

# THE LOVE OF GOD

by

I. A. Sadler

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**Other Books by Dr I A Sadler**

"Mystery, Babylon the Great" - The Church of Rome and the European Union exposed to the light of truth. (288 pages)

"Jesus, the Way" - Walking in the way of salvation, turning neither to the right hand nor to the left. (81 pages)

## **FOREWORD**

*by Pastor G D Buss  
Old Baptist Chapel, Chippenham, England*

No greater or sweeter subject can ever occupy the mind of a believer than the love of God. This is the fulness of joy in heaven above, and should be the delight of saints below.

The author has sought to set down simply some of the aspects of this unfathomable love, tracing its streams flowing from each Person of the Trinity, particularly as displayed in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Redeemer. It is a spiritually revealed and saving knowledge of these sacred truths that bring into sweet focus the doctrines of grace in the heart of a saved sinner, enabling him to join with the poet:

"Why was I made to hear Thy voice,  
And enter while there's room;  
When thousands make a wretched choice,  
And rather starve than come ?"

'Twas the same love that spread the feast  
That sweetly forced us in;  
Else we had still refused to taste,  
And perished in our sin.

(Watts)

May it please the Holy Spirit, that many who read these pages will by His teaching be able to echo the same language from their hearts.

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**PREFACE**

Since the publication of "*Jesus, the Way*" many readers have enquired whether we are writing another book. However, the author acutely feels the need of the Lord's approbation in such a venture. If there is to be any blessing, it can only come through the powerful work of the Holy Spirit in the heart and life of the reader. It is humbling to realise this. The Lord's words are clear; "without Me ye can do nothing." (John 15. 5) But there is that wonderful promise, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." (Philippians 4. 13)

There have been many testimonies from both home and abroad, that the Lord has graciously answered the author's poor prayers concerning "*Jesus, the Way*". In laying these matters prayerfully before the Lord, we felt the application of the spiritual promise: "Let Asher be blessed with children; let him be acceptable to his brethren, and let him dip his foot in oil. Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be." (Deuteronomy 33. 24-25) Therefore, we venture to write once more, seeking the honour and glory of God.

The burden on our spirit is to write about the love of God, especially as displayed in sending His only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to lay down His life upon the cross. "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5. 8) Divine love melts the hard heart and brings repentance and reconciliation with God. Even a glimpse by faith of the love of Jesus refreshes the soul burdened by sin and the troubles of this life. Those sad disputes between fellow believers are also dispelled in a moment, when the Holy Spirit descends with power in the church and reveals the Redeemer's love.

## *Preface*

This book can only touch upon such an immense and glorious subject; but there is a fulness in the Lord Jesus Christ, the living head of the church. "And of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." (John 1. 16) It is in Jesus that our hope lies. May the reader be led by the Holy Spirit to pray earnestly to the Lord for the blessing spoken of by the psalmist David; "Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." (Psalm 16. 11)

It is particularly to African brethren that this book is dedicated. Some of the brethren we know personally and have felt a bond of love in the Lord Jesus Christ, but there are many others that are unknown. Nevertheless whether known or unknown to us, each is known of God; and we pray the book will be made a blessing by the power of Holy Spirit.

## *Scripture References*

Quotations from the Bible are taken from the Authorised King James Version of 1611. This is not from some feeling of tradition or sentimentality. The author used various modern versions as a young man. However, none had the accuracy of translation, the spiritual savour and the divine grandeur of the Authorised Version.

Any reader wishing to know more on this subject is referred to the meticulous and scholarly work by Dr E Hills "*The King James Version Defended*" (4th Edition, ISBN 0-91592300-9) and to the Trinitarian Bible Society, Tyndale House, Dorset Road, London, SW19 3NN, England.

**CHAPTER 1**

***THE PURE AND HOLY LOVE OF GOD***

***What is Love ?***

It is a feature of this fallen and sinful world that the lips and minds of men are filled with the word "love". But how many know its true meaning ? As we view current events, the world is seemingly like the days of Noah when "the earth was filled with violence." (Genesis 6. 11) To the believing eye of faith these things are the signs of the last times. Jesus spoke thus of His second coming in glory; "And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. ... Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed." (Luke 17. 26-27, 30)

It is fundamental to our subject to understand what is meant by "love". The dictionary may rightly define it as "an intense feeling of deep affection"; but we then read of other definitions that speak not of true love, but of sinful lust. The "love" spoken of by the world is not the same as that of the Bible, the holy word of God.

Let us now turn to the word of God, for it is there that the truth is found. May we beseech the Holy Spirit to open up our understanding of the scriptures and bestow a rich eternal blessing upon us. It is only in this way that we shall gain a right view of God and His dealings with mankind. Let us therefore take careful heed to what the Lord has revealed in the scriptures about love.

The apostle John, the disciple who especially knew the love of the

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Lord Jesus, wrote as follows. "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation [i.e. atonement or appeasement] for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us." (1 John 4. 7-12)

Thus we see the profound definition, "God is love". The perfect display of love is only to be found in God, His divine attributes and the sending forth of His only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

### *The Eternal and Irresistible Love of God*

We have asked, what is love ? This leads us to the greatest of all questions; namely, who is God ? To understand the answer to this vital question, let us search the scriptures. Unless we know Him, as revealed to us personally by the Holy Spirit, we have no sure hope or foundation of salvation. James solemnly warns, "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble." (James 2. 19) Well may this apply to many who casually take upon their lips the name of the Lord, but whose lives display their utter ignorance of Him and the divinely ordered way of salvation.

The triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is before all things. The Bible begins with the words, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." (Genesis 1. 1) Speaking of the Word, who is the eternal Son of God, the apostle John likewise opens his gospel; "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and

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the Word was God." (John 1. 1) Not only is the Lord God before all things, but He is infinite and eternal. His name is "I AM THAT I AM". (Exodus 3. 14)

As the Lord God is eternal, so is His love from everlasting to everlasting, without beginning or without end. This is set forth by the prophet Jeremiah; "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." (Jeremiah 31. 3) Thus we read that His love precedes any love that the church has unto God. "We love Him, because He first loved us." (1 John 4. 19)

Not only is the Lord eternal, but He is the sovereign Creator who accomplishes all His eternal purposes. (Isaiah 14. 27 and 46. 9-11, Daniel 4. 34-35) Therefore, the love of God is all powerful and irresistible. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power." (Psalm 110. 3)

Let us contrast this with the love of man, which is often frustrated and spent in vain. A man may love his child, but the child rejects its father's love; a man may fall in love with a woman, but those feelings of love are not returned. However, it is not so with God, who draws each redeemed sinner by His all powerful love. The Lord Jesus declared, "No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day." (John 6. 44) Therefore, the church cries out by faith, "Draw me, we will run after Thee." (Song of Solomon 1. 4)

In drawing a sinner to Himself, the Lord God shines into the heart. The apostle Paul wrote; "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Corinthians 4. 6) There is no darkness when the love of God is shed abroad in our heart. "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all."

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(1 John 1. 5) It is only as God shines forth in love, that a sinner sees and understands the love of God. The Psalmist praises the Lord thus; "For with Thee is the fountain of life: in Thy light shall we see light. O continue Thy lovingkindness unto them that know Thee." (Psalm 36. 9-10)

### *The Holiness of God in His Love*

But does the Lord shine forth into the heart and enlighten all men who have ever lived ? Does God love all mankind equally ? For many these are difficult questions, but the Lord has not left us without an answer in the scriptures.

The Lord Jesus spoke thus in the Sermon on the Mount: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." (Matthew 5. 44-45) God as Creator shows kindness, care and provision to all; but this is not the saving love that will never cease in eternity.

Man's love may overlook faults and fail to recognise that which is sinful in those who are dear. However, God is perfectly holy and must punish sin, which is transgression of His holy law. (1 John 3. 4) Furthermore, God is true (Deuteronomy 32. 4), righteous (Ezra 9. 15), pure (Habakkuk 1. 13) (1 John 3. 3) and holy. (Leviticus 11. 44) (1 Peter 1. 15-16) He is jealous with a holy jealousy. (Exodus 34. 14) The psalmist David wrote; "For Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with Thee. The foolish shall not stand in Thy sight: Thou hatest all workers of iniquity." (Psalm 5. 4-5)

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If the psalmist ended here there would be no hope for any, since "there is none righteous, no, not one:" and "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." (Romans 3. 10, 23) But David goes on to speak of God's mercy and a righteousness not his own. "I will come into Thy house in the multitude of Thy mercy: and in Thy fear will I worship toward Thy holy temple. Lead me, O Lord, in Thy righteousness." (Psalm 5. 7-8) Likewise in another Psalm we read, "Deliver me in Thy righteousness." (Psalm 71. 2)

It was these truths that were so greatly blessed to Martin Luther in the monastery. He had been taught the holiness of God; he saw the desperate evils of his own heart, and the sentence of death that has come upon all men since the fall of man. (Genesis 2-3) Luther strove hard to make amends and to establish his own righteousness, almost to the point of killing himself by self-imposed hardships. However, it was of no avail, until the Holy Spirit revealed to him that the righteousness he sought was to be found in God by faith. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." (Ephesians 2. 8-10)

The love of God cannot be displayed without satisfying divine justice and punishment for sin. God would have been just if He had condemned all the race of fallen man to eternal punishment in hell. But blessed be His holy name, He has purposed to save those the scripture refers to as the "elect". (1 Peter 1. 2, Titus 1. 1, Mark 13. 27) This is not on account of any goodness in them, but because the Lord in love would choose the vilest of sinners to display His great mercy. (1 Timothy 1. 15) When the Lord proclaimed His name to Moses, He declared; "The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression

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and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." (Exodus 34. 6-7)

Paul also writes to the Romans of the love of God to His chosen people being distinct to His dealings with others of the human race. "When Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. What shall we say then ? Is there unrighteousness with God ? God forbid. For He saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." (Romans 9. 10-16)

Just as it is a divinely revealed truth that the love of God is sovereign, so it is also a divine commandment to the church that the gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ is to be preached (but not offered) to all, whether they will hear or not. Woe unto that man who would seek to restrain the open declaration of the gospel to sinners, for it is God's appointed means ! "He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap. As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all. In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good." (Ecclesiastes 11. 4-6)

***God is Faithful***

As the Lord is sovereign in His love, so is He unchangeable in His covenant set forth in the Bible. The everlasting covenant of grace

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that God has made with man is fixed. The Lord spoke through the Psalmist; "My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of My lips." (Psalm 89. 34) Likewise, it is written; "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." (Malachi 3. 6) Built upon this divine truth is the faithfulness of God. "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is Thy faithfulness. The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in Him." (Lamentations 3. 22-23) As the Lord changes not, so is His love unchangeable.

What a mercy it is when these truths are applied to the heart by the Holy Spirit in the midst of trial or affliction ! These truths are the foundation of a believer's hope for eternal salvation. Whilst through sin and unbelief we are often tossed up and down in our feelings, being subject to many passions, temptations and trials that seem at times to cast doubt on everything; yet the Lord changes not. How we need to pray for an increase of faith to lay hold of the great and precious promises, and to be given the clear spiritual sight of the poet.

God moves in a mysterious way  
His wonders to perform;  
He plants His footsteps in the sea,  
And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines  
Of never-failing skill,  
He treasures up His bright designs,  
And works His sovereign will.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;  
The clouds ye so much dread  
Are big with mercy, and shall break  
In blessings on your head.

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Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,  
But trust Him for His grace;  
Behind a frowning providence  
He hides a smiling face.

His purposes will ripen fast,  
Unfolding every hour;  
The bud may have a bitter taste,  
But sweet will be the flower.

Blind unbelief is sure to err,  
And scan His work in vain;  
God is His own interpreter,  
And He will make it plain.

(Cowper)

*The Old and the New Covenant*

But we must return to consider further the "everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure." (2 Samuel 23. 5) This leads us more particularly into the theme which must be the joy of every believer, namely the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God.

