

Daily Meditations on the Glory of Jesus

VOLUME III

A Thirty-day Devotional

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Table of Contents

Preface	1
Day I: God's Free Favor and Love	4
Day II: Our Indescribable Pardon	11
Day III: The Greatest King & Lowliest Servant	17
Day IV: Not One Sin Remains	26
Day V: Our Coming King's Glorious Rule	33
Day VI: Faultless Before His Throne	38
Day VII: Part I: Emptied of Glory	47
Day VIII: Part II: The Humiliation of Heaven's Captain	58
Day IX: A Cloud of Favor.....	67
Day X: Clothed With Christ, Clothed With Power	77
Day XI: A Spotless Bride	84
Day XII: Nothing Too Hard and Nothing Too Big	94
Day XIII: Saved From the Dunghill.....	100
Day XIV: Silver, Barley, & God's Redeeming Love	106

Day XV: Jesus' Better Fruit	114
Day XVI: Our Savior's Unfailing Righteousness	121
Day XVII: Christ's Power & A Lad's Lunch	127
Day XVIII: The Rich Dew of Christ's Head	133
Day XIX: Ascending Heaven's Ladder	141
Day XX: The Great God's Humble Gaze	150
Day XXI: Behold the Man!	156
Day XXII: Sweet Comfort in Our Failure	161
Day XXIII: Abiding in True Shalom	166
Day XXIV: The Breastplate of Christ's Love	171
Day XXV: The Lord's Invitation	176
Day XXVI: Expecting God's Mercy & Restoration	183
Day XXVII: Night and Day	188
Day XXVIII: The Joyful Dance of Our True Groom	193
Day XXIX: Light in the Darkness, Freedom in the Prison	199
Day XXX: The Faithful Attitude of Our Righteous King of Glory	206

Preface

In regard to The Scriptures, which are “*God-breathed, and [are] profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, [and] for instruction in righteousness,*” [2 Tim 3:16] there is one overall theme: Jesus Christ – even as He said through the Psalmist, “*Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me.*” [Psa 40:7] It is our Lord Jesus to which all the scriptures point; yes, “*to Him give all the prophets witness.*” [Acts 10:43] If there is any true prophesy, inspired of God, (for, “*The Lord GOD hath spoken, who can but prophesy?*” [Amo 3:8]), it will speak of Christ: as it is written, “*the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.*” [Rev 19:10] If there be therefore any “*edification, exhortation, and comfort,*” which things are prophesy, [1 Cor 14:3] then they will find the fulness of their fruit in the glory of Jesus.

Therefore, when we come to God’s word, we must look at it first to see Jesus. If The Spirit is interpreting and teaching us, of whom Jesus promised, “*He will guide you into all truth;*” [Jn 16:13] and, “*but the anointing which ye have received of Him...teacheth you of all things*” [1 Jn 2:27] – then we can be assured He shall speak to us of Christ Jesus and His glory. For again, Jesus said, “*He shall glorify me: for He shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto*

you.” [Jn 16:14] Jesus shows us this truth too, for when He led the two on the road to Emmaus, He spoke of Himself, revealing Himself through God’s word. *“And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself.”* [Lk 24:27]

Let us therefore be about the same business. For both Jesus and His Spirit testify to this great truth: that all of God’s word displays, foreshadows, pictures, explains, and magnifies Jesus Christ. Let our eyes be *“ever toward the LORD,”* [Psa 25:15] ever toward His shining face, that we might learn of God’s glory, of His character, of which Jesus is *“the radiance.”* [Heb 1:3] Let us look at Christ and behold His shimmering glory; let us cry out to The Spirit to teach us and reveal Jesus to us, that we might be ever more in love with Him and conformed into His image. Let us, as it says, *“grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ;”* [2 Pe 3:18] and that, because it is *“through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue”* that we may lay hold of *“all things that pertain unto life and godliness,”* and also *“whereby, [that is, by the knowledge of Jesus], are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature.”* [2 Pe 1:3-4]

Further, The LORD has promised, *“in all places where I cause my name to be remembered/celebrated I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.”* [Ex 20:24] It

is in those places where God's name, where His character, His glory, are celebrated and/or remembered that He will come and bless. Even as a husband will contently dwell with those people and in those places where His wife is prized, but will hardly in those places where she is despised or ill-spoken of. Let us think good thoughts of Christ; let us see His glory and praise His name. Let Jesus Christ be magnified through this book, through each of these devotions, and may your heart ever burn for His glory and yearn to love Him more. For, "*The LORD is high above all nations, and His glory above the heavens;*" [Psa 113:4] He is "*the chiefest among ten thousand;*" [Songs 5:10] the knowledge of His character and glory are like a fragrant and soothing balm, and He is worthy of our deepest and most steady attention. Dear reader, may you find Christ so today, and each day you open this devotion. May His brilliant face and blessed character become ever-sweeter to your heart as you gaze upon the King of Glory.

Day I: God's Free Favor and Love

Psalms 147:10-11 – He delighteth not in the strength of the horse: he taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man. The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy.

After becoming king, David desired to show kindness to someone for the sake of his friend, Jonathan. David spoke of their love, saying, “*thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.*” [2 Sam 1:26] When Jonathan died, it grieved David, for early in their relationship it is written for our remembrance, “*the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David.*” [1 Sam 18:1] And so knit were their souls, so deep their love and friendship, that preceding David's fleeing from Saul, they made a covenant. Jonathan spoke to David in the field, saying,

“And thou shalt not only while yet I live shew me the kindness of The LORD, that I die not: but also thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my house for ever: no, not when The LORD hath cut off the enemies of David every one from the face of the earth. So Jonathan made a

covenant with the house of David...And Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul.” [1 Sam 20:14-16, 17]

This covenant was not hastily made; even after Jonathan’s father, Saul, did much evil to David, yet after becoming king, David thought it well to do some kindness to Jonathan’s household, thus fulfilling that covenant. And so it came to pass that “*David said, is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may shew him kindness for Jonathan’s sake?*” [2 Sam 9:2] To this, Ziba, a servant in Saul’s house, answered and said, “*Jonathan hath yet a son, which is lame on his feet.*” [2 Sam 9:3] In response to this, “*king David sent, and fetched him out of the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, from Lodebar.*” [2 Sam 9:5] What happens after this, when Jonathan’s Son, Mephibosheth, comes to David, is a glorious picture of Christ’s grace toward us. We therefore read,

“Now when Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, was come unto David, he fell on his face, and did reverence. And David said, Mephibosheth. And he answered, Behold thy servant! And David said unto him, Fear not: for I will surely shew thee kindness for Jonathan thy father’s sake, and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father; and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually. And he bowed himself, and said, What is thy servant, that thou shouldst

look upon such a dead dog as I am?" [2 Sam 9:6-8]

Notice first-of-all, the grace David bestows so freely on Mephibosheth, in saying, *"fear not: for I will surely shew thee kindness...and will restore thee all the land of Saul...and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually."* No doubt, a descendent of David's enemy, Mephibosheth had tremors of fear coursing through his heart and mind, for we read that when he drew near to David, *"he fell on his face, and did reverence."* It was not uncommon, as we see through other scriptures, for evil kings to kill off the last king's family; for it is written of Athaliah that wicked queen, *"she arose and destroyed all the seed royal."* [2 Ki 11:1] But David was not a wicked king; he was just, *"a man after [The LORD's] own heart."* [Acts 13:22, 1 Sam 13:14] Though Mephibosheth may have had fear, yet David intended to do him no wrong; on the contrary – David wished to do him a kindness. And truly this represents to us the great love of God toward us through Christ. For *"God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us;"* and again, *"when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son..."* [Rom 5:8, 10] When we were enemies of God, sinners and ungodly men, walking *"according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air,"* [Eph 2:2] that is, satan, God's enemy, our gracious

Lord thought well to do us a great kindness in sending us Jesus Christ to die for our sin.

Moreover, David offered Mephibosheth, though he was lame, a continual supply of provision and land. He invited him into his home to eat and drink and take delight in all that was the king's. In this, David shows us what God The Father has done for us through Christ. For notice too that David says, "*I will surely shew thee kindness for Jonathan thy father's sake;*" and in like manner, The Father blesses and loves us for the sake of Christ. Jesus tells us it is because of Him that we are loved of God. He says, "*The Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and believed that I came out from God.*" [Jn 16:27] And furthermore, it is written that not one thing can take away God's love for us which is given to us in Jesus;

*"...Neither death, nor life...nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come...shall be able to separate us from the love of God, **which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.**" [Rom 8:38-39]*

And,

*"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies **in Christ.**" [Eph 1:3]*

And again,

“...[The Father] hath made us to be endowed with grace *in the beloved [Son].*” [Eph 1:6]

Just as David blessed Mephibosheth for the sake of Jonathan, so too God blesses and lavishes grace upon us for the sake of Jesus Christ, His Son. Even as it was with Israel, who did not receive God’s favor and election for their own good works, but because of God’s love. “*The LORD did not set His love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people...but because The LORD loved you...*” [Deut 7:7-8] In Christ we have been adopted into God’s family, thus making available to us every spiritual blessing; yes, and every promise too, for it is written, “*all the promises of God in [Jesus] are yea, and in Him amen, unto the glory of God by us.*” [2 Cor 1:20] Like Christ Jesus was told of God, “*this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,*” [Mt 3:17] so too it is with us. For we “*have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father;*” [Rom 8:15] and indeed, in Christ we are true sons and daughters.

