

REVIEW AND REWARD

WILL THE LIVES OF
ALL CHRISTIANS BE
REVIEWED

WILL THE FIDELITY
OF ALL CHRISTIANS
BE REWARDED



HAROLD P. BARKER

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WILL THE LIVES OF ALL
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THEIR FIDELITY REWARDED?

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PICKERING & INGLIS
LONDON GLASGOW EDINBURGH

London: 14 PATERNOSTER Row, E.C.4
Glasgow: 229 BOTHWELL STREET, C.2
Edinburgh: 29 GEORGE IV BRIDGE

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FOREWORD

During the fifteen-day Summer Conference in 1932, at Cedar Lake, Indiana, the substance of the following pages was given in a series of morning Bible talks. Many expressed a desire that others should have this line of truth brought before them. "It is just what the people of God need today," said a well-known Chicago business man. Hence this little volume.

But the subject is such a tremendous one that no writer or speaker can do full justice to it. It is interwoven with other truths in Scripture from almost the first page to the very last. To Jeremiah we are indebted for the knowledge that God has been pleased to call Himself, "The Lord God of Recompences," and it is a truth as sure as the heavens themselves that He will requite both the well-doer and the evil-doer.

Let me pass on the two words of counsel that revolutionized Augustine's life: "*Tolle, lege,*" *Take and read.* Read your Bible afresh to discover how much it has to say on the subject of future Review and Reward.

H. P. B.

Review and Reward

CHAPTER I.—INTRODUCTORY

Silver Network

“A wise reproof laid on a willing hearer is like a golden apple laid on silver network; a golden earring, a necklace of rare gold—an apt word is like that.”

So Dr. Moffatt, with remarkable insight, renders Proverbs 25: 11, 12. The quotation is pertinent to our theme, for the judgment-seat of Christ is brought before us in Scripture not only by way of stimulus and encouragement, but by way of “wise reproof,” and this, we are told, is like a golden apple. When there is “a willing hearer,” an ear ready to listen, it is like a golden apple *laid on silver network*. Then, indeed, its worth is made manifest.

But the mention of the “silver” in this connection suggests something more than attentiveness. Silver, in Scripture, is the well-known symbol of redemption, and it is only as we are established in this great truth that we can comfortably and profitably enter into what the

judgment-seat will mean. Otherwise, we shall be full of misgivings, and the study of the subject will bring terror to our hearts. We must know what it is to be redeemed, to be in relation with God on that footing, before we can rightly consider the teaching of Scripture on the Review of our lives and the Reward for fidelity.

Can the reader join in the chorus of praise to the Saviour: "Thou...hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood"? Can you, with Paul, look up into His face and say: "In whom we have redemption through His blood" and, with Peter, "redeemed with the precious blood of Christ"? (Rev. 5:9; Eph. 1:7; 1 Peter 1:10, 19). If so, there is the "silver network," and we may proceed to lay upon it a wonderful "golden apple,"

"We Know"

Will the reader now take his Bible and read thoughtfully the first eleven verses of 2 Corinthians 5. In verse 10 we are told that we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ. But observe how the apostle begins, and how he leads up to the statement.

He starts with a triumphant note of assurance: "We know." No doubt he is referring primarily to his own assurance, but he puts it in a way that enables every believer to use the same language. He thinks forward and says,

as it were: "Whatever may happen to this body, it does not really matter. This earthly house of ours may be dissolved, but a glorious future lies ahead; we have an eternal dwelling-place in heaven."

How good to be able to chime in with Paul's words and say, "I also know it." For we *may* know it. It is not God's way to keep His children in doubt; He would have our souls filled with assurance, not the full assurance of *feeling*, but the "full assurance of *faith*" (Heb. 10: 22). You may be knocked down by an automobile and fatally injured; you may die of a terrible wasting disease. But if your faith has laid hold of Christ as your Saviour; if you rest upon the firm foundation of His once offered sacrifice, you may say, "*I know* that a house in heaven awaits me." "He hath said...so that we may boldly say" (Heb. 13: 5, 6).

God's Handiwork

It will not be lost time if we linger a little longer with Paul in his approach to the subject of Christ's judgment-seat. In verse 5 he mentions two reasons for his unwavering confidence. The first is that *God has wrought* us for that glorious future. Do you ever take account of yourself as a bit of God's handiwork? "For we are His workmanship," says the same apostle elsewhere. Just as a potter picks up a handful of clay and works it, fashions it,

moulds it for the purpose he has in view, so God has done with us. And "whatsoever God doeth, it shall be forever" (Eccles. 3:14).

You have a friend who is a cabinet-maker by trade. You are visiting at his home, and he wants to show you a specimen of his work. Does he point you to a box which he made in his apprenticeship days when he had hardly learned the use of tools? No; he takes you to a beautifully polished mahogany cabinet, with bevelled glass front, an article of furniture which would be an ornament to any home, and he says: "I made that." In the same way, God wishes to exhibit His handiwork. Does He point us to the shining orbs of light, all the work of His fingers, and say: "These are My masterpiece"? No; He points to men and women like ourselves, once the slaves of sin, with hearts capable of every evil thought, but now cleansed, re-created, made children of God, and He says: "I did that; that is My handiwork."

Let us learn to think of ourselves in the light of this, and say to ourselves sometimes: "GOD . . . saved us" (2 Tim. 1:9); "We are His workmanship;" He has "created [us] in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:10).

The Telescope

The second reason Paul gives for his assurance is that God "also hath given unto us the

earnest of the Spirit.” The word translated “earnest” is one of very full significance. It means more than “pledge.” A very competent scholar renders it “pledge and instalment.” This is what the Holy Spirit is to us: not only the pledge of coming glories, but the means by which we get a foresight and foretaste of them here and now.

Suppose that I am taking a boy of mine to Europe. I buy him a telescope for his use on the voyage, not a mere toy, but a serviceable instrument. He finds much pleasure in looking through it at the ships that pass, the birds, etc. At length we are nearing land, and some affirm that they can see the outline of the hills in the distant east. I can see nothing, but my boy, with the telescope at his eye, exclaims: “Why, yes; it is quite clear; I can distinguish the hills one from another.” We get nearer; all is dim and indistinct to me, but the boy says: “I can see the trees and the houses; why, I can see some people walking down there on the pier.” The telescope is his “pledge and instalment” of what lies ahead. My giving it to him was the pledge that he was going to Europe with me. But, more than this, it enabled him in some measure vividly to anticipate the future by giving him a sight of the land to which he was travelling before he arrived there.

Is this what the Holy Spirit is to us? There is an old hymn that runs thus:

"The Spirit grants the sight
Of that resplendent One."

Have we looked into heaven? Have we seen Christ in His attractiveness? If so, what assurance is ours!

Therefore . . . Wherefore

It is still necessary to meet the oft-repeated objection that assurance naturally leads to carelessness of conduct. This may be true of cocksure-ness, but it is not of this that we speak. When Paul says, "We know," he refers to well-grounded confidence. It is not a question of riding for a fall because we *think* that we stand.

Notice how the apostle reasons. After mentioning the two solid grounds for faith in verse 5 he proceeds: "*Therefore* we are always confident." Repeating the words, "we are confident," in verse 8, he continues: "*wherefore* we"—what? "Wherefore we grow slack?" "Wherefore we do as we please?" No, indeed; this is not the result of God-given assurance! What he affirms is this: "We are confident . . . wherefore we labor,"—we are diligent, or (as an alternative rendering puts it) we are *ambitious* to be what the Lord would have us be. Our aim now is to be "accepted of Him." Not accepted in the sense in which we were accepted when first we came to Him as sinners, but in

the sense of being acceptable, well-pleasing to Him. We are saved for His pleasure, and when we lay to heart why God has wrought us and given us His Spirit, it becomes our holy ambition to please Him and live to Him who died for us (2 Cor. 5: 15).

The Judgment-Seat

Having cleared the ground, the Apostle now makes the direct statement: "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ." It is there, not here, that the measure in which we have been "acceptable" to Him will be determined.

Now there are three ways in which this statement may be interpreted, all in conformity with the general teaching of Scripture.

(1) Remembering that "the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son" (John 5: 12), the judgment-seat of Christ has been taken as including every session of judgment at which He will preside, whether at His appearing to establish His kingdom (Matt. 25: 31) or at the final disappearance of earth and heaven (Rev. 20: 11). All are to appear before Him; though not all at the same time nor in the same way. Christians are to be manifested before His judgment-seat at the time appointed for them; the wicked dead are to appear before that judgment-seat a thousand years later, but we must all, saved

and unsaved, appear there at one time or another. The fact is, of course, true; the question is, whether 2 Cor. 5:10 has all this in view.

(2) The "we" is taken as including all the professed servants of Christ, whether truly regenerate or not. Appeal is made to the latter part of the verse in support of this interpretation. The true servants of Christ will receive for the "good," the false servants for the "bad" that they have done. Reference is also made to the Parable of the Talents (Matt. 25), where the Lord represents Himself as "coming" and "reckoning" with His servants. There are those who are rewarded, but the unfaithful one, who has proved himself to be no true servant at all, is cast into the outer darkness, the place of "weeping and gnashing of teeth."

(3) The verse is interpreted as referring to Christians only, and to *all* Christians, not merely those who have a place as recognized servants of Christ. As a matter of fact all Christians *are* servants of Christ. At Colosse even the slaves were said to "serve the Lord Christ" (Col. 3:24). The Lord may give special authority to some servants but He gives "*to every man his work*" (Mark 13:34), and as those to whom responsibility has been committed for Christian living and faithful witness, if not for service of a more public kind, we must all appear before Christ's judgment-seat.

The reader must decide for himself which interpretation is most in line with Paul's train of thought and teaching in 2 Cor. 5, but one thing is certain, namely that the "we all" includes *all Christians*, for all of us have Christ for Master as well as Saviour (John 13: 13). To Him we are responsible, and under His searching eye our lives must come. He who walks among the churches has eyes like a flame of fire. What He has seen will then be manifested.

CHAPTER II.—EXPOSITORY

There are four leading thoughts connected with the judgment-seat of Christ in Scripture. The first is

Investigation

Our Lord likens Himself to a king who will "*take account* of his servants" (Matt. 18: 23). He "*cometh and reckoneth with them*" (Matt. 25: 19). He is like one who calls his servants to him "*that he might know* how much every man had gained" (Luke 19: 15). These passages all convey the idea of investigation, and show that the Lord is going to investigate into the measure of our fidelity, how far we have acted in His interests, what we have done with the time, influence, ability, wealth, strength and opportunity with which He has entrusted us. The result will be far-reaching indeed.

Suppose that a merchant in some town in the State of Indiana has a son in the business. One day he calls him and says: "Harry, I want you to go to Chicago tomorrow. Go on the night train so as to arrive early, for there will be a big day's work ahead. Here is a list of customers on whom you are to call. There are also some debts to be collected. Get the seven o'clock train home in the evening. Here is a ticket for the return trip."

So Harry goes off to the big city. On his way he studies the list of addresses and makes his plans. He calls on a customer or two, when suddenly he hears a familiar voice: "Why, Harry, old chap! What are you doing here? I haven't seen you since we were at school together. You must come and see my folks. We live away on the south side. We'll get on a street car and soon be there."