The apostle Paul speaks of the two great covenants that God has made with man (Galatians 4. 24-26); the first is from mount Sinai, commonly known as the law of Moses and summarised in the Ten Commandments. Moses "took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient." (Exodus 24. 7) We read that "Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them." (Romans 10. 5 citing Leviticus 18. 5)

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Yet it is a profound truth that no fallen man can follow the holy law; and transgression of the law is sin. (1 John 3. 4) This is particularly searching when one considers that even "the thought of foolishness is sin." (Proverbs 24. 9) It is by the law that we know what sin is. However, the Lord has set forth a new and living covenant: "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." (Jeremiah 31. 33-34 and cited in Hebrews 8. 10-12)

The new covenant is not dependent on good works, but is of faith. The apostle Paul wrote; "by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." (Romans 3. 20-25)

The Old Testament saints looked forward to the Messiah by faith. Jesus declared, "Abraham rejoiced to see My day: and he saw it, and was glad." (John 8. 56) The sacrifices and ceremonies of the law were a figure of the Lord Jesus and His perfect sacrifice. (Hebrews 9-10) However, the New Testament church is privileged to have that clear revelation of the gospel. (1 Peter 1. 10-13)

The new covenant of grace has this marvellous promise to poor

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sinner; "God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." (Galatians 4. 4-7) Then the keeping of the commandments is done in love through the in-dwelling of the Holy Spirit. The outward and upright walk is a token and a witness that the Lord Jesus Christ is truly known as the Saviour. "And hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments." (1 John 2. 3) This is the perfect law of liberty. (James 1. 25)

### *The Lamb of God*

The law of Moses set forth sacrifices requiring the shedding of blood, without which there was no remission of sin. (Hebrews 9. 22) These sacrifices were types and figures of the Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, slain from the foundation of the world. He is none other than the eternal Son of God, who took into union with His deity a human nature, consisting of a perfect human body and soul, and was born at Bethlehem and named Jesus (meaning "Saviour") by the angel of God. (Matthew 1. 21) This is He who declared to God the Father; "Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of Me, I delight to do Thy will, O my God: yea, Thy law is within my heart." (Psalm 40. 7-8)

The apostle Paul sets forth that the Lord Jesus Christ is the express image and revelation of God. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds; Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He

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had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." (Hebrews 1. 1-3)

God the Father in eternity saw the church redeemed in the Lord Jesus, the eternal Son of God, by the everlasting covenant. Thus in saving vile fallen sinners there is no change in His love, only a manifestation and revelation of it by God the Holy Spirit. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: ... In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." (Ephesians 1. 3-4, 7)

It is in Jesus Christ that love and mercy, righteousness and justice are all fulfilled. "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." (Psalm 85. 10) Therefore it is the Lord Jesus, His life and especially His death and resurrection that is the grand theme and focus of our meditations. The poet expresses it thus.

What is love ? My soul would answer,  
Nought deserves the endearing name  
But the God of love, the Saviour,  
Whose dear heart's a constant flame.

View Him prostrate in the garden,  
Wet His locks with dews of night,  
Grappling with the powers of darkness,  
Sweating blood, amazing sight !

Hear His groans, till He, expiring,  
Cries triumphant, "It is done;"  
Bearing all the wrathful anger  
Which to us was due alone.

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What is love ? My soul would echo  
With the saints in heaven above,  
Who, through Jesus, gone to glory,  
Sing in concert, "This is love !"

(Zion's Trumpet, 1838)

This is the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which is to be preached throughout the world. (Mark 16. 15) It is Jesus to whom His redeemed and beloved people bear witness of so great a salvation. Therefore, let us meditate upon the love of God as displayed in the Lord Jesus Christ, praying in faith that the Holy Spirit will shine powerfully into our hearts. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3. 16)

**CHAPTER 2**

***JESUS, THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD***

***Emmanuel - God with us***

To the comfort of the Old Testament saints, the Holy Spirit gave testimony in the scriptures to the Messiah, the Saviour of the world. The coming of the Lord Jesus was expressed by the prophet Isaiah. "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." (Isaiah 9. 6) Thus when the angel of the Lord appeared unto Joseph in a dream, he declared, "fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name JESUS: for He shall save His people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet [Isaiah 7. 14], saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." (Matthew 1. 20-23)

The eternal Son of God, the second Person of the Trinity, took a human nature into union with the eternal divine nature. Thus He was both the Son of Man and the Son of God. He was born of the lineage of King David; and so was David's son, yet the one whom David looked forward to by faith as his Lord and Saviour.

***The Grace and Humility of the Lord Jesus***

Although the Lord Jesus was born of the descendants of King David, He was not born into a royal palace, but in a stable. There was no

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room at the inn for the Lord Jesus. Even from His birth, the Lord Jesus walked in a pathway of rejection in fulfilment of prophecy; "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." (Isaiah 53. 3) The apostle John declares, "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." (John 1. 10-11)

Behold the love and humility of the Lord Jesus ! Although He was the very Creator, the "Mighty God" (Isaiah 9. 6), He came to be born in poverty in Bethlehem. He knew the world of sin, sorrow and grief into which He would come. He was subject to earthly parents (Luke 2. 51) and lived in obscurity for most of His life.

What amazing grace that the eternal Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, should condescend to dwell with sinful man ! For Jesus is "the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth... . And He is before all things, and by Him all things consist." (Colossians 1. 15-17) Not only did Jesus come to live upon this earth, but He did so knowing the death He would ultimately die for His beloved people ! The apostle Paul declares of Jesus, "who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Hebrews 12. 2)

### ***The Example of the Redeemer's Love***

The Redeemer's love is a glorious example to each and every Christian. May we examine ourselves, that we may be spared from hypocrisy and self-deception. Do we joyfully take a lowly position in His service ? Do we take upon us the yoke of the Lord Jesus, who was meek and lowly in heart ? (Matthew 11. 29) However, we sadly

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prove the hardness of our own hearts. Without the power of the Holy Spirit we are quite unable to overcome our sinful pride. So often we desire to be esteemed highly by our fellow men, and we are most careful to preserve and improve our reputation. But the Lord Jesus, the eternal Son of God, humbled Himself in love and obedience to God the Father.

When by faith we follow His example, what joy and peace there is in our soul ! What heavenly riches of grace and love are revealed to our soul by the Holy Spirit ! But what is the outcome when the Spirit is grieved and we are left to our own spirit and self-will in the churches ? What damage is done in the churches by those who love to have the preeminence ! Thus the witness of ministers, elders and whole churches is brought into disgrace. When Christians seek to devour one another, walking in the path of defaming and whispering, do they walk with the Lord Jesus ? When our sights are on the faults of others, or when we relish to hear a minister eloquently destroying the name of other Christians, do we enjoy a soul refreshing union with the Redeemer ?

The devil delights to see Christians attacking each other and bringing the churches into ruin and spiritual poverty. The sinful heart may bring forward all sorts of justification for acting in this way, such as standing fast in the truth and defending denominational tradition. However, we should solemnly remember that we can easily mistake the way. The Holy Spirit will not guide a Christian into pride contrary to the holy word of God. If we think we have spiritual direction into such paths of contention, this spiritual direction is not of God the Holy Spirit, but is a temptation of the devil to vain-glory.

Let us contrast this with the Lord Jesus. The apostle Paul wrote: "If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one

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accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." (Philippians 2. 1-8)

When each heart is taken up with Jesus, strife and division will cease. The poet expresses the truth most succinctly.

When is it Christians all agree,  
And let distinctions fall ?  
When, nothing in themselves, they see  
That Christ is all in all.

But strife and difference will subsist  
While men will something seem;  
Let them but singly look to Christ  
And all are one in Him.

(Hart)

In writing this we do not mean that Christians should compromise the truth, nor that church discipline should be neglected. However, even discipline is to be applied in love. The desire of the church and every Christian should be that an offending brother or sister might be restored. (2 Corinthians 2 and 7)

***The Temptation***

We must now return to consider the entry of the Lord Jesus into His earthly ministry. After many years in obscurity, the time came that He should come forth openly in Israel and be baptized by John the Baptist. "Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art My beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased. ... And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, Being forty days tempted of the devil." (Luke 3. 21-22, 4. 1-2)

Let us observe the love of Jesus in that He was willing to be tempted by the devil, that He might deliver His people from the temptations of the evil one. Although Jesus was made like unto His brethren, He was sinless. He did not have a human father by generation, for the Holy Ghost overshadowed the womb of the virgin Mary. (Luke 1. 35) He was not subject to the corruption of Adam's race, but He was the only begotten Son of God. Nevertheless, Jesus was "touched with the feeling of our infirmities" and "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." (Hebrews 4. 15)

What an unspeakable comfort this is to His people ! Jesus has gone before them in temptation and triumphed over the adversary, the devil. When we sink under the suggestions and enticements of the devil, feeling that our sinful hearts must succumb and that we must surely fall into gross evil and disgrace, then let us by faith look unto Jesus. By virtue of the union between Jesus and His beloved people, we shall finally triumph over the devil.

May we plead this eternal truth and beseech the Holy Spirit to grant a fresh anointing. May we also be given in the furnace of affliction,

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temptation or trial, that clear view the psalmist David had of God's everlasting love, and thus to trust in Him. "Unto Thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul. O my God, I trust in Thee: let me not be ashamed, let not mine enemies triumph over me. Yea, let none that wait on Thee be ashamed: let them be ashamed which transgress without cause. Shew me Thy ways, O Lord; teach me Thy paths. Lead me in Thy truth, and teach me: for Thou art the God of my salvation; on Thee do I wait all the day. Remember, O Lord, Thy tender mercies and Thy lovingkindnesses; for they have been ever of old." (Psalm 25. 1-6)

Thus are we called upon to put on the whole armour of God. We are not called upon to stand once, but to stand time and again whilst in this life. The battle will be fierce, Satan will not give any quarter, but by taking the shield of faith we "shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." We are exhorted to "take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit." (Ephesians 6. 16-18) Our victory is secure, since Jesus in love withstood the violence of Satan on behalf of His beloved people. The poet thus expresses the hope of the church, even in the darkest trials.

In union with the Lamb,  
From condemnation free,  
The saints from everlasting were;  
And shall for ever be.

In covenant from of old,  
The sons of God they were;  
The feeblest lamb in Jesus' fold  
Was blessed in Jesus there.

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Its bonds shall never break,  
Though earth's old columns bow;  
The strong, the tempted, and the weak,  
Are one in Jesus now.

When storms or tempests rise,  
Or sins your peace assail,  
Your hope in Jesus never dies;  
'Tis cast within the veil.

Here let the weary rest,  
Who love the Saviour's name;  
Though with no sweet enjoyments blessed,  
This covenant stands the same.

(Kent)

***The Wilderness Pathway***

May we also note the perfection of God's order. The Lord Jesus was tempted in the wilderness before entering into His earthly ministry. No servant is above his master; therefore those who are called to follow the Lord have to pass through this way.

The Bible records for our instruction how the children of Israel were not permitted to pass straight from Egypt to the promised land of Canaan. They had to travel through the terrible wilderness of Sinai, and only after many years did they pass over Jordan. Moses declared to them on the borders of Canaan; "And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments, or no. And He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that He

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might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live." (Deuteronomy 8. 2-3)

The Israelites are a type of the Christian church. After being brought out of the slavery of sin, the Christian must walk as a stranger and pilgrim in this fallen world, spiritually feeding upon the Lord Jesus Christ, the Bread of heaven sent down from above. Then at death each believer is brought safely into the promised land of heaven. But in this life we prove that "we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." (Acts 14. 22)

We also observe that a time of particular temptation and tribulation usually precedes the calling to any great work in the Lord's service. It was so with Joseph, who was sold into slavery and wrongly imprisoned, before he was suddenly called forth before Pharaoh. Likewise when Moses would have delivered the Israelites, the Lord's will was that Moses must yet spend forty years in the wilderness of Midian before being called forth to lead the Lord's people. But when the Lord's perfect time came, those mountains of opposition were suddenly swept away. The word goes forth in power: "Who art thou, O great mountain ? before Zerubbabel [a type of the Lord Jesus] thou shalt become a plain." (Zechariah 4. 7)

In our own spiritual experience, we may think we know the Lord's will and we seek to step forward in His service; but the Lord's ways are perfect, and we first have to be proved and humbled that we might be made meet for the Master's use. Then we see more clearly that answers to prayer are all of God's grace, and not of ourselves.

