

Contents

ChristianShepherd • Vol. 4 • No 3 • March 2000

Paying the Price	59
<i>Editorial</i>	
Our Heavenly Calling	68
<i>Practical applications — B. Prost</i>	
The Righteousness of God	75
<i>On the pirnicple of faith— R. K. Gorgas</i>	
Feed the Flock	77
<i>A test of love</i>	
Practical Reflections	78
<i>Acts 4:34 — 5:14</i>	
Glories of Christ	83
<i>Seven glories (conclusion)—B. Anstey</i>	

—Also in this Issue—

Fragment—J. N. Darby	63
Dead and Risen with Christ	63
Meditations of a father	65
Fragment—W. Kelly	67
Fragment—G. V. Wigram	74
Bible Challenger answers	74
Bible Challenger	82

Editorial

Paying the Price

“I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and [that] the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. (Rev 3:18)

These words of counsel, spoken by the Lord Jesus in view of the lukewarm spiritual condition found in the assembly at Laodicea, strikingly show His loving desire and faithful care for His assembly. To those who have an *ear to hear*, desiring to be *overcomers*, the Lord’s counsel is *vital* for it contains a promise of reward. It is also *clear*, revealing that it will cost something to walk pleasing to Himself in this world. And it is *urgent* because He, as righteous Judge, is about to solemnly disown the lukewarm Laodicean assembly.

Laodicea spiritually had no *cup of cold water* (Matt. 10:42, Mk 9:41) to offer as refreshment. Nor was the report of their condition “good news from a far country”, for it did not refresh His blessed heart as *cold waters* (Prov 25:25). There were no *mighty men* evident in Laodicea—such as had willingly hazarded their lives, bringing Bethlehem’s water to refresh their beloved David. (2 Sam 23:15).

Rather, the condition of the Laodiceans was so nauseous to the Lord Jesus that it is about to be *spued out of His mouth*. May His warning and counsel make us willing to buy that which will *refresh* His blessed heart. It is to those who over-

come, that the Lord Jesus says, “will I grant to sit with me in my throne” (Rev. 3:21)

The Lord counsels each to *buy* of Him three things—gold, white raiment, and eyesalve. Let us make a *spiritual application* of these, allowing them to picture morally the three great principles of Christian life—found in the earliest epistle of Paul (1 Thessalonians). “Remembering without ceasing your *work of faith*, and *labour of love*, and *patience of hope* in our Lord Jesus Christ,...” (1 Thess 1:3). These three, faith, love and hope, were not operative in the assembly at Laodicea—the last state of the assembly—as they had been at the first with the Thessalonians. If they are to be living and active in our lives, we must be willing to pay a *price*.

“Work of faith”—Gold, tried and precious

The Thessalonians had “turned to God from idols” (v 9), —from that which was visible and tangible to that which was unseen—a proof that their faith was real and working. It had *cost* them very much to take that step of faith. They experienced persecution—perhaps even loss of earthly goods (Acts 17:1-15). But when *tried by the fire* of persecution, their faith was found *more precious than the gold* (1 Pet 1:7).

The Laodiceans who considered themselves *rich*, felt no need to pay the price for that which the Lord counseled them to buy. They felt *increased* with what their flesh desired and shunned the trials and persecutions connected with the path of faith.

Are we willing to pay the *price* of daily walking by faith? It will cost as much to walk thus today as it

did the Thessalonian believers. But possessing that Divine *gold* —tried and tested faith—which endures until it gives way to sight, is surely worth the cost! “*O kindle within us a holy desire, Like that which was found in thy people of old, Who tasted thy love, and whose hearts were on fire...*” (LF #168)!

“Labor of love”—submission and obedience

We read in Rev 19:8 that the Lamb’s wife was “arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.” Not only will it cost believers to walk by faith (*a work of faith*), it will also *cost* Christians to live lives that are characterized by *righteousness* in this violent and corrupt world—a real *labour of love* in the energy of faith.

