. Sun bleached linens were best because artificial bleaching oxidized and destroyed the natural gum and thus weakened the fibers. Flax was one of the strongest and most durable natural fibers known, and it had many industrial uses. But if not properly processed, flax was weak.

We see much spiritual weakness in churches today. Jesus taught that some believers are weak and temporary (Matt. 13:21). But when we move in the Divine progression we "go from strength to strength" and are made "strong in the Lord. and in the power of His might."

Fine linen also had special quality as a preservative. Egyptian mummies 4,000 years old have been found wrapped in linen. Jesus was buried in linen clothes. The Dead Sea Scrolls were found wrapped in linen. Paul prayed that our "whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Thess. 5:23.

"Pure" linen was not only clean and white but unmixed with other fibers. God gave Israel a law against such mixture: "Thou shalt not wear a garment of divers sorts, as of woolen and linen together." Deut. 22:11.

In all church history Satan has succeeded in enticing many into a mixed religious life. Those who will not accept the pure Gospel will take a mixture - a mingling of truth and error, the carnal and spiritual, the pure and impure, the righteous and unrighteous, the Christ-life and the self-life, the natural mind and the spiritual mind.

Paul exhorted the Corinthians against such a mixture when he wrote: "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils; ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's tables and the table of devils." Those who tried to mix these two would "provoke the Lord to jealousy." 1 Cor. 10:21,22.

In our permissive age, many churches allow such a mixture of God and the world; but God will not accept a divided worship. The harlot church has a special blend that is deceiving multitudes everywhere. Paul wrote about harlot church leaders in his day when he said: "For we are not as many, which corrupt (adulterate) the Word of God." 2 Cor. 2:17. These teachers were playing up the attractive positive part of the Gospel but watering down the unattractive negative part. They preached that "God is love," but did not preach that He will be a God of vengeance to unrepentant sinners who reject His love. They were afraid to "declare the whole counsel of God."

Some textile manufacturers tried to deceive buyers by mixing adulterants with fine linen. Cotton was a chief adulterant, and this cheapened and weakened the fabric. But buyers used infallible tests to detect adulteration. Two such tests were to boil a

sample of the fabric in water, or to set the fabric in the sun. Either test exposed the inferior material.

Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God." And the apostles wrote of "pure minds," "pure conscience," "pure religion." The Biblical sense of spiritual purity is not only that we must be cleansed from sin, but also that in our hearts there is no polluting mixture. Many have a mixture of two minds, and to them James wrote: "Purify your hearts, ye doubleminded." James 4:8.

The final work with the flax was spinning and weaving. The care in preparing it was evident in the finished product, but much depended on the skill of the weaver. Proper threading of the loom was important; also it was necessary to keep the threads at the right tension so as not to get a loose weave. Density and texture of the weave were important to the quality of the linen. "Beaters," were used by the weaver to accomplish this.

The workmanship of the weaver was so evident in the finished linen that buyers in textile markets could sometimes tell from which country the linen came.

In God's textile mill the specifications for fine linen are exact and the standards high. No detail is ever compromised. The workmanship of the Divine Weaver is evident in His products. Paul wrote: "For we are His workmanship (product) created in Christ Jesus unto good works."

After final inspection and approval the linen was sent to the textile market. Jesus taught there will be a final inspection and approval of all who enter the Kingdom of God. The apostle James wrote: "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried (approved), he shall receive the crown of life." James 1:12.

All the qualifications for Christ's Bride are summed up in one word - righteousness. The fine linen is the righteousness of the saints, but this is not self-salvation because "to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen

The wedding robe is the Bridegroom's gift to the Bride, but she has to put it on. Paul used the illustration of undressing and dressing when he wrote: "Put off ... the old man ... and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Eph. 4:22-24. "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ." Rom. 13:14.

Those who obey the Bridegroom's command to be ready when He comes will share the privilege to reign with Him forever as His Bride, in His "Kingdom wherein dwelleth righteousness."