Harry, forgetting his father's business, goes off with his old schoolmate. After lunch, his friend says: "You remember Sam, who used to be in our class at school. He is in Chicago just now; I'll get him on the phone and we'll all go down town. There's a wonderful film showing at one of the Movie theatres; you must not miss the chance of seeing it." So they call for Sam, and away they go. By the time they are through, the stores and offices are closing. Harry looks at his list with dismay. Whatever will he do? He has to be at the station by seven o'clock. He has just time to see one more client and then must make a rush for his train.

Seven o'clock comes and Harry boards the homebound train. The conductor asks no question about what he has been doing. *He has his ticket* (bought for him by his father) and his right to ride on that train is unquestioned. And the next morning he sits at the breakfast-table with his folks at home *because he is one of the family*.

After breakfast, the father says: "Harry, come into the office with me, and we'll go over what you did yesterday."

Then it all comes out: the waste of time, the yielding to temptation, the forgetfulness of his mission, the preference given to his friends, and the general unfaithfulness shown.

"Harry," says the father, "I arranged that day's work as a kind of test. If you had been faithful to the trust, I was going to offer you a partnership in the firm. That, of course, is out of the question now. You will have to continue in your very minor position, with the same small salary."

Harry is not turned out of the home. He is his father's son and continues to share all the wealth of love that belongs to the relationship. But he has suffered a great loss. His unfaithfulness has deprived him of a position that might have been his.

It is hardly necessary to point out the meaning of my parable. We are sent into the world (John 17:18) with a definite mission: to glorify God and do His will, to represent our Lord Jesus Christ and do our best to make Him known. What will unfaithfulness on our part mean? Not the forfeiture of our relationship, not exclusion from heaven, but loss of the glorious reward which might have been ours. "He shall suffer loss, but he himself shall be saved" (1 Cor. 3:15).

The judgment-seat of Christ, then, will be no mere "church parade." There will be a solemn and searching investigation into what we have said and done, and how we have used our time, and far-reaching issues depend on the result.

The second great thought connected with the judgment-seat of Christ is

Manifestation

"Every man's work shall be *made* manifest; for the day shall declare it." "The Lord... will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make *manifest* the counsels of the hearts" (1 Cor. 3: 13; 4: 5).

Everything will be disclosed in the light of His presence. We shall get His estimate of all.

"Deeds of merit, as we thought them,
He will show us were but sin;
Little acts we had forgotten
He will tell us were for Him."

As our lives are reviewed, how we shall magnify the goodness and mercy that followed us "all the days" *without missing one!* We shall see how again and again His grace intervened for us and stood between us and the powers of evil. Our folly, ingratitude and sin will be shown us in the light of His constant love. We shall know then what is of true worth and what is of little value.

An eloquent man with breezy manners and "popular" gifts gets crowds to hear him, and

numbers his converts by hundreds and thousands. Another, who lives much with his Lord, and faithfully does His bidding, gets few to hear and none to applaud. The big man *now* is at the top of the ladder, and his name is on everyone's lips. The other is at the bottom. Nobody thinks anything of him. What will happen at the judgment-seat? The ladder will be reversed: the humble servant of Christ will *then* be at the top, and the eloquent man (who has already had his reward in the applause of the crowd) will be at the bottom. Yes; everything will be appraised at its true value.

I am sometimes asked: Will *everything* be manifested at the judgment-seat of Christ? Has not God said that He will remember our sins no more? I reply, "Do you not *want* to see all that you have ever said and done in the light of His grace?" Could we rightly appreciate all that Christ has done for us if we did not know what *we* had done? It is not that our sins will be remembered as sins, nor will they be brought up against us. But it would be impossible for our lives to be reviewed without our sins being shown us in the light of the love that has forgiven them all.

Suppose that a young man, to the distress of his father, has got into evil ways. With bad companions he has taken to gambling, betting and drinking, and has involved himself heavily in debt. More than once his father has had, at

great sacrifice to himself, to clear him. At last he says: "John, this must stop. I will pay your debts once more, but it will be the last time. Now bring me all those bills."

John brings them, and says: "They are all there, father; everyone." The father goes round to all the creditors and pays the last cent. Then he ties the receipted bills together and puts them away in his desk. Then he calls his son and says:

"John, I have paid all your debts. Now what do you propose to do?"

"Why, father, I am most heartily ashamed of myself. If you would only help me to get away from my companions, I would like to go to Australia or anywhere overseas, and with God's help I'll make good, even if I have to do the most menial thing for a living."

"Well said, my boy," replies his father; "I will certainly help you to do that."

So John goes off, and in the land of his choice he *does* make good. Working hard he secures a good job, is steady and persevering, gets on, marries and has sons and daughters of his own. Years pass, and he thinks:

"How I would like to see my dear old father once more. It is thirty years since I left home. I am fifty now, and he must be getting on for eighty." So John goes back to the old home on a visit.

His father welcomes him, and they get talking of old times. "You remember when I paid all your debts, just before you went away?" asks the old man.

"Why, sure, father; could I ever forget the kind way you handled that sad matter?"

"Well, did you ever know just *how much I paid* to clear you of your debts?"

"I really did not have the heart to reckon them all up. I know it was a lot; I should not be surprised if it were two or three thousand dollars."

"Would you like to see the bundle of receipts?"

"Why, yes, father; I would. I should like to know how much you had to pay on my behalf."

So the father fetches the packet from the drawer in his desk. The papers are faded and brown with age, but there they are, the bills receipted in full. John spreads them out on the table and looks at them with mingled feelings. He adds up the amounts and looks at his father with amazement.

"Father!" he says, "do you mean that you had to pay thirty thousand dollars to clear me?"

"Yes; that was the sum."

"Well, father, I knew that you had paid it all, that no creditor had a claim on me to the extent of a single cent. But I never knew till this moment *how much I am indebted to your love.*"

That is how we shall feel at the judgment-seat when all the receipted bills, all the forgiven sins, are shown us. As McCheyne has put it in his well-known hymn:

“Then, Lord, shall I fully know;
Not till then, how much I owe.”

That will be the great object of the *manifestation* in that day.

The third thought connected with the judgment-seat of Christ is that of

Commendation

The Lord will say to those in whom He has found fidelity: “Well done, thou good and faithful servant” (Matt. 25: 21). Some there are who “love to . . . be seen of men;” they love “the praise of men more than the praise of God” (Matt. 6: 5; John 12: 43). But the day is coming when those who have lived to God, and not to men, will receive their meed of praise. When the day of manifestation comes, “then shall every man have praise of God” (1 Cor. 4: 5). That is, every one who has earned praise from God will receive it *then*.

If the Lord says “Well done” to any of us, it will not be because of what He has done for us, but because of what His grace has enabled us to do for Him. It will be helpful to enquire as to what *doing well* really means. We must never mistake *saying well* for doing well!

The apostles, while the Lord was here, were great at *saying* good things. "Ye call Me Master and Lord," said He, and He added: "Ye *say well*." But He went on to lay stress on *doing* rather than saying: "I have given you an example, that ye should DO;" "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye DO them" (John 13: 13-17).

Now even good men sometimes think they are doing well when in reality they are doing extremely ill. Jonah is a case in point. He was giving way to what he no doubt would have called righteous indignation. Twice over God asked him: "Doest thou well to be angry?" He replied, "I do well to be angry." But the dear man was doing exceedingly badly. He could say: "I knew that Thou art a gracious God, and merciful," but he was quite out of touch with the grace of God's heart, and his behavior was far from good.

Take another case, that of the high priest Eliashib. He was "allied unto Tobiah," a man of a different race and religion, and had actually permitted him to come and reside within the precincts of the house of God in Jerusalem. People now-a-days would say: "That only showed that Eliashib was a large-hearted, charitable man, for Tobiah would not be any the worse for being of a different religion."

But Nehemiah did not think so. He says: "I came to Jerusalem and understood the EVIL

that Eliashib did for Tobiah, in preparing him a chamber in the courts of the house of God. And it grieved me sore; therefore I cast forth all the household stuff of Tobiah out of the chamber" (Neh. 13: 7, 8).

How exhilarating is this! Here was a man with backbone, who refused to call evil good. Men might say Eliashib had done well, but Nehemiah labelled his conduct "evil," and flung out Tobiah's furniture. How one would have liked to see those chairs, beds, tables, pots and pans come hurtling out! One would have cried: "Thank God; here is a man who looks at things from *His* standpoint and calls evil by its true name!"

So we must seek instruction from the Scriptures as to what "doing well" really means. Turn, for example, to James 2: 8: "If ye fulfil the royal law...*ye do well.*" This royal, or kingly, law given to those who, being children of God, are a kingly people, is simply, "Thou shalt love." God is love, and we are to exhibit His character in our dealings with others. This is *doing well*, and will win our Master's commendation at His judgment-seat.

Again, turn to 2 Chronicles 6: 7-9. King Solomon says: "Now it was in the heart of David my father to build an house for the name of the Lord God of Israel. But the Lord said to David my father, Forasmuch as it was in thine heart to build an house for My Name,

THOU DIDST WELL in that it was in thine heart: notwithstanding thou shalt not build the house." We have here an illustration of the important fact that God may interpret a right intention on our part as "doing well" even though He may not permit us to carry out what we desire.

It was David's desire to build the temple, and God did not say, "Thou desiredst well," but "Thou *didst* well," No doubt, at the judgment-seat David will hear the Lord say "Well done" for this, though he never actually built the house for God.

How can we apply this principle today? Here is a young sister who hears of the great need for workers among the heathen in India or Africa. How she would like to go and help! She would gladly spend and be spent, and would even lay down her life in the service of the Lord. But she has home responsibilities, an aged mother needs her. She lays the whole matter before God in prayer and is led to the conclusion that it is His will that she should remain at home.

Will not that young Christian's desire be taken into account in the day when every one gets his "praise of God"? Will not her gracious Master say: "In that it was in thy heart, *thou didst well*"?

Here again is a young brother who desires to share in some holy enterprise that some

servants of God are undertaking. "How I would like to give a thousand dollars to help!" he sighs. But the dear fellow does not possess a thousand cents. The Lord, however, looks at the heart. He is the same blessed One as He was in the days of Luke 21:3, 4, and what He has seen in His young servant's heart will assuredly come up for commendation "in that day." What good cheer there is in this for those whose means and abilities are small, who have little power, time or influence, and who move in a very limited circle!

Once more, in 2 Peter 1:29, with reference to "the sure word of prophecy," we read: "Whereunto YE DO WELL that ye take heed." Some folks seem to think that they do well to neglect prophecy and occupy themselves exclusively with what they are pleased to call "the practical parts of the Bible." But the word of prophecy is intensely practical if approached in the right spirit; there are at least seven very good and practical ends that it accomplishes:

1.—*It is a light in a dark place.*

The passage quoted above tells us this. If we study prophecy we find that it explains things that happen in the world that otherwise would seem most mysterious. It enables us to discern "the signs of the times," and to shape our course accordingly. (Compare what is said

in 1 Chron. 12: 32 about the men of Issachar.) The strongest searchlight ever devised can reveal nothing beyond the horizon, but the light of prophecy shines upon the far future, and illuminates the way thereto.