***The Miracles***

After the temptation, the Lord Jesus went forth preaching the good news of the kingdom of God. He was no ordinary preacher, nor just a

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prophet. This is testified by the mighty miracles that He performed, which far exceeded those of the Old Testament prophets. The miracles of Jesus showed that He is both God and man. They also testify of His love and compassion.

There are many examples in the scriptures, but let us first consider the case of Lazarus, whose sisters sent unto Jesus "saying, Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick." (John 11. 3) The Lord Jesus knew all about Lazarus' sickness: "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." (John 11. 4) Yet the Lord delayed His arrival at Bethany until after Lazarus had lain in the grave four days.

When Jesus came to Bethany, He showed such tender compassion, love and sympathy to Mary and Martha. The Lord Jesus as the Son of man wept at the tomb. Then He displayed His Godhead, when He called Lazarus forth from the dead in front of many witnesses.

Let us meditate upon this a little. The Lord does not always answer our urgent and fervent petitions in the way or timing that we might think. But can the Lord of heaven and earth do wrong or be uncaring about our needs ? The answer must be, no. It is for want of faith that these things are puzzling. But to the spiritually enlightened soul, faith lays hold of the promises and believes that God's ways and timing are perfect. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." (Romans 8. 28) What a mercy it is that the Lord yet forgives our sins of unbelief and comes to our aid in ways we least expect ! By the operation of God the Holy Spirit, we are given faith to believe. Then we prove that He supplies our every true need, displaying this in such a way that brings glory and praise to Himself. "As for God, His way is perfect: the word of the Lord is tried: He is a buckler to all those that trust in Him." (Psalm 18. 30)

***Seek ye first the Kingdom of God***

Other miracles of healing displayed His loving care, as well as His divinity. However, the case of the paralytic man sets forth a fundamental principle, that we must seek first "the kingdom of God, and His righteousness." (Matthew 6. 33) Let us then consider this by faith. "And, behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy: and they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before Him. And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop, and let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus. And when He saw their faith, He said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee." (Luke 5. 18-20) When the Pharisees accused the Lord Jesus of blasphemy for declaring forgiveness to a sinner, which God alone can do, the Lord Jesus proved His divinity and authority to forgive all sins. "But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins, (He said unto the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go into thine house." (Luke 5. 24)

Thus we see a greater work than simply the healing of the body; namely, the healing of the soul from the deadly sickness of sin. It is this that brought the Lord Jesus to die upon the cross. Whilst the Lord is gracious to answer the prayer of faith for bodily healing or the provision of our earthly needs, we must beware of looking only for outward miracles that we might enjoy the pleasures or lusts of this life. (James 4. 3)

The Pharisees witnessed many miracles at Jesus' hand, yet they persecuted Him. Others were miraculously fed with the loaves and fishes, but were seeking carnal things. Jesus said to them; "Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled. Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of

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man shall give unto you." (John 6. 26-27) Likewise, the children of Israel were miraculously fed by manna in the wilderness and saw many mighty evidences by the hand of Moses. Yet their "carcases fell in the wilderness" and could not enter into the promised land because of unbelief. (Hebrews 3)

May we be delivered from the hypocrisy of Herod. "And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see Him of a long season, because he had heard many things of Him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by Him." (Luke 23. 8) Yet when Herod saw the suffering silent Redeemer, he was offended and "set Him at nought." (Luke 23. 11) However, to the believing heart the mighty works of God in our hearts and lives are a token of the Lord's goodness in eternity. Therefore, let us seek by faith the inner work of the Spirit. May we earnestly desire the fruits of the new birth in our lives. How precious in the sight of God is the prayer of a poor sinner in secret pouring out their heart to God. "The publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner." (Luke 18. 13) But the Lord Jesus said that it was this broken-hearted publican that went to his house justified, rather than the proud Pharisee. The Lord is gracious to answer the prayer of repenting sinners. Let us then seek first "the kingdom of God, and His righteousness." (Matthew 6. 33)

### *Miracles of Grace*

It is a great mercy, that whilst Jesus was separate from sin and led a perfect holy life, He is the Friend of sinners. Thus ran the accusation of the proud Pharisees. (Matthew 11. 19) However, Jesus is not the Friend of unrepentant and presumptuous sinners. As the apostle Paul wrote; "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which

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believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." (2 Corinthians 4. 3-4) But His name is Jesus, which means "Saviour"; "for He shall save His people from their sins." (Matthew 1. 21) The Lord Jesus came to seek and to save. Then as God manifest in the flesh, but now by the powerful work of the Holy Spirit, whose blessed office is to reveal the risen Lord Jesus Christ to the soul.

In many places the scriptures set forth how the Lord Jesus had compassion on sinners, but He never condoned their sinful deeds. The love of Jesus powerfully transformed lives, that sinners might henceforth bring honour to God by their holy walk and conversation. The case of Zacchæus (a publican and a notorious sinner) is most striking. "And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchæus, make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at thy house. And he made haste, and came down, and received Him joyfully." (Luke 19. 5-6) And truly did Jesus abide in that house; and not only so, but the Lord abode in Zacchæus' heart by the Holy Spirit. That work of grace immediately brought forth fruit, demonstrating true faith and repentance. "And Zacchæus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke 19. 8-10)

It is the miraculous transformation of lives by God's power that is so needful today. Let us pray that through the preaching of the gospel, we might see God-given sorrow for sin, an earnest plea for forgiveness, and a humble coming to Jesus in faith. Might there be many who not only know that Jesus is the Saviour of sinners, but who have the inward revelation in their heart by the Holy Spirit that Jesus has saved them personally. How we need throughout our lives

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as Christians that witness of God's love and forgiveness in our hearts, and that this glorious light might shine as we walk in newness of life united to Jesus our Lord !

***Love of God revealed Spiritually***

At this point we must observe another important principle, one that serves as a warning. The love of God displayed in the life and death of Jesus is not revealed by pictures, images, statues, plays or films, but is divinely revealed to the heart and understanding by the Holy Spirit. If Christians truly believe in the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ, that He is God the Son, how is it that images and pictures of Jesus are so prevalent ? Truly these things ought not to be ! The Lord strictly forbids images of God in the Ten Commandments. (Exodus 20. 4-5) Moses later explained to the children of Israel, "for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire." (Deuteronomy 4. 15)

To the natural carnal heart the Lord Jesus is "as a root out of a dry ground: He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him." (Isaiah 53. 2) If the church seeks to attract followers by beautiful man-made representations of Jesus, there will be no spiritual depth or solidity. We are to "walk by faith, not by sight." (2 Corinthians 5. 7) The Lord Jesus spoke, after He gave unbelieving Thomas a literal sight of His risen body, "blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." (John 20. 29) Carnal views by sight, and not by faith, will never prosper. The churches will just gain carnal "believers", who worship a false Christ, a man-made image that is not the eternal Son of God. Worldly entertainments, instead of a spiritual gospel ministry, will then be needed to retain the worldly "believer" within church adherence or membership.

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Moses desired to know the Lord's presence and to see the glory of God. Yet his desires were not like the rebellious Israelites, who only saw outward manifestations and miraculous provision for their bodies. The Lord graciously answered Moses' petition for the blessing of his soul: "I will make all My goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; ... Thou canst not see My face: for there shall no man see Me, and live. And the Lord said, Behold, there is a place by Me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock: And it shall come to pass, while My glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with My hand while I pass by." (Exodus 33. 19-22) The rock is a type of the Lord Jesus Christ, from whose pierced side flowed blood and water; blood to atone, and water to cleanse. May we seek a powerful divine revelation of God's love in a spiritual union with Jesus our Saviour. The Lord has promised; "Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." (Matthew 7. 7)

### ***Our Great High Priest***

We must now conclude this chapter with the priestly office of Jesus. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy Him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." (Hebrews 2. 14-17)

In Jesus we see the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy. "Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him

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stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." (Isaiah 53. 4-6) This is to be the grand theme of the following chapters, in which we desire to meditate upon the Lord Jesus, who laid down His life at Calvary for the sins of His beloved people.

Jesus came just where the sinner was, yet He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." (Hebrews 7. 26) He walked out a perfect life, fulfilling the law in humble obedience to His heavenly Father. As the Son of man, He "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." (Matthew 20. 28) The way He trod, led Him to Gethsemane, and then to die as the Lamb of God. This is love beyond human comprehension, but it is blessedly revealed to the heart by the Holy Spirit in answer to prayer.

**CHAPTER 3**

**GETHSEMANE**

***Introduction***

We ended the previous chapter by briefly considering the Lord Jesus as the great High Priest. With this theme in mind, we now come to the last period of Jesus' life. Although it lasted but a day, it is the great focus of the gospel writers, as it is of vital importance to our eternal salvation. If we know nothing of the passion of the Lord Jesus as He passed through Gethsemane, the judgement hall and finally to the cross of Calvary, we can have no true hope of heaven. Nor will a mere head knowledge of these events save us. The passion of the Lord Jesus is not to be viewed casually, as many must have done on that solemn day in Jerusalem, but we need a God-given spiritual understanding. Let us ask ourselves the vital question: have we been shown by faith that Jesus suffered in our place, the just for the unjust? Have we been shown that it was for our sins that Jesus suffered unspeakably and shed His precious blood? May we earnestly pray to the Lord, that we might receive answers of peace to the blessing of our souls.

Let us then proceed by considering that Jesus was not like the high priests under the law of Moses, who offered the blood of beasts both for their own sins and those of the people; but He offered up Himself as the holy Lamb of God. (Hebrews 7. 27) For God the Father made Jesus, the incarnate Son of God, "to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Corinthians 5. 21) Thus shines forth the love of God in all its glory.

***Jesus prays for His People***

After partaking of the last supper with His disciples the Lord Jesus said, "I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God. And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives. And Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of Me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered. But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee." (Mark 14. 25-28)

Until the blessed Spirit had been given, the disciples understood not these things. But let us meditate, as enabled by the Holy Spirit, upon the divine power in the glorious prayer of the Lord Jesus that overcomes all unbelief. Before the Lord Jesus entered Gethsemane, we read that He "lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee: As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him. And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent." (John 17. 1-3) Thus Jesus prays for His beloved church on the eve of laying down His life at Calvary. In so doing the Lord Jesus consecrates Himself as the great High Priest of His people; "for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." (John 17. 19)

The prayer of the Lord Jesus for His beloved people is so expressive of the love of God. The love between the blessed Persons in the Trinity, between God the Father and God the Son, is set forth. The Lord Jesus prays that this would likewise be granted between the elect vessels of mercy and the Triune God. Such prayer from Jesus, the eternal Son of God in whom the Father delights, is heard and answered. "And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are one: I in them, and Thou in me,

### *Gethsemane*

that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me. Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me: for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee: but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent Me. And I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them." (John 17. 22-26)

After speaking these words, Jesus then went forth across the brook Kidron to the Mount of Olives. Let us then behold by faith the entry of the Lord Jesus into Gethsemane. Truly did the apostle John, whom "Jesus loved", write of Jesus: "having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." (John 13. 1)

### *Jesus bears His Peoples' Sins*

It was after the Lord's entry into Gethsemane, the scriptures record that the awful load of sins of the elect were laid upon the blessed Redeemer. "And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane: and He saith to His disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray. And He taketh with Him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy; And saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death." (Mark 14. 32-34) Let us first consider that the very name "Gethsemane" is most expressive, being translated "Olive Press". The poet writes thus.