The world said to God, “we will not have this man to reign over us” (Luke 19:14) and they cast out and crucified His beloved Son. Now the Lord Jesus says to those who are called by His blessed Name, “If ye love me keep my commandments”.

The Thessalonian believers *bought* their *white raiment* by serving the *living and true God*. Keeping His *word* and not *denying His Name* in a world governed by self-willed disobedience was the price they *paid* for that *white raiment* (practical righteousness of walk). It cost them (as it will us) misunderstanding and reproach in a world that thinks “it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you:” (1 Pet. 4:4) May our hearts be so stirred that we willingly and joyfully *pay* the price for His *white raiment*.

“Patience of hope”—enduring “till He come”

Unlike the Thessalonian believers, the foolish Laodiceans were not willing to *patiently* wait (endure) for “his Son from Heaven”. They readily gave up what they were unable to see with natural sight—the believer’s proper hope of coming glory with Christ—in order to obtain the fleeting pleasures of this “present evil world” (Gal 1:4). Morally, they were *earth dwellers*. The Lord Jesus would “drink no wine” until He drank it new in His Father’s kingdom (Matt 26:29), but Laodicea was already “drunk with wine, wherein is excess” (Eph 5:18).

There was no *patience of hope* in their lives, for their eyes were not *anointed with Divine eyesalve* to see the beauty of His Person and the glory of His coming kingdom. They answer to Isa. 53:2, “. . . *and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him*”. The *present* filled their vision and hearts, even as Sodom had filled Lot’s, so that they were blinded to Christ’s loveliness.

God grant us the spirit of the Psalmist who said, “Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things. . .” (Psa 119:18) May we be willing to *pay* the price for *Divine eyesalve* (communion), that with eyes so anointed, we can by faith view the coming glory and thus patiently await His return.

“These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.” (Heb 11:13)

Ed.

A timely word

The whip and the scourge may be righteous, but there is no winning the heart of man with these. Nor is it righteousness which reigns among the saints of God, but grace, righteousness, unto eternal life. Alas! how many sins that might have been washed away (Joh. 13) have been retained! How many brethren alienated for all time, that might have been won back to God and to us, because we have hammered at the conscience merely, with the heart ungained—with the heart, I may say, almost unsought!

We have not overcome evil, because we have not overcome it with good. We have taken readily the judge's chair, and have got back judgment; but the Master's lowly work we have little done.

But how little yet do we understand that mere righteous dealing, yes, absolute righteousness, as it may be—will not work the restoration of souls; that judgment, however temperate, and however true, will not touch and soften and subdue hearts to receive instruction, that, by the very facts of the case, are shown not to be in their true place before God. Man is not all conscience; and conscience reached, with the heart away, will do what it did with the first sinner among men—drive him among the trees of the garden, to escape the unwelcome voice. *J.N.D.*

Dead and Risen with Christ

Having now Christ as my life and Christ as my object, I am given power over the motives that were mine before. The things that are around me have lost

their force. The one object that the new life has is Christ; that which alone forms and governs this life is Christ; and, the soul of the believer being filled with Him, the things of the outward world have lost their force. His mind is filled with something else. The life that is in him is occupied with Christ.

The consequence of this is outward things no longer exert influence over him. "The eye is single, and the whole body is full of light." Hence what excites the old man is not working now in that way. The thing manifested is the effect of Christ revealed to the new man—the new man living on Him.

The apostle says: "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved," etc. He does not say, 'You make out that you are "elect of God, holy and beloved." He says, "This is your place: I want you to live in the consciousness of this; and because you are such, you are to live and act in the good of that.'