2.—*It magnifies Christ.*

This is always good. To have Christ set before us in the various spheres of His glory is to produce worship in our souls. Prophecy shows us that, as the Son of David, He will fulfil the old-time promises as to the kingdom. It is He who will reign and be glorious. Over all the nations, too, He will extend His beneficent sway, and rule for their blessing and spiritual prosperity. The whole creation will own Him as Lord and be vocal with His praise. He will hush its age-long groan. Everything entrusted to men, in which men have proved unfaithful, will be recovered and headed up in Him (Eph. 1: 10). And His glorious name will be, as it were, the national hymn of every tribe, tongue and kindred on earth.

3.—*It encourages Faith.*

In Zech. 1: 6 an appeal to the men of that generation is based on the fact that what God had said He would do, He did. The argument from fulfilled prophecy has always been a strong one and it has nurtured the waning faith of not a few. Predictions concerning the Jews,

Egypt, Babylon, Tyre, and other nations have been verified with marvellous detail. This indisputable fact surely fosters faith in the prophetic Word. As has been well said, prophecy, to the devout student, is history written in advance.

4.—*It promotes communion with God.*

In connection with the fate of Sodom, God took Abraham, His "friend" into His confidence. "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" He said. He revealed to the patriarch what it was His intention to do, and very significantly this is called "communing with Abraham" (Gen. 18:33). But the communication had led to intercession on the part of Abraham. If the study of prophecy has its proper effect on us, it will not be so much to the satisfaction of mere curiosity concerning the future as to the furtherance of our secret communion with God, in intercession for those who are little aware of the fate in store for them.

5.—*It rescues from misunderstandings.*

It is noteworthy that the Book of the Revelation is intended primarily for *the servants* of Christ (chap. 1:1), that the unfolding of God's plans might serve as guidance to them in their labors. I know a devoted missionary, confessedly ignorant of prophecy, who is eating out

his heart with disappointment that the world shows no sign of turning to God. What an amount of mental suffering the dear man would be spared if only he would learn from the prophetic Word that it is not the purpose of God to convert the world by the preaching of the Gospel in the present age!

“Jesus shall reign where’er the sun
Doth his successive journeys run,”

is a noble hymn, to be triumphantly sung in anticipation of the coming Kingdom, but hardly suitable for singing at a *missionary* meeting! It might happily be sung at the close of a talk on Daniel 2 or Psalm 72. An understanding of the prophecies of Scripture would give us intelligence as to such matters.

6.—*It separates from the world.*

Prophecy exhibits the doom of the world-powers and of world-religion. It paints their fate with such lurid colors that we shrink alarmed from all connection with either. We determine, by God’s grace, to stand clear from the world-system, as those whose citizenship is in heaven, and to have nothing to do with conditions in which Christ is displaced. From the prophetic page, where the fate of the mystic Babylon is foretold, we hear a voice calling: “Come out of her, My people, that ye be not

partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (Rev. 18: 4).

7.—*It sets our souls in movement.*

A wonderful vision of glorious things to come was vouchsafed to the prophet Habakkuk. "For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Hab. 2: 14). He was bidden to "write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, *that he may run that readeth it*" (ver. 2). A fantastic misquotation of this verse gives the idea of a writing so large and plain that one who runs past may read it without stopping. The meaning of the passage is, of course, quite different. The object of the writing, the making the vision plain, was that he who reads it may start off running (in the desires and affections of his soul) toward the glorious goal. Just as Rebekah was set in movement by hearing of Isaac: just as the Queen of Sheba was set in motion by hearing of Solomon in his wisdom and greatness; so the object of prophecy is not achieved unless it sets our souls in movement toward the bright prospect which it unfolds before us, and makes us true *pilgrims*, as far as this world is concerned.

We have dwelt at considerable length on this practical aspect of prophecy with the hope of inducing our readers to win the Master's "Well done" by *doing well* in respect to the study of

it. We now pass on to the fourth great idea which we find in Scripture is connected with the judgment-seat, that of

Compensation

or reward.

God has been pleased to reveal Himself both as the Reward and the Rewarder of His people.

To Abram, called from the wealth and luxury of city life to be a sojourner in a strange land, where enemies abounded, God said: "I am thy Shield, and thy exceeding great Reward" (Gen. 15:12). Who will say that Abraham was a loser? Whatever he left, he had God as his present Reward.

But in connection with a man who lived centuries before Abram we read that God is "a *Rewarder* of them that diligently seek Him" (Heb. 11:6). He is the Reward in the present, and will be the Rewarder in the future of men like Enoch and Abram who seek Him, who put Him first and please Him by doing His will.

Of course, there is such a thing as *present* reward for the Christian. For instance, Paul, speaking of himself as a servant of Christ, exclaims: "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" (1 Cor. 9:16). He continues: "If I do this thing willingly, *I have a reward.*" It is not here a question of the future, but of what Paul had during his life on earth. "What is my reward, then?" he asks. Note his noble

answer: "That when I preach the gospel I may make the gospel of Christ without charge." And he had his reward in full measure, and gloried in it.

There is also such a thing as present reward for evil-doing. Of hypocrites it may usually be said, as in Matthew 6: 2, "They have their reward!" Iniquity of another kind gets its reward (Acts 1: 18). Judas' reward for betraying his Master was fifteen dollars. A wonderful reward indeed! Much good it did him!

Moreover, there is also, in many cases, present reward to the evil-doer in the way of *retribution from God*. One executed for his misdeeds confessed: "We receive the due reward of our deeds" (Luke 23: 41).

But, generally speaking, reward is reserved for the future. For the Christian the time of reward will be that period called "the resurrection of the just" (Luke 14: 14), when he will appear before Christ's judgment-seat.

One sometimes sees the decease of a Christian intimated as So-and-so having "gone to his reward." But, emphatically, this is wrong. When a Christian dies his happy spirit goes to be "with Christ" (Phil. 1: 23) in the place where he "is comforted" (Luke 16: 25). But will anyone contend that this is *reward*? What! Heaven a reward for a well-spent life on earth? This is but another form of the old doctrine of salvation by human merit. A man has lived

a good Christian life, and has been a faithful servant of God, and people say he has gone to be *rewarded* for it! The notion is entirely contrary to the gospel of the grace of God. No one ever goes to heaven save in virtue of the precious blood of Christ. To that precious, atoning blood, no works, no good living, no faithful service on our part can be added. It stands alone in its abiding efficacy, and when a saint is called away from earth he goes to be "with Christ," not because of anything he has done, but because he has been redeemed by the Saviour's blood.

The Lord Himself distinctly says: "Behold, I come quickly, and *My reward is with Me*" (Rev. 22:12). The day of reward, then, is not when a Christian dies, but when the Lord comes. His coming, spoken of in a general way in Matt. 16:27, is definitely stated to be the time of reward: "*Then* He shall reward every man according to his works."

Have you ever heard anyone say: "I am not thinking of a reward; it is enough for me that I am to be in heaven with Christ"? It sounds so religious; does it not? But when the Lord speaks so much about reward, and desires to give us one, it seems a rather low-down thing to depreciate it. We read of Moses that "he had respect unto the recompense of the reward" (Heb. 11:26). We shall not err if we follow his example.

We must again clearly distinguish between *salvation* and *reward* for the sake of any readers to whom the matter is not quite plain. A passage in 1 Cor. 3, already referred to, will help us. We read in verse 13 that the day of manifestation will be "revealed by fire" and that "the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is." Some people, saved by grace, have done good work for Christ, and verse 14 says of such: "He shall receive a reward." Others, saved by the same undeserved, free grace, have wasted their time, lived for themselves, and produced nothing that will stand the test of the fire. The result of their lives is worthless, and it is all burned up. There is no reward for them, they "suffer loss" in that respect, even though they themselves are saved.

The sixteenth verse has in view yet another class of persons, those who have occupied a niche in connection with the temple of God (that is, His people), but their influence and example have wrought corruption. They have defiled what they have touched. They are interlopers, servants of Satan rather than of God. They not only receive no reward but they are themselves destroyed by God: that is, they suffer the penalty of eternal destruction from His presence (2 Thess. 1: 9). *For they have never known Christ as Saviour.*

To make this matter perfectly clear, suppose that a wealthy merchant charters a ship to go

to some distant land to bring back a very special cargo of goods. To encourage promptitude and fidelity the merchant offers a substantial bonus, both to officers and crew, if they bring the ship home by a certain date, with the valuable cargo intact.

The ship arrives at the foreign port, and the cargo is placed on board. But, alas, a quantity of intoxicating liquor is also taken on board, and on the homeward voyage officers and men indulge in it too freely. Their carousals make them careless, and they bring the ship upon the rocks, and the cargo is lost. They send out an "S.O.S." signal, and men with life-saving apparatus put out from a near-by port and effect the rescue of their lives. They are thus saved from a watery grave, but they lose the bonus that might have been theirs. Unrewarded, and with the loss of all that they had, they return to their homeland at the expense of others. Similar to this is what awaits the unfaithful Christian—"Saved, yet so as by fire," with the loss of all that otherwise might have been his.

Now in speaking of Rewards, we must distinguish between these and

The Prize

Rewards are many, but the prize is one. It is "the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:14), and Paul tells us he was pressing towards it. It was the mark,

the goal, towards which he hastened. His body, if permitted, would hinder his soul's running. So he kept his body under and brought it to subjection; buffeted it, mauled, and mastered it (Moffat's rendering) that he might be able to run in a way that would secure for him an incorruptible crown (1 Cor. 9: 24-27). This is different, of course, from the thought of getting a reward for fidelity in life and service.

It is true, however, that crowns are spoken of as rewards, and it is noteworthy that they are connected with the affections of the soul rather than with what we do or suffer. The Lord promises "the crown of life" to them that LOVE Him (James 1: 12). A "crown of righteousness" awaits all that LOVE His appearing (2 Tim. 4: 8).

Besides these, we must refer to the inducements held out in the epistles to the seven churches in Asia, to encourage saints to be overcomers. They were not exactly rewards. Two of us are out walking and, missing our way, get far from the right road. One becomes very weary, and the other says: "Oh, cheer up; put your best foot forward, and plod along. We shall get home before long, and there will be a comfortable easy chair and an appetizing meal for you." The chair and the meal are not rewards, but are *inducements* to persevere.

In the same way certain things are mentioned in Rev. 2 and 3 which will be the portion of all true Christians but are brought forward by way of inducement to us to stand firm and thus "overcome" in the midst of widespread defection and unfaithfulness. Take the following as instances of what is meant: "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life." "He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death." "I will give him the morning star." "The same shall be clothed in white raiment."

We come now to the question of *what kind* of things will be rewarded at the judgment-seat of Christ. It will be instructive to turn to some passages of Scripture to find an answer to this enquiry.

Putting Away Our Idols

In the story of good King Asa, David's great-grandson, we read that a Spirit-endued prophet came to him and said: "Be ye strong, therefore, and let not your hands be weak; for your work shall be rewarded" (2 Chron. 15 : 7). What work? Three things are to be noted.

(1) "He took courage and *put away the abominable idols*" (ver. 8). This is a thing for which a reward will be given: putting our idols away. If anyone questions the application of this to Christians, one need only remark that it was Christians who were exhorted to "flee

from idolatry" and to "keep yourselves from idols" (1 Cor. 10:14; 1 John 5:21). Indeed, the blunt command, "Neither be ye idolaters," is addressed to those who were "washed... sanctified...justified" (1 Cor. 6:11; 10:7).