"Into the garden Jesus came, -  
Gethsemane its pregnant name",  
Which signifies an olive press.  
Ah ! There began His soul's distress,

*Gethsemane*

Salvation's oil extracted thus  
Brings health and life and joy to us !  
(Hallgrímur Pétursson, trans. A Gook)

How beautiful it is to consider the blessings that flow from the Lord's passion, when revealed by the Holy Spirit. Under the law of Moses the children of Israel were commanded to bring unto the Lord for the light of the tabernacle "pure oil olive beaten for the light, to cause the lamps to burn continually." (Leviticus 24. 2) This not only speaks in type of the spotless and holy purity of the Lord Jesus, but the oil flowing from the bruising of the olive signifies the blessings bestowed by the Holy Spirit to the church of God on account of Jesus' atoning sufferings. The very name "Christ" means the "anointed one", anointed to be King and the High Priest of His beloved people. By virtue of the Lord's anointing and His precious atonement, each one of His beloved people receive in their souls "an unction from the Holy One". (1 John 2. 20)

As the Tabernacle was lit by the oil of the olive, so the Lord gloriously fulfils this type. Jesus spake, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." (John 8. 12) The dim light of the candlestick in the earthly Tabernacle is replaced by the divine radiance and glory. The apostle John saw this in his vision of the new Jerusalem: "And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." (Revelation 21. 23)

***Christ's Agony in the Garden***

The sins of the elect being now imputed to the Lord Jesus in His human nature, the Lord bowed down beneath that awful enormity, the sins of every vessel of mercy from Adam until the Lord's second

*Gethsemane*

coming. The Lord Jesus prayed, "Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me: nevertheless not My will, but Thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him. And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly: and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." (Luke 22. 42-44)

The Lord's perfect and sinless human nature shrank from the awful sins of His people laid upon Him; but He was strengthened through that glorious union with His divine nature. Only the Lord Jesus, who was truly God and truly man, divine and human natures in one glorious Person, could have withstood and borne this awful load. The apostle Paul exhorts every believer to look "unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Hebrews 12. 2) The tears, distress and agony of the Lord Jesus, when bearing His peoples' sins, have brought His church joy and peace unspeakable. United to the Lord Jesus, His church is made a partaker of paradise.

Again we quote from the 17th century Icelandic poet Hallgrímur Pétursson, who meditates most profitably upon these truths.

With sorrow's load His soul was bowed  
Beneath the awful judgment cloud  
His human nature, sore distressed,  
No solace found, no peace, no rest.  
"Even to death My soul," He said,  
"Is crushed by sorrow's burden dread."

He went from them a little space,  
Then, falt'ring, fell upon His face.  
His agony like ocean wave  
Swept o'er Him, my vile soul to save.

*Gethsemane*

No tongue can tell, nor mind assess  
The measure of His soul's distress.

My conscience smites me with the thought  
That hereby was my freedom bought.  
'Twas sin of mine that tortured Thee,  
All this Thy suffering was for me !  
Oh, how I grieve that deeds of mine  
Should fill with gall that cup of Thine !

My sin, it seems, has greater weight  
Than all my Lord did e'er create;  
He, by the Word of His great power  
Upholds creation to this hour,  
Yet, bearing all my sin's disgrace,  
He sank in horror on His face.

What confidence, what joy of heart,  
These truths sublime to me impart -  
The ransom paid for me was worth  
More than the wealth of heaven and earth !  
His depth of grief, the pains He bore,  
Absolve my soul for evermore.

(Hallgrímur Pétursson, trans. A Gook)

Yet, alas, in the midst of our Lord's agony, we read of the failure of all His disciples, for they could not watch and pray. This is true of every believer by nature; our sins are as scarlet. But behold the fruits of the Holy Spirit that flow to the church on account of His agony and crucifixion ! In our own strength we can do nothing, but when powerfully wrought upon by the Holy Spirit we can do all things through the Lord Jesus Christ. (Philippians 4. 13)

***I am He***

Swiftly following the Lord's agony in the garden, Judas Iscariot and "a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees" came with "lanterns and torches and weapons." (John 18. 3) It was at the arrest of Jesus that His divine nature as God the Son shone forth openly. "Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon Him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye ? They answered Him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am He. And Judas also, which betrayed Him, stood with them. As soon then as He had said unto them, I am He, they went backward, and fell to the ground." (John 18. 4-6) Although the hearts of Judas and the band of men from the chief priests were so hardened as not to perceive any blessing in those words, "I am He", the poet expresses the comfort that these words convey to God's chosen and beloved people.

Our Lord made answer: "I am He !"  
(Judas was near, His power to see)  
And at His mighty accents' sound  
They all fell prostrate to the ground.  
The very thing that caused their fear  
Is to my soul the greatest cheer,  
And wipes away the falling tear.

If sin's dark cloud should come apace  
And hide from me my Father's face,  
Ah ! Then I hear my Saviour's voice,  
That bids my falt'ring soul rejoice.  
"Behold, poor sinner, I am He,  
Who shed His blood upon the tree,  
That ransom was for such as thee !"

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When sore oppressed by Satan's snares,  
By conscience' sting and inward cares,  
'Tis then my Saviour's voice I hear,  
'Tis then I know that He is near,  
For "I am He !" I hear Him say,  
"Who all thy sins have borne away."  
His precious words my fears allay.

And when in poverty and pain  
I long in feebleness have lain,  
I hear Thee saying: "I am He,  
Whose grace sufficeth e'en for thee.  
My riches 'wait thee, in My store,  
When all thine earthly trials are o'er,  
Yea, pleasures there for evermore !"

And when the call comes to depart  
And be with Christ, I know my heart  
Will hear again those words I love,  
Sounding all other sounds above:  
"My child, behold, for I am He,  
Who has prepared a place for thee;  
There shall also My servant be."

(Hallgrímur Pétursson, trans. A Gook)

Then Jesus spake a most precious word. Although it was immediately directed towards the band of men who had come to arrest Him, there is a much deeper spiritual significance to the beloved people of God who Jesus was to redeem. "Jesus answered, I have told you that I am He: if therefore ye seek Me, let these go their way: That the saying might be fulfilled, which He spake, Of them which Thou gavest Me have I lost none." (John 18. 8-9) This speaks of Jesus standing in the place of His dear people. It is the Man Christ Jesus, not His unworthy people, that bears the wrath of divine justice

### *Gethsemane*

on account of their sins. This divine love on the part of the Lord sets them free and prepares them for glory. How we desire that the Holy Spirit would reveal more of these precious blessings in our own soul ! "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. ... He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." (Revelation 22. 17, 20)

### *Jesus before the Council*

From Gethsemane Jesus was taken to the high priest and set before the Council. When many false accusations were laid against Him, we read that Jesus "held His peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked Him, and said unto Him, Art Thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed ? And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Then the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, What need we any further witnesses ? Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye ? And they all condemned Him to be guilty of death. And some began to spit on Him, and to cover His face, and to buffet Him, and to say unto Him, Prophecy: and the servants did strike Him with the palms of their hands." (Mark 14. 61-65)

It is instructive to observe the hatred shown to Jesus by those in authority. Even at the beginning of Jesus' life, king Herod sought to kill Him who was born the true King of Israel. Although Jesus' kingdom was not of this world, but a glorious heavenly kingdom, the worldly king Herod hated the Lord of Glory, for he feared that Jesus should take his place. Likewise Caiaphas, the earthly high priest, persecuted Jesus, who is the true and eternal High Priest.

Caiaphas did not perceive that Jesus was fulfilling all the types and

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shadows of the law, as his eyes were blind to spiritual things. How different were the words of John the Baptist, when he saw Jesus coming to him. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." (John 1. 29) And again: "He must increase, but I must decrease." (John 3. 30) John the Baptist was a true spiritual son of Abraham, who rejoiced to see by faith the coming of the Lord Jesus. (John 8. 56)

To the outward eye the high priest Caiaphas offered acceptable sacrifices according to all the forms of the law of Moses; but God would have love, truth and mercy, not hypocrisy. (Isaiah 1. 10-15, Malachi 2) In contrast the Lord Jesus offered up Himself an acceptable sacrifice in all things, full of grace, truth and love. Thus it has ever been that those, who only have a form of godliness and make a great boast of their religion, will persecute the Lord's people who faithfully bear witness to the truth in Christ Jesus. "And ye shall be hated of all men for My name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved. ... The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord." (Matthew 10. 22, 24)

### *Peter's Denial and the Lord's almighty Love*

As these terrible deeds were being carried out, Peter followed at a distance into the palace. It was here that Peter was challenged by those who warmed themselves around the fire. "And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not. And about the space of one hour after another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with Him: for he is a Galilæan. And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said unto him, Before the cock crew, thou shalt deny Me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept

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bitterly." (Luke 22. 58-62)

Behold, how a view of the smitten face of the Lord Jesus broke Peter's heart ! Speaking of the Lord Jesus in prophecy, Isaiah wrote; "I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting." (Isaiah 50. 6) What need we have to view the Lord Jesus by faith, that we be given "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Corinthians 4. 6) Under the old dispensation of the law, no one might see the face of God and live. But in the gospel "we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Corinthians 3. 18)

The look of love from Jesus, who suffered in the place of His people, is so needful to our souls. This gives repentance that no human exhortation or resolution of itself can give. After the Lord's death and resurrection Peter could testify that God the Father had exalted Jesus "with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him." (Acts 5. 31-32) Let us then pray that the Holy Spirit might reveal unto us more of these soul refreshing views of the loving Saviour and Mediator, whose smitten face, when seen by faith, brings forth repentance mingled with love, joy and peace in believing.

### *Jesus silent before Pilate*

Then Jesus was led bound to Pilate. "When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put Him to death: And when they had bound Him, they led Him away, and delivered Him to Pontius Pilate the governor. ... And

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Jesus stood before the governor: and the governor asked Him, saying, Art Thou the King of the Jews ? And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest. And when He was accused of the chief priests and elders, He answered nothing." (Matthew 27. 1-2, 11-12)

Why should it be that the Lord of glory, God the Son, remained silent ? This was to fulfil the prophecy of Isaiah many hundred of years before. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth." (Isaiah 53. 6-7) The Lord's silent suffering was to redeem His beloved people, who have all strayed like sheep from the way of righteousness. The Lord Jesus is the Shepherd of His people and cares for them with tender love. He comes just where they are, even to the judgement hall, and stands forth in their place, bearing their sins, to receive the punishment they deserve.

Let us then pray for a clearer sight of the loving Saviour, who spake in His earthly ministry; "I am the good Shepherd: the good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep." (John 10. 11) When the Holy Spirit gives us a view of Jesus by faith, we say as John the Baptist, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." (John 1. 29) In union with Jesus our sins can no longer be found, for they are purged away by His shed blood and sin atoning sacrifice.

*Greater Love hath no man than this*

#### **CHAPTER 4**

##### **GREATER LOVE HATH NO MAN THAN THIS**

###### ***The Power of the Spirit***

In a day when the love of many has grown cold, how we need a spiritual view of the love of Christ to enliven us. It is in the sufferings of the Redeemer in the place of His chosen people, that His love shines forth so brightly. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (John 15. 13) In seeking to write upon this profound truth, the author is acutely conscious of the necessity of the power of the Holy Spirit the Comforter. As The Lord Jesus said of the Spirit to his disciples; "He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall shew it unto you." (John 16. 14) Without this blessing the words written will be merely paper and ink. However, if the Spirit make known Jesus in all His attractiveness to the reader, then there will be joy and peace in believing. We would therefore seek to consider the subject of Christ's humiliation before the Roman soldiers, praying that there may be profitable meditation upon the love of Jesus, "who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." (Hebrews 12. 2-3)

###### ***Jesus sentenced to Death, the Church set at Liberty***

Let us then turn to the word of God, which records the events at the close of the judgement of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Pilate, having examined Jesus and finding no fault in Him, asked the Jews, "What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ ? They

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all say unto him, Let Him be crucified. And the governor said, Why, what evil hath He done ? But they cried out the more, saying, Let Him be crucified. When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just Person: see ye to it. Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children. Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered Him to be crucified. Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto Him the whole band of soldiers. And they stripped Him, and put on Him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon His head, and a reed in His right hand: and they bowed the knee before Him, and mocked Him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews ! And they spit upon Him, and took the reed, and smote Him on the head. And after that they had mocked Him, they took the robe off from Him, and put His own raiment on Him, and led Him away to crucify Him." (Matthew 27. 22-31)

In reading this passage we are reminded of the words of Caiaphas some time before: "it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; And not for that nation only, but that also He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad." (John 11. 50-52) The cry of the Jews, that the blood of Jesus should be upon them and upon their children, was literally fulfilled in the terrible judgements which fell upon the Jewish nation ever since, starting with the destruction of the Temple and the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD. But there is a deeper spiritual prophecy in these words, which speak of the application of the redeeming blood of Christ. Thereby many of the Jews were themselves called by grace, for we read at Pentecost (the feast of the first fruits) of thousands in Jerusalem who were "pricked in their

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heart" and gladly received the gospel of Jesus Christ. (Acts 2. 37)

The ungodly Pilate also confessed that Jesus was innocent, having found no fault in Him. Pilate unwittingly testified that the death of Jesus would be a perfect and acceptable sacrifice for sin, a Lamb without spot or blemish. The release of Barabbas is likewise a type of the salvation of guilty sinners. The punishment of death and the outpouring of the wrath of God the Father is borne not by themselves as they deserve, but by Jesus Christ the Son of God. When this is revealed by the Holy Spirit, the believing sinner is set at gospel liberty.