- Guy W. Duty

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- Woe to a gospel of which all men speak well. It is no longer offensive, neither effective. It is popular, but powerless; fashionable, but futile. It is without reproach and without redemption. It is the gospel of the world and of Satan, but not the Gospel of God, nor of Christ.
- Many believers need an awakening to the fact of their carnality, as much as sinners need to be awakened to their wickedness.
- No man is high-born, but he that is born from on high.
- I steadier when I recall that though I slip, Christ does not fall.

WHAT IS SELF?

M. Baxter

“I AM CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST: NEVERTHELESS I LIVE; YET NOT I, BUT CHRIST LIVETH IN ME: AND THE LIFE WHICH I NOW LIVE IN THE FLESH I LIVE BY THE FAITH OF THE SON OF GOD, WHO LOVED ME, AND GAVE HIMSELF FOR ME” - Galatians 2:20.

It is the principle which governs us in our natural life, and which takes in our being the place God claims as His. It is self in a man which feels hurt and wounded when he does not get the credit he desires for that which he does. Christ in us gives all the credit to God. It is self in us which retaliates when we are unjustly treated. Christ in us, when He is reviled, reviles not again.

It is the carnal mind, which “is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Romans 8:7), which Jesus calls on us to deny. “If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself” - Matthew 16:24. Self, like King Saul, is always head and shoulders taller than anybody else.

Self in us pities itself, and thinks it has a right to be noticed and sympathized with, when in physical suffering. When it cannot get room on the bus, when the driver won't stop, when someone opens a window and makes a draft or shuts a window and it can't breathe, self thinks it is to be pitied. Self loves to relate all these circumstances in order to excite and receive the compassion it craves. Christ in us sees the hand of God in all these things, believes they are all working together for our good, and praises God for a little test of faith or patience.

Self in us feels hurt if other people are being praised, their work for God related, and their zeal and love admired. Self thinks it loses too much ground, and seeks to turn the conversation to its own zeal and devotion or that of its parents, brother, uncle, aunt, or twentieth cousin; so that the party spoken to shall feel that self has as much to boast of as anybody has. Christ in us is pained when anything is said about ourselves or our work, knowing that the Lord Himself does it all; but rejoices to hear others spoken of, and is glad of the grace of God in them.

Self is conscious of the impression it makes upon people in entering a room. Christ in us makes us unconscious of our selves.

Self is always ready to exact its rights as regards honor, comfort, convenience, property, etc.; and self has generally a somewhat magnified view of what its rights are. Christ in us has no rights but the will of God and can, therefore, always and under all circumstances praise Him.

Saul is an apt type of this rival of God in our hearts and lives. Self may be changed as Saul was, may have “another heart,” and be “turned into another man.” But self is still self and not Christ. Self may be changed from sinful and worldly self to converted self; but the same self-seeking, self-esteem, self-pity, self-justification is there, only on another ground. Self may become pious, and the passion of life may be holiness. Self may be the essence of consistency, and yet be self still and not Christ. There may be the greatest devotion, the greatest self-sacrifice. But it may be for the object of obtaining holiness in ourselves, for the satisfaction of being known as holy people; but this is self still. Christ seeks not His own glory, nor His own will, nor His own

ideal, and speaks not His own words. Many earnest Christians do not discern how much of self there is in their spirit, in their work, nor in their aspiration after and in their experience of holiness.

As Saul was rejected, so is self. God cannot mix with self, and so self must die; but die by its own hand it cannot. If we attempt to mortify self, the very attempt strengthens it; it is only as self is handed over to God and ignored, that its death comes about. Self, although condemned, may linger on - constantly manifesting itself in one form or other where it is least suspected.

But how am I to get rid of self? Hand it over to Jesus. He tells us to deny ourselves; but it is in favor of another Self, even Jesus. He is our new, our everlasting life, our eternal Self. Instead of me Jesus. "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." It is not I that pray, but the Holy Ghost prays in me. It is not I that conquer sin, but Christ in me does it all. (Reprint)

SOMETIME

Sometime when you're feeling important,
Sometime when your ego's in bloom,
Sometime when you take it for granted
You're the best qualified in the room.

Sometime when you feel that your going
Would leave an unfillable hole –
Just follow this simple instruction
And see how it humbles your soul.