It is quite possible for us to be theologically orthodox and ecclesiastically correct, and yet to set up idols in our hearts (compare Ezekiel 14:4). Walking through a forest a gentleman came upon a giant tree prostrate on the ground, laid low by a recent storm. Inspection showed that the trunk was hollow. For years this magnificent monarch of the forest had been only the shell of a tree. A little worm had eaten its way into its heart and had deposited its eggs there. Soon there were hundreds of worms eating away its life. Sometimes a man crashes like this, the result of long continued self-indulgence in some sinful thing—some idol. Sometimes there is no awful crash, but the idol is there all the same, with the resulting hollowness. God help us to get rid of our idols. To put them out of our lives will bring future reward.

(2) For a long while Israel had been without the true God (ver. 3). But Asa "*renewed the altar of the Lord*" (ver. 8). We sometimes hear the phrase "the family altar," by which is meant prayer and the reading of the Scriptures in the home. This is important and good, but has little value unless there be also a per-

sonal altar:—a personal walk with God, and the maintenance of personal relations with Him.

Perhaps the greatest insult that can be offered to God is to join in a public act of worship on Sunday and live the rest of the week as if He did not exist. We rightly resent the outrageous insults that blatant Russian bolshevists heap upon His holy Name. Let us beware lest we commit the greater sin of having our hearts far from Him while drawing near to Him with our lips. To renew our altar, to seek the restoration of the relations broken by our backsliding, is to ensure a reward by-and-by.

(3) Asa's mother, Maachah, had made an idol, and for this reason "*he removed her from being queen*" (ver. 16). He was prepared to do despite to his nearest and dearest rather than allow her to come in between him and his duty to God. "God first" is the slogan of every true-hearted servant of His. He that loveth father or mother more than Christ is not worthy of Him, and cannot be His disciple. If one's own mother attempts to come in between us and our allegiance to our Lord, it is a thing that will bring its reward if we put her in the second place, and Him, to whom we owe so much, in the first.

But someone will be thinking: "Asa was a king. He had wealth, power, influence, oppor-

tunity, ability: I have none of these things; I move in a limited orbit and fill but a tiny niche." For such a one there is great encouragement in the next Scripture to which we will turn.

We read in Proverbs 11:18 about

Sowing Righteousness

To him who does this, we are told, there "shall be a sure reward." What precisely is meant by sowing righteousness?

Have you ever seen a man sowing a field of grain in the old-time way, holding a basket in the crook of his left arm and scattering the seed with his right hand? When he gets across the field he looks back and sees a long straight trail of seed along the way that he has come. So with him who sows righteousness. He leaves behind him a trail of *right doing*. For this is what righteousness in the Book of Proverbs means. To be honest, pure, truthful and kind; to avoid lying, deceit, selfishness and bad temper; to do the things that are right and pleasing in the sight of God, no matter what the cost may be. This is what sowing righteousness means, and "to him that soweth righteousness shall be a SURE reward." There is no doubt whatever about his getting it!

But righteousness goes hand in hand with readiness to forgive those who do us an injury. So in Proverbs 25:22 we read that if we find

our enemy in need we are not to revenge ourselves upon him, but "heap coals of fire upon his head," and *the Lord will reward* us. We gather from the verse a general idea of being kind to one who has wronged us, even if the significance of the coals of fire be not understood. But Moffat's rendering of the passage throws a new light upon it: "If your enemy is hungry give him food, and give him water if he thirsts; for so you shall quench blazing passions, and the Eternal will reward you."

Another Scripture that speaks of a reward for deeds of kindness is a familiar one.

A Cup of Water

"Whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in My name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward" (Mark 9:41). We read in 1 Cor. 3 of the one who will "suffer loss." Here is one who will *not* suffer loss, or as it is emphatically put in the parallel passage in Matthew 10:42, "He shall in no wise lose his reward."

The cup of water is of little value in itself. It is the motive behind the gift that makes it precious to Christ and for which the reward will be bestowed — "Because ye belong to Christ." Whatever is done from love of that dear Name will assuredly come up for commendation and reward "in that day."

Private Prayer

Perhaps there is no apparent result from our prayers save the comfort of being able to pour out our souls before a loving Father. But the Lord Jesus taught His disciples: "Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly" (Matt. 6:6).

There is nothing here about God *hearing* our prayers, but there is a two-fold assurance, (1) that He *sees*, (2) that He will reward openly.

Is it not a great comfort to remember that God is looking on when we pray to Him behind the closed door? Even when the words will not come; when we are too weary to concentrate thought and attention on what we are saying; when our hearts are too broken for us to be able to frame definite petitions; when we kneel, not knowing what to pray for as we ought; *then*, God sees. As Paul says: "God is my witness"—the witness of all his prayers (Rom. 1:9).

All this, however, is secret. But the day is coming when the open reward will be given. In this way God will testify how dear to Him are the cries of His children. He values the expression of our confidence and will openly reward those who have sought His face in secret.

Suffering and Reproach

Some of us, from childhood's days, have sung a hymn that refers to the present time of suffering for Christ's sake. Two lines of it are of special cheer to those who are called to bear reproach and persecution for His name:

"A crown incorruptible then will be theirs,
A rich compensation for suffering and loss."

This is indeed the teaching of the Lord Himself. He taught His disciples that a great reward awaited them in heaven (to be theirs when He shall come): "Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil for the Son of Man's sake; rejoice ye in that day and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven" (Luke 6: 22, 23).

All that has been endured for Christ's sake will be richly rewarded by-and-by. While suffering in itself is valueless, and even martyrdom, where love is lacking, profits nothing (1 Cor. 13: 3), yet all that is endured for love of Him is unspeakably precious to Him, and all those who "live godly in Christ Jesus," and inevitably (in these "last days") suffer persecution (2 Tim. 3: 12), shall reap a rich reward in the glorious future.

Twice in Scripture, once in the Old Testament, and once in the New, we find the term

“A Full Reward”

used. In Ruth 2: 11, 12, Boaz says to the poor desolate, bereaved young Moabite widow: “It hath been fully showed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother-in-law,...the Lord recompense thy work, and A FULL REWARD be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust.”

Naomi was even more desolate than her daughter-in-law, for death had robbed her of her two sons, as well as of her husband. Mothers-in-law, when widows, are often thus. With no longer a home of their own, they have to live in the house of their married son or daughter, and are often made to feel that their presence is unwelcome and a burden. How tender and gracious of God to cause this passage about kindness to a mother-in-law to be recorded, and not only a reward, but a FULL reward to be promised to the one who shows her kindness and consideration!

The passage where the phrase occurs in the New Testament is of great significance. There is some difference of opinion as to the true rendering of 2 John, verse 8, the difficulty being with regard to the pronouns. But taking the verse as it stands in our ordinary Bibles, we

read: "Look to yourselves, that WE (servants of Christ, apostles, preachers) lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward."

Really, this is extraordinary! Is it possible that John, for instance, will miss the *full* reward because of the failure of his converts to walk as faithful and consistent Christians? It looks like it. It was because of their happy and consistent conduct that Paul could say of his converts at Thessalonica: "What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?" (1 Thess. 2:19). To the Philipian converts (also faithful and exemplary Christians) he spoke of his rejoicing in the day of Christ that he had not run in vain, or labored in vain, since *they* were "holding forth the word of life" (Phil. 2:16).

So, in some way, the preacher's reward by-and-by is connected with the way his converts conduct themselves. At all events, whether he gets a FULL reward or not depends on this. We can only call attention to this verse in 2 John. But surely the patient, faithful labor of those servants of Christ who have the sorrow of seeing their children in the faith turn back to the world and the crooked ways of sin will not be forgotten by their Lord.

But the teaching of 2 John 8 is there for a purpose. Surely it is that we who preach the

gospel may be more diligent in prayer, and more concerned about the walk of those whom we have been enabled to lead to Christ. You cannot say "good-bye" to a convert and leave him to his own devices without risking the partial loss of your own reward.

Chinese doctors are paid on a strange plan. They receive so much a year for keeping their patients in good health. If one should become ill, the doctor does his best to bring about his recovery, for he loses his pay as long as his patient is sick! Is there something similar hinted at in 2 John 8, a *full* reward only when our converts continue in spiritual health? We ask the question: we make no dogmatic affirmation.

We learn from Colossians 2:18 that there is the possibility of somebody

Beguiling Us of Our Reward

Most of us hate to be "done." We could rather give a man a dollar any day than be "done" out of a quarter. This word "beguile" means just that. The exhortation is that we let no man *do* us out of our reward. Nor are we to let any woman do us out of our reward.

May I beg my younger brethren and sisters to remember this when the proposition of marriage is before them? It is so easy for us to link our lives with those who will do us out of our reward. It is not enough to know that the

one you think of marrying is a believer. He or she may be that, and yet not God's choice for you.

When the Lord Jesus was about to choose His companions He "continued all night in prayer to God" (Luke 6 : 12), and the next day He made His choice. Unless we make earnest prayer to God for guidance, we run the very serious risk of taking a life-partner who will do us out of our reward.

Not only people, but things, may cause us to lose it; and such little things too! The tuberculosis germ measures only about one ten-thousandth of an inch in length, yet 200,000 people die of its ravages in the United States every year. And things so small that they escape our notice may, unless we are careful, infect our souls to such a degree that we are put hopelessly out of the running for a reward.

Let us sum up what we have had before us in this Section of our subject. We have seen that the following are the principal thoughts connected with the judgment-seat of Christ in Scripture:—

1. Investigation into our service;
2. Manifestation of our lives;
3. Commendation of deeds of love and fidelity;
4. Compensation for suffering and faithful service.

CHAPTER III.—ILLUSTRATIVE

There are sections of Scripture that seem intended to illustrate the judgment-seat of Christ. The eleventh chapter of 1 Chronicles is one such. The last verse of chapter 10 speaks of the kingdom becoming David's. This is followed by the roll of the names of those who had served and followed him in the days when he was hated and hunted by Saul. The deeds of valor and devotion performed by his faithful adherents are recounted, and certain ones have positions assigned to them by way of reward.

This leads us to enquire as to *when* rewards will be given to those who have won them in the days of Christianity. In Luke 14: 14 recompense is said to be "at the resurrection of the just," while Rev. 11: 18 distinctly connects the giving of rewards with the time of judging (*i.e.*, avenging) the dead and establishing the kingdom in power.

Let me try to explain. Appointments in the British Civil Service are made as the result of competitive examinations. Successful candidates are sometimes assigned almost immediately to the administrative posts that they are to fill, perhaps in some distant outpost of the Empire. But weeks, or even months, may elapse before they actually go to take up the

post assigned to them. It seems that it will be somewhat similar with Christians in the future. The judgment-seat will be like the competitive examination. The "successful candidates" are those who have positions assigned to them by way of reward then. But it is not till the appearing of Christ to take His kingdom, and establish His sway from the river to the ends of the earth, that they will actually take up the positions awarded them. This will explain the apparent discrepancy between the scriptures that speak of reward at the judgment-seat and those that speak of reward in the kingdom, or at the Appearing. The one is the *assignment* of rewards, the other the *enjoyment* of them.

In the New Testament a chapter that very wonderfully illustrates the judgment-seat of Christ is Romans 16.