The very name Barabbas is full of spiritual meaning, for in English it means "father's son". As a murderer, Barabbas was following in the steps of Cain, the son of Adam our first father. By nature all believers are sons of our father Adam who fell, and are ruined and worthy of death. But behold ! Barabbas is set at liberty, and Jesus is crucified, "that we might receive the adoption of sons." (Galatians 4. 5) The Bible commentator Gill wrote that Barabbas "was an emblem of God's elect in a state of nature, released and set free when Christ was condemned." (Although we must note that the scriptures are silent about whether Barabbas himself was later called by grace.) Thus we, who have grievously sinned and robbed God of His glory, are made sons of our heavenly Father and the spiritual brethren of Jesus. The redeemed church of Christ is then rightly called the spiritual Israel, for the word Israel means "prince of God." A prince is the son of a King.

***Jesus Scourged***

Then Pilate commanded Jesus to be scourged, despite having confessed His innocence. But why should the governor commit such a glaring injustice ? Was it because he cared little for these things ?

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Perhaps this was so in Pilate's own mind; but in the sovereign purposes of God he was fulfilling scriptural prophecy concerning the Messiah. "I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting." (Isaiah 50. 6) The Psalmist also wrote in prophecy, "The plowers plowed upon My back: they made long their furrows." (Psalm 129. 3) Yet behold the quiet humility of the Redeemer ! "He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth." (Isaiah 53. 7)

How painful it is to our pride to be falsely accused ! How we would immediately respond, especially at such a public humiliation which would end in death ! Yet the Lord Jesus quietly suffered. He knew for whom He was suffering in the purest love and grace. "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." (John 14. 3) "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (1 John 4. 9-10)

These things are beyond our natural understanding; but may we be led of the Holy Spirit to pray that these truths be revealed to us. What a blessing to be enabled to say with John, "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." (1 John 5. 20) May we heed the precious exhortation and promise of the risen Lord to the churches; "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." (Revelation 3. 20)

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***The Crown of Thorns***

After the Lord Jesus had been scourged, He was led away by the Roman soldiers to face a cruel and insulting ritual. The soldiers took great delight in mockery and inflicting awful pain. Yet they, like the Jews, were fulfilling the determinate counsel and purposes of God. However, they little understood the significance of their spiteful acts against the Redeemer. Let us first consider that they clothed the Lord in a "scarlet robe", also referred to in John 19 as a "purple robe". This colour of robe was symbolic in the pagan world of authority; we read of Daniel being clothed in scarlet by Belshazzar and a proclamation made "that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom." (Daniel 5. 29) Furthermore, the special robe of the Roman Emperors is recorded by historians as being a purple one. Therefore, the soldiers' intention was to dress the Lord Jesus in a mock robe symbolic of a King or Caesar, in keeping with the accusation that Jesus was a King. They then proceeded to crown the Lord Jesus. However, the crown they gave Him was not made of gold, but of thorns !

This cruel ritual sets forth to the spiritual eye of faith the truth of scripture, that God the Father made the Lord Jesus "to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Corinthians 5. 21) It is staggering to the natural mind to consider that the colour of the robe, which the soldiers put upon Jesus, was that of the whore of Babylon "arrayed in purple and scarlet". (Revelation 17. 4) How indescribable is the insult and blasphemy to the blessed and sinless Son of God ! However, this act of the soldiers in clothing the Lord Jesus in the robes symbolic of sin, uncleanness and hatred to God, sets forth the precious doctrine that the Lord Jesus bore all the vile sins of His chosen people. The place reserved for the whore, Satan and his followers is eternal punishment in Hell, the "lake of fire burning with brimstone". (Revelation 19. 21) This is the place where all deserve to be on

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account of sin. However, the Lord Jesus bore this punishment in the place of His beloved people. The curse on account of a broken law was borne by Him. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." (Galatians 3. 13)

The Babylonish garment, in which the soldiers clothed Jesus, is also symbolic of all false religion. The Lord's people have a sinful nature which follows after the religion of the spiritual Babylon. All that is opposed to God's commandments is the delight of the old man of sin, which revels in idolatry and spiritual fornication. But in clothing Jesus in the scarlet and purple robe, the soldiers were unwittingly signifying that the wrath of God on account of sin was to fall upon Jesus, who was about to be crucified and hung upon the tree at Calvary. The Lord Jesus was clothed in shame that we might be clothed in righteousness !

However, let us contrast this with the precious blood of Christ that was shed so freely at Calvary, as the poet most sweetly expressed.

Great God ! from Thee there's nought concealed,  
Thou seest my inward frame;  
To Thee I always stand revealed  
Exactly as I am !

Since I can hardly, therefore, bear  
What in myself I see;  
How vile and black must I appear,  
Most holy God, to Thee !

But since my Saviour stands between,  
In garments dyed in blood,  
'Tis He, instead of me, is seen,  
When I approach to God.

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Thus, though a sinner, I am safe;  
He pleads, before the throne,  
His life and death in my behalf,  
And calls my sins His own.

What wondrous love, what mysteries,  
In this appointment shine !  
My breaches of the law are His,  
And His obedience mine.

(Newton)

The crown of thorns is highly symbolic of Christ's sin-bearing atonement. The thorn is first spoken of in the book of Genesis as a consequence of the fall of man; "cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee." (Genesis 3. 17-18) The apostle Paul adds, "that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned." (Hebrews 6. 8) The crown of thorns symbolise that the Lord Jesus was "made a curse for us". It also shows the fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah; "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." (Isaiah 53. 3) Instead of the curse and rejection on account of sin falling upon His people, it fell upon the head of the Redeemer. "The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again." (Mark 8. 31)

***The Day of Atonement***

The placing of the crown of thorns on the head of Jesus is the fulfilment of the type set forth on the day of atonement, when the sins of the people were ceremonially transferred to the scapegoat. Moses commanded that "Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the

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head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness." (Leviticus 16. 21) Thus the crown of thorns, representing the fruit of the Adam fall, was placed on the head of Jesus, signifying that the sins of God's people were imputed to Him. As the goat under the law was sent away into the wilderness, so the Lord Jesus experienced on behalf of His beloved people, whilst upon the cross, the terrible anguish of being forsaken by His Father. This is recorded in those piercing words, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me ?" (Matthew 27. 46) These truths are beautifully expressed by the poet.

Not all the blood of beasts  
On Jewish altars slain,  
Could give the guilty conscience peace,  
Or wash away the stain.

But Christ, the heavenly Lamb,  
Takes all our sins away;  
A sacrifice of nobler name  
And richer blood than they.

My faith would lay her hand  
On that dear head of Thine;  
While like a penitent I stand,  
And there confess my sin.

My soul looks back to see  
The burdens Thou didst bear,  
When hanging on the accursed tree,  
And hopes her guilt was there.

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Believing, we rejoice  
To see the curse remove;  
We bless the Lamb with cheerful voice,  
And sing His bleeding Love.

(Watts)

*The Lord's powerful and endearing Love*

If we feel love in our hearts to God, it is because God first loved us. (1 John 4. 19) The love of God is the cause of the salvation of each sinner who is saved. "But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." (Ephesians 2. 4-6) What is striking is that the word "together" is repeated twice, emphasising the blessed union of Christ and the church. This union is by virtue of the perfect sacrifice that Jesus made for the sins of His beloved people, when He suffered such humiliation for them. It is this love that draws a seeking sinner. We read of the church speaking to Christ in prophecy: "Because of the savour of Thy good ointments Thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love Thee. Draw me, we will run after Thee." (Song of Solomon 1. 3-4) It is the goodness of God, not just the thunders of the law in the conscience, that leads a sinner to repentance. (Romans 2. 5)

What is so powerful and endearing to the Lord's people is that Jesus came just where they are. In wearing the crown of thorns the Lord bore their sins and iniquities. In the Song of Solomon the Lord Jesus declares, "I am the rose of Sharon, and as the lily of the valleys." (Song of Solomon 2. 1) The rose signifies His fragrant sacrifice when shedding His precious blood, but the lily of the valley represents His condescension to assume a perfect human nature. But then the Lord speaks of the church as a lily, perfect and sinless in His

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sight. "As the lily among thorns, so is My love among the daughters." (v. 2) These thorns are not only the ungodly, amongst whom the Christian's lot is cast, but are the iniquities within our own breast derived from the old man of sin. But behold ! Christ the "lily of the valley" wears the crown of thorns to redeem the object of His love. He took their nature upon Him (sin excepted), that they may be together with Him in heaven; "My Beloved is mine, and I am His: He feedeth among the lilies." (v. 16)

***The Fruit of the Spirit***

When there is the powerful work of the Holy Spirit revealing the love of Christ in the heart of a believer, there will be an abundance of spiritual fruit in their life and conduct. "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle." (Isaiah 55. 13) "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." (Romans 7. 4) These spiritual fruits, such as love, joy and peace (Galatians 5. 22-23), are most necessary in a Christian's life and must have a real effect, for "faith without works is dead." (James 3. 26)

Nevertheless, the Lord has seen fit to permit the temptations and violence of Satan. There is not only outward persecution by the ungodly, which has to be endured from time to time, but there is that continuous battle between the old man of sin and the new man of grace. The apostle Paul spoke of a "thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure." (2 Corinthians 12. 7) That which is most grievous to a believer is the thorn of in-dwelling sin. But the Lord has gone before His people. Jesus wore a crown of thorns that was beaten into His head, suffering in an infinitely deeper way than ourselves. Through this He

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triumphed over Satan and his agents, rising from the dead and delivering His people from the power and condemnation of sin.

When the apostle Paul wrote of the "thorn", he is not referring to just one little thorn, some inconvenient prick. The word he uses in the original Greek could also be rendered a "sharp stake" (see Young's Concordance) and is different to that used elsewhere for a thorn. Therefore, in his epistle to the Corinthians, Paul uses a word that signifies a very large and painful sharp object impaled in the flesh. Sin is not just a little prick, but is an excruciating trial to the graciously taught believer. Like Paul, the Christian cries out within himself, "O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death." But when precious faith is given, he sees the love of the Redeemer and can say with Paul, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 7. 25)

*Divine Love and Prosperity in the Churches*

It is from the love of Christ that His attractiveness to the sinner is felt. This attractiveness of the blessed Redeemer is essential for the spiritual health of churches and the ministry. For want of this, there is much barrenness and coldness. From the attractiveness of the Lord Jesus flows the attractiveness of the graces of fellow Christians. Where the love of Christ is not set forth in the ministry in its fullness, the mutual love between believers will grow cold. Martin Luther warned professed Christians of viewing Jesus Christ as an angry judge, for on the contrary He is a loving and merciful Saviour to His beloved people. If Christ is set forth with harshness and severity, it is feared that there will be a harsh and judgemental spirit within the churches. The commandment of Jesus will then be neglected; "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." (John 13. 34)

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There are further signs that follow a neglect of the love and attractiveness of Jesus Christ in the churches. Let us consider the parable of the talents in Luke 19. Those who traded with the talents, to which they were entrusted, not only brought forth fruit in their lives to God's honour, but there was an increase in the cause of truth. In contrast, the man who buried his talent viewed the Lord as "an austere man" and returned the talent with no increase. (Luke 19. 20-21) This is a warning to those who regard the Triune God, and especially the Lord Jesus Christ as an "austere man", where judgements and condemnation for sin obscure the gracious atoning love of the Saviour. Under such a condition or ministry there is no burning desire from the heart to tell others of the good news of salvation, no loving Saviour to speak of. The gospel is hidden inside the chapel or church building, and does not sound forth throughout the world.