Truly though, the kindness that David showed Mephibosheth is as nothing in comparison to God’s kindness toward us. For The LORD’s compassion, mercy, grace, and love are not just overflowing for those in His Son, but everlasting as well. And let us notice one more glory regarding David: that he was aware of Mephibosheth’s lameness beforehand. Remember that the servant who told David of

Mephibosheth said, *“Jonathan hath yet a son, which is lame on his feet.”* David did not choose Mephibosheth to come into his house and enjoy the pleasures of his presence because Mephibosheth would be useful. It was not so that he might fight in the army, or till land, or help the servants; no, but it was purely out of love for Jonathan. In a very similar way, God’s love for us is not for anything that we might do for Him. He did not love us nor save us that we might work or repay Him in any fashion, or because he thought us strong and useful to His causes. No, but because of His great and abounding love which is found in Christ His Son, He loved us and saved us; He made us sons and daughters, kings and priests, objects of His grace and mercy. Yes, and Psalms agrees to this, showing us that we cannot nor are expected to repay God.

“What shall I render unto The LORD for all His benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of The LORD.” [Psa 116:12-13]

This great quality of our God is found in our verse today, which reads again,

“He delighteth not in the strength of the horse: he taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man. The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy.” [Psa 147:10-11]

Even as David took no delight in Mephibosheth's legs, them being lame, The LORD does not take pleasure and delight in us because of our legs: because of our usefulness to Him, because of works. No, but The LORD takes pleasure in those that simply, restfully, lovingly cling to Him in fellowship; in those that fear Him and hope in His mercy and other good qualities. The man that seeks to be useful for God, thinking himself to be strong or able, shall not give God much pleasure. But the man who abides in sweet, pure fellowship, hoping in and looking to God for mercy and love, this man gives God pleasure. For our God did not save us for our works, nor for anything we could do for Him; He saved us because He loved us and desired us. Praise be to our God who shows us such favor in His Son!

Day II: Our Indescribable Pardon

Micah 7:18-19 – Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retaineth not His anger for ever, because He delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, He will have compassion upon us; He will trample under foot our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.

In order for us to more fully appreciate what God reveals to us in the verse we have for today, we must first expand upon some of their definitions. Then, after knowing the words more perfectly, we may get a far better glimpse into the mirror of God's word, which shows us Christ's image and beauty.

First, "*pardoneth*." The word means to expiate. To expiate means, "*to atone for; to make satisfaction for; to extinguish the guilt of a crime by subsequent acts of piety or worship, by which the obligation to punish the crime is cancelled.*" [Webster] The basic meaning of this Hebrew word is to take up or take away. That is, The LORD is taking up our sins off of us. He lifts them up off us and has placed them on the

shoulders of Christ, our Savior and Lamb who has paid our debt and bore our transgressions and faults. Our sins are no longer a weight we must bear: the obligation for God to punish us for their badness has been cancelled, and our Father has been well pleased to extinguish all our guilt and liability for them. Praise be to Jesus Christ, who has provided us with expiation, who has borne the fulness of our sins' penalty; and praise also to our great God, "*that pardoneth iniquity.*"

Second, "*iniquity.*" The Hebrew word here means perverseness; and perverse means, "*turned aside; hence, distorted from the right.*" [Webster] Perverseness is a disposition to thwart or vex; uncompliant; a stubborn disposition; unaccommodating to what is proper or desired by others. [Webster] God, Judge of all, has graciously, for the sake of Jesus and His precious blood, elected and predetermined that all who believe in Christ; that all who step into that boat as it were in faith; that all who shroud themselves in Christ's hem – yes to all of them, their deepest perversions and distortions of what is right, their incomppliance and stubbornness against all which God deems good, shall all be removed. Every jot and tittle against them, accumulated through their lifetime of "*iniquity,*" should by Christ's magnificent blood be dashed to pieces and thrown out: all of their iniquities satisfied and atoned for in God The Judge's fiery eyes.

Third, “*passeth by.*” This phrase means to pass by; that is, to forgive. The word literally means to pass over, as in, pass over a stream, pass by a person, or pass over the earth.

Fourth, “*transgression.*” Transgression in the Hebrew means to defect or rebel against. Our transgressions against God are those of infidelity against His kingship, against His lordship, against His covenant, or against His love. To transgress is to be unloyal to a certain duty or allegiance. For the subject, he throws off the authority of his king; for the citizen, in like manner his lord; for the covenantor, that which was promised; and for the husband or wife, their transgression is against their marital promise of lifelong love and faithfulness. Praise God who is so inclined toward us as to walk past our rebellions, who does not stop to linger nor observe our defection and revolts of allegiance, but for Christ’s sake forgives them in an instant. As Paul said, “*but God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*” [Rom 5:8]

Fifth, “*retaineth.*” This Hebrew word at its base means to bind fast to anything; to join to; to take hold of. Our Father does not bind Himself to anger; He does not cling tightly to it. Rather, He holds a very loose grip upon it, being exceedingly longsuffering, for He takes great delight in showing mercy, for He is “*rich in mercy.*” [Eph 2:4]

And finally, “*delighteth*,” which word means to be inclined toward, to be favorable toward.

Who is like our great and awesome God, whose character and glory span beyond the vast lightyears of space? There is none like Him, who is so forgiving and merciful. As the Psalmist said rhetorically,

*“For who in the heaven can be compared unto
The LORD? Who among the sons of the mighty
can be likened unto The LORD?...O LORD
God of Hosts, who is a strong LORD like unto
thee? Or to thy faithfulness round about thee?”
[Psa 89:6, 8]*

And again,

*“...There is none like unto thee, O LORD; thou
art great, and thy name is great in might.” [Jer 10:6]*

*“There is none holy as The LORD: for there is none
beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God.” [1
Sam 2:2]* Among the gods, among the people of
earth, there is not one among them who can
compare to our great God and Redeemer, Jesus
Christ. For as we have seen today, He is He who
atones for all our depravities. Though we rebel
against Him, and though we quickly turn out of the
way; though we have been enemies of His,
purposely disobeying His statutes, yet our Father
has chosen to forgive us in Jesus His Son. He has

chosen to completely wipe out all guilt and shame associated with our sin, imputing to us the righteousness of Jesus, and forsaking all His former wrath against our sins and grievous lifestyles. As Psalms says, “*bless The LORD...who forgiveth all thine iniquities...*” [Psa 103:2, 3] Every single sin which we have committed is forgiven in Christ, passed over, sunk deep into the depths of the sea, as Micah goes on to say,

“He will turn again, He will have compassion upon us; He will trample under foot our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.” [Mic 7:19]

Just as Jesus in time to come, at “*the Day of Vengeance,*” will “*tread the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God,*” [Isa 63:4, Rev 19:15] so too The Father, who was well pleased to “*crush [His Son]*” in judgment of our sins, [Isa 53:10] tread under foot Christ Jesus as a grape, when all His wrath was poured out upon His head while He hung upon the cross. And just as Jonah was cast into the sea and so “*the sea ceased from her raging,*” [Jon 1:15] so also Christ Jesus, who was “*made...sin for us,*” [2 Cor 5:21] was cast into the sea of God’s wrath to experience that deep, relentless pressure of God Almighty’s anger against sin, so that those who trust in Christ’s sacrifice might steadfastly cling to the promise, “*being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.*” [Rom 5:9] Praise

God a thousand times over for His pardon of our sins by the sacrifice of Jesus our Lord. Our sins, by virtue of Jesus' payment and our belief, are utterly abolished. In Isaiah, we see again, The LORD says to us regarding our this truth,

"I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee." [Isa 44:22]

Indeed, again as Micah exults, "*who is a God like unto thee[!]*" Who is like The LORD on high who is so willing to furnish and lavish such grace and mercy upon us! For through Christ all our sins are never again to be seen, having been plunged into the depth of the sea as it were, and having been blotted out. So then, let us not falter at this through unbelief. Whether we require salvation or forgiveness, let us follow the admonition given in Isaiah, for our God is not like man, but being holy, delights to show mercy.

"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD." [Isa 55:7-8]

Day III: The Greatest King & Lowliest Servant

Genesis 40:4 – And the captain of the guard charged Joseph with them, and he served them: and they continued a season in ward.