The Picture Chapter

In the first eight chapters of this great evangelic Epistle "the Gospel of God," as it is called in chapter 1: 1, is unfolded. We are shown how ungodly sinners are justified, delivered and brought into relationship with God. Again and again, after bringing some vital truth to the notice of the readers, the apostle asks: "What shall we say then?" (4: 1; 6: 1). "What shall we then say to these things?" (8: 31). (See also 9:14). But the practical chapters that follow, 12-15, rather raise the question as to what we

are going to DO. The judgment-seat of Christ will show not only what we have *said* as to the great truths of the Gospel, but how they have affected our lives and actions. Chapter 16 gives us a picture of the summing up.

We may be sure that many copies of so important an epistle as that to the Romans would be made, and that possibly a copy would be sent to all the churches. There is substantial ground for thinking that the copy from which our translations are derived was the copy originally sent to the church at Ephesus, and that Paul added chapter 16 to commend Phœbe who was going there. In this case the various ones saluted would be Ephesian, not Roman, saints (see Appendix).

When we regard the chapter as portraying the judgment-seat of Christ, it is deeply interesting to observe that at least nine of those mentioned were women. Christian women have a wonderful sphere of service, and rich will be their reward if they fill it for the glory of Christ.

Let us now see how some of these dear people are commended and how some are disapproved.

Phœbe

Phœbe, going from her home at Cenchrea, would need a letter of commendation to the saints among whom she would be sojourning. Paul gives her this. And this, in itself,

is a thing that will surely come up at the judgment-seat. It is sad that Christians should leave home and take their chance of finding fellowship in the place to which they are going. The right course is to make every possible enquiry as to Christians there and ask for a letter of commendation, either from a brother known to them, or from an assembly the address of whose meeting-place would be known. To exercise godly care in this matter will assuredly win an approving word from the Lord. Other instances in Scripture of letters of commendation are those that Paul gave to Onesimus (Epistle to Philemon) and that John gave to Demetrius (3rd Epistle of John). We also find that when Apollos was going to Europe, "the brethren wrote, exhorting the [European] brethren to receive him" (Acts 18:27).

Observe what is stated concerning Phœbe. (1) She was a servant (*Greek*, minister, deacon) of the assembly in the place where she resided. We may be sure that her ministry did not take the form of preaching or teaching. Would any Christian woman be commended by-and-by, for that, in the face of the explicit directions of 1 Cor. 14:34 and 1 Tim. 2:12? Phœbe's service would be more in accord with the mind of her Master. It may be that she dusted the benches and trimmed the lamps of the meeting-room (no small service this) and

that she visited and cared for any of the Christians that were sick or in need.

(2) She was a "succorer" of many, and of Paul himself. This is just what the Lord Himself is, "able to succor" (though the Greek word in Hebrews 2:18 is different) . This dear sister was *Christlike* in her gracious ministry. Great will be her reward.

Priscilla and Aquila

This worthy couple are mentioned six times in the New Testament, three times with the wife's name, as here, first. Priscilla did her part and bore her share in their united life of testimony and service. Those who are married may well take this Christian couple as their model! Their very names are significant. Aquila means "eagle," and suggests activity, energy and enterprise. Priscilla means "old-fashioned." This is good! A Christian wife and mother who walks in the old paths, and brings up her children in the ways of piety and obedience (old-fashioned though this may be) is worth her weight in gold. It is old-fashioned for wives to "obey" their husbands; to insist upon obedience on the part of their children; to have prayer and the reading of the Scriptures in the family. God give us more Priscillas of this kind!

We are introduced to these two in Acts 18: 1-3. Banished from Rome, they come to Corinth.

Paul, seeking lodgement, goes to them, since he, like Aquila, is a worker in canvas. Now begins a lifelong friendship. What conversations the two men would have as they sit plying their needles, with Priscilla sometimes standing by to listen! They receive the gospel and make rapid headway in the truth. They grow so attached to Paul that when (ver.18) the apostle goes to Ephesus they accompany him.

Soon after this a remarkable man arrives in the city from the great Egyptian University city of Alexandria. He is eloquent, and well taught in the Hebrew Scriptures, but knows nothing further of their fulfilment than John the Baptist's testimony. Now is the opportunity for Aquila and Priscilla to pass on what they have learned from Paul, and this they do, much to the spiritual profit and advancement of Apollos.

The fourth mention of this devoted couple is in Romans 16, to which we will return. Next in 1 Cor. 16: 19, where Paul, writing from Ephesus, sends a loving greeting from them to their friends at Corinth among whom they had sojourned. There was a church in their house; a gathering of Christians that met under their roof.

Within some six weeks of his being "with Christ," in the Epistle that he penned just before his death, Paul mentions them again. They are still at Ephesus and the apostle asks Tim-

othy to salute them for him (2 Tim. 4: 19). Many of his earlier friends had left him: indeed, "all they which are in Asia" had turned from him. But here are these two, faithful to the end. Perseverance to the very end will surely count "in that day."

Turning again to the mention of them in Romans 16:4 we read that for the apostle's life they had "laid down their own necks." When did they do this? I do not know. Nobody knows. This is the kind of thing to be richly rewarded at the judgment-seat, acts of self-sacrifice that no one on earth knows anything about!

Epænetus

This Christian was specially beloved by Paul. He was "the firstfruits of Asia" (see R.V.) unto Christ. That is, he was Paul's first convert at Ephesus. Of the many who were led to the Saviour in that great Asian metropolis, Epænetus was the first to step out. Perhaps this is one reason that Paul loved him so well.

To be the first to become a Christian in a country, in a town, or in a family is an honor, a thing that will assuredly be taken into account in the day of review and reward. Constantino, a young brother in Paraguay, was the first of the Guarani tribe to receive the gospel. Others have since been won, largely through his instrumentality. But none can have the reward that he will have for being the *first*!

Some young reader of these pages may feel solitary and disheartened because no other member of his or her family is a Christian. What! You are the first? Well done! Go on praying for your family, and thank the Lord for the honor put upon you in that He has called you first. He will not forget it "in that day."

Mary

The fact that Epænetus is mentioned in connection with Priscilla and Aquila suggests that he had possibly found shelter under their roof when turned out of his home because of his conversion. It may be, however, that he was a leading figure in the group that met at their house. But there can be little doubt that Mary was an inmate of the home of our two friends. For we read that she had bestowed much labor on, or had "slaved for" Paul. This must have been when he was staying with Aquila and Priscilla before he left for Jerusalem.

An enquiry was once addressed by a correspondent to "Marching Orders" concerning the different Marys of the New Testament. He enumerated five: Mary the mother of Jesus; Mary her sister (or cousin), the wife of Alphæus; Mary Magdalene; Mary the sister of Martha; and Mary the mother of John Mark. But he entirely forgot the Mary of our chapter, and I have ever since thought of her as "the forgotten Mary." But just as her laborious

service was gratefully remembered by Paul, so will the forgotten labors of many another Mary be remembered by-and-by. "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love" (Heb. 6: 10).

Andronicus and Junia

Junia should almost for a certainty read Junias. It is a masculine name. Three things are said about these converted Jews, for we take the statement that they were Paul's kinsmen to mean this.

(1) They had been imprisoned for Christ's sake. That they were the apostle's "fellow-prisoners" does not mean necessarily that they were in prison with him, but that they had suffered in the same way. Saints in prison may serve their Master in wonderful ways. We learn this from the case of Paul himself; it was as a prisoner that he wrote his "prison epistles" that have taught millions. Epaphras, too (Philemon 23), labored fervently in prayer for the saints from whom he was separated by prison walls. And it was in Bedford Gaol that John Bunyan wrote "The Pilgrim's Progress." But the Lord not only honors and uses His prisoners while they are in confinement, He will honor and reward them by-and-by.

(2) They were "of note among the apostles." Of course this does not mean that they *were* apostles, but that they were Christians well

known to the apostolic circle. There are men of note in scientific circles; others are of note in the world of politics, of industry or of literature. Such men have their reward in the shape of fame, financial success, political power, etc. But to be "of note" in the Christian circle has often meant ill-treatment, prison, defamation and a martyr's death. Their reward in the future will be great when men of note in other circles are forgotten and the circles in which now they move have passed into oblivion.

(3) They were in Christ before Paul; that is, they were converted to God early, possibly at Pentecost, or when the multitudes of Acts 5:14 were added to the Lord. To live one's life forgetful of God, using one's time, money and opportunities for self, and then in old age to turn to the Lord is *to miss something in the day of reward*. To turn to Christ in the morning of life, to enthrone Him in the heart as Lord while yet young and strong, is something that will bring its sure and wonderful reward at His judgment-seat.

Passing over several names in our chapter, we come to

Apelles

We do not read that he was approved *of* Christ, or *by* Christ, but *in* Christ. Exactly what does this imply? There are two spheres in which a man may be approved. He may make

his mark *in the world* and win the "Well done" of his fellows, as a man once said: "I could wish for no better epitaph than 'He played the game.'" Or one may be scorned and derided by men, looked upon as eccentric and narrow-minded, but approved in another sphere—in Christ. And those who are approved *in* Christ now will be publicly approved *by* Him in the day of manifestation.

The Christian Slaves

We are not to suppose that Aristobulus and Narcissus were Christians. They were wealthy Ephesian gentlemen who owned households of slaves. Some slaves in both these households had been converted, and were saluted by Paul as being "in the Lord." We know that in the metropolis of the empire some of Cæsar's slaves were Christians (Phil. 4: 22).

One might wonder what opportunity slaves, who were the property of heathen masters and whose very lives were at the mercy of men who were often cruel and tyrannical, could have for winning a reward. But in Col. 3: 22-24 Christian slaves are shown the way. They were in all things to obey their masters in the fear of God; they were to perform their duties willingly, "*as to the Lord*," and were thus to "serve the Lord Jesus." Daily duties, even of the most menial kind, may be used as occasions to serve and glorify Him who is our Master, and

the gracious promise is ours: "Of the Lord ye shall receive the reward."

Tryphena and Tryphosa

These sisters were engaged in happy and active service for Christ at the time when Paul wrote. Again we note the preposition "in." The apostle does not say that they were laboring *for* the Lord (though that, of course, was true), but *in* the Lord. It suggests that all that they were doing for Him was safe, treasured up in His heart, to be manifested and rewarded "in that day." The very memory of ourselves and our deeds may perish, as far as this world is concerned, but all that is "wrought in God" (John 3:21) or, as here, "in the Lord," will never be lost. It will be found again by-and-by, and will come up for His commendation and reward.

Persis

This sister was probably advanced in years, or laid aside from some cause, for her service is spoken of as in the past. She "*labored* much in the Lord." Notice that word "much." Her service had been earnest and zealous. She was not one who had played at serving Christ; with her it was the real thing.

Aged servants of the Lord, whose days of activity are past, are not forgotten by Him. He can use them even upon a bed of sickness, and

they may bring forth fruit to Him in their old age. Psalm 92 assures us of this. Moffat's rendering of verses 12 to 15 gives fresh force to this beautiful passage and throws emphasis on the conditions for fruitfulness: "But good men flourish like a palm, and grow like cedars on Lebanon; planted inside the Eternal's precincts, they flourish in the courts of our God, still bearing fruit when they are old, still fresh and green—showing how just the Eternal is, my Strength who never errs." It will be observed that the clause about still bearing fruit is not so much a promise as a statement of fact concerning those who abide in the courts of God. And their freshness and fruitfulness is a testimony to the unchanging faithfulness of God. This, in itself, is no mean service. In the day of review many an aged Persis will discover with surprise how much has been accomplished by her freshness of soul in old age!