Take a bucket and fill it with water,
Put your hand in it up to the wrist –
Pull it out, and the hole that's remaining
Is a measure of how you'll be missed.

You may splash all you please when you enter,
You can stir up the water galore –
But stop, and you 'll find in a minute
That it looks quite the same as before.

The moral in this quaint example is:
Do just the best that you can.
Don't be proud of yourself, but remember –
There is no indispensable man.

THE SONG OF MARY

“My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my savior, for He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant. For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed. For He who is mighty has done great things for me, and Holy is His name. And His mercy is on those who fear Him. From generation to generation, He has shown strength with His arm. He has scattered the proud in the imaginations of their hearts. He has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty. He has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy, as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to His seed forever.”
(LUKE 1:46-55 NKJ)

Christmas time is one of contradictions. On the one hand, the mighty voice of materialism seeks to draw all attention to itself, while on the other hand the story of Jesus quietly draws men to reflect on their relationship, or lack of it, with their creator and redeemer. We are not commanded in Scripture to honor the birth of Jesus Christ, and there's some debate on whether we should even acknowledge it as a special day at all, but it can be an opportunity to show fulfilled prophecies surrounding His birth, ministry, death, and resurrection. Seen as the God of the past (including the creation of the world), the God of the present (our relationship through salvation), and the God of the future (the 2nd coming of Christ and His subsequent rule over all things), the shallowness that tends to surround Christmas will be replaced by a deep gratitude to the love and grace of God.

These verses in Luke express the gratefulness of Mary to God for working in her life. She encourages herself in the faithfulness of God to her people in years past; which causes her to anticipate her future. Without the acknowledgement of God, Christmas can become dark and depressing. The pressure to perform materially, to whims beyond the budget, strains relationships with others, while an ungrateful spirit for the gifts received are frustrating. The whole experience can become exhausting in body, soul, and spirit. This has caused many to ignore Christmas all together in an effort to save themselves this emotional roller coaster.

Whether you're one that shies away from Christmas for past hurts or other reasons, or you revel in the festivities to excess, I believe the key is perspective. I Corinthians.10:31 reads, “Therefore, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” If our drive in life is to glorify God then the rest will take care of itself. We'll be able to keep expectations and impulsiveness in check, and we'll see and have a desire to minister the love of Christ to those hurting and in need of Him.

It doesn't matter whether it's Christmas, Thanksgiving, Easter, Mother's day or any Wednesday in the middle of your work week, God wants to work in lives of His people just as He did in Mary's.

The question is: Will we let Him?

-- Tim Smith

- Prayer is the bridge between panic and peace.
- When we focus on Christ, everything else becomes clear.
- God's easy yoke does not fit on a stiff neck.
- Why pay the high price for this world's bargains when eternal life is free.
- With unwanted burdens come undeserved blessings.
- He is truly rich who is satisfied with Jesus.

FROM THE CROSS TO THE CROWN

C.E. Foster

"THROUGH FAITH HE KEPT THE PASSOVER, AND THE SPRINKLING OF BLOOD, LEST HE THAT DESTROYED THE FIRSTBORN SHOULD TOUCH THEM" - Hebrews 11:28.

There are sixteen characters listed in this chapter. Each of these personages brings forth some definite characteristic of faith. There is one woman mentioned among the first eight; that is Sarah. There is also one woman named in the second eight; that is Rahab. How wonderful is the Word of God. These things do not just happen so; but they occur for an express purpose, that we might know the will of God. In this portion, we see the Christian life from the Cross to the Crown. It brings out the truth of His grace and of His glory. Let us study these eight characters.

MOSES. Many phases of faith are set forth in Moses' life; but what is perhaps the main fact is expressed in the text - "Through faith he kept the passover." The word "Moses" means "drawn out," because he was taken out of the water when he was a babe. The story given in Exodus twelve tells how the Lord commanded Israel to kill a lamb and sprinkle its blood upon the doorposts of their houses so that the angel would not harm them when he passed over Egypt and slew the firstborn in every house. Death was already expressed in Israel's homes, by the sprinkling of the blood. The shedding of the blood speaks of Christ's death for us; but the sprinkling of the blood speaks of our individual faith in Him and His blood.