When Jesus came to earth, though indeed He was “*The blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings, and Lord of lords,*” [1 Tim 6:15] yet, He did not use that information and status to be served. John reveals to us Jesus’ true nature, which goes far beyond just that of a man. Agreeing with Micah, who said of The Messiah, “*whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting,*” [Mic 5:2] he says,

“*In the beginning was The Word, and The Word was with God, and The Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made.*” [Jn 1:1-3]

Jesus is and was and will ever be the eternal Creator of all things, the “*heir of all things...the brightness of [God’s] glory, and the express image of His substance.*” [Heb 1:2-3] If there was anyone upon earth in all of

its history who deserved to be served, it was Jesus. There have come and gone, like the flower of the field and grass of the plains, many men who saw themselves as great – who have yearned for the honor of men, and who used their authority and status to subject others unto themselves through various means. Yet all of these were frauds; “*liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons,*” [Tit 1:12] chasing down the appetites of their bellies, who at present, if having remained such heathen rejectors of God to till their death, suffer “*everlasting destruction from the presence of The Lord.*” [2 Th 1:9] All these men, no matter their greatness, have been thrust down to hell; as The LORD spoke through Jeremiah,

“Thy terribleness hath deceived thee, and the pride of thine heart, O thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, that holdest the height of the hill: though thou shouldest make thy nest as high as the eagle, I will bring thee down from thence, saith the LORD.” [Jer 49:16]

Ah, so it is with mere men; but it was not so with Christ. The eternal God, the everlasting victor, the chief prince and Son of God, “*The LORD strong and mighty, The LORD mighty in battle,*” [Psa 24:8] who came down to earth to save men and “*destroy the works of the devil;*” [1 Jn 3:8] yes, Jesus Christ – though high above all, did not come down and use His position of authority to be served. As Jesus said,

“And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant. Even as The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.” [Mt 20:27-28]

And again,

“For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? Is not he that sitteth at meat? But I am among you as he that serveth.” [Lk 22:27]

Jesus was among us as a servant. Yes, Jesus *“emptied Himself, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.”* [Phil 2:7] He did not think of Himself, but of us. He did not covet the servitude of men, nor of their honor, but in stark contrast to the self-appointed great leaders of earth, Jesus sought to give His life up and serve us, leaving us an example.

There is an edifying comparison for us, if we will take some time to remember Joseph’s life. The brother who was betrayed and sold as a slave, used every opportunity he had to serve others. When arriving at Potiphar’s house, it is written,

“And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had put into his hand.” [Gen 39:4]

And then, after being thrown into prison, falsely accused and arrested, it is recorded,

“And the captain of the guard charged Joseph with [the other prisoners], and he served them: and they continued a season in ward.” [Gen 40:4]

Joseph lays for us an impressive example in his dedicated and diligent service in each place that God put him. Truly, Joseph reminds us that we ought to work for Jesus in all that we do, as Paul said, *“whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to The Lord, and not unto men.”* [Col 3:23] And further, Joseph found grace and strength from God to serve others, even after being wrongfully accused twice and thrown into prison. However, Joseph’s life in this case, as well as many others, is typological of Christ’s. For just as Joseph was betrayed of his brethren, falsely accused, and thrown into prison, so too Jesus, of whom it is prophesied, *“yea, mine own familiar friend...which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.”* [Psa 41:9, Jn 13:18] So too Jesus, *“was taken by oppression and by judgment,”* and, though, *“did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth,”* yet He was *“numbered with the transgressors.”* [Isa 53:8, 12, 1 Pe 2:22] And just as Joseph used his position to serve, so too Christ, though in a much greater way. For just as Joseph used his position in slavery and prison to serve others, having little choice of else to do, Christ Jesus, with all the

freedom in the world, chose to use His position to serve His disciples. One may be a servant to another easily enough when there is hardly another choice, and when there is little hope for escape, and this is commendable even still, being a worthy and Christian quality; but Jesus demonstrates for us the glorious love and mercy of God in that He served us voluntarily, in a position of leadership, freedom, and authority. For while Joseph was in prison, and in slavery, serving where He went: Jesus was in complete authority, being Creator and Lord over all, free from all men, and yet still serving.

This is most clearly exemplified for us in John, where The Spirit writes through John,

“Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end. And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, to betray Him; Jesus knowing that The Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from God, and went to God; He riseth from supper, and laid aside His garments; and took a towel, and girded Himself. After that He poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded.” [Jn 13:1-5]

Let us notice a few things, which will amplify for us the glory of Christ. First, Jesus “*knew that His hour was come.*” Second, Jesus “*knew...that He should depart out of this world unto The Father.*” Third, notice that prior to the washing, “*the devil...[had already] put into the heart of Judas Iscariot...to betray [Jesus].*” And fourth, Jesus knew “*The Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from God, and went to God.*” Let us briefly look at each point, and see how they do magnify the love and grace of Jesus in His ministering to the disciples.

Firstly, that Jesus “*knew that His hour was come,*” and, “*that He should depart out of this world unto The Father.*” There is a great temptation in man to grow tired and slack with time, and also to do the same when the end is in sight. But Jesus, though He was nearly finished, though the end was in sight when He would finally be freed from the corruption of the world and once again enjoy the blessedness of heaven, yet even so Jesus, “*loved them unto the end.*” Jesus faithfully loved His brethren to the very end, even so far as to wash their feet. Our Lord did not look beyond the present circumstances to covet after that forthcoming rest in lieu of ministering to His disciples, but though such glory awaited Him, and though He had endured for such a great while already, still humbled Himself and served those less-worthy than Himself, so that it might also be exemplified that which was typified in Melchizedek

and Abraham, of whom it is written, “*the less is blessed of the better.*” [Heb 7:7] God be praised; for the same love Jesus showed the disciples, He shows us; and the same endurance that He had with them, He has with us too – for, “*Jesus Christ [is] the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever,*” and, “*[love] endureth all things.*” [Heb 13:8, 1 Cor 13:7] We have a strong consolation; yes, “*everlasting consolation and good hope through grace,*” [2 Th 2:16] that our Lord will keep us and love us until the very end, not growing tired: for, “*He that keepeth thee will not slumber.*” [Psa 121:3] And, “*[Jesus Christ] shall also guarantee you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.*” [1 Cor 1:8]

Secondly, though Jesus knew Judas would betray Him, (“*for Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray Him.*” [Jn 6:64]), and though satan had entered Judas’ heart, possessing him unto the great wickedness of Jesus’ betrayal; yet, even though these things were presently true, Jesus included Judas in the washing of feet. Jesus took seriously all that He spoke, all that He taught. When Jesus said, “*but I say unto you, love your enemies,*” [Mt 5:44] He truly meant it, and with His behavior here and also through His passion, proves it.

Thirdly and finally, Jesus knew “*The Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from*

God, and went to God.” With this truth, we may find much encouragement. Like Jesus, who knew He would be king over all, and who knew He was the Messiah, God’s chosen savior for all men, so too Joseph had a word. For we remember his dream, wherein his brethren and parents bowed to his authority. This was not merely a dreamer’s dream, but a word from God regarding his future, for in Psalms we gain insight and read, “*the word of The LORD tried him.*” [Psa 105:19] But as it is with men, so it is not with Christ. Though Joseph surely had a dream, yet it can hardly be argued that Joseph knew he would be king of Egypt. What an unlikely and miraculous scenario! As God loves to do time and time again, He exalts the lowly and uses those whom no one else would choose, putting them in positions, wherein no one else would guess. “*But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise...*” [1 Cor 1:27] And so, while Joseph had in mind God’s word, the extent of revelation which He received was no doubt less than Christ’s. For we read that Jesus knew who He was, where He was going, and what would happen. More than once our Lord warned His disciples, prophesying of His soon-coming death and resurrection, revealing to us of His extensive knowledge into God’s plan. And here, we see that Jesus knew “*the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from God, and went to God.*” But though Jesus knew His position, knew

His destination, and for quite a while knew His approaching death, yet He loved His disciples wholeheartedly and passionately, even to the point of washing their feet just hours before His crucifixion.

Truly, our Lord Jesus far exceeds the example of Joseph in serving His brethren. What a marvelous and loving Savior we have; what a privilege it is to be called His.

Day IV: Not One Sin Remains

Exodus 10:19 – And The LORD turned a mighty strong west wind, which took away the locusts, and cast them into the Red Sea; there remained not one locust in all the coasts of Egypt.

The love that God has showed us through His forgiveness is indescribable. As Paul wrote, “*thanks be unto God for His indescribable gift.*” [2 Cor 9:15] Who among men could describe with precision the glories of Christ’s work? Or the fulness of His love? It goes beyond description; His love is, “*surpassing knowledge.*” [Eph 3:19] In like manner to “*the breadth, and length, and depth, and height,*” of Jesus’ love, [Eph 3:18] it is written in Job regarding God,

“*Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? He is high as heaven; what canst thou do? Deeper than hell; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea.*” [Job 11:7-9]

God’s mercy, which was poured out abundantly upon us through Jesus, is “*from everlasting to*

everlasting,” *“for as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him.”* [Psa 103:17, 11] So strong is the salvation offered to us through Jesus, that God has, if we have accepted Christ and entered into the New Covenant, wiped away our sins to the uttermost. The LORD has endeavored so thoroughly to eradicate our sins that they are not presently in existence. The LORD has *“trampled under foot our iniquities;”* yes, He has *“cast all [our] sins into the depths of the sea,”* and He says now, *“I will remember their sins no more.”* [Mic 7:19, Jer 31:34, Heb 8:12] Our sins are so removed that not even God, who exclaims, *“do not I fill heaven and earth,”* [Jer 23:24] can find them. For The LORD who says, *“I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins,”* [Isa 43:25] also proclaims to us,

“In those days, and in that time, saith The LORD, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve.” [Jer 50:20]

Jesus’ covering of our sins through His blood, washes us so clean, presents us so white, that there is not one speck of sin upon our souls, and The Lord therefore tenderly speaks to us as the Groom in Songs, saying, *“thou art all beautiful, my love; there is no spot in thee.”* [Songs 4:7] For Jesus presents us as *“holy and unblameable and unproveable in [The*