Rufus

Nothing is stated concerning this brother save one outstanding fact that throws all others into the shade. He was "chosen in the Lord." What does this imply? "Chosen" is an unusual word in the New Testament in connection with the servants of Christ, except in the sense in which it applies to *all* (Eph. 1: 4; 2 Thess. 2: 13). But in the Old Testament the thought is prominent. Nahor and Haran were passed by,

and Abram, the youngest son of Terah, was *chosen* as the depositary of God's promises. Ishmael was rejected, Isaac was chosen. Esau was refused and Jacob chosen. Saul was set aside and David chosen. Did anything like this take place in the case of Rufus?

His father, Simon, who had the unspeakable honor of bearing the cross of the Lord Jesus on the day of His crucifixion, is introduced upon the inspired page by Mark, as "the father of Alexander and Rufus." Evidently these two men were well known by name to the Christians in New Testament times. Simon was probably dead, and his widow and sons were living at Ephesus. Now, an Alexander of Ephesus had been prominent, though rather as a neutral, in the riot that had been caused by the metal-workers of that city against Paul. Some sixteen years later the apostle, writing to Timothy (who was at Ephesus), refers to an Alexander who had made shipwreck of the faith and had been "delivered unto Satan." And in his second epistle to Timothy, Paul again speaks of a metal-worker, Alexander by name, who had done him much harm. "The Lord reward him according to his works," he adds significantly (2 Tim. 4: 14).

Whether these Alexanders are all one and the same or not, there was one of that name at Ephesus who had turned aside from the faith and had become an enemy of the apostle. If it

was the elder brother of Rufus (as such named first in Mark 15:21), how awfully significant is the word "chosen" in our chapter! It is a case of Ishmael and Isaac, Esau and Jacob, over again. And if Alexander will be rewarded by the Lord according to his evil works, so assuredly will Rufus be for his good ones. He was on the line of faith, and genuine faith *always* shows itself in deeds.

The Mother of Rufus

"His mother and mine," says the apostle. The dear woman had "mothered" him, perhaps when he was sick. He had made his home with Priscilla and Aquila while at Ephesus on his first visit. There is nothing to show that Priscilla was a mother. A sick man needs a mother's care, and the mother of Rufus supplied the need. She had sons of her own, and understood!

It is more than probable that her husband (a Moghreby, or colored Jew from Africa) was the Simon mentioned in Acts 13:1 as "Simeon that was called Niger," Niger, of course, meaning "black man." If so, Paul was well acquainted with the family before they went to live at Ephesus. If the father and husband had been still living, Paul would surely have saluted him as well as his wife and son. Rufus' mother was almost certainly a widow.

She had been the wife of a prominent teacher in the assembly at Antioch, named along with Barnabas. No doubt she shared the esteem in which her husband was held. The days at Antioch had been full of activity and enjoyment. But now—. Paul had not forgotten, but others probably had. It is so today, the wives of prominent brethren are the recipients of much kindness. But in their widowhood they are often relegated to obscurity, and they would be less than human if they did not feel the difference.

But what an opportunity came to Rufus' mother, to win by her motherly kindness

- (1) The gratitude of Paul,
- (2) A place on the inspired page of Scripture, causing millions to hold her name in high regard, and
- (3) A bright reward by-and-by.

Is there not great encouragement in this for lonely widows who have known brighter days?

The Groups

Verse 14 of our chapter mentions the names of five Christians, and adds, "*And the brethren which are with them.*" Verse 15 mentions five others, and adds, "*And all the saints which are with them.*" What are we to learn from this?

It is evident that there was a very large number of saints at Ephesus. Paul's last visit to

that city had lasted three years (Acts 20:31) and the Word of God had grown mightily and prevailed there (Acts 19:20). Probably it was impossible to have one large meeting-place, or indeed to have public meeting-rooms at all. This would have brought down upon the Christians the unwelcome attention of the heathen authorities, and persecution on the part of the devout adherents of "Great Diana of the Ephesians."

They must, therefore, have met in convenient houses. Some were accustomed to gather in the home of Priscilla and Aquila; this constituted the church that was in their house (ver. 5). Others apparently met in other houses; there was the group named in verse 14 and the other group in verse 15.

These were not the church of God at Ephesus: *that* would be the aggregate of all the saints in the city. But the Lord has been pleased to give church status to these groups that gathered in different houses. More than once we read of these "house churches." There was one in the house of Philemon at Colosse (Philemon 2), and another in the house of Nymphas, apparently at Laodicea (Col. 4:15). In Acts 12 we find one of these house churches functioning; it was in the home of John Mark's mother, at Jerusalem, and "many were gathered together praying" (Acts 12:12).

We call attention to this because

Good Churchmanship

is a thing that is going to count at the judgment-seat of Christ. Let me explain what I mean. To study the Scriptures to learn what they teach as to the Church and the churches, and to translate what we find into practice, to make our ways conform to the ideals that the Word of God sets before us, this is good churchmanship. It is a form of *obedience* that will certainly be taken into account in the great Review day.

In Romans 16 the church is spoken of in three distinct ways, and it is of the highest importance to have these clearly before our minds so that we may shape our course in such a manner as to win the commendation of Christ.

(1) Though the word "church" is not mentioned in verse 25 it was surely in the apostle's mind when he wrote of "the mystery which was kept secret...but now is made manifest." He enlarges on this subject in Eph. 3, and it is not without reason that what he says in verse 3, "As I wrote afore in few words," is understood as referring to the concluding verses of Romans 16. According to Eph. 3, the revealed secret was that the Gentiles, converted to God, should be fellow-heirs and of the same body as converted Jews. The Jew should be brought from his place of national privilege and the Gentile from his place of darkness and distance

to be united *in one body*. This body, the church (or "assembly," the same word in the Greek), was formed by the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and consists of all who are Christ's from that day to the great translation day for which we wait (1 Thess. 4: 14-17). This is the church, or assembly, in its widest aspect, the body and bride of Christ, the *ekklesia*, or called-out company of the redeemed during this Christian era. It is called, in Eph. 1: 22, 23, "the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all."

In the very nature of things there can be only one assembly in this sense of the word; one body, even as there is one Head. To it the Christian reader, the writer of these lines, and every other true believer on the face of the earth belongs. "We are members of His body" (Eph. 5: 30).

(2) Then there are the local assemblies; the church in this or that city, composed of *all* the saints who are found there. So, in our chapter, we read of "the church which is at Cenchrea" (ver. 1), "the churches of the Gentiles" (ver. 4), and "the whole church," *i.e.*, the whole church in that city (ver. 23). Elsewhere we read of "the church of God which is at Corinth," "the churches of God," "the churches of the saints" (1 Cor. 1: 2; 11: 16; 14: 33); "the churches of Galatia," that is, churches in the various cities in the province of Galatia (Gal.

1:2): "the church of the Thessalonians," "the churches of God...in Judæa" (1 Thess. 1:2; 2:14).

These are autonomous, local churches, each directly responsible to Christ. While *gifts* (evangelists, pastors and teachers) are connected with the church in its "body" aspect, *offices* are connected with the churches locally. Thus we read of "elders" at Jerusalem (Acts 11:30); "in every church" (Acts 14:23); "in every city" (Titus 1:5). But these churches were *locally* the body of Christ; they had that character as including all who were of Christ's body in that city (1 Cor. 12:27). They were *golden candlesticks* (Rev. 2:1).

Do such churches exist today? Under the eye of God they exist in all places where there are Christians. Though divided by denominational barriers, bearing sectarian names, and often in bitter antagonism the one against another, yet as God looks down He sees them in their true unity, one church or assembly, one body, one Christian company. Nothing short of this is *the church of God* in a city, town or village.

But are there anywhere today companies of which one may say, "These are assemblies of God"? Can a city be named in which the church of God is seen and known as a united company? Thank God, yes. Probably in hundreds of localities in China, in India, in

Africa, in the islands of the Pacific and in other lands there are assemblies where every Christian in the place is found. Outside, there is nothing but heathenism. There is no division, no sectarian name, no officials of which the New Testament knows nothing, no humanly devised rules and regulations. No unsaved persons are knowingly received; these assemblies are true "churches of the saints." Alas, we know of no place in the United States, in Canada, in Britain, or in any so-called Christian country, where such assemblies may be seen. In every city, town and village known to us the church of God is divided, sects and schisms have ruined its testimony, and no fragment can claim to be the assembly of God in the place, any more than if a jug were smashed into a hundred pieces a single piece could say: "I am the jug."

(3) Thirdly, there are groups of saints meeting in different houses or buildings to which, as we have already observed, church status is given. How very gracious of the Lord is this! If I cannot persuade all the dear children of God in the city where I live to depart from their sectarian positions and gather together in the name of Christ as one, I can at least enquire for any who are practising the truth and meet with them in the house or hall where they assemble. Doing this, we should not claim to be "an assembly of God," as the assembly at

Cenchrea, at Corinth, or at Smyrna was, but we should be entitled to call ourselves "the assembly in So-and-So's house" or "in such-and-such a hall." And we should endeavor to walk in the light given in the Scriptures to govern the churches. We should depart from everything that is a denial of the fact that "there is one body." And we should seek that all our thoughts, words and ways be controlled by the Word of God.

What we *should* do, and what we actually *do* are, alas, often very different. Those who have and know the truth will be the first to admit how often, and in how many respects, they have failed. But, let me repeat, good churchmanship will be taken into account at the judgment-seat of Christ. If we seek grace to carry into practice the principles that we find in Scripture, we may surely count on His present help, as well as upon His future word of approval and gracious reward.

Division Makers

In connection with the above remarks, let it be noted that the apostle has words of unsparing condemnation for those who have introduced divisive doctrines among Christians, causing "divisions and offences *contrary to the doctrines which ye have learned*" (ver. 17). Of course, in one sense, *every* division among saints is of this kind, for it is contrary to the

cardinal and fundamental truth of the unity of the body of Christ, whether in its general or its local aspect. And if to make divisions is evil, to maintain them is just as bad. One trembles to think what the judgment-seat will mean for those who are guilty of this. Those who have acted like the wolf (John 10: 12) will certainly not receive the fadeless crown of glory promised to those who are "ensamples to the flock" (1 Pet. 5: 3, 4).

It is not for us to judge motives. But Paul, writing by the Spirit of God, does so. This is what one would expect in a chapter that serves as an illustration of the judgment-seat. He says that they "serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly." Dr. Moffat's rendering is very forceful. Let us quote the whole passage: "Brothers, I beg of you to keep your eye on those who stir up dissensions and put hindrances in your way, contrary to the doctrine which you have been taught. Avoid them. Such creatures are no servants of Christ our Lord, they are slaves of their own base desires; with their plausible and pious talk they beguile the hearts of unsuspecting people."

Yes; *motives* are going to weigh heavily in the day that is coming. And in anticipation of that day the Holy Spirit here puts His finger on the motives of those who make divisions: *self-interest*.