The first eight characters in this chapter began with the Cross in type - the excellent sacrifice of Abel who offered a lamb; so the second eight characters begin with the Cross in type - the shedding of blood by the passover. We read in I Corinthians 5:7 - "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us." We are to keep the Feast of the Passover "with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." No leaven is to be in our midst. So Moses kept the Passover by faith.

The Passover was the foundation of all the feasts that were kept in Israel. No matter where one studies in God's Word, he must always begin with the Cross. At the redemptive work of Christ on the Cross of Calvary we begin with God, and there God begins with us. As we go on, we find our place of victory and rest is under the precious blood of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

RAHAB. "By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace." "Rahab" means "breadth." It speaks to us

of the liberty and security of faith. When she received the spies whom Joshua sent over into the land of Canaan to spy out the land, she covered them with stalks of flax. When she sent them away, she made them swear to her that when they came to take possession of the land of Canaan they would save her household - her mother and father and her brethren. The flax speaks to us of righteousness, because linen is made from flax. She let them down by a cord over the wall. This cord was a witness of the oath and a testimony of her faith. Because of it, her house and all within were spared.

The scarlet thread speaks of the precious blood of Christ. They had no more than left, until she bound the scarlet thread in her window. It was there day after day and night after night. When Israel crossed over and marched around the wall for those seven days, no doubt, they saw the scarlet thread hanging there in the window. When the shouts went up and the walls went crashing down, Rahab and her house were saved because of the scarlet thread. She was secure because she was under the protection of the scarlet thread, which speaks to us of the blood of Jesus Christ. So, praise God, where the blood of Jesus Christ is on the door, judgment cannot fall because judgment has already fallen on the Son of God whom we have received as our personal Saviour and our Substitute; and we are secure in Him.

Rahab speaks to us of the oath of faith, or the security of faith. God confirmed His promise to Abraham by an oath. "Because He could swear by no greater, He swore by Himself." One day He gave the patriarch a word of promise; and some time afterward, He "confirmed it by an oath." Thus, by two unchangeable things - His word of promise and His oath - we who believe have "a strong consolation." We have fled to Christ for refuge and have a glorious hope - Hebrews 6:13-20.

We have Christ's own word, speaking to His sheep, that no one can pluck them out of His hand. A believer is just as safe as Christ Himself. You are just as safe as the refuge in which you hide. Jesus said, "My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all"; and adds that "no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand." He and the Father are one. They are perfectly agreed on our safety. Rahab said to the spies, "Give me a true token." She was safe and sure because she based her faith on the scarlet thread. We, too, have a true token - the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. When we come to the pearly gates, we will have a sure token; and we will sweep through in triumph, having been washed in the blood of the Lamb. For all eternity, we will rejoice among the redeemed. Praise God! We are saved because the blood was shed, and we believed it; and we know that God is able to keep that which we have committed unto Him against that day.

GIDEON comes next. Gideon, Barak, Samson, and Jephthah were judges in Israel in that dark time, when Israel fell into captivity to the enemy so many times; and God raised up judges to deliver them from the hands of the enemies. The word "Gideon" means "cutter down." The first thing that Gideon did, after God called him to be a judge, was to destroy idolatry in his father's house. He speaks of the faith that subdues. He broke down the grove and destroyed the Baal worship in Israel in one night. The Midianites gathered against him, and God sent him against the Midianites. Gideon had faith in God. "Midianite" means "contention" and "strife." In our individual life, we receive Christ as our Passover. Then we are secure in Christ. Then we come up against strife and contention. Just as sure as we believe in eternal life, strife and contention will arise. Paul preached the Word in the midst of much strife and contention.

The Midianites abound on every hand. Likewise, it is with us. We have to preach Christ many places where there is strife. But, like Gideon, we can prevail against the Midianites; and we can overcome the strife and contention: and go on with God.