Father's] sight." [Col 1:22] Now praise be to our God who is so gracious on Christ's behalf; who so lovingly views us as Him, and who so completely forgives us because of the precious blood of Christ Jesus our Lord. Dear brother, is it not always a comforting truth to hear again from Christ's lips, *"Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee"*? [Mt 9:2] As Jesus said to the disciples, let Him say to you again, *"notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven."* [Lk 10:20] Rejoice good Christian! For all those dastardly sins which so tainted your soul black have been washed away never to be seen again. As The LORD has promised us,

"Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." [Isa 1:18]

In Exodus, there is a great picture for us of God's forgiveness and mercy. The varied sights we receive of God regarding His tender mercy bring delight and refreshment. Are you wearied on your pilgrimage to Zion, dear Christian? Does your heart droop low with the weight of sin? Think again upon Christ's blood and the forgiveness and mercy obtained thereby and so be comforted. Let the hand of Christ pick you up and hear Him say, *"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."* [Rev

1:17-18] For it is written, “*in the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul.*” [Psa 94:19]

During that period of time when God came down to deliver His people from Egypt, God afflicted Egypt with several plagues, in order that He might show Himself strong and get Himself glory in the deliverance of His chosen people. The eighth plague was that of locusts. After yet another rejection of God’s request by Pharaoh, it says,

“*And The LORD said unto Moses, stretch out thine hand over the land of Egypt for the locusts, that they may come up upon the land of Egypt, and eat every herb of the land, even all that the hail hath left...And the locusts went up over all the land of Egypt, and rested in all the coasts of Egypt: very grievous were they; before them there were no such locusts as they, neither after them shall be such. For they covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened; and they did eat every herb of the land, and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left: and there remained not any green thing in the trees, or in the herbs of the field, through all the land of Egypt.*” [Ex 10:12, 14-15]

Because of Pharaoh’s rebellion and sin, God sent many locusts upon the land, a grievous horde which covered the land in darkness and ate all the fruit.

The picture is very similar to that of sin: that, for our wicked rebellion against God and His Christ, our lives are covered in darkness, and that monster of sin eats up all the good fruit of our lives. Before being saved and forgiven, “*we were dead in sins.*” [Eph 2:1, 5] There was no light in our lives, but we were covered in darkness, not being in the true light of Christ Jesus. For Jesus says, “*he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life,*” [Jn 8:12] implying that the one who does not follow Jesus walks in darkness. And to this, the prophet Isaiah agrees, who writes, “*the people that walked in darkness have seen a great light;*” [Isa 9:2] and again, Paul, “*for ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in The Lord.*” [Eph 5:8] And so, just as the locusts “*covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened,*” so too sin covered us in a woeful darkness. And just as the locusts in Moses’ day, “*did eat every herb of the land, and all the fruit of the trees,*” so too it was with us before Christ. For it is written,

“*What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death...For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*” [Rom 6:21, 23]

And again,

“*Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.*

A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.” [Mt 7:17-18]

We can see clearly the parallels to sin from the locusts. But what is truly encouraging is not this, but the healing which takes place; for just as we have seen that in our salvation God has forgiven and removed every sin, not leaving even one behind, so too it is written of the locusts,

“And The LORD turned a mighty strong west wind, which took away the locusts, and cast them into the Red Sea; there remained not one locust in all the coasts of Egypt.” [Ex 10:19]

Just as God has utterly forgiven us, so too He utterly removed the locusts. Just as Pharaoh confessed, *“I have sinned against The LORD,”* [Ex 10:16] and so intreated God for forgiveness (though insincerely), we have genuinely intreated God, confessing Jesus and repenting from sin. And just as The LORD in response to this humility (though Pharaoh’s was yet insincere), God has responded to our genuine humiliation and falling upon Christ’s feet in forgiving us of all our sins. Just as there was not one locust left in all the land of Egypt, there is not left one sin in all our lives, for they have been forgiven in Christ.

See that though God *“brought an east wind”* [Ex 10:13] to bring in the locusts, He brought yet, *“a*

mighty strong west wind,” [Ex 10:19] to quell the plague. The wind to bring the plague was great, but the wind to remove it was much greater; and in this, we remember what is written, “*but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.*” [Rom 5:20] Praise God that our sins are forgiven. There remains not even one sin in all our coasts as it were. Imagine the strength of wind necessary to remove every single little locust. There remained not one. One could not find a locust stuck in a tree, nor under a rock, nor yet in a hole; there was not one carcass of the bugs left either, for “*there remained not one locust in all the coasts of Egypt.*” The LORD thoroughly and completely removed all the locusts; and in the same way, He has forgiven us of all our sins.

May we take this truth and cling to it; may it abide near our hearts when condemnation and guilt seek to prick them; may it soothe our souls like a balm when the heat of affliction tempts us to despair; may it guard our hearts and minds, keeping them in perfect peace. For our Lord loves us dearly and has forgiven us of all sin, so that there remains not so much as one to condemn us: all has been subdued through Christ. And just as the locusts were “*cast...into the Red Sea,*” so too we are promised that God has “*cast all [our] sins into the depths of the sea.*” [Mic 7:19]

Day V: Our Coming King's Glorious Rule

Psalms 72:3-4 – The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness. He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor.

In The Bible, mountains are sometimes used symbolically in place of governments. In Daniel we see this through Nebuchadnezzar's dream and interpretation thereof. When the great king of Babylon dreamed a dream, it did not fade quickly, but haunted him, for we read that by reason of this dream, "*his spirit was troubled, and his sleep brake from him.*" [Dan 2:1] So strong upon his soul was the memory of this dream, that upon the "*magicians, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans,*" failed attempts at interpretation, Nebuchadnezzar, "*was angry and very furious, and commanded to destroy all the wise men of Babylon.*" [Dan 2:2-12] But according to the word of his unable men, "*there is none other that can shew [the dream] before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh,*" [Dan 2:11] so it was: for The Lord

GOD, who “dwelleth between the cherubim,” and “that revealeth secrets,” [1 Sam 4:4, Dan 2:28] gave unto Daniel the dream and its interpretation.

In Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, he saw “a great image,” whose “head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, [and] his feet part of iron and part of clay.” [Dan 2:31-33] The LORD reveals through Daniel the different pieces of the great image are kingdoms.

Nebuchadnezzar, representing Babylon, was “this head of gold.” [Dan 2:38] After him would “arise another kingdom...and another third kingdom of brass...and the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron.” [Dan 2:39-40] But what grabs our attention today is the symbolic use of a mountain. For in the dream,

“A stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces...and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.” [Dan 2:34-35]

The interpretation of the stone and mountain is that of Jesus Christ, for it is written,

“And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and

consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.” [Dan 2:44]

Thus, through this dream, we can see how God uses the mountain to describe a government.

Specifically, in this case, the government of the Messiah, of Jesus our Lord, to whom it was promised,

“He shall be great, and shall be called The Son of The Highest: and The Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end.” [Lk 1:32-33]

And in a vision given to Daniel,

“There was given [The Son of Man] dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.” [Dan 7:14]

And so, we come to our verse for today, which speaks of Christ’s kingdom. Unlike the kingdoms of this earth, which are often cruel and tyrannical, hungry for power and devoid of righteous ambition, Jesus’ kingdom is that which, “*shall bring peace to the people...by righteousness.*” Jesus as “King over all the earth,” [Zech 14:9] and as “the governor among the

nations,” [Psa 22:28] will “*judge the poor of the people, [and] He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor.*” Jesus will rule the earth with uprightness; He will not be as the kings of this earth, who are unyielding and inept, who are ignorant of the trials of their people. No, but Jesus, as a good and righteous King, as one who “*was made in the likeness of men,*” and as one who “*was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin,*” [Phil 2:7, Heb 4:15] will, “*come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth.*” [Psa 72:6] Jesus Christ, “*King of kings, and Lord of lords,*” [Rev 19:16] shall rule with grace and mercy, taking thought for the poor and the needy, (yea, He “*shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper.*” [Psa 72:12]), and dashing to pieces all those who are evil. As it says in Isaiah,

“*Behold, a King shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment. And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.*” [Isa 32:1-2]

Jesus’ kingdom and rule will offer such a drastic and welcomed contrast to the kingdoms of this world. No longer will there be enforced poverty, famines, nor the production and distribution of all manner of vileness as there is today. In Christ’s kingdom, there shall be a great abundance of “*righteousness,*

and peace, and joy in The Holy Spirit,” for of such is His kingdom. [Rom 14:17] Yes, “in His days shall the righteous flourish [also], and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth.” [Psa 72:7] Praise to our coming king! As John prayed, let us joyfully agree, “even so, come, Lord Jesus[!]” [Rev 22:20]

Let us conclude with this. Have you found a leader, or some authoritative figure, acting unjustly or out of turn? May we change our way of thinking; may we not sulk in discouragement at such offences to righteousness, as though there is no hope; let us not diminish our spirits as do others – may these things provoke us to hope: to the hope and reminder that our Lord Jesus is yet coming; as He Himself said, “*surely I come quickly.*” [Rev 22:20] May we see that which falls drastically short of God’s ideal and be reminded that these men are not our true kings, “*for our citizenship is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, The Lord Jesus Christ;*” [Phil 3:20] and, “*nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness;*” [2 Pe 3:13] and again, “*for here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come.*” [Heb 13:14] Ah, so let us take comfort and rejoice! For our King doth yet come, “*His kingdom ruleth over all,*” [Psa 103:19] and blessed in His name forever and ever, amen.