How different it was with the Thessalonian church. Paul wrote thus of the powerful effect of the word of truth in Christ Jesus. "For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost: So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad." (1 Thessalonians 1. 5-8) Paul writes of the power of the gospel in their hearts and lives, the assurance of salvation, the joy of the Holy Ghost amidst afflictions, and then the sounding forth of the gospel from the church in Thessalonica. Can the same be said of ourselves, both as individuals or as churches? However, we must beware of a carnal work of man; but rather let us seek the power of the Spirit working through the Lord's people.

*Greater Love hath no man than this*

The disciples, who were eye-witnesses of the wonderful love of the Lord Jesus, and who witnessed His suffering and death, received the great commission: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." (Mark 16. 15) This was not only given to the apostles, but to the church of Christ until the second coming. Not all God's children are called to be ministers; but all are called to show forth a precious Christ in their conversation and conduct, and to pray for God's servants as they labour in the gospel.

Behold the great desire of the disciples under the influence of the Holy Spirit to warn, not only of judgement to come, but to proclaim with joy the glorious salvation and good news of the risen Lord Jesus. Where there is a lack of an active concern for the salvation of those outside our own company of believers, it is to be feared that the talent has been buried and there is little spiritual life.

Therefore, may the attractiveness of Christ in His love shine forth in our lives and in our churches, knowing the precious promise to the godly; "Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off." (Isaiah 33. 17) Let us pray that the Holy Spirit would so reveal to us the love of Christ in His sufferings and death, that the fruits of the Spirit might abound. May there be a love of gracious things, a love of the brethren and a hatred of sin. May the churches be delivered from a harsh, stern or unforgiving spirit, but rather may we truly forgive one another from the heart, as Jesus forgave our sins. "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." (1 John 4. 7-8)

**CHAPTER 5**

**THE CRUCIFIXION**

***Jesus only***

We are now come to the crucifixion, the climax of the gospels. In this we see the fulfilment of the types of the day of atonement. The crucifixion is central to the gospel of salvation. The apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." (1 Corinthians 2. 2) Jesus said of His crucifixion: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." (John 12. 32)

How Satan would desire that a minister might be turned aside from preaching Jesus, that the great commission might be neglected. Likewise, Satan tempts every church member that their spiritual thirst for Christ might be lessened. Let us therefore beware of Satan's devices. Let us take heed to how we come to worship the Lord and hear the word preached. Are we on our knees begging the Lord to grant an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, that the minister might preach Christ Jesus with divine power and authority ? Do we pray for hearing ears and an understanding heart ? Or do we go only desiring to gain some earthly benefit, or to be entertained ? The Lord Jesus declared, "seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things [our earthly needs] shall be added unto you." (Matthew 6. 33) It was on the cross that the blood of Jesus flowed so richly to atone for sin; and it is through His righteous life and shed blood that every true believer is made righteous.

***Calvary***

It was from the scenes of mockery and insult, which we considered

### *The Crucifixion*

in the previous chapter, that the Lord Jesus was taken to be crucified. "And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left. Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." (Luke 23. 33-34)

Crucifixion was a most cruel and painful form of execution. After the hands and feet were nailed to the wood, the victim was hung from those bleeding wounds slowly to die. Yet in all this the Lord said, "Father, forgive them". Although the Roman soldiers literally crucified the Lord, yet it was on account of the sins of each one of the Lord's chosen people that the nails were driven into the Redeemer's hands and feet.

How heinous does sin then appear to the redeemed believer, when the Holy Spirit reveals the holiness of God and the terrible stroke of divine justice that fell upon the Lord Jesus, who was made "to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Corinthians 5. 21) Yet how the Lord's people wonder at the gracious love of the triune God to undeserving sinners! The foundation of their salvation is in such unparalleled love. Jesus prayed: "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me: for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee: but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent Me. And I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them." (John 17. 24-26)

Thus is the eternal love of God the Father to God the Son revealed in the scriptures; and wherever God the Holy Spirit works in the heart of a believer, there will be a conforming in measure to this love. The words of the apostle Paul must attend the faithful preaching of the

### *The Crucifixion*

gospel of Jesus Christ: "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Corinthians 3. 18) As the love of God shines forth in the Lord Jesus, so should there be a reflection of this love in the life of every believer. Is this true in our lives, both individually and as churches ? Do we forgive each other from the heart ? May the Lord give us grace to walk in the exhortation, lest our example be a disgrace to the name of Jesus Christ. "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." (1 John 4. 7-8)

### *Jesus the Great High Priest*

Even the coat that the Lord Jesus wore to the cross signifies that He is the great High Priest. "Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also His coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it." (John 19. 23-24) Christ's righteousness is perfect, woven "without seam"; His life was perfect and sinless. But let us compare the coat that Jesus wore with that of Aaron, the high priest. "There shall be an hole in the top of it, in the midst thereof: it shall have a binding of woven work round about the hole of it, ... that it be not rent." (Exodus 28. 32) These things are written for our instruction. They show the glorious unity of the scriptures in setting forth priestly office of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us then look further at the breastplate that Aaron wore as high priest. "Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgment upon his heart, when he goeth in unto the holy place, for a memorial before the Lord continually." (Exodus 28. 29) When we now consider Jesus as the great High Priest who

### *The Crucifixion*

fulfilled the types of the Old Testament, we see that Jesus bears the names of His beloved upon His heart, those for whom He suffered and shed His precious blood.

The Lord Jesus bore the awful pain of the cross with such patience. This is love beyond human comprehension. May the Holy Spirit reveal more of the greatness of Christ's love and grace to vile sinners. Paul wrote of Jesus: "Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." (Hebrews 12. 2-3) It is then that we see our own sufferings are so small in comparison. But when it is revealed to us that Christ's suffered on account of our sins, we have fellowship with Him in His sufferings. (Philippians 3. 10)

### *The Dying Thief*

Let us notice the mockery of the crucified Lord Jesus by the chief priests, scribes and elders, who said: "He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him: for He said, I am the Son of God. The thieves also, which were crucified with Him, cast the same in His teeth." (Matthew 27. 42-44) The proud religious leaders hated the Lord, for He overturned their earthly hopes and carnal religion. They saw nothing in the crucified and bleeding Saviour.

But in a short while we read of very different words from one of thieves. Instead of reviling, the power of the Holy Spirit brought him to repentance. Then the sight of the sufferings of the Lord Jesus were seen by the dying thief, not just with natural eye, but with the eye of faith.

### *The Crucifixion*

All his hopes had gone, his sins were before him as scarlet, the prospect of the judgment before him. The threatenings of hell took hold upon him. However, the power of the Spirit opened his heart, and through the love of God he is given repentance and pleads for mercy. He was literally and spiritually crucified with Christ. "And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on Him, saying, If Thou be Christ, save Thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation ? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this Man hath done nothing amiss, And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto Him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with Me in paradise." (Luke 23. 39-43)

How this sets forth the intercession and tender care of the Lord Jesus, now risen and ascended into heaven, towards all those who truly and spiritually confess their sins, pleading mercy in His name. May we, like the dying thief, come venturing with nothing to plead but a cry for divine mercy. As we meditate upon the Lord Jesus, may the Holy Spirit give us clearer views by faith of the glorious love of God the Father. "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Corinthians 4. 6)

The poet brings forth most beautifully the Lord's gracious love and care for the soul of the repentant thief, even amidst the Lord's excruciating pain and suffering upon the cross.

He saw the Saviour dying  
Beside him on a tree.  
Yet, on His word relying,  
He dared to make his plea.  
Repenting all the evil

*The Crucifixion*

In blindness he had done,  
He turned now from the devil  
To love and serve God's Son.

By Jew and Gentile flouted,  
By every passer-by -  
In hate they yelled and shouted -  
He still made no reply.  
But when He heard the sighing  
Of a repentant soul,  
Although in anguish dying,  
He hastened to console.

Thy love so strong and tender  
Quick to his cry gave heed,  
Caring for this offender  
More than Thine own deep need.  
That love is still abiding  
And ne'er shall pass away.  
We find, in Thee confiding,  
Thou art the same today !

(Hallgrímur Pétursson)

Thus we learn that the Lord Jesus will neither answer proud religious men, nor profane. However, a poor repenting sinner ready to die, who has nothing but a plea for mercy, will receive mercy. It is this one that the Lord will forgive, tenderly listen to and care for; yea moreover take to Himself in glory at last. Thus the word of God says, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. ... Incline your ear, and come unto Me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." (Isaiah 55. 1, 3) Truly it could be said of such that come rightly to the Lord: "to this

### *The Crucifixion*

man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My word." (Isaiah 66. 2)

Let us solemnly remember the other thief, who died unrepentant and is in the torments of hell. Men often flatter themselves that they can have their fill of this life, and then repent later. But God is not mocked. The heart grows harder under the deceitfulness of sin, and the conscience is hardened in later years. Many come to old age and lose their mental faculties. Others die suddenly without warning. Let us heed the parable of the rich fool, who said. "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" (Luke 12. 19-20) But if we are in Christ Jesus, whatever frailty of mind or sudden death that awaits us, we are eternally secure in Him.

### *The Darkness*

Then we read of the darkness that descended. "And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour." (Luke 23. 44) How this shows the darkness that Jesus the eternal Son of God went through in His human nature. On account of His peoples' sins whilst suffering on the cross, He was forsaken by His heavenly Father. In deepest distress of soul, bearing the wrath on account of His peoples sins, the Lord Jesus cried out. "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me." (Matthew 27. 46) Who can fathom the depths that Jesus went through in love to His people to redeem them? Those sufferings of his body were great, but behold the unspeakable sufferings of His holy soul!

Let us with trembling consider the awfulness of Hell, which awaits those who know not the redeeming blood and salvation in Jesus. Hell

### *The Crucifixion*

is a place where God's wrath and hatred for sin is unabated and eternal; a place where there is unspeakable darkness and despair. God is a consuming fire outside of Christ the Saviour.

Whatever suffering we face in this life, be it ever so intense, we have some hope that it will end (even if in death), or that it will be relieved. But eternal punishment in hell will not cease, nor will the soul be destroyed. (Matthew 25. 46) Jesus declared (quoting Isaiah 66. 24), "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched". (Mark 9. 44) Of the rich man who lived a life of luxury, caring not for the poor, Jesus said, "the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments." (Luke 16. 22-23) For "it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." (Hebrews 9. 27)

Indeed the greatest teaching in the scriptures about hell came from the Redeemer's lips. But He experienced the punishment due to His people in His human body and soul, whilst upon the cross of Calvary. Only in union with His Divine nature could Jesus have borne that tremendous load. "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation." (Hebrews 9. 28)

Then we read, "And the veil of the temple was rent in the midst." (Luke 23. 45) This is a glorious token that by Christ's sufferings the way is made into the holiest place, the very place representative of God's immediate presence. Only the high priest once a year under the Law could enter there. But through Christ's glorious sacrifice the veil was rent in two. In union with Jesus, the great High Priest of the new testament, His redeemed people enter into the loving presence of God. There is no barrier any more, for sin is put away and atoned for.

The Lord Jesus triumphed over all the powers of hell and darkness.