CHAPTER IV.—PRACTICAL

It may be thought, after all that has been considered in the foregoing pages, that a chapter headed "Practical" is quite superfluous. For is not everything connected with the subject of the judgment-seat of Christ most intensely practical?

It is, indeed. Yet there are other practical considerations which we must by no means omit. Let us devote a few minutes to the study of the Parable of the Pounds in Luke 19: 11-27. In this parable the Lord represents Himself under the figure of a nobleman going to a distant land to have royal rank conferred on him. His citizens disown him; but he has servants whom he left to care for his interests, and on his return he summons these before him (before he executes justice on his enemies), "that he might know how much every man has gained by trading."

This is a striking picture of Christ's judgment-seat, and from it we learn that three courses are open to those who take the place of being His servants.

Business

We may "occupy" for the Lord, during His absence, by being actively engaged on His be-

half. We may "trade" for Him, and gain substance for His kingdom, winning souls to faith in Him, "planting" that the fruits may be for His pleasure and glory, and "building" for eternity. Those who use the "pounds" after this manner are called "good servants," and the Lord will say to them "Well done" and will give them spheres of service and influence in His glorious kingdom.

The Bank

One of the servants in the parable misused the pound entrusted to him, and hid it away in his sweat-cloth, or napkin. The lord enquires why he did not deposit the money in the Bank, for in that case he would have received it again, with the addition of interest. The *best* way to serve our absent Lord is to put our whole strength and ability into the advancement of His cause. The second best is to hand over to others what we fail ourselves to use, that *they* may do something with it in the interests of Christ. There are those who from faint-heartedness or some other cause do not put their own hands to active service for Christ. But they can strengthen the hands of those who do; they can supply those who are fighting the battles, bearing the burdens and doing the work, not only with money, but with prayerful help and intelligent sympathy. This would answer to putting the lord's money into the Bank.

The Napkin

This is the sweat-cloth that men carried, to wipe the perspiration from their brows, when laboring in the field or vineyard, or toiling at their trade. But the man of Luke 19:20 had no intention of sweating in his lord's service; he would have no use for a sweat-cloth, so he used it as a mere receptacle for the idle pound. He was a wicked man, and his lord denounced him scathingly.

It is easy to read the meaning of this part of the parable. The question is sometimes asked, however, as whether this wicked slave may not represent a Christian who through idleness and unfaithfulness incurs punishment, but who will eventually be released and taken to heaven. Men with honored names teach this, but we are convinced that they are mistaken. The wicked slave represents those who bear the Christian name, but who show by their actions (or rather, by their lack of action) that their Christianity is merely nominal. In the somewhat similar Parable of the Talents in Matthew 25, the slave who hid his lord's talent in the earth, is cast into outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

We dare not offer delusive comfort to unfaithful men who profess to be servants of Christ, or persuade them that, after chastisement, they will be forgiven and glorified. Their

lives have given the lie to their profession; they have proved that they care nothing for Christ, they are without any living link with Him.

See the context of another parable in Matthew 25. The five foolish virgins are shut out, not because of anything that they have done, but because of what they did *not* do. They did not provide themselves with oil. The unprofitable slave is cast into outer darkness because he did *not* trade with his master's goods. And those who find themselves classed as "goats" and are sent away into everlasting punishment, are consigned to this terrible doom because of what they did *not* do.

In the Parable of the Ten Virgins the five with oilless lamps do not represent mere hypocrites. A hypocrite *knows* he is playing a part, and does not really expect admittance when the Lord comes. But the five foolish virgins really did expect to be admitted. They represent those who sincerely imagine they are saved. Perhaps in answer to a question they have *said* that they believe in Christ. Saying "I believe" is one thing; really believing is quite another. James challenges that insufficient and delusive "faith" with the question: "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he have faith and have not works? Can faith save him?" (James 2:14). Now we are saved by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8), but the obvious answer to the question which James asks is: "No

profit at all; faith that affords no evidence of reality in the life is not saving faith." Can faith save a man? No, certainly not; not *that sort of faith*. "Faith without works is dead" (James 2: 26). If our actions do not prove that our faith is real, it is but self-deception to imagine that we are saved.

In the Parable of the Ten Virgins, fifty per cent of those who sincerely expected to get in were shut out! It is to be feared that many who really think that they are saved are making a fearful mistake. They are not bringing forth "fruits meet for repentance." Their lives afford no evidence of true Christianity. Profession without discipleship is like salt that has lost its savor: utterly worthless.

Let the reader take his bearings as in the presence of God, for a delusive "faith" is far more dangerous than no faith at all.

Now turn again to 1 Cor. 3:9-17, and note what is said about

Building and Burning

This brief section of the chapter mainly concerns those who set their hands to the work of the ministry, not so much to evangelists as to those who labor in connection with "God's husbandry," or "God's building" (ver. 9), that is, among His people.

Paul, as the one who had brought the gospel to Corinth, had laid the foundation. He had

preached "Jesus Christ, and Him crucified," and this good and true foundation had been laid once for all in the souls of those who composed the assembly in that city. But Paul had passed on to other fields of labor, and others were at Corinth building upon the foundation that he as a wise master-builder had laid. The question was, what kind of material were they building? As to this, the apostle utters a much needed warning.

He mentions six different materials. (1) GOLD. This speaks of what is essentially divine. To unfold the revelation that God has given of Himself, His heart and nature disclosed in the gospel; His purposes for the glory of Christ in connection with the church through the ages to come; His love, His righteousness, His wisdom, His power, His gracious work, His faithful dealings—all this is pure gold. He who builds the knowledge of God, revealed in Christ, so that saints get to know and understand Him better, builds *gold* into the structure of God's house.

(2) SILVER. At the beginning of this book we remarked that this is a well-known symbol of redemption. To teach saints the meaning of the death of Christ, to lead them into the far-reaching results of His sacrificial work, to establish them firmly on the ground of His atonement, and to enlighten them as to all that is theirs in virtue of His precious blood, is to build *silver* into their souls.

(3) PRECIOUS STONES. These, shining and reflecting the light, speak of the beauties and excellencies of Christ reproduced in His saints. The bride of the Lamb, viewed as a city in Revelation 21, was seen by John “gar-nished with all manner of precious stones.” To minister Christ in His attractiveness after such a manner that hearts are drawn after Him, and through companionship with Himself something of His character is reproduced in His people—this is to build *precious stones*.

But the apostle also mentions materials of a vastly inferior character. He speaks of building,

(4) WOOD. Now wood is useful for the temporary framework of a building. In Haggai’s day the people were bidden: “Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house” (Haggai 1: 8). What answers to this in connection with our building today is anything that may be useful for a time, but is only of transient value. It will not last for eternity. Ministry on “the topics of the day” may sometimes be opportune, but it is very combustible material. Wood is larger in bulk than gold or silver, but it is soon burned up.

(5) HAY. This is fine stuff for feeding animals, but worse than useless as building material. It was once my misfortune at a conference to have to listen to “ministry” on the sizes and weights of the stars, their distances from

one another and from the earth, all very interesting in its place, and quite entertaining to unsaved people, who need no help from the Holy Spirit in order to understand it. What is there in such stuff for the souls of God's children? It is mere hay, good for certain beasts, but utterly unsuitable for use as material in God's building.

(6) STUBBLE. This is absolutely valueless material, and nobody but a rogue would introduce it into any structure that is being erected. The beautiful memorial arch of the Leland Stanford University, California, appeared to be so solidly built that it might last for a millenium. But the earthquake that shattered San Francisco flung it down. It was then discovered that the foundation was just stubble: it was erected on loose, worthless material.

"Let every man take heed how he buildeth," says the apostle. What gives additional force to the exhortation is the fact that, whatever we build, it is *on the foundation already laid*. Think of building wood, hay and stubble where *Christ* has been built into people's souls!

The Spirit of God, through Paul, reveals the fact that "the day," that is, the day of Christ, shall be "revealed by fire," and that the work of every builder will be tested by that fire. Gold, silver and precious stones are of small bulk, proportionately to their value, but they pass through the fire unscathed. Wood, hay

and stubble occupy much space and loom large to the eye of the observer, but how soon they are utterly consumed by the flames!

According to verses 14-17 of 1 Cor. 3 there are three kinds of builders, and "the day" will disclose to which class each workman belongs.

(1) The saved builder who does good work. He builds with good material. Upon the foundation that is already laid in the soul of every redeemed man or woman he lays "gold, silver, precious stones." "God's building" derives value from his ministry. What he builds into the structure abides for eternity. And "if any man's work abide which he hath built there-upon, *he shall receive a reward.*"

(2) The saved builder who does bad work. He misuses his opportunities for ministering Christ and the great things of God to the souls of His children and talks about things of no spiritual value whatever. He may make "converts" and introduce them into the assembly, but they are his converts, not God's. The assembly is weakened by their presence. It no longer is fresh and powerful like a swift-flowing river. It becomes big and superficial, like a morass. This is the result of the work of the builder who builds with "wood, hay, stubble." It will be all burned up "in that day." As for the builder himself: "*he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire.*"

(3) The unsaved workman, who does not really set his hand to building at all, but simply corrupts or defiles God's temple. Notice the change of words. "God's building" (ver. 9) is now called "the temple of God" (ver. 17), in order to emphasize the fact of its *holiness*. The children of God are His temple. Even their bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19), but in 1 Cor. 3 they are spoken of collectively as the one temple of God, in which His Spirit dwells. Think of a man defiling this! Yet this is what is done when evil men preach their wicked doctrines, propagate their false cults and seduce Christians from the truth.

What will happen to such "dogs," "evil workers," as Paul calls them elsewhere? (Phil. 3:2). "If any man defile the temple of God, *him shall God destroy*." He will be visited with the doom that his wicked work deserves.

Let every workman in God's building give earnest heed, therefore, to how he builds and the kind of material that he uses.

Mercy

Sometimes a conscientious Christian, seeking to please the Lord, is oppressed with a sense of his shortcomings. He sighs: "How can I expect to get a reward? All that I do is marked by imperfection. There are mixed motives, and I have to mourn over frequent failures."

For the comfort of such, may I call attention to the fact that while righteousness will see to it that no "work and labor of love" is forgotten (Heb. 6: 10), there will be something besides righteousness at the judgment-seat of Christ. *Mercy* will be there. "Also unto Thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy, for Thou renderest to every man according to his work" (Ps. 62: 12). Many of us might well wonder how we could receive a reward, were it not that mercy will put its best construction on our poor service. Indeed, if it were not for such mercy who is there among us that could gain a reward? Is not *all* our service marked by imperfection? Do we not *all* omit things that we should do? Do we not *all* discover mixed motives often underlying our actions? If strict righteousness alone were to review our lives, how could a reward be given to any one of us?

But the Lord renders to every man according to his work because there is mercy, as well as righteousness, with Him.

Let the story of that dear servant of Christ, Onesiphorus, illustrate this for us. He arrived at Rome during Paul's final imprisonment, and of course enquired where he was. It appears that no one, not even the brethren, could tell him. No doubt the apostle was moved from one prison to another, so that the brethren had lost touch with him. It almost appears as if some of them were ashamed of having as their

leader and chief spokesman a man in chains, charged with some crime, and awaiting his sentence in gaol.