There are affections and duties which flow from the place I am in. "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved." Oh if my heart can live in that—in what I am—as elect of God, holy and beloved, I can put on anything then! If I live in the consciousness of my relationship, in the consciousness of what God is to me, these are the fruits that will follow—love, joy, peace, longsuffering, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. But I must have love, joy, and peace first. If I am perfect happy in God I do not mind if a person insults me.

excerpted, The Christian Friend, 1874

Meditations of a father

“...*exceeding great and precious promises...*” (2 Pet. 1:4) Promises—the Bible is full of them. Waiting for us in the simplicity of faith to claim for our own enjoyment. Sometimes we promise with all good intentions, but are not able to make good due to human impossibility. But here we have promises from a God with Whom nothing is impossible and before Whom we stand in unchanging favor because of our position “in Christ.” He wants us to make good on those promises in the energy of faith.

“*Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid.*” (Isa. 12:2) Fear sometimes crowds into the heart, but the secret is choosing simply to trust based on the exceeding great and precious promises that God has given us in His Word. When God fills the heart, so does trust and consequently the fears have to go.

“*Thus saith the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel; In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength.*” (Isa. 30:15) The reason for returning is that the current of this world is away from the source of real and lasting strength, trying to get us to trust in ourselves. It is not a matter of being strong in ourselves that is the answer, but rather in resting quietly in His strength.

“Lo, these are the borders of his ways; but what a whipser of a word do we hear of him! and the thunder of his power; who can understand” (Job 26:14 J.N.D.Trans) Job had been speaking of the wonders of creation and then when he considers HIM who made it all makes this elequent statement. All that we hear of Him is but a whisper of a word. Isn't it just marvelous to be able to know such a great God? And then to be able to look up in the simplicity of faith and call Him “Father.” The more we know of Him, the more we are brought to realize just how little we know of Him who fills heaven and the heaven of heavens.

“But the people that know their God shall be strong, and shall act.” (Daniel 11:32 J.N.D trans.)

“Being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, ...he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith giving glory to God.” (Rom. 4:19-21)

What gives strength is knowing who our God is and acting in the light of that revelation. Abraham did not consider what seemed to contradict naturally, but chose to believe God. It is a strength that is evident not merely in youth but often in those of age who simply act in the light of the revelation of who our God is.

Read Luke 5:1-11

It is interesting and important to give attention to

the smallest of details of what the Lord has to say to us. Here Peter was told by the Lord to let down the nets. Oh, the blessing He wants to pour into our lives—when He gives, He gives in abundant measure. Peter probably thought the Lord being a carpenter did not know much about fishing, but he would comply and let down at least one net. But that meant 1) that his net broke, 2) he lost some of the fish, 3) he had to ask for help from the other boat and they both almost sank. There is only one response for us when our God speaks to us—simple, unqualified, whole hearted obedience. Let us simply set our thoughts aside and accept His thoughts.

“Although he will not get up and give them to him because he is his friend, because of his SHAMELESSNESS, at any rate, he will rise and give him as many as he wants.” (Luke 11:8, J.N.D. Trans.)

Here the Lord teaches that in asking in prayer we cannot be too shameless. Think of going in the middle of the night to some person and just because he is a friend, make him get out of bed just to give you some bread. Inside the friend tells him, “I cannot.” Still he persists, and in the end gets all he needs. Most would be ashamed to do such a thing. But the Lord uses this to encourage the persistence of real faith. Because it is our God Himself, we *cannot* be too shameless in asking—insignificant or large. The persistence of faith *asks, seeks*, and then if necessary *knocks* until there is the answer. Do we really know what such supplication means?