BARAK means "lightning." He defeated Jabin the king of the Canaanites. "Jabin" means "he will understand or observe." Jabin speaks to us of human reasoning. Barak speaks of the righteousness of faith, or the divine righteousness. Many things arise in our old nature that want to reason things out; but divine righteousness is set over against human reasoning. It is not by human reasoning, but it is by faith, that we prevail in the things of God. Hence, we find Deborah associated with Barak in this great battle against the Canaanites. She is not mentioned here in Hebrews; but, back in Judges, she was associated with Barak as the judge of Israel at that time. She speaks to us of the Word of God, the Word of faith. As we read the Word of God and meditate upon it, we are stirred up to go against human reasoning and everything that is contrary to the will of God. We cast down every high thing that exalts itself against the Word of God.

The modernists want to reason everything out. In doing so, they reject the Truth - the virgin birth and the atonement - the fundamentals that give us faith in Christ. But, like Barak, we believe God and we are clothed with the divine righteousness. This is set over against human reasoning, as Christian Science and every cult that denies the atoning work of Christ. They tell us that one man dying could not atone for our sins; but the Word teaches us that by the death of Christ "all that believe are justified from all things." We are saved from sin, saved from the wrath to come, and we are safe and secure in Christ - who will vindicate His followers one of these days and prove that His Word is true. We already believe it and know it is true; and the world will know it is true, one of these days, when He comes in mighty judgments.

SAMSON means "sun-man." He speaks to us of the promises of faith. His mother was barren. The angel of the Lord came to her and said that she should conceive and bear a son. He made a wonderful promise to her, and told her what to eat and what to drink and how to raise the son, and that he would deliver Israel from the Philistines. He had won great victories over the Philistines, who speak of formality. Christendom today is all form and ceremony. Christendom denies the power of godliness. Therefore, Paul said, "From such turn away." God's people had more battles with the Philistines than with any other people. So it means much to overcome the "Philistines" today. When we realize the terrible corruption of Christendom with all of Babylon's confusion and superstition, we must cry out against it and thank God that we can have victory over it all.

JEPHTHAH means "he will open, or set free." In the time of Jephthah, the Ammonites were warring against Israel, the people of God; and God raised up Jephthah to defeat them. "Ammonite" means "peoplish, tribal, clannish." How much it means to have victory over kinfolk and sects. Many people are clannish these days. It means much to rise above this condition and keep in the center of God's will and not let people - relatives, friends, or neighbors - come in between us and the Word of God. Jephthah speaks to us of the revelation of faith, which moves us to be free to speak out our God-given convictions without fear or trembling. We preach the truth uncompromisingly. It is like a two-edged sword; it cuts both ways.

DAVID means "beloved." He was the king of Israel. David, perhaps more than any other individual mentioned in the Bible, overcame the Philistines. When he was a

lad, he went out against Goliath that great champion of the Philistines. He was continually defying them. Many times David inquired, "Shall I go up to the Philistines? Wilt Thou deliver them into mine hand?" And the Lord would reveal His will. David speaks to us of the reign of faith. He reigned until all of his enemies were defeated. How wonderful that, through Christ, we have the enemies under our feet and we have victory over all of our foes. I am glad it can be so in our individual lives today. We can have victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil, over ourselves and over everybody else. When we have real victory over our old nature, we have victory over everybody else. The Lord often allows the flesh to act up and try us and trouble us, to show us the things that are still in us that we need to take the victory over. All the Midianites, Ammonites, Canaanites, and Philistines, and all the other "ites," speak of the traits of the old creation which must be conquered in us.

SAMUEL means "asked of God." In Samuel, we have the glory of faith. We began with the Cross and will end in the glory. As Paul says here, "And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthah; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets." There are twentyfour items mentioned here, of the sufferings they endured and of the victories God gave them. It is very profitable to read the record of these wonderful men and women of faith. What are they here for? To encourage our faith in God. The next chapter begins thus - "Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us." We are compassed about by all these Old Testament worthies. They encourage our faith. They received a good report, and they will receive all they believed for and hoped for.

(Reprint from May 1969)

THE POWER OF FAITH

Mary M. Bodie

"Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy" - James 5:11.

"Elias (Elijah) was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not ... And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit" - James 5:17,18.