### *The Crucifixion*

What a token this is for the Lord's people when they walk in deep soul trouble ! They may be terrified by the fear of death, the temptations of Satan, or past sins brought to remembrance; and they are overwhelmed within themselves. David was evidently there when he said, "Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto my soul." (Psalm 69. 1) Yet at the end of the Psalm, David breaks forth in praise, "I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify Him with thanksgiving." (Psalm 69. 30) How many Christians have proved that in praising the Lord for His great goodness and mercy, and believing by faith upon the Son of God who triumphed, they have been delivered into the glorious light of the gospel. It was when Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises to the Lord at midnight in the inner prison, that the Lord gloriously delivered them. (Acts 16)

When we are walking through great darkness in our lives, and we seem forsaken of our hopes and even tempted to think God has forsaken us, then let us consider Jesus. His sufferings were so much greater than our "light affliction". When we look at ourselves and look down, it is a heavy and grievous affliction, but when we look to Jesus and know fellowship with Him in His sufferings (Philippians 3. 10), truly we know Him and by the Spirit are filled with hope, joy and peace in believing. Then we can say, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." (2 Corinthians 4. 17-18)

United to Jesus by the Spirit, we truly can say with the Psalmist; "If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me". (Psalm 139. 11) Such are moments sweet with blessing when we know and rejoice in these exceeding and great promises, which are yea and amen in Christ Jesus the Lord. With such faith, which is the precious gift of God, we truly trust Him in all things.

*The Crucifixion*

***The Lord's Desire towards His People***

We then read of the Lord's cry upon cross, "I thirst." (John 19. 28) This expresses not only the terrible sufferings of the crucifixion, but also the loving desire of the Lord towards His people for whom He was laying down His life. We read of this gracious loving desire in the Song of Solomon, where the Son of God speaks in prophecy of the church. "Thou hast ravished My heart, My sister, My spouse; thou hast ravished My heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck. How fair is thy love, My sister, My spouse !" (Song of Solomon 4. 9-10) The church responds: "I am my Beloved's, and His desire is toward me." (Song of Solomon 7. 10) The poet writes of this so beautifully.

His human frame  
Was all aflame  
With pains of crucifixion -  
Perchance the worst  
The burning thirst,  
As there, accursed,  
He hung in deep affliction.

And now behold -  
Thou hast been told -  
O, keep it e'er before thee !  
He thirsted more  
Thee to restore;  
He longed to pour  
His living water o'er thee.

Think, O my soul -  
To make thee whole  
Was e'er His heart's deep yearning.

*The Crucifixion*

How canst thou dare  
Despise His care,  
His grace forswear,  
His loving kindness spurning ?

Thou shouldst rejoice  
To hear His voice,  
The Heavenly Bridegroom's wooing:  
"Walk by My side !  
I long to guide  
My earthly Bride.  
Her perils all subduing."

For His parched lip  
Dare not to dip  
Thy sponge in vain deception.  
Turn to His Word,  
Which thou hast heard,  
And which has stirred  
Thy heart to true affection.

I answer, Lord,  
Thy dying word,  
E'en through my tears, my Saviour:  
"Of men the worst,  
In sin immersed,  
I also thirst -  
After Thy grace and favour."

Praise be to Thee,  
Now I am free,  
Free, at the cost of Thine anguish !  
Death has no sting,  
Now will I sing

*The Crucifixion*

To Thee, my King,  
No more in thirst to languish.

(Hallgrímur Pétursson)

***It is Finished***

But in reply to Jesus' cry, "I thirst", we see that final act of cruelty, humiliation and insult. "Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to His mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, He said, It is finished: and He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost." (John 19. 29-30) But what glorious words the Lord spoke, when He cried "It is finished". The sufferings of Jesus are now over, redemption's work is complete and sin atoned for. He was not overcome by death, but He laid down His life and conquered death and hell. "Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." (John 10. 17-18)

"It is finished !" Sinners, hear it;  
'Tis the dying Victor's cry;  
"It is finished !" Angels bear it,  
Bear the joyful truth on high:  
"It is finished !"  
Tell it through the earth and sky !

Justice, from her awful station,  
Bars the sinner's peace no more;  
Justice views with approbation  
What the Saviour did and bore;  
Grace and mercy  
Now display their boundless store.

*The Crucifixion*

Hear the Lord Himself declaring  
All performed He came to do;  
Sinners, in yourselves despairing,  
This is joyful news to you.  
Jesus speaks it,  
His are faithful words and true.

"It is finished !" all is over;  
Yes, the cup of wrath is drained;  
Such the truth these words discover;  
Thus the victory was obtained;  
'Tis a victory  
None but Jesus could have gained.

Crown the mighty Conqueror, crown Him,  
Who His people's foes o'ercame !  
In the highest heaven enthrone Him !  
Men and angels, sound His fame !  
Great His glory !  
Jesus bears a matchless name.

(Kelly)

*Jesus' Wounded Side*

Let us finally meditate upon the piercing of Jesus' side. "But when they came to Jesus, and saw that He was dead already, they brake not His legs: But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side, and forthwith came there out blood and water." (John 19. 33-34) This sets forth the blood to atone for sin and the water to cleanse, living waters that flow from Jesus' heart.

Let us also remember that Adam's bride Eve was drawn from the side

*The Crucifixion*

of Adam. (Genesis 2. 21-24) Likewise, let us behold by faith the eternal blessings that flow from Jesus' wounded side towards His bride, the redeemed church.

Adam's lonely state perceiving,  
God created him a bride.  
Deepest sleep the pain relieving,  
Drew her from his wounded side.  
To her husband ever cleaving,  
With him ever to abide.

Thus to Christ His bride was given,  
Taken from His wounded side.  
By the spear His side was riven,  
Setting free the cleansing tide.  
Thus her sins were all forgiven,  
She for all time sanctified.

See, my soul ! with heavenly vision  
Blood and water thou dost know.  
For thee God has made provision,  
Baptized in the cleansing flow.  
Faith concedes the recognition  
Of the grace He doth bestow.

Since the gracious Lord permitted  
Doubting Thomas to draw nigh,  
To his startled touch submitted,  
Thus approach Him may not I ?  
Doubts and fears are all outwitted  
When His wounding I descry.

From His heart the streams of healing,  
Shed to save His people, flowed;

*The Crucifixion*

All God's care and love revealing;  
All His grace on us bestowed,  
When, redemption's franchise sealing,  
He repaid the debt we owed.

So that I might see more clearly  
The full measure of His grace,  
He reveals His wounds more nearly;  
Brings me to Him face to face,  
That His feet I more sincerely  
And more humbly might embrace.

(Hallgrímur Pétursson)

Then the apostle John writes (quoting Zechariah 12. 10), "They shall look on Him whom they pierced." (John 19. 37) When brought to repentance, which is a precious gift from God (Acts 5. 31), the sinner looks by faith to the wounds that Jesus received and the rich atoning blood that flowed. The sinner cries within, "Why me, why me ? Why one so vile and unworthy, whose sins have pierced the suffering Lord upon the cross !" But the Redeemer speaks in mercy by the Spirit, that it is all for love's sake and it is all of grace. That the glory and honour of God might be displayed, to the praise of His glory. (Ephesians 1. 12) That in heaven the redeemed of the Lord might give eternal praises to the Lamb that was slain, saying, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." (Revelation 5. 13)

**CHAPTER 6**

***THE RISEN AND GLORIFIED REDEEMER***

***Jesus Reveals Himself***

The apostle Paul wrote: "And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins." (1 Corinthians 15. 17) It is fundamental to our salvation that Christ not only died, but rose from the dead and ascended into heaven; moreover, that He is the glorified Redeemer interceding for the church at the right hand of God the Father.

Let us then begin with the scriptural account of the women coming to the sepulchre in which the body of Jesus had been laid after the crucifixion. "Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them. And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre. And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus. And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments: And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead ? He is not here, but is risen." (Luke 24. 1-6) Behold such glorious and joyful news ! Yet the disciples regarded their account "as idle tales, and they believed them not." (Luke 24. 11) They had not understood spiritually the events of the crucifixion.

However, as we read further in the gospel account, we see the love and patience that the Lord showed to His disciples. Later that day two of the disciples were walking on the Emmaus road. They reasoned about the crucifixion and the empty tomb, yet they could come to no conclusion. (Luke 24. 13-24) Human reason failed them.

### *The Risen and Glorified Redeemer*

But then the Lord Jesus drew alongside, listened to them and then lovingly reproved them. He showed that these events, including the resurrection, were in fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy. (Hosea 6. 2, Psalm 16. 10)

Whilst hearing the words of this supposed stranger (for Jesus had not as yet revealed Himself to them), their hearts burned within them as He spoke to them, and they desired Him to abide with them. Then, as the Lord brake bread before them, their eyes were opened. They knew it was Jesus their Saviour, and joy filled their hearts. (Luke 24. 30-35) Indeed it is the blessed desire of every believer, that they might hear Jesus' voice and know His presence.

After His appearance on the Emmaus road, the Lord then appeared to the apostles. But one of their number Thomas, being absent, refused to believe their testimony of the resurrection. (John 20. 25) Nevertheless, the Lord came to Thomas and showed him His wounded hands and side. Thomas exclaimed in wonder and amazement, "My Lord and my God". Jesus then declared, "Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." (John 20. 28-29) Let us then meditate upon these things a little further.

The disciples had their own idea of Jesus' work as Messiah. This had to be brought down that they might know God's ways and eternal purposes. The Lord declared in prophecy, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts." (Isaiah 55. 8-9) Unlike the disciples, the Lord's enemies seemed to remember the Lord's words about His resurrection from the dead, and so they set a watch over the tomb. (Matthew 27. 62-66) But this was mere head knowledge; they hated the Lord Jesus and would "not have this Man to reign over" them.

### *The Risen and Glorified Redeemer*

It is blessed to consider that the risen Lord appeared to Mary Magdalene, the two on the Emmaus Road and the other disciples despite their doubts, despite Peter's betrayal, despite all their sins; for they were loved from eternity with an everlasting love. Jesus had shed His precious blood and redeemed them, such that there was a glorious union that could not be broken. Therefore, the Lord must appear to them and reveal His love joined with glorious power. The apostles must be eye witnesses of the bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus, having a divinely revealed knowledge of the truth, that they might then preach the gospel to the ends of the earth.

We read of instances where the disciples did not at first recognise the risen Lord. As well as the two on the Emmaus road, there was Mary Magdalene (John 20. 15) and the apostles fishing on the Sea of Galilee. (John 21. 4) But when the Lord spoke to them, then they knew Him. This shows that Jesus the glorious Saviour and Son of God is not seen by the natural eye, but by God given faith. Jesus taught, "no man can come unto Me, except it were given unto him of My Father." (John 6. 65: see also John 6. 44 and Luke 10. 22) When Jesus, who is the "express image" of the person of God the Father (Hebrews 1. 3), spoke with power, their hearts burned within them and they were filled with joy.

Let us remember that Jesus is "the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." (Hebrews 13. 8) Jesus is full of compassion and ever ready to help us in all our infirmities. He has not changed since the days of the New Testament, for He is eternally the same. In these gospel days since the Lord's ascension, the Lord Jesus is revealed to each believer by God the Holy Spirit (also called the Holy Ghost in scripture). Just prior to His crucifixion, the Lord explained how He would manifest Himself. "If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him. ... But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost,

### *The Risen and Glorified Redeemer*

whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." (John 14. 23, 26) Therefore, let us come before Him in faith pleading these exceeding great and precious promises.

### *The Necessity of the Resurrection*

But before we turn to the ascension of the Lord, let us look more closely at why the Lord Jesus must rise from the dead. Paul explains that Jesus was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." (Romans 1. 4) Thus the resurrection is a glorious proof of His divine authority and eternal sonship.

At the start of Jesus' earthly ministry He purged the temple of those that had turned it into a "house of merchandise". The Jewish rulers were offended that a previously unknown Galilean should so openly rebuke their government of the temple. The Jews said to Jesus, "What sign shewest Thou unto us, seeing that Thou doest these things ? Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt Thou rear it up in three days ? But He spake of the temple of His body. When therefore He was risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said." (John 2. 18-22) The Lord's resurrection, which was witnessed by many, is proof that His words are truly the words of God, and they are spirit and they are life. (John 6. 63) The resurrection is the sign that all authority is given unto Jesus as the head of the church.