Divine Love

It is well to remark the connection of *charity*—love—here (1 Cor 13) with the assembly of God, and the working of the Holy Spirit in it. Everywhere love is precious, never out of season, *above all it is the lifebreath of the church*. Where love is not the regulating power in the Spirit, the very nearness of the saints to each other, and the action of the gifts, prove the greatest dangers; where love governs, all else works smoothly to the edification of the saints and to the Lord's glory. If the Corinthian saints, in their ministering of the gifts, had forgotten the supreme excellence of love, the apostle puts it forward with all prominence between his treatment of the Spirit's presence and action in the assembly, and the order laid down for the due exercise of gift there. Love, he shews, has intrinsic and divine excellency, surpassing all gifts, even the gifts that edify. For such gifts may exist where there is no love. *"And now abide faith, hope, love; these three things; and the greater of these is love."* (1 Cor 13:13, JND)
excerpted, "Notes on Corinthians", W. Kelly

Errata

A sentence from an article in the May 1999 Christian Shepherd titled "The Unbroken Fellowship of Father and Son" should read: *"However, unlike Matthew and Mark, in Luke and John those heart rending words uttered by our precious Saviour— "My God, My God why hast thou forsaken me"— are left out of Divine Inspiration"*.

Regarding this most solemn and holy subject, we find our hearts stirred by the following comment, excerpted from the ministry of A. H. Rule. “How was it during those hours of darkness on the cross? Was there any ministering or strengthening angel? Was there any voice from the excellent glory expressing untold delight in His blessed Person? Was there any ray of light from that glory to relieve the awful gloom? God had abandoned the Man Christ Jesus. This is an hour that stands alone. There is none like it in the annals of eternity.”

May the sense in our hearts of the blessed Lord’s love, sacrifice and suffering be deepened as we meditate on that most solemn cry.

*O how our inmost hearts do move,
While gazing on the cross;
The death of the Incarnate Love!
What shame, what grief, what joy we prove,
That He should die for us!
Our hearts were broken by that cry,
“Eli, lama sabachthani?” (#215, LF)*

Ed.

In Micah 6:8 we have three things that God wants from us: “*to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God*”. It is the summing up of the whole fruit of grace. It makes the believer’s life very simple—he has nothing else to do but that, and it is perfect happiness. Nothing can hinder me from doing what is right, except my own will.

from a personal letter

The Word of God

What a wonderful privilege it is to have the precious, living Word of God. It just doesn't matter where we open this precious Book, we're sure to find something that God has for real blessing to our hearts. Every once in a while, as I pick up the Book, my memory goes aback to my early boyhood days and I remember how this Book was read and honored in the home in which, by God's grace, I was brought up. Perhaps you often see your Father and Mother reading this Book; and it may be sometimes, that you're tempted to think that you can find a lot of pleasure and satisfaction in other things. I want to tell you that having had the happy experience of being brought up in a home where this Bible was read and loved, that there is just no privilege like it.

I was just a very little fellow, just learning to read when my Daddy and Mother first gave me a rather large print Testament with my name in the front. You know, I thought it would be a good thing to have a Testament of my own; it would be fine to be able to hunt for the answeres in the Messages of Love; it would be a fine thing to learn my weekly Sunday School text from my own Bible. And I remember, one day, seeing one of my brothers sitting and reading his Bible and I said to him, "Are you looking for your answers?" He looked up and said, "No". "Then, are you learning your Sunday School verse?" Again he said, "No". I didn't ask him any more questions, but I remember how it struck me; I thought, "Is he just reading that Bible because he enjoys reading it?"

I remember going and getting my own Testament,

and thinking; that would be a good idea for me. And to this day when I pick up this precious Book, a sense comes over me of how very, very little to this day I know of the precious treasures that are in it; and then, what a wonderful, wonderful Book it is. I look at the dear young people here tonight and I urge you with all that is within me to read this precious Book.

I took a funeral recently, of a dear old sister in the Lord, and this precious Book was lying open on her casket. Her two daughters had laid that Book there, and I asked them if I could pick it up and look at it. I turned to the front, and there in the front I found her name and the word, "Finish", and the date; and then again the word, "Finish" and a later date, and again the word, "Finish", and a later date; and all down the page was that word, "Finish" and the date on which she had read the last verse in Revelation, and had started over again. I beg you to make this precious Book your daily companion and guide.