James is proclaiming the power of faith in this chapter of his little letter. In fact, James is emphasizing different phases of FAITH, all through his epistle. He teaches that faith is the victory in every part of the Christian life.

In the first chapter, FAITH is upheld as the sole sustaining asset in the trial which besets every believer. The second chapter suggests it as the only way of good works. Chapter three declares it as the way of victory. Chapter four tells us that it is the way of dependence upon God. Chapter five affirms it as the way of power - power to endure, power to do. Faith is the prominent theme of the letter.

To prove his case James, at the close of his discourse, brings on the scene two of the striking examples of faith from the Old Testament. One on the line of endurance, the other of doing. They witness to the truth of his statements as to the preeminence of faith. These men teach that faith was always the way of spiritual power, even agreeing with James that there is no other means of pleasing God than by faith. Men never had salvation or prestige or honor with Him, otherwise than by believing Him.

Job, the oldest writer of the Bible, is the first witness that James calls on the scene to back up his argument as to the power of faith. He lived previous to Moses and Sinai. All authorities agree that his book is the oldest among the sixty-six of the Bible, because there is not one reference to- Abraham and his family, the Law, or the Law-giver - Moses. This would be impossible in a book of such a vast discussion of facts upon the problems of life, if these characters were known at the time.

According to James, Job occupies a unique place on the program of the ages; and testifies among God's worthies to the power of FAITH, and in a peculiar sense - its POWER TO ENDURE. He stands forth as the illustration of its might in this way, making men patient in all matters; whether these be in circumstances, afflictions, bereavements, or the uttermost of physical pain. The power of faith to endure is stupendous, as manifested in a yielded life, as Job testifies.

The Patriarch did not at first understand the wherefore of the trial, nor the reason of the multitude of sorrows which came upon him. He did not know that, through these tribulations, he was to be the synonym of patience to all men throughout the ages; nor that he was the type, the witness, the striking figure of faith's power to stand the greatest sufferings, the most intense pain, with never a murmur against God; though he bewailed his fate and his misfortune in possessing three such friends as Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar.

Job received all of his trials from the hand of God, not from Satan. His wife could not understand the reason of them. She blamed God in allowing them to so suffer; for she was also in anguish at the loss of children and fortune of every kind. She urged Job to curse God and die - Job 2:9. His friends blamed him, declaring that he was chastened of the Lord for some wicked way in him. Hardness, cruelty, censure, and criticism for Job are found in their words. They had no sympathy nor comfort for the patient, suffering man. They did not understand, even as the majority of folk today, why the godly suffer. In fact, this is the problem of the book. Job gives the answer himself. He declares that all his sufferings were allowed of God, that he might be tried. He was to be purified thereby, as he tells us, "When the path tried me, I shall come forth as gold" - Job 23:10. Notice that he acknowledges the Lord in everything.

Job was a marvelous man of faith and practical righteousness. He was an example to all men of his day. If he had not been of this caliber - able to stand such terrific trials, and justify God in all of His ways with him - he would not have been thus tested. The hedge which was around him would not have been removed. The Lord would not have let Satan get at Job if He was not sure that this man of faith would not fail - Job 1:12. God knows His men. Some are able to star in any place and under all circumstances. The new man in them is so developed that they can hold fast in the darkest night, believing God in the most pronounced trial; while others fail in a little test. The new man in them is so immature that they need to be coddled continually to keep going on in any measure. Their faith is so little, that it will not stand any strain put upon

it. Therefore they are seldom tested and they generally, like Job comforters, judge those who are so tried.

We say, it is a privilege, honor, to be allowed to suffer the uttermost in the will of God. It is a sign that God can trust us and that we will be faithful any place. Trials, thus allowed, purify us. They deliver us from the dross which is a part of all of us, until it is burned off in the furnace of affliction. The trial of our faith works good for us. We are kept down at the feet of the Lord, humbled and little, made to cry mightily, exercised in the very depths of our being, as the waters of woe overwhelm our soul. We are thus broken and contrite in the hands of the Lord, not murmuring nor complaining at His ways with us. We prove the Word of God and He proves our faith at the same time.