Day VI: Faultless Before His Throne

Zechariah 3:1-2 – And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of The LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And The LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even The LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?

In the Book of Revelation, Satan is named as “*the accuser of our brethren...which accused them before our God day and night.*” [Rev 12:10] To accuse means, “to charge with, or declare to have committed a crime...” [Webster] While those good angels “*rest not day and night, saying, ‘holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come,’*” [Rev 4:8] Satan, that wicked cherub whose “*heart was lifted up because of [his] beauty*” and who “*said in [his] heart, ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God...I will be like the Most High,’*” [Ezek 28:17, Isa 14:13, 14] rests not day and night accusing the brethren, that is, of the saints of God. There has not been one day of human existence where that miserable enemy of all that is good has not laid

charge against one of God's elect children; for he "*accused them before our God day and night*" – he has been hard at work charging God's people with wrongdoing since the dawn of man upon the earth. We see it too, in the passage for today, where "*Satan [was] standing at [Joshua's] right hand to resist him.*" Truly, this is a grievous thing, that we should be accused and reviled by our enemy day and night. But, I think, if we would stay here a moment longer, we should see that even here too there is beauty for us to behold.

Let us first remember what our Lord said about our adversary who "*cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy,*" [Jn 10:10] that "*there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.*" [Jn 8:44] Therefore, good brother, good sister, take heart, for Jesus, "*who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth,*" and of whom it is written, "*God is not a man, that He should lie,*" [1 Pe 2:22, Num 23:19] has said "*he is a liar.*" Now Jesus, who "*sitteth on the right hand of God,*" [Col 3:1] and who does not lie, (for He "*cannot lie,*" [Titus 1:2]), who does always "*present [us] holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in [The Father's] sight,*" [Col 1:22] we being "*before Him in love,*" [Eph 1:4] says lovingly and dearly, "*thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee.*" [Songs 4:7] Our God, who is "*a God of truth and without iniquity,*" [Deut 32:4] declares that we are spotless and pure, beloved of

Him; and the Devil, who again, is “*a liar*,” accuses and brings to remembrance our sins, no doubt seeking to diminish our good standing and favor with God. Shall we believe the father of lies, wicked Lucifer, or shall we cling fast to what our Lord has said? For Paul exhorts us and assures us that we stand as the 144,000, of whom it says, “*they are without fault before the throne of God.*” [Rev 14:5] And again, that “*as [Jesus] is, so are we in this world.*” [1 Jn 4:17] If there is a pleasant and good trait of Jesus, so too of us, whom He presents before God, for we “*are the body of Christ, and members in particular,*” [1 Cor 12:27] and Christ Jesus is entered “*into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for our betterment.*” [Heb 9:24] And He does there, without fail or mishap, present us faultless before God, as it is written in praise unto our King, “*now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.*” [Jude 1:24]

Now then, dear Christian, how do these truths fare with your heart? Do you accept them? Do you find them sweet or amiable or worthy of meditation and acceptance? Or do you feel as though they could in no wise apply to a sinner so great as yourself? Let us see clearly that the latter response is of the devil, for God sees us as faultless in Christ Jesus our Lord. Yes, so much so that it is written, “*herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of*

judgment: *because as He is, so are we in this world.*" [1 Jn 4:17] So accepted in Christ are we, (yes, "*accepted in the Beloved [Son].*" [Eph 1:6]), that we may be bold and freely approach God in the day of judgment. Where others may cower and shrink back, yet we shall step forward in humble faith and courage, for we shall in that day step nearer to our father and our Groom, to our friend and our God, to our Shepherd of old who wrought salvation in our souls when He saved us from the pit and made us His own. As it says regarding men, so too we may apply to Satan who accuses us before God:

"What shall we say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?...Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also obtains audience [with Him] for our betterment." [Rom 8:31, 33-34]

What glorious comfort we may find here in these verses. Can anything Satan says change God's mind about us? Hardly! "*For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.*" [Rom 11:29] Can the dragon's railings upon our character, his bringing up of sinfulness and trespass, cause God to find fault with us, or to lessen His great love toward us? In no wise! For "*who shall separate us from the love of Christ?...For I am persuaded, that neither...angels, nor principalities, nor*

powers...nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” [Rom 8:35, 38, 39]

But why should Satan’s constant threatenings be ignored and altogether discarded by our God? Have we not sinned? Is it not truth that we have many a time done our Lord a great disservice in our thoughts, conducts, and words? It is true indeed, my fellow Christian, and yet The LORD does not see these things as true. And why is that? It is as we read, wherein Paul speaks rhetorically: *“who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again.”* Let us rejoice in this truth! For if we have been saved, if we have been *“raised...up together,”* and made to *“sit together in the heavenlies,”* [Eph 2:6] in that blessed place where God *“hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings,”* [Eph 1:3] then we are without fault before our God. Jesus stands there beside us as it were to defend us, as we are told, *“if any man sin, we have an advocate with The Father, Jesus Christ The Righteous [One].”* [1 Jn 2:1] Though we once were sinners, yet no more; for we *“are justified in the name of The Lord Jesus, and by The Spirit of our God.”* [1 Cor 6:11] We have been, by our God’s overflowing mercy and grace, declared and made righteous, so that we are no longer those sinners which Satan our accuser brings to God’s remembrance. Though we sin in practice, yet Satan

has no grounds; for it is written that “*now once in the end of the world hath [Jesus Christ] appeared to the annulment of sin by the sacrifice of Himself.*” [Heb 9:26] To annul means, “*to make void; to nullify...to abolish...*” [Webster] And so though in practice we sin, yet we are declared righteous by our Lord Jesus Christ, for we are “*now justified by His blood,*” [Rom 5:9] and in Christ “*God imputeth righteousness without works, saying...blessed is the man to whom The Lord will not impute sin.*” [Rom 4:6, 8] When we, as God’s saints, saved in Christ Jesus, covered in His righteous blood, are condemned of our enemy, whether it be Satan, the flesh, or the world, it is seen by God as a lie. For it is not true; God’s word, which “*cannot be broken,*” [Jn 10:35] declares it to be true, and thus it is true. In Christ Jesus we are not guilty but innocent, for our sins have been dashed to pieces as the chaff of the summer threshing floor, they have been made void in Jesus Christ, and God declares, “*I am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.*” [Isa 43:25]

Let us take great comfort in this truth: all the accusations of Satan, or any other enemy, fall to the ground and are forgotten; not one of them may stand in court before The Father. Again, as it says, “*every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn.*” [Isa 54:17] There is not one word of Satan’s which shall stand against us in judgment,

not now nor in that day, for we are found in Christ Jesus. We have seen how that despite Satan's earnest attempts to accuse and condemn, they are void for those washed in the blood of Jesus. And let us see another thing from today's passage, and we shall be encouraged yet further. Let us read again,

"And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of The LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And The LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even The LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" [Zech 3:1-2]

And now, may we notice, that while "*Satan [was] standing at [Joshua's] right hand to resist him,*" yet The LORD did not find any occasion to argue. No, our Lord did not respond to Satan, as though he was worth responding to; nor yet did Joshua or Zechariah, but all that is recorded is such: "*The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even The LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee.*" And herein lies a great truth, that our Father responds to accusations against us with His choice of us. For as it is written, "*He hath chosen us in [Jesus] before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.*" [Eph 1:4] In Christ we are loved and chosen and that is all God need say. There is no argument, no going back-and-forth between The LORD and Satan, but simply and shortly, "*The*

LORD [that hath chosen Jerusalem] rebuke thee.” And may all those saved men and women who read these words insert their name into that sentence, for it is also God’s response regarding us when our enemy comes to attack and revile.

Let us meditate again upon the matter: The LORD does not take those foul words into account; they do not influence His love toward us, nor His choice of us, nor His thoughts of us. Even though Satan accuses us “*before our God day and night*,” yet The LORD still favors us and loves us, seeing us in Jesus Christ our Savior and His Son. And let us also be careful to notice that not one of Satan’s words are recorded. There is not one accusation written down – all of them are forgotten, all of them are blotted out, all of them are forever lost in history. And so it is today: there is not one, single accusation in heaven against our names, for we are found and protected and loved in Jesus. We are, as it says, presented as “*unreproveable in His sight*,” [Col 1:22] a word which means irreproachable or blameless; that is, we are presented as such and we “*cannot be justly reproached [charged with fault]*,” we are “*free from blame...[and] innocent*.” [Webster] May God be ever praised; He is not a God who gives heed to gossip or wicked speech, but who always and without fail sees us as Christ Jesus. And praise God again, for every word of ill against our person is removed, leaving only those blessed words which agree with

our Lord Jesus', "*as The Father hath loved me, so have I loved you,*" and, "*The Father Himself loveth you.*" [Jn 15:9; 16:27]

Day VII: Part I: Emptied of Glory

Philippians 2:5-8 – Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought not equality with God a prize to be grasped: but emptied Himself, 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.