I want to turn first of all tonight to a verse which I trust will speak to the conscience. It's found in the book of Jer. 17:9. "*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? I the Lord, search the heart.*"

Have you ever felt this verse probe deep down into your heart, into your conscience? It's so easy to live in a community where a certain code of conduct is expected; it's easy to come to the meetings and come to Sunday School, and have Father and Mother perhaps consider that everything is well with your soul because you can sing the hymns so

nicely, because you're found reading the Bible every once in a while. Yet as you sit here tonight—is it true of you that the finger of God has probed right down into that heart and caused you to feel just exactly what He has seen there?

I refer again to my childhood days and I tell you that I grew up in a home where this Book was loved and where Father and Mother loved the Lord Jesus. I'm sure they prayed for their son, and I'm pretty sure they thought their boy was a Christian because I came to meeting with them, sat between them in the meeting room, and read that precious Bible that they had given me: but let me tell you this—I sat down in those meetings week after week, looked right up as you're looking, and listened to the preacher as they called him, but the finger of God, although it probed deep down into my heart, had never yet laid bare to me what was here.

Oh, when the time came in my life when I realized what was in my heart in the sight of God; when I found what a poor, lost, guilty, helpless sinner I was in God's sight and that I was lost. I tell you, it sent me home to lie awake at night and many a time at night lie there awake for fear that the Lord Jesus would come and take Father and Mother, brothers and sisters away and leave me behind.

I want to read this verse as though the very voice of God were speaking to your inmost conscience.
The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it? As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man.
We're not speaking about the man behind bars

tonight; nor of those who are awaiting execution; or the poor man down in the gutter of sin that everybody avoids and considers unfit company. No, the finger of God points with one sweep and tells that *there is no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.*

We read also in Heb. 4:13, All things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. There's a solemn statement! I remember the first time that statement really struck home to me: I had known the Lord at that time for many years, but the force of that verse struck home to me as a dear brother was preaching one time in a gospel tent, and I was sitting there on one of the benches. I sat there on that bench and I thanked God that the cleansing power of the precious blood of Christ had cleansed and blotted out forever all that the eye of God had seen in that wretched heart of mine.

You may pass among your fellow men as a pretty respectable person. But that's the part of the verse that rings in my soul—*who can know it?* Oh, what matchless news it is, in spite of what God saw in my heart and in your's too, He loved us just the same. He loved us with a love that we cannot possibly express. We know that the answer is—None but God can know the depths of sin that He sees in the human heart. Yet we know that the wonderful news of the gospel looked right down into a depraved and sin-stained heart like ours, bringing the glorious news of forgiveness and cleansing from all sin.

adapted from an address, A. Hayboe

“Prayer is sure work, and the harbinger of blessing. So I have found in forty-six years’ pilgrimage. Having been laid aside this spring, these past two months, this thought has been a comfort to me.. I too have been reminded that there is a still more precious truth—that if prayer be a channel of blessing, the spring is in God and the fountain of blessing, Christ Jesus. The blessings flow down freely, and often what sets us praying for more is a first dropping of His rich love and grace.

I have been preaching this evening from 1 John 4, to a simple, poor people, showing what the gospel which John wanted us to hold fast was. We begin with God’s love—love that is for sinners, His Son to make propitiation for sin, to give life, to be the Saviour of the Word.” *from a letter, G.V Wigram*

Answers to February 2000 Bible Challenger

Crying in the wilderness	Luke 3:4
Righteousness	Psa. 23:3
Old	Jer. 6:16
Out of the way	Heb. 12:13
Keep his covenant and testimonies	Psa 25:10
Evermore	Psa 16:11
Darkness	Pro. 2:13

“The way of peace they know not; and there is no judgment in their goings: they have made them **CROOKED** paths; whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace. (Isa. 59:8) *R. Erisman*

The Righteousness of God

A lot of confusion exists among Christians about this term. In Paul's introduction in the epistle to the Romans (ch 1:1-17), we read that in the gospel of God is revealed "the righteousness of God from faith to faith" ("on the principle of faith to faith" (JND trans). Many understand the righteousness of God to be the personal righteousness of the walk of the Lord Jesus in His life here below imputed to-put to the account of-the believer when he believes. There is no biblical evidence for this.