Job, as James declares, witnesses to this fact. He endured because he had FAITH. It held him steady amid the taunts friends and foes. "He endured as seeing Him who is invisible" - Hebrews 11:27.

Elijah is the second man to be called from the Old Testament record, to prove the power of faith. The mighty prophet steps up and takes the chair, and testifies by his works to its might. He shows the force of faith in the way of doing, not enduring; though he did not come short on this line either. But his strong point was performing. And James emphasizes the fact that he was a man like all other men, weak and fallible. His strength was not in himself, but in his faith in God. He believed Him, and thus his name has become the synonym of power to do.

James declares that he prayed earnestly. Ah, this tells the story of his might. He was dependent upon God. He went down before the Creator in weakness and need. Israel, his people, were departing from God. Ahab and Jezebel, worshippers of Baal, were on the throne - a wicked pair; and the people were following in their steps. The prophet's heart was broken. He was despairing. They refused to listen to the words of Jehovah, the true and living God. He knew something startling and destructive must happen to awaken them. He called on the Lord to send judgment upon His people. He prayed that it might not rain for three years. He even set the time limit, knowing that a drought of such length would ensure a famine, which would bring them to their senses.

God heard Elijah's prayer. It was in the will of God and for His glory. The prophet had the mind of the Spirit, in thus petitioning the Lord. His prayer was not born of his own desire. He was not seeking his own things; nor hoping to pay back in their own coin, the harshness of the people. Oh, no. He loved them and was seeking their ultimate blessing; but he knew that judgment must come first. Therefore he prayed, and the prayer of faith was heard. It had power, and brought forth the result that he desired. The windows of heaven were shut up. The rain was stayed; and Israel, beginning with the king and down to the lowliest in the kingdom, were desperate. They were brought down to the dust before the Lord; and this is the point - Elijah's FAITH WAS THE POWER that brought this about.

But that was not the end of Elijah's faith to do. He did not leave Israel to suffer and die in their dilemma. When the trial had brought forth the desired result, "he prayed again." Thank God, for the second prayer. It is "again" indeed, for Israel. God came upon the scene to execute the will of Elijah, which was also His will, and the waters fell in torrents upon the dry ground. Mercy followed judgment, and the people rejoiced. The power of faith was evidenced a second time in mighty demonstration, far beyond the

finite mind to understand. Faith is a force impossible to fathom. Its power no man can penetrate or estimate - POWER TO EXECUTE, POWER TO ENDURE.

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In prosperity, God tries our gratitude - in mediocrity, our contentment - in misfortune, our submission - in darkness, our faith - in temptation, our love - and, at all times, our obedience and trust in Him.

“WRITTEN IN THE EARTH”

Hazel Fern Astle

“O LORD, THE HOPE OF ISRAEL, ALL THAT FORSAKE THEE SHALL BE ASHAMED, AND THEY THAT DEPART FROM ME SHALL BE WRITTEN IN THE EARTH, BECAUSE THEY HAVE FORSAKEN THE LORD, THE FOUNTAIN OF LIVING WATERS” - Jeremiah 17:13.

This Scripture was recently made real to me, and I was impressed by these four words: “WRITTEN IN THE EARTH!” While meditating on this thought, God began to enlarge the meaning to me and to give these words a personal application to my own life. Let us consider these Scriptures.

In Genesis 2:7 we are first informed that. “God formed man of the dust of the ground.” Some time after this, sin entered the picture and God's creation was defiled. At the time man was “formed” the ground had not been cursed, but now God saw fit to curse the very ground from which man had been taken - Genesis 3:17. There was no escape from the ground, for God said, “Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.” We are reminded of this fact every time the breath of life leaves a body and we see that body placed into the ground.

Let us learn some more about this creature from the earth. In I Corinthians fifteen Paul tells us many things about him. One of those things is that he is, “of the earth, earthy.”

People speak today of many well-known entertainers as being “earthy.” They foolishly assume that they are paying that person a compliment. It is no compliment, but they are certainly right about the earthy part. They bring forth thorns and thistles. Isn't that what God said of the earth after it had been cursed by Him? Let us put it into different words and say that man is “of the dirt, dirty.”