Therefore, the apostle Paul prayed that the Ephesians might know the greatness of Jesus' power and His sovereignty over the church. This

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is displayed by the resurrection, when God the Father "raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And He hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church." (Ephesians 1. 20-22)

The resurrection is a glorious proof that Jesus conquered death, and that His glorious sacrifice was accepted of God. Jesus "was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." (Romans 4. 25) Then "we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us." (Romans 8. 37) All our enemies are eternally defeated. The Psalmist declared in prophecy, "Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered." (Psalm 68. 1)

The Lord leads His people forth by the right way, going before them in all things. He is "the way, the truth and the life." (John 14. 6) He is a risen and living Saviour, who ever lives to bring his beloved people to glory in heaven. May the believer be much encouraged by the glorious prospect of being raised eternally with Christ. "He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you." (2 Corinthians 4. 14) This shows the glorious love of God. "But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come He might shew the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." (Ephesians 2. 4-7) There is that prospect of heaven to the believer, being delivered from this earthly body of sin and death, and being carried to immortality to dwell with Jesus in perfection. (1 Corinthians 15. 42-58, 1 John 3. 2, Philippians 3. 20-21)

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Through the resurrection we are born again of the Spirit, that we might worship a living, not a dead, Christ. We have a living hope in Christ. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." (1 Peter 1. 3) The love of God is such that in our deepest trials, the Spirit reveals Christ to us. Paul declared, "we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead." (2 Corinthians 1. 9) The Psalmist in deep affliction saw this by faith and was comforted: "Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come." (Psalm 102. 13)

May we be led to meditate more upon the resurrection, and to pray that the scriptures be opened to our understanding, that we may commune daily with the living Jesus. How we need to know more of the power of His resurrection. This was the earnest desire of the apostle Paul. (Philippians 3. 10-11) In our affliction may we be taught more deeply of the Lord Jesus' unspeakable sufferings for His beloved people, yet look up in faith to the risen Lord Jesus, praying that God might powerfully raise us above the things of this life. We overcome through Christ, who overcame the world. (John 16. 33) This is ours through faith in Jesus, as the apostle John writes. "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" (1 John 5. 5)

### *The Ascension*

After the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, the scriptures clearly speak of His bodily ascension into heaven. Jesus led his disciples "out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. And they worshipped Him, and returned

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to Jerusalem with great joy." (Luke 24. 50-52) Likewise today let us with joy meditate upon the blessings and glory of the ascension of the Lord Jesus into heaven.

Jesus must enter into heaven itself in the same body in which He lived and died to present the merits of His perfect sacrifice, there to intercede for His beloved people before God the Father. He entered into the heavenly and eternal holy of holies, of which the earthly tabernacle was but a shadow. "But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. ... For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." (Hebrews 9. 11-12, 24) Whilst the Lord Jesus Christ "was once offered to bear the sins of many" (Hebrews 11. 28), His intercession for each and every believer at the right hand of the Father is continual. "Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." (Hebrews 7. 25)

From Christ's entering into heaven is the Holy Spirit given. That special manifestation at Pentecost (the feast of the first fruits) soon followed Christ's ascension, as He had promised to the disciples before the crucifixion. "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you." (John 16. 7)

The Holy Spirit reveals the truth in Jesus and glorifies Christ in the hearts of the church. "When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will shew you things to come. He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine,

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and shall shew it unto you." (John 16. 13-14) The unbelieving world can not receive the Holy Spirit the Comforter, but He abides eternally with the Lord's dearly beloved people. It is through the Spirit that the risen and ascended Lord Jesus comes to dwell with every true believer. (John 14. 16-18)

The psalmist David prophesied of this blessed gift of the Spirit to unworthy sinners saved in the Redeemer, flowing from the ascension of the Lord Jesus. "Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captivity captive: Thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them. Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation." (Psalm 68. 18-19) How glorious is the love of God to send forth the Holy Spirit the Comforter to such unworthy and vile sinners, who deserve nothing but hell ! It is an unspeakable blessing that Jesus died, rose again and ascended into heaven, so that the members of His mystical body, the church, should be an habitation of God through the Holy Spirit. (Ephesians 2. 22)

The Holy Spirit in scripture is called both the "Spirit of Christ" and the "Spirit of God" (Romans 8. 9), thereby giving further testimony of the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Spirit dwells within the believer and gives a glorious testimony in our souls to our sonship. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." (Romans 8. 14-16) That which is wrought in the soul will bear fruit in the life of every true believer. Their lives are set apart for the honour, glory and service of God their heavenly Father. This is not out of fear or feelings of duty, but because the power of the Spirit produces such love to God in their hearts that they delight to serve Him. But alas, the Christian whilst in this life still lives in a body of clay. The new man of grace is ever opposed by

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the old man of sin, and the battle is often fierce. (Romans 7) Then let us look up in faith, for our Redeemer has entered heaven itself and intercedes there for us before the Father. In union with the risen Lord Jesus, our salvation is eternally secure.

It is by the power of the Spirit manifested in God-given faith, which is the evidence of things hoped for, that we know the love of God. The apostle Paul expressed the prayerful desire, "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." (Ephesians 3. 17-19)

### *A Glorified Saviour*

In previous chapters we have dwelt upon the eternal Son of God stooping in humility to take human nature and to suffer and die, veiling His eternal glory whilst he lived as the man Christ Jesus. We must now consider a further aspect to the ascension of the Lord Jesus, namely the glorious entering into heaven in triumph. The psalmist rejoices in this in prophecy. "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in." (Psalm 24. 7) Jesus is crowned and enthroned in glory as the head of the church, ever interceding with the God the Father.

The scriptures set forth the blessed gifts that flow from this, for Jesus "hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." (Acts 5. 31) How blessed and vital are these gifts ! How else would a hardened sinner, caring nothing about spiritual things, be brought humbly to the feet of Jesus confessing their sins ? Moreover, in the Lord's sovereign time they receive personally that precious promise of

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forgiveness spoken by the Spirit into their soul.

There is reserved for each member of His earthly church the prospect after death of being glorified with Christ in heaven. The apostle Paul wrote: "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together." (Romans 8. 16-17) Paul also wrote of the blessed evidence to encourage us in this present evil world: "Christ in you, the hope of glory." (Colossians 1. 27)

This is the blessed fruit of the Lord's prayer to God the Father for His people before He laid down His life on the cross. "And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are one: I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou has loved Me." (John 17. 22-23) The prayer of Christ shows forth the eternal love of God the Father to the eternal Son, and that the Lord Jesus lay down His life that this love and glory might be bestowed upon His redeemed people. It is the Lord's eternal purpose that the redeemed should give forth His praises to eternity before His throne. (Revelation 7. 14-17) As the eternal and sovereign Creator of the heavens and the earth, "none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou ?" (Daniel 4. 35) Therefore, nothing can separate the Lord's people "from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8. 39) The believer can say with the apostle, "We love Him, because He first loved us." (1 John 4. 19) Behold, the love of God !

### *The Effect in a Believer's Life*

Let us then look up in faith, love and joy to this heavenly prospect, leading lives that give honour and praise unto God, full of the fruits

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of the Spirit. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." (1 John 3. 1-3)

Let us consider in earthly things, the one that we love is the one we most desire to be with and talk to. Is the same true in spiritual and eternal things ? Do we truly walk thus with Christ Jesus, seeking His word and praying unto Him, earnestly longing to hear His voice by the Holy Spirit ? So often when we contemplate this, we must hang our heads in shame feeling our sin and uncleanness, crying out with the apostle Paul; "O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 7. 24-25)

Our salvation and preservation in this life is founded upon the glorious truth that God loves His people with an everlasting love. (Jeremiah 31. 3) Thus it is His eternal purpose to draw them to Himself with lovingkindness and bless them indeed. What an encouragement to pray and to wait for answers of peace ! God is almighty, and what He wills shall surely come to pass. However, at times we do not understand His dealings, and often the Lord chastens us and reproves us. Yet this is all in love. The apostle Paul wrote: "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him: For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth." (Hebrews 12. 5-6) Our prayer must ever be, "Lord increase our faith !"

If we should trust in man, we will always be disappointed in some respect, for man's love is imperfect. If we should seek to speak with

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someone important, he may have many others also wishing to speak with him, and so he is distracted or too busy. But no matter how many other believers seek God the Father, pleading the name of the Lord Jesus by the Holy Spirit, there is no such limitation or hindrance. He hears every one individually and knows all their cares and needs. "Before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." (Isaiah 65. 24) The omnipotent Lord hears and speaks graciously to each one, understands their needs and cares for them. Let us not fear if the Lord seems to delay, for He is all wise and waits to answer prayer. "And therefore will the Lord wait, that He may be gracious unto you, and therefore will He be exalted, that He may have mercy upon you: for the Lord is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for Him." (Isaiah 30. 18)

Let us each examine ourselves, lest we fall short of a saving knowledge of Christ. The awesome sight of the glorified Lord Jesus is described by the apostle John. This was such exalted glory that John fell at His feet. John wrote; "His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and His eyes were as a flame of fire; And His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and His voice as the sound of many waters. And He had in His right hand seven stars: and out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and His countenance was as the sun shineth in His strength. And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. And He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." (Revelation 1. 14-18)

Let us then seek a balanced and spiritual view of Christ's love. There are many in our present day who speak of Christ's love, but know not that He is holy, glorious and all powerful, the sovereign ruler of the church. The scriptures record that Jesus made a "scourge of small cords" and drove out the money changers and sellers of oxen, sheep and doves that profaned the temple, overturning their tables. (John 2.

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13-17) Paul also wrote of the terrible appearance of the Lord in His second coming to the shame and destruction of the ungodly. "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power; When He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe ... in that day." (2 Thessalonians 1. 7-10)

The Lord will have His people purified in the fire and fitted for His use. Profanity and worldliness can not abide when the work of the Spirit is truly known in the heart. But where there is the fear of the Lord, there is salvation. The Psalmist wrote: "Surely His salvation is nigh them that fear Him; that glory may dwell in our land. Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." (Psalm 85. 9-10) To the Lord's people there is such glory and power coupled with love in the blessed Redeemer, who has washed them in His precious blood. His delight is with His bride, the church. (Song of Solomon 4. 9-10 and 7. 10)

***Praise the Lord of Glory***

Let us pray that we might be filled with Christ's love; a love that is manifested in our lives to His honour and glory; a love to a Triune God and love to one another. Thus we shall praise God in word and in deed, as the poet expressed.

Come, ye that know and fear the Lord,  
And lift your souls above;  
Let every heart and voice accord,  
To sing that God is love !

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This precious truth His word declares,  
And all His mercies prove;  
Jesus, the Gift of gifts appears,  
To show that God is love !

Behold His patience lengthened out,  
To those who from Him rove;  
And calls effectual reach their hearts,  
To teach them God is love !

The work begun is carried on  
By power from heaven above;  
And every step, from first to last,  
Proclaims that God is love !

O may we all, while here below,  
This best of blessings prove;  
Till warmer hearts in brighter worlds,  
Shall shout that God is love !

(Burder)

Every blessing flows to us through the Lord Jesus and His glorious grace. God the Father for love's sake sent God the Son to this sin cursed earth to redeem the church. It is God the Holy Spirit that reveals the true sinful state of man and then reveals Christ to the soul. Thus we see the threefold operation of the Godhead in manifesting the love of God. The Trinity is a doctrine full of blessing and essential to salvation. (1 John 5. 1-7)

The words of the apostle Paul at the close of his epistle to the Corinthians are a beautiful summary of the desire of every true minister of the gospel. As we draw this book to a conclusion, the author also earnestly desires this for each reader. May there be that establishing and perfecting (that is a maturity in our walk as a

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Christian, though we are yet sinners saved by grace) which is so needful in the church. Paul wrote: "Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you. Greet one another with an holy kiss. All the saints salute you. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen." (2 Corinthians 13. 11-14)