I believe it is clear from Romans that righteousness is God's perfect consistency with what He is in His nature when He saves the sinner. God makes no compromise with His character as light in justifying him that "is of the faith of Jesus." (Rom 3:22)

The perfect holy walk of the Lord Jesus here is not in question (Heb 4:15, JND). Because of His perfect, sinless life, He is the spotless Victim who satisfied the claims of a thrice-holy God on the cross. Any who would deny the sinless humanity of the Saviour would indeed be guilty of solemn doctrinal error. There would be no Saviour, and no gospel, if the Lord Jesus were not the spotless Man.

However, the Lord's sinless life would only condemn me. What saves me is His obedience unto death, offering Himself without spot to God for my guilt (Heb 9:14). That obedience constitutes me righteous before God, so God then is "just, and the justifier of him who believes in Jesus" (Rom 3.26).

This righteousness is "(apart from) law" (Rom. 3.21). If our justification were based on the Lord's

keeping the law for us, then “righteousness would be by the law” which scripture says it is not (Gal 3:21).

While we do not, of course, get doctrine from hymns, the following hymn by Albert Midlane seems to summarize the apostles’ doctrine regarding “righteousness” which Paul presents in Romans:

*The perfect righteousness of God
Is witnessed in the Saviour’s blood;
’Tis in the cross of Christ we trace
His righteousness, yet wondrous grace.*

*God could not pass the sinner by,
His sin demands that he must die;
But in the cross of Christ we see
How God can save, yet righteous be.*

*The sin is on the Saviour laid,
’Tis in His blood sin’s debt is paid;
Stern justice can demand no more,
And mercy can dispense her store.*

*The sinner who believes is free,
Can say, “The Saviour died for me”;
Can point to the atoning blood,
And say, “This made my peace with God!”*

“Lovingkindness and truth are met together;
righteousness and peace have kissed each other.”
(Psalm 85.10-JND trans) R. K. Gorgas

Feed the Flock

“Greater Love hath no man than this”

The story is told of a drill sergeant who, meeting a group of recruits for the first time, without warning tossed a hand grenade into the group. Understandably they all scattered seeking cover away from the grenade. It did not explode because, the drill sergeant explained, “it was not set to explode.” That was their initiation into intensive combat training.

The next day, just before a new recruit joined the group, the sergeant told the rest not to let on what was going to happen. The sergeant came out again, threw the grenade into the crowd of soldiers who again scattered—except for the new recruit. Unaware of the trick and thinking it was a live grenade, he had thrown himself on top of it to keep it from harming his fellow soldiers.

We often are reminded in Joh. 15:13 that “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” This is the greatest expression of love that man is capable of displaying, and it reminds us of the ultimate sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ.

However in Rom. 12:1 we are encouraged to give ourselves as a “*living* sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” In 1 Joh. 3:16 the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus in His *death* is the standard and measure by which we are to *live* lives of sacrifice for our brethren. May we, in love for Christ, be willing to pay that price!

“... see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently” (1 Pet. 1:22) *Ed.*

Practical Reflections

Acts 4:34—5:14

v 34, 35 *Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.*

All earthly possessions were placed at the disposal of the apostles for those in need. If submission to the “Apostles’ doctrine” guides our giving, the happy result will surely be blessing to others.

v 36, 37 *And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus, Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.*

Under the law a Levite expected to receive from others (Deut 26:12, 13) for he had no possessions in this world (Num 18:23). Under grace Barnabas, a Levite, gives what he owned, becoming a true New Testament example of a Levite. Let us be *cheerful givers* (2 Cor 9:7), walking as those who *have nothing yet possessing all things* (2 Cor 6:10).