All that man touches becomes dirty and defiled. Not only is this true in a spiritual and moral sense, but also in a very real physical way. Much of our time is spent washing woodwork, floors, furniture, dishes, and clothing - all because of the dirtiness of mankind.

John 8:3-11. In this true account, we have the story of the woman taken in adultery. Now we know that this was an earthy deed and one that was not pleasing to God. However, that was not what Jesus zeroed in on, but the earthiness of those self-righteous hypocritical Pharisees. He stooped down and wrote on the ground. Many sermons have been preached on the possibility of what was written. We still do not

know, but one thing we can be certain of - the Pharisees knew, and they began to slink away. Now remember that they were a very religious people. God does not want religious earthiness any more than moral or physical earthiness.

Genesis 4:2-5. We now turn to the story of Cain and Abel and learn from them. They brought their offerings to God. Let us especially note that they both brought their offerings to God. Yet, He accepted the one offering and rejected the other. We know that God accepted Abel's offering because it was a blood sacrifice. Cain's was rejected because he presented the fruit of his own works to God. What really impressed me in this account this time was that it is said of Cain's offering - he "brought of the fruit of the ground." Any of our own self-efforts today are just as "dirty" in the sight of God.

We could dwell on this at greater length, but let us just briefly notice the "wicked and slothful servant" of Matthew twenty-five. He could have done many things with the talent that was committed to his trust, but he chose to bury it in the earth.

Is there no escape from this earth from which we were fashioned? The answer is an emphatic YES! God has made provision to bring in a new creation, a spiritual creation, of which we are partakers. This is headed up by the Lord from Heaven, according to I Corinthians 15:47 - "The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second Man is the Lord from Heaven."

What a difference there can now be in our lives:

II Corinthians 5:17 - We are "a new creature" in Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 1:3 - We are blessed "with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

Colossians 3:1 - We are "risen with Christ" and seated "on the right hand of God." We have been liberated!

Let us again consider Jeremiah's statement that those who depart from the Lord "shall be written in the earth." Many of men's achievements are worthy of note and may contribute to the welfare of mankind in some way. Some become great artists, while others may achieve musical excellence, business successes, educational achievements, or heap together great wealth. Some others do great humanitarian things, such as build hospitals or orphanages. These things may have temporary value. Yet, if they are not based on the redemptive work of Christ and are not for His glory, they are nothing more than writings on the earth.

It takes only one little windstorm or rain to completely obliterate that which was written on the earth. Those of us who live near the beach have seen children build elaborate castles in the sand, only to have them washed away by the next large wave.

Paul may have had in mind what Jeremiah had written when he spoke of the building materials in I Corinthians 3:12. We see two types of materials: those which will survive the test of fire and those which will not. Take a look at gold, silver, or precious stones, after they have passed through a fire. They not only survive but are very recognizable. It is not so with wood, hay, and stubble. Not only are they consumed by the flames, but the ash that remains mixes right back into the earth. In a very few days there will be no evidence that they ever existed.

It is very easy for us to see that man's evil deeds are of the earth; but we have to see as God sees to realize that his worthy efforts, apart from God, are just as earthy.

We are all familiar with the saying, "They dug up some dirt about him." It simply means that a person had some earthy deeds that had been concealed. I think it is

interesting to consider that, the one who does the digging has to be just as deeply into the dirt to do the unearthing, as did the one who did the burying.

All that God accepts from us of the earth is our earthen vessel. Then He fills it with His own excellent Treasure. Of course, the unsaved can produce nothing but earthiness, but WE do have an option. Though our names are written in the book of life, our deeds can be written in the earth.

Where are you writing today?

(Reprint from 1979)

- All men must either die “to” sin “in” Christ, or else die “in” sin “without” Christ.
- When man stands in the way, the light of the Gospel will not shine through him.
- We can only know God's estimate of sin, by the sacrifice which He provided -to atone for it.
- The Bible promises no loaves to the loafer.
- Do not call people ‘dirty’ just because you have forgotten to clean your own glasses.
- Anger showeth the character of a man.
- Man is born with his hands clinched, but his hands are open in death; because on entering the world he desires to grasp everything, but on leaving it he takes nothing away.