Regarding Jesus' glorious and victorious work upon earth, the most awe-inspiring accomplishment of our Savior was the cross. The cross, "*the power of God, and the wisdom of God,*" [1 Cor 1:24] is the most blessed work of God, that which was prepared before time began and around which all of history has revolved. But more than the cross, the man upon the cross; for without Christ Jesus, it is but a piece of wood, and as Hezekiah said regarding the bronze serpent which does signify the cross, so too we could say it, "*he called it Nehushtan, [that is, being interpreted, 'a thing of brass.']*." [2 Ki 18:4] Truly, it is Jesus Christ which makes the cross so important of a symbol to us: the fact that The Son of God

Himself died upon that cursed tree, “*being made a curse for us,*” [Gal 3:13] offering Himself up “*an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling fragrance,*” [Eph 5:1] that we might be saved. Yes, a thousand praises be to our God for accomplishing such a victory for us.

Thus, it is to the cross where we turn our eyes today, and specifically, to a passage in Philippians. For it is here that we learn an astonishing truth, that Jesus “*emptied Himself.*” In His descent to earth, taking upon Himself “*the form of a servant...being found in fashion as a man,*” Jesus “*emptied Himself.*” He did not sit in heaven, a lofty and aloof king, looking down sternly upon his subjects; no, but in tender and glorious love, for His great love wherewith He loved us, Jesus descended, not thinking “*equality with God, [which He fully enjoyed], a prize to be grasped.*” But what does it mean that Jesus emptied Himself? Emptied of what? And how? Let us venture to answer this if but only in part – for who has known the mind of The LORD? Who can plumb the great depths of this unspeakable work which God has accomplished? It is “*high as heaven,*” and “*deeper than hell;*” [Job 11:8] the great work which Christ wrought when He came down and paid for our sins is beyond comprehension. The breadth, length, depth, and height of Jesus’ love is boundless and supreme. And so, we may feebly attempt to write but a jot and tittle as it were in the

great volume that may be written regarding The King of Glory's victory.

In the law, God said regarding the tabernacle,

“But unto the place which The LORD your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put His name there, even unto His habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come: and thither ye shall bring your...offerings...” [Deut 12:5, 6]

The tabernacle was a holy place, a special place: a location set apart. And why is that? Because God had chosen to place His name there. But there is yet another reason. Reading in Exodus, God says, *“and there will I meet with the children of Israel, and the tabernacle shall be sanctified by my glory.”* [Ex 29:43] And in fulfillment of that word, it came to pass that *“a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of The LORD filled the tabernacle.”* [Ex 40:34] The tabernacle did not just have God in name, but God in reality; it was not just that God had said, “this is a special place, I quite like it;” but more than that, The LORD Himself abode in it and upon it, that sacred place bearing witness to such a fact through the cloud and the fire.

We see plainly that the tabernacle was chosen and set apart, marked out by God's presence. But let us also see how Israel was chosen and set apart. For it is written,

“Thou art an holy people unto The LORD thy God: The LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto Himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth.”
[Deut 7:6; 14:2]

And as God said, so it is true, even to this day: Israel is His chosen and holy people. Yes, even today, for *“as touching the election, they are beloved for the father’s sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance;”* [Rom 11:28-29] and again, as touching the fact that *“blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in,”* it is written, *“in that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen...and I will build it as in the days of old.”* [Rom 11:25, Amo 9:11, Acts 15:13-17]

It is evident; Israel is holy unto The LORD, chosen and marked out, *“above all the nations that are upon the earth.”* [Deut 14:2] And may we indicate, dear reader, another holy participant in God’s righteous plan: the high priest. For we read in Hebrews regarding that position, of which only a man from the tribe of Levi could hold, (for it is written, *“the priests the sons of Levi shall come near; for them The LORD thy God hath chosen to minister unto Him.”* [Deut 21:5]), *“and no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.”* [Heb 5:4] Do notice that not only was the position holy, in that one must needs be chosen by God, but

also holy because only men from the tribe of Levi were acceptable. Thus, the position is doubly holy.

Having this knowledge, let us now read regarding the Day of Atonement. It was to be, “*in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month,*” [Lev 16:29] that Israel was commanded to observe the festival. It was a somber time, as God said, “*ye shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all,*” [Lev 16:29] and, “*whatsoever soul it be that shall not be afflicted in that same day, he shall be cut off from among his people.*” [Lev 23:29] This day was instituted by God to be accomplished once every year, for that purpose to which God said:

“*For on that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from all your sins before The LORD...and he shall make an atonement for the holy sanctuary, and he shall make an atonement for the tabernacle of the congregation, and for the altar, and he shall make an atonement for the priests, and for all the people of the congregation. And this shall be an everlasting statute unto you, to make an atonement for the children of Israel for all their sins once a year.*” [Lev 16:30, 33-34]

But what was so special and unique about this day was not so much the atonement, but who was performing it and where; for atonement was continually being performed throughout the year,

albeit in far less extraordinary fashion. But here, on this particular day, and only this day, the high priest was to be the one carrying out these things; yes, and him alone – for God says, “*and there shall be no man in the tabernacle of the congregation when he goeth in to make an atonement in the holy place, until he come out...*” [Lev 16:27] And further, upon this sacred day, and only this day, the high priest was to enter into the holy of holies, as it was commanded of God, “*speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy place within the vail before the mercy seat...[but on this day] thus shall Aaron come into the holy place;*” [Lev 16:2, 3] and, “*but into the [Holiest of all] went the high priest alone once every year.*” [Heb 9:7] And so it was ordained of God that on this holy Day of Atonement, the high priest would enter into the holy of holies and perform that which was written. Now it was that upon this day, in the service of this rigorous day, The LORD commanded regarding the high priest,

“*He shall put on the holy linen coat, and he shall have the linen breeches upon his flesh, and he shall be girded with a linen girdle, and with the linen mitre shall he be attired.*” [Lev 16:4]

What is peculiar about this, is that these were not the normal high priestly garments. No, for his normal garments were much more ornate, having many jewels and colors, being of very great expense. But on this day he wore but simple, linen garb:

there was not much to look at upon this day. This truth in particular is where we shall draw our focus today. For we see almost a contradiction; that is, if we were to view things after the flesh and after the wisdom of this world. For in this world, men wear ornate and wealthy garments on days which are much set apart – but on this holiest of days in the holiest of places by the holiest of men, it was quite the opposite.

Now, If this truth has not struck you quite yet, do as Mary did, who “*pondered [those sayings regarding Jesus] in her heart,*” [Lk 2:19] for we shall soon come to a conclusion regarding these things.

Let us summarize thus far and place our Lord Jesus square in the center of our understanding of these things; for in so doing we shall reap some encouragement. First, the tabernacle was chosen and set apart, made holy by God’s name and God’s presence. Second, Israel was chosen and set apart, made holy by God’s free and voluntary choice. Third, the high priest was only to be of the tribe of Levi, those chosen specifically to minister to The LORD. Fourth, the high priest could only have been chosen by God. Sixth, once a year, and only once a year, upon a set day, the Day of Atonement was to take place. Seventh, during the Day of Atonement, the high priest was allowed into that most holy place – this being the only allowable time and person in which such a thing could be carried

out. And finally, eighth, upon this day the high priest was wearing normal, linen garments instead of his ornate high priestly ones.

We have taken great efforts to come to this place. Many words have been spent in an attempt to display the holiness of this act which took place on the Day of Atonement. It was in the holiest place in all of creation. In God's chosen country and God's chosen people; in God's chosen city; in God's chosen building; in God's chosen space; in God's chosen day; by God's chosen priest, taken out from among God's chosen tribe – yes in this fashion, the high priest adorned himself with linen garments and wrought atonement for Israel.

Let us remember how we started: that Jesus “*emptied Himself*” when He came down to earth, taking upon Himself a human body to make atonement for sin. Herein we see one aspect of that truth: that Jesus disrobed Himself of glory. Remember how we have shown that the high priest upon the Day of Atonement, (a day which no doubt displays and foreshadows Jesus' atonement upon the cross), wore only linen garments. The high priest did not wear his normal garments, for again, after most all was accomplished, The LORD says, “*and Aaron...shall put off the linen garments...and put on his garments.*” [Lev 16:23-24] In this we see how that in the same manner that the high priest put off the high priestly and beautiful garments at first, to put on normal,

linen garments, so too Jesus disrobed of his glorious body, taking upon Himself *“the likeness of sinful flesh.”* [Rom 8:3] And to the truth that Jesus enjoyed a far more spectacular body than when He came to earth, it is evident. For when Ezekiel saw a heavenly vision of God’s throne, he caught a glimpse of Christ, and wrote,

“And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it. And I saw as the color of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of His loins even upward, and from the appearance of His loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about. As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of The LORD. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake.”
[Ezek 1:26-28]

And again, Isaiah,

“In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also The Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and the flowing skirt of His robe filled the

temple. Above it stood the seraphim: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is The LORD of Hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen The King, The LORD of Hosts.”
[Isa 6:1-5]

Our Lord Jesus, before He came to earth and took upon Himself a body of a man, was clothed in excellent glory. He was surrounded by angels and constant praise; He was high and lifted up, and so awesome and wonderful was the sight of His body, that with two of their wings, each angel “*covered his face,*” and both Ezekiel and Isaiah fell down as dead. And He, sitting upon the throne, clothed in glory, high and lifted up, of whom it says, “*who humbleth Himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth,*” [Psa 113:6] did not esteem that position as something to cling to, but willingly, mercifully, graciously gave it up so that He might come and dwell with us, and that He might, “*by the blood of [His] covenant,*” save us “*out of the pit wherein is no*

water.” [Zech 9:11] Our Lord Jesus emptied Himself of His glory.