Chapter 5:1, 2 *But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet.*

Previous to this solemn account, Satan’s attempts to corrupt the assembly had come from without

(Acts 2:13, 4:2,3,17,18) . Now he seeks to corrupt from within by using covetousness (keeping back part of the money) which then led to deceit and lies. God does not need our puny wealth, but He must have reality—*truth in the inward parts*. (Psa 51:6)

v 3-5 But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things.

The early believers were filled with the Spirit of God (2:4, 4:31, 13:52), but Annanias' heart is filled by Satan with covetousness and lies. The Word of God is silent as to the reality of this couple's faith, for their actions were not consistent with their profession. Let us walk in *reality* and in *fear* before God.

v 6 And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him.

The “young men” (representing strength and service), guided by the Spirit, realizing the assembly had a need, fulfilled that ministry, apparently without receiving special directions. Love for Christ, and communion with Him produces intelligent service.

v 7-9 And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in. And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much. Then Peter said unto her,

How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband [are] at the door; and shall carry thee out.

Peter gave opportunity for Sapphira to repent and confess her sin, but she persisted in *covering* it (Prov. 28:13), and also fell under solemn judgement.

v 10 *Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried [her] by her husband.*

Sapphira falls dead at the feet of Peter—a place where others had laid their wealth and possessions. The young men must again undertake a sad but necessary service. The way in which they perform it, however, is beautiful in its *moral* seemliness. Her body is not “wound up” by them (as was Annanias’), but with as little contact as possible, they simply carry the body out, burying it by her husband.

v 11 *And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.*

One can hardly think of an event more calculated to prove the truth of Ps 89:7, “God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him.”

We find in Rom 3:18 that fallen man as a race, has no *fear of God*. Sadly, today the fear of God seems lacking even among those who profess Christianity. While believers ought never to be *afraid* of our God and Father, we should be very careful to act in a way which is pleasing and honoring to Him.

v 12 *And by the hands of the apostles were*

many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch.

Miracles that were done provided indisputable proof to the truth and power of the gospel. Today, a soul redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, walking in the *newness of life* (Rom 6:4) and shining as a *light* in the midst of a *crooked and perverse* world (Phil 2:15) gives similar testimony.

Solomon's porch pictures the entrance into coming millennial blessing for Israel. But a *greater than Solomon is here*, and the proper hope for the assembly is heavenly, not earthly glory.

v 13 *And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them.*

The judgement that had come on Annaias and Sapphira served as a solemn safeguard—for a time—to any who might seek to connect themselves with the assembly, without a reality in their hearts.

v 14 *And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.)*

The assembly in Jerusalem grew—both in the esteem of those who observed it, and in the numbers of those who were saved. Some may argue that Christians must be careful not to drive people away from the Lord by being too *legal*. Yet here, when all Jerusalem was aware that unfaithfulness to the Name of Christ cost two souls their lives, the numbers in the assembly increased—rather than decreased. Though today, we may not always see increased numbers, faithfulness to Christ will always result in increased blessing. *Ed.*

The Glories of Our Lord Jesus Christ— (cont) His Redemption glory

This is a glory that Christ has won by going into death to accomplish redemption. Having glorified God over the question of sin, God “raised Him up from the dead and gave Him glory.” (1 Pet 1:21) He is now at God’s right hand “crowned with glory and honor.” (Heb 2:9) This is an acquired glory that He shares with the redeemed. “The glory which Thou gavest me I have given them” (Jn 17:22, 2 Thess 2:14). A type of is found in the Trespass offering, where “the fifth part” was added (Num 5:6, 7). When a man made amends for his offence, he came with a sacrifice and returned what he had taken away. He also added one-fifth more, so that the offended party got back more than what was taken away.