But Onesiphorus was not a Christian of this sort. He "was not ashamed of my chain," says Paul, "but when he was in Rome he sought me out very diligently and found me." We can picture Onesiphorus going from prison to prison making enquiries, and pursuing his search till at last he found his beloved friend. He was permitted to visit him, which he did again and again, for Paul says: "He *oft* refreshed me." Then he significantly adds: "The Lord grant unto him that he may find MERCY of the Lord in that day" (2 Tim. 1:18).

If such a dear, faithful man as Onesiphorus will need mercy of the Lord in the day of Review at the judgment-seat, how much more will the reader and writer of these pages need it! Thank God, it will be there for us, and because of this the Lord will graciously render to us and to every one, according to our work.

The Kingdom

In this connection we may consider another question that is sometimes asked. Since the coming kingdom (during the Millennium) is to be the sphere of recognition and reward, will *all* believers have part in it? What about the builder who suffers the loss of all that he has wrought, whose work is all burned up?

We believe that the answer to the question is this: There will be some who will fill positions of honor in the kingdom; some (to use the language of the Parable of the Pounds) "over five cities," and some "over ten cities." But others will be there on the ground of sovereign mercy alone.

It will be remembered how Jonathan, knowing that David was to ascend the throne, bespoke the chief place in the kingdom, next to the king himself. But when David's day came, Jonathan was lying dead on the battlefield of Gilboa. His devotion, up to a point, was noble, but it did not go to the length of wholehearted identification. While David was an outcast, Jonathan clung to the court and the palace. And when David became king his life was over.

One of David's first acts was to enquire if there were no relative of his dead friend to whom he might show kindness for Jonathan's sake. The case of Mephibosheth was brought to his notice, a miserable cripple, placed for shelter in the house of one Machir, at Lo-debar. David sent for him, showed him such kindness that no name could be found for it but "the kindness of God," and gave him a place for life in his household.

So Jonathan, in this way, *was* in the kingdom, represented by his poor, cripple son, who enjoyed his place there by the sovereign, undeserved mercy of the king. Will some of us

have a place in the kingdom on the same ground? It may be so. Yet one can hardly conceive of any real Christian living a life so barren of good that there will be *nothing* to reward at the judgment-seat. In the Parable of the Sower, in every instance where the seed fell upon good ground there was *some* fruit, not always an hundredfold; in some cases not even sixtyfold, but never less than thirtyfold (Matt. 13: 8). When there was no fruit at all, it was because the seed had fallen "by the wayside," "upon stony places," or "among thorns." We are justified, therefore, in saying that entire absence of fruit proves the one whose life is under consideration to be no Christian at all. Such a one will assuredly have no part in the kingdom, nor in heaven. The Lord will "appoint him his portion with the unbelievers," for he is an unbeliever himself (Luke 12: 46).

People like this may "for a while believe" (Luke 8: 13), but they "have no root." They only believe like the men of Jerusalem in John 2: 23. It is significantly said of these that, while they "believed in His name," Jesus *did not believe in them*. This is the meaning of the words. "Believe" in verse 23 and "commit" in verse 24 are the same word. The proof that we have truly believed in Christ is that He *commits Himself to us*. Just as Paul and his companions, in Acts 16: 15, showed their confidence in the reality of Lydia's conversion

by committing themselves to her, and going to abide at her house, so the Lord shows His knowledge that our faith is real by making His abode with us. Does Christ dwell with me? Am I really and truly His? Let us challenge ourselves with these wholesome questions.

The judgment-seat of Christ will show how intensely real and practical everything in Christianity is. Woe to us in that day if we have been satisfied with a faith that is merely nominal!

CHAPTER V.—EXPLANATORY

It is usual to clear the ground by making the necessary explanations before developing one's thesis. But the object of this book is not so much to make things clear to the reader as to exercise his conscience and stir up desires within his soul. Lack of spiritual ambition is a terrible blight upon the lives of numbers of Christians. It was the God-given aim of Paul to make others as "ambitious" as he was himself to be acceptable to the Lord. We have already noted this, in our study of 2 Corinthians 5.

So we have kept our explanations for the last chapter. They are needed, because some fail to distinguish between the judgment-seat of Christ and other sessions of judgment of which we read in the New Testament. There is confusion in the minds of many with regard to the whole subject of future judgment.

The Lord speaks of His coming as Son of Man in Matt. 25:31. All nations will be gathered before Him, and He will decide who among them shall inherit the kingdom and who shall be banished into everlasting punishment. There are those who have given evidence of their fear of God by befriending His (Jewish) people whom the King calls His brethren (compare 2

Sam. 19: 12). In the period called "the end of the age" cruel waves of anti-Semitism will threaten to engulf those of the King's brethren who have turned in repentance to Him. But some among the nations will show them kindness and will reap their reward in the kingdom.

There is, in Revelation 20: 11-15, another vivid description of a judgment scene. Earth and heaven have fled away, and the dead are summoned to stand before God. Death yields up their bodies, hades delivers up their souls, and all are brought before a Great White Throne to be judged according to their works, all recorded in books of unerring truth.

Does the reader see many resemblances between the two judgment scenes depicted in Matthew 25 and Revelation 20? The *differences* between them are striking.

The first takes place at the coming of the Son of Man to establish His kingdom; the second when that kingdom has rolled on its course for a thousand years.

The first concerns the nations living on earth when Christ appears in glory; the second has to do only with the dead.

The first judgment takes place on the earth; the second after earth and heaven have disappeared.

At the first the question for adjudication is how those summoned for judgment have treated

the King's brethren; at the second the one question is the works of those who stand there. What is recorded in the books?

At the first, the sentence is diverse: some are blessed and some are punished; at the second *all* who appear before that throne of dazzling whiteness, their names never having been entered in the book of life, the register of the living ones, are cast into the lake of fire.

Some one may say: "I cannot but see that there are these differences as to time, place, persons, causes of judgment and sentence. But my question is: At which of the two will *Christians* appear?"

The answer is: At neither the one nor the other. There was a day when *our* sins came up in remembrance before God. They were all before His face; not one was forgotten (Hos. 7:2). And He laid them all upon Christ (Isa. 53:6). The punishment due to us was borne by our Saviour, and as a result of this God, having remembered our sins when He laid them upon our suffering Surety, declares that He will remember them no more (Heb. 10:17). Not only is there "no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1), but there is no judgment for us.

A man may be charged with some offence against the laws of the land and be put upon his trial. His innocence is proved and he is acquitted. But, though not condemned, he has

been brought into judgment, and his case has been gone into. Turn to John 5:24. Before reading it, let me point out that the word translated "condemnation" is the very same word that the Lord used in verses 22 and 27 and which is there rendered "judgment." The force of verse 24 is largely destroyed though this practice of translating the same Greek word in a passage by different English words. Let us read verse 24 remembering this: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, *and shall not come into judgment*; but is passed from death unto life."

The Christian's judgment day, therefore, is already passed. That is, his sins have received the judgment due to them and, though all that he has said and done will assuredly be shown him, he will never be put into the dock, so to speak, to be judged for his sins.

Through the death and resurrection of Christ we are already, in this world, "as He is" (1 John 4:17). This gives us holy boldness when we think of the day of judgment. The perfect love that led God to give His Son to die for us casts out all our fear, so that the torment with which fear of the future once filled our hearts is banished from them for ever. Instead of tormenting fear, grateful love springs up within us, and "we love Him, because He first loved us."

The fact remains that "every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rom. 14:12). But when we are called to do this we shall already have been clothed with our resurrection bodies, "like unto His (Christ's) glorious body" (Phil. 3:21). There is, therefore, no need to fear that we are to be judged for the sins that have been atoned for by our Saviour.

This does not rob the judgment-seat of any of its solemnity. A tremendous loss is going to be suffered by some. With some of us this is already inevitable. We may obtain, with God's gracious help, an ample reward for what we have done on certain days and for what we may yet be enabled to do. But days that we have spent for self, without a thought of God, are gone beyond recall. When those days come up for review, the result must be a dead loss. Nothing that we can now do can make any difference in that respect. The thought of it should stimulate us to make the utmost of the days that remain to us.

A certain Christian dreamed that he saw an angel, who went into a vault, bringing back a crown of marvelous beauty, blazing with diamonds. He said: "This was the crown that was designed for you when you were young, but you held back in those days from laying your life wholly at the feet of your Lord. That crown is gone forever." The angel went away and returned with a plainer crown, still beauti-

ful, but with far fewer jewels. He said: "This was designed for you in middle age, but you gave your days then to pursuits of earth and to a low level life, and it is gone." A third time the angel went and returned with a plain circlet, without a single jewel, saying: "This is all you can get now, for eternity."

See to it, "that no man take THY crown" (Rev. 3: 11).

APPENDIX

The Saints Saluted in Romans 16

It is stated on page 51 that the saints to whom the apostle sends his greetings and many of whom he lovingly commends in this chapter are with great probability thought to be Ephesian, not Roman Christians. The chief reasons for this conclusion are as follows:

(1) Paul, at the time of writing the Epistle to the Romans, had never been to the imperial city. Yet he greets the brethren and sisters whom he names as dear friends. It is unlikely that so many in a strange city would be intimately known to the apostle. When we remember that he had spent three years at Ephesus our cause for surprise is removed if we regard the sixteenth chapter as a letter of commendation for Phœbe, attached to the copy of the Epistle made by Tertius for the Ephesian church.

(2) It is far more likely that Phœbe would be going on business to the comparatively near-by city of Ephesus (less than 300 miles) than on what was then a costly, difficult and dangerous voyage to Rome.

(3) Priscilla and Aquila had been driven from Rome by the Imperial edict banishing the Jews from that city. The edict was subsequently withdrawn, but there is no evidence that our two friends returned. They settled at Ephesus, and both the subsequent references to them in the Epistles indicate that they were still there.

(4) Epænetus was the firstfruits of Asia (R.V.) unto Christ. Ephesus was the chief city of the province of Asia, and was the first center where Paul preached. He was therefore an Ephesian. If Paul had been writing to Roman Christians, there would have been no object in mentioning that Epænetus was the first convert in Asia. To Ephesian saints the point would be of great interest.

(5) Mary had bestowed much labor on the apostle. Then she must have been living in some place where he had been. It could not, therefore, have been Rome, for he had not been there.

(6) The same argument applies to the mother of Rufus. She had been like a mother to Paul. This implies that her home was in a city where he had stayed, and not at Rome.

(7) Rufus is mentioned in Mark 15:21 as the brother of Alexander. Three times (Acts 19:33; 1 Tim. 1:20; 2 Tim. 4:14) an Alexander is named *in connection with Ephesus*. Whether it is in each case the brother of Rufus

that is referred to does not affect the argument, as long as the probability is allowed that in at least one passage his brother is indicated.

(8) Rome is a European city, Ephesus an oriental one. The kiss of salutation mentioned in verse 10 is an eastern mode of greeting, not one practised at Rome, though Italians today kiss each other.

(9) In Ephesians 3:3 Paul remarks that he had already written a few brief words about "the mystery," and he supposes (ver. 4) that the readers of his Epistle had read, or could read them. We are at a loss to know where these words are to be found unless in Rom. 16:25,26. It is more than likely, therefore, that these verses formed part of a communication sent to Ephesus.

The cumulative force of these nine proofs makes the conclusion irresistible that the sixteenth chapter was an appendix, added to the copy of the Epistle to the Romans that was sent by the hand of Phœbe to the saints at Ephesus.

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