But Jesus did not just take upon Himself any body, He took upon Himself a normal, unassuming body. For in Isaiah we read, “*He hath no beautiful form nor decoration; and when we shall see Him, there is no appearance that we should delight in Him.*” [Isa 53:2] Like the high priest wore undecorated clothing, so too Jesus, when He disrobed of His infinite glory and took upon Himself flesh. And let us go further and see that though the Day of Atonement was so holy, so set apart, so absolutely special, the high priest yet wore very normal clothes. In this world, among men, this is backwards; for the men of this world, on special days, love to dress up and show off their wealth. However, it was not so on that solemn festival. Nor yet was it with Christ, who came to fight and war and conquer all our enemies, dashing them to pieces through the work of His cross. For if the Day of Atonement is holy, much more the day upon which Jesus died. So let us stare up at Christ, let us do as we are exhorted and “*behold the man!*” [Zech 6:12, Jn 19:5] let us gaze upon such glory, that though Jesus came to do so magnificent a work, so holy a work, yet He did it in such a normal and dull body. May His glory and reward be multiplied a thousand-fold through our praises of such things; for our King’s meekness and so humility go beyond the expression of words.

Day VIII: Part II: The Humiliation of Heaven's Captain

Philippians 2:5-8 – Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought not equality with God a prize to be grasped: but emptied Himself, 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.

When Israel entered the land promised unto them of The LORD, they were promised, “*every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses.*” [Josh 1:3] Any location within that ordained land, so given and outlined by God, was available for conquest. The only thing inhibiting Israel from taking to themselves what God has freely given was unbelief. Yes, unbelief; as we read in Hebrews, regarding Israel’s refusal to enter and take the land,

“For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit

them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.” [Heb 4:2]

It would not be Israel’s weakness which would prevent them, for victories come from God’s hand and His strength, even as God has “*chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty...that, according as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in The Lord.*” [1 Cor 1:27, 31] In the Psalms, The Holy Spirit says,

“They got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them: but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favour unto them.” [Psa 44:3]

Yes, and even still we, (and not just Israel), cannot obtain nor conquer nor get victory in any area without God. For the Psalm continues, The Spirit speaking,

“Thou art my King, O God: command deliverances for Jacob. Through thee will we push down our enemies: through thy name will we tread them under that rise up against us. For I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me. But thou hast saved us from our enemies, and hast put them to shame that hated us. In God we boast all the day long, and praise thy name for ever. Selah.” [Psa 44:4-8]

As with the Israelites, so too it is with us, we cannot get victory, even in regard to that which is promised, “by *[our] own sword*” nor “*[our] own arm.*” For again, “*the horse is prepared against the day of battle: but victory is of The LORD.*” [Prov 21:31] Therefore, we can see that if we fail to obtain victory in some promised area, just as with Israel so too it will be true of us: our failure and defeat will not be due to our weakness, (for our weakness or strength play no part in victory, seeing that victory is of The LORD and also how that it is secured in His strength), but it will be due to our unbelief. Again, Jesus says, “*all things are possible to him that believeth.*” [Mk 9:23]

Under Joshua’s administration, before Israel crossed over the Jordan river into the promised land, The LORD spoke to Joshua, saying, “*every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses.*” [Josh 1:3] If Joshua relied upon The LORD, abiding in Him and obeying Him, believing His word, then he would succeed, and as God said, “*there shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life.*” [Josh 1:5] The LORD encouraged him further, saying to him, and also to us who believe,

“*Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left,*

that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest. This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success. Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for The LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.”
[Josh 1:7-9]

See that though Joshua had a very great calling and though there was much to do and many enemies to defeat, yet God did not speak strategy with Joshua. He did not tell him to train and become stronger; The LORD did not give him tips and tricks, nor yet a numbered list of to-dos. No, but The LORD said only to cling tightly to Himself, “*that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law.*” The LORD encouraged Joshua to “*meditate [in the law] day and night,*” and to obey it, and having done this, God promised, “*then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.*” It was not Joshua’s strength, fortitude, or army which would save Him; no, for as we have seen in Psalms and Proverbs, God is the source of strength and victory. Therefore whether it be with Joshua or David, so too it is with us: we must cling to Jesus Christ, abide in Him and His word, being obedient to such, that

we might find victory and grow as Christians. The only thing that would inhibit us from such an accomplishment is unbelief. We may not be strong, but that is no matter; as David wrote, “*He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them which hated me: for they were too strong for me;*” [Psa 18:17] and Paul, “*when I am weak, then am I strong,*” for Jesus had said to him, “*my grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.*” [2 Cor 12:9-10]

As with Joshua, as with David, and as with Paul, so too with us: our strength lies not within ourselves, but is given to us by Jesus Christ. Herein lies a great truth, by which we may expand upon our discussion regarding Jesus’ glory and how that He, as Philippians says, “*emptied Himself.*”

When Joshua crossed over the Jordan river, the first place that was to be conquered was Jericho. It was in that place where Jesus met Joshua. There, our Lord appeared as “*Captain of the host of The LORD.*” His deity is apparent for He said, after “*Joshua fell on his face...and did worship,*” those same words which The LORD spoke to Moses out of the bush, “*loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy.*” [Josh 5:14, 15] Further, when He begins to speak, it is recorded in Joshua, “*and **The LORD** said unto Joshua,*” therefore showing us that this “*man,*” the “*Captain of the host of The LORD,*” was indeed Jesus. And so, it is written,

“And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay; but as Captain of the host of The LORD am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant? And the Captain of The LORD'S host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so.” [Josh 5:13-15]

During this encounter Jesus gave Joshua instruction on how to defeat Jericho, which can be read of in chapter six. It is there where “*The LORD*,” that is Jesus, said, “*see, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour.*” [Josh 6:2] Regarding Jesus’ position of commander, it is also written, “*thy Maker is thine husband, The LORD of Hosts is His name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; the God of the whole earth shall He be called.*” [Isa 54:5] Jesus, who is our redeemer and husband, our Groom, is also “*The LORD of Hosts*” – the word hosts meaning armies. Jesus is the LORD of Armies, that is, of the heavenly armies: the angels; He is the one of whom The LORD spoke to Moses saying, “*behold, I send an Angel before thee, to*

keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared...my Name is in Him.” [Ex 23:20, 21]

Having this in mind, let us read of an encounter Jesus had upon that night He was betrayed. When Judas came with the Romans to capture Jesus, Matthew records an incident involving Peter:

“And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear. Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and He shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?” [Mt 26:51-54]

While in heaven Jesus held absolute authority and equality with God, on earth it was not so; for though Jesus on earth was one-hundred percent God, (as it says, “**God** was manifest in the flesh.” [1 Tim 3:16]), yet Jesus must have lived as we lived, suffering like-temptations, for it is also written, “[Jesus our High Priest] was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” [Heb 4:15] And though in heaven Jesus enjoyed power as Commander and Captain of God’s Heavenly Armies, yet here in

Matthew we see that Jesus has emptied Himself of that power. For notice that Jesus says, “*thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and He shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels,*” and that He does not say that He can in any wise do that of His own accord, having to request such a thing of God. And this is perfectly in line with what Jesus speaks of regarding Himself, when He says on earth, “*I can of mine own self do nothing;*” and, “*verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of Himself.*” [Jn 5:19, 30]

The humiliation of Jesus’ emptying should give us pause. Let us see the meekness and grace of our Lord that He would do such a thing. Whereas formerly He was in charge, able to command God’s armies at will, being the one to whom they looked for orders, yet on earth Jesus emptied Himself of such, instead choosing to live as we live. As it says also in Psalms, “*thou hast made Him a little lower than the angels.*” [Psa 8:5] Jesus, for a season, for His great work of salvation, allowed Himself to be made a little lower than the angels. To see more clearly the humiliation of such a thing, imagine the longstanding CEO of a great corporation lowering himself to serve at the lowest cashier’s level. No longer in a place of prominence or glory, no longer surrounded by luxury or riches, no longer powerful or freely able to do as he wishes – the CEO is humbled and lowered, being made like one of the

workers whom he was formerly above. This is similar, yet still a thousand galaxies short in length, when compared with what Jesus accomplished when coming to earth. Jesus emptied Himself of that free will to command Heaven's Armies; He gave it up, so that He might, as we must, rely upon God in faith for each victory. And truly, this makes Jesus' righteousness and life upon earth, and His great victories over our shared enemy, so much more glorious and blessed. For who is like unto The Lord our God? Who can be compared to Jesus Christ our King, that wonderful and beautiful Savior? There is none like unto Him, for He is high above all, dazzling and fearful in praises, marvelous in glory.

May these thoughts provoke us to praise and thank and extol Jesus, our God, who for His love for us "*emptied Himself*" of that position of The Lord of Heaven's Armies so that He might live as we and die for our sins. May Jesus, who is "*The King of Glory*" and who was and is "*mighty in battle*," [Psa 24:7, 8] ever receive thanksgiving and honor for His great humiliation.

Day IX: A Cloud of Favor

Isaiah 44:22 – I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee.