The outburst of sin in the creation has been an offence to the holiness of God the Creator. God has been robbed of worship, obedience, service, and glory. Christ’s death not only satisfied the claims of divine justice, it went a step further, and glorified God by redeeming trophies of His grace, bringing many sons to glory. In that sense, He added the fifth part. He has brought a glory to God that He never would have had, had sin not entered the world. When Christ appears, He will put the trophies of His grace on display so that “the world may know” this glory. (Jn. 17:23, 2 Thes. 1:10)

The glory of His preeminence

When the Lord Jesus rose from the dead, He became the Head of a new race of men (the new

creation)—Rev 3:14. Christ risen is “the Firstborn among many brethren.” (Rom 8:29) The believer now is no longer looked at as under the headship of Adam, but under the headship of Christ. (Rom 5:15-21, 1 Cor 15:22) “If any one be in Christ, there is a new creation,” (2 Cor 5:17).

Every believer in the Lord Jesus is of the same kind as Christ in the new creation. (Compare Gen 1:21, 24-25, 2:23) “Both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are *all of one*: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren saying, I will declare Thy Name unto My brethren.” (Heb 2:11, 12) Because He is “the Firstborn from among the dead, His Father has given Him a special glory that distinguishes Him from all other men in that new race; so that “in all things He might have the preeminence.” (Col 1:18)

Christ’s great desire now is that “they may behold my glory which Thou has given me” (Jn 17:24) This is a glory that we will behold, but not share. He will always have that first place in new creation. While He is not ashamed to call us brethren, the Word of God never tells us to call Him our Brother. His glory of preeminence sets Him apart from familiarity.

His Official Kingdom Glory

The Old Testament Scriptures are filled with descriptions of Christ’s kingdom glory. Every godly Israelite looked for the day when their Messiah and King would reign over the earth. When the kingdom will be established in power in the world to come, “all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the

Lord.” (Num. 12:21, Hab. 2:14, Ezk. 39:21, 43:2) “I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come and see My glory. . .that have not heard of My fame, neither have seen My glory; and they shall declare My glory among the Gentiles.” (Isa. 66:18-19) When the Lord Jesus walked among men He veiled this glory, with the exception of the preview given to three of the apostles on the mount of transfiguration. (Matt. 17:1-9, 2 Pet. 1:16-18) This is a glory that the Lord will share with the church for He will associate it with Himself in the administration of the world to come. Under the figure of a city descending out of heaven, the church as the bride of Christ will reflect His kingdom glory before the world. (Rev 21:9-22:5)

Summary

The Lord Jesus had two great glories in the past eternity (His Godhead glory and His Sonship glory); then when He created the universe, there was added His creation glory. When He became a Man another glory was apparent (His Moral glory). Upon completing redemption, He acquired two more glories (His Redemption glory and His Preeminent glory). The when He comes again (the appearing) all the world will see His Official Kingdom glory in the Millennium. *B. Anstey*

Faith is believing what God says and then acting upon it. If we do not act upon what God says, this is evidence that we really do not believe.

Spiritual Gems for the Path of Faith

Bible Challenger

The first letter of each of the following responses will form the word that tell what many people in Solomon's day were *making*, seemingly with no end, the use of which resulted in weariness of the flesh. The number in brackets indicates the number of words in each answer.

1. In the early days of Israel's history, what were the multitudes of the people making? (1)
2. What were Sodom and Gomorrah turned into, making them an example of the ungodly. (1)
3. What were the religious leaders in Jesus' day making the word of God through their traditions? (2)
4. Who are assembled Christians speaking with, as they sing and make melody in their hearts? (1)
5. What were the Israelites, in Amos' day, falsifying as they were also making the ephah small? (1)
6. Wherein was the law of commandments contained which has now been abolished, so making peace? (1)
7. In the words of a new testament writer, where was he making mention of certain believers? (2)
8. Something Good that the Levites taught the people as they were making confession to the Lord during certain feast days. (1)
9. That which some assembled men, found a president making three times in a day. (1)

R. Erisman