Long ago, when Christ walked the earth, it came to pass on a certain day that a man, who was “*afflicted with paralysis*,” was brought to Jesus, “*lying on a bed*.” [Mt 9:2] The men, the paralytic and those carrying him, had faith, and as it is written,

“When they could not come nigh unto [Jesus] for the press, they uncovered the roof where He was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the paralytic lay.” [Mk 2:4]

When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralyzed man, “*son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee*.” [Mt 9:2] Notice that Jesus did not say, as a result of their faith in Him, “be of good cheer, thy legs are restored!” nor did our Lord say (though He did to others), “rejoice, man, for your faith hath made thee whole.” No, but we see what Jesus said, “*son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee*.” After their faith-filled efforts to reach Jesus, going so far as to break open the roofing of the home wherein Jesus taught

and performed miracles, where most would surely think such faith demanded healing, Jesus thought differently. Jesus, directed only ever of The Father in the power of The Holy Spirit spoke as God spake and acted as He acted, just as we are admonished to do: *“if any man speak, let him speak as the sayings of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth.”* [1 Pe 4:11] Jesus shows us here what is far more valuable and important: forgiveness. Forgiveness of sins exceeds healing; whereas as mere men we tend to think healing is more necessary and is that which faith provokes God to do most often, here we see Jesus saying very notably, in lieu of healing the man’s legs, *“son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.”* Think of the man who lay there, after having gone to such extremes to reach Jesus. I suppose, as we might all, that he expected quite different words to come forth from The Messiah’s mouth. “Forgiveness! Why,” the man might have thought, “forgiveness is certainly good, but my legs remain paralyzed.” However, we know that the man was eventually healed; for, after the Pharisees *“said within themselves, this man blasphemeth,”* [Mt 9:3] it is written,

*“And Jesus knowing their thoughts, said,
wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For
whether is easier, to say, thy sins be forgiven thee;
or to say, arise, and walk? But that ye may know
that The Son of Man hath power on earth to*

forgive sins, (then saith He to the man afflicted with paralysis,) arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house. And he arose, and departed to his house.” [Mt 9:4-7]

Indeed, the paralytic was healed. But let us notice that if the Pharisees had not murmured against the good work, Jesus very well may never have healed the man, sending Him off with only forgiveness. But, having heard the thoughts of those wicked, religious leaders, Jesus healed the man to boot.

There is a great truth here for us, and it is that forgiveness is a joyful thing. It is in fact placed above every other blessing we have from The Lord, and that for at least this reason: that without forgiveness from Jesus, we cannot enjoy any good thing God desires to give us in Christ. Remember when “*the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name,*” and how Jesus responded, saying,

“Behold, I give you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.” [Lk 10:19-20]

See how Jesus lays the blessing and joy on forgiveness, saying, “*rejoice because your names are*

written in heaven.” And may we have the same attitude. No matter what gift we have received of The Lord, no matter what healing we have either been blessed with or would love to enjoy, no matter what good thing has been bequeathed to us from above, let us rejoice chief over all in that our sins are forgiven. Let us not look to physical healing or blessing for joy, but let us rejoice because our names are written down in the Lamb’s Book of Life; and our names being therein engraved, never to be blotted out, we shall never taste of death. For it is written that only “*they which are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life,*” will be given access to God’s City, [f.f., Rev 21:27] and that outside of the city, “*the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable...shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death,*” [Rev 21:8] but those who are saved, who are believing in Christ, “*shall inherit all things,*” and dwell with God; [f.f., Rev 21:7-8] they shall avoid that death for Jesus “*by the grace of God [did] taste death for every man.*” [Heb 2:9]

Each of us ought to take pause at this, remembering that we too have been saved, we too have been forgiven. May we do as the Psalm says and “*forget not all His benefits;*” [Psa 103:2] may we be content with forgiveness, being careful not to complain because The Lord has failed to also grant us such and such things. Dear reader, sweetly think upon it and remember: dwell contently in the great safety of

forgiveness; place your name in Jesus' words and read again, "*son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.*"

Having spoken of forgiveness and the joy therein contained, let us read again the verse for today.

"I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee." [Isa 44:22]

As we expound upon this great promise, let us have in mind the great joy of forgiveness; let us come to this truth with fresh hearts. May God anoint us with "*fresh oil,*" [Psa 92:10] and may The Holy Spirit be as a invigorating wind in our lungs as we come once again to the great truth of God's forgiveness. So then, let us draw our attention to a particular word used in Isaiah, "*thick cloud.*"

The Hebrew word for "*thick cloud*" in Isaiah is the same word used in Exodus. There, back in Moses' day, "*The LORD said unto Moses, lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud.*" [Ex 19:9] It was that day, on Mount Sinai, where The LORD descended and gave the law. God had told Moses, "*be ready against the third day: for the third day The LORD will come down in the sight of all the people upon Mount Sinai.*" [Ex 19:11] But though The LORD Himself would descend, coming down to visit His people, it was a solemn and fearful event. In Hebrews we read,

“For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: (For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart: And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:).” [Heb 12:18-21]

The event there on Sinai was not at all as it was upon Mount Zion, whereupon Christ laid His foot over some two-thousand years ago. For those under the law came to Mount Sinai and faced with dread that blackish darkness and terrifying tempest. Of a truth, they saw The LORD, “*the righteous judge,*” [2 Tim 4:8] come down; yea, even as we – for, “*[we] are come unto Mount Zion...to God the Judge of All...*” [Heb 12:22, 23] However, whereas those saints of old saw God’s presence as foreboding and full of fear, (for even Moses said, “*I exceedingly fear and quake;*” and the Israelites when they saw and heard, “*removed, and stood afar off,*” and said, “*let not God speak with us, lest we die.*” [Ex 20:18-19, Heb 12:19]), in contrast, we of the New Covenant, who have come to Mount Zion and not Sinai, come to God’s presence with exceeding joy full of hope and faith.

We approach Him in acceptance and in love as we are exhorted,

“Having therefore, brethren, freedom to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.” [Heb 10:19-22]

Through Jesus’ blood and great sacrifice, we may draw near to God freely and abundantly, even whenever we please. Without condemnation or judgment, in full assurance and without guilt, (for our hearts have been “*sprinkled from an evil conscience*”), we can approach our blessed God through Jesus Christ His Son.

In this we see a great contrast and encouragement. For in Isaiah we read what The LORD says to us, “*I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions.*” That thick, dark cloud, which formerly abode upon Mount Sinai as a testimony to our sin and forthcoming judgment, now drapes over us as a great cloak of righteousness as it were. No longer does that cloud stir us to terror, but to joy and praise; for God has, “*as a thick cloud,*” blotted out our sins. They are completely, utterly removed from

God's sight. The cloud upon Sinai no longer bears witness that we are cursed creatures, transgressors of the law, no good and liable for judgment – no! but that cloud lays upon us sweetly as it were, a covering of mercy, for The LORD has blotted out our sins like a thick cloud. And why? We must see it clearly: for Jesus Christ died for our sins. It was He, *“who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God,”* who *“loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling fragrance.”* [Heb 9:14, Eph 5:2] Yes, as Hebrews says again, *“but ye are come unto Mount Zion...to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.”* [Heb 12:22, 24] We have come to the blood of the Lamb which washes us white as snow; we have come to Christ, that glorious God-Man who was far superior to Moses – who did not climb the mountain to receive the law but to fulfil it; who did not descend to earth to condemn us, but to save us; who did not enter into that cloud of glory at the Mercy Seat as it were for our destruction, but for our everlasting and permanent atonement, giving Himself up and offering His very own blood for our sakes.

May we praise God all our days for Jesus' work upon the cross, for through this act, and our acceptance of it, we have been forgiven. And as we have seen, therein lies great joy. Yes, *“blessed is he*

whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." [Psa 32:1] Blessed is that man for whom Christ died and upon Whom was reckoned all his awful sin; yes, blessed and happy and joyful is that man who can say truthfully: "I am forgiven, Christ died for me." And may we ever look upon the thick cloud of Sinai with joy, remembering that we are no longer under that covenant nor that condemnation, for it is written,

"And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He made alive together with [Christ], having forgiven you all trespasses; blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross." [Col 2:13-14]

Let those of us who are Christian, who trust in Jesus, dwell often upon these truths. As God *"covereth the heaven with clouds,"* [Psa 147:8] preparing *"rain for the earth,"* and so we may find it hard or nearly impossible to peek a look beyond the clouds at the sun, so too in like manner our sins are hid from God. For Christ Jesus' atoning work and our faith therein is, as it were, a thick cloud which blots out our sins, so that as God looks down upon us, He sees not our sins nor us, but He sees Jesus Christ, our advocate and mediator. It is Jesus' glory which covers us; no longer does the glory stand far off, a reminder that we shall never attain

righteousness and nearness to God, but it abides over our heads, a great yet tender cloud of latter rain: offering us hope, life, and peace with God. “*In the light of the king’s countenance is life; and His favor is as a cloud of the latter rain.*” [Prov 16:15]

Day X: Clothed With Christ, Clothed With Power

Acts 16:25 – And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.

In Ephesians Paul glorifies God, saying,

“Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.”
[Eph 3:20-21]

Notice in Paul’s exclamation what He says of God’s power. It is not just that The Lord possesses great power; no, but exceedingly great power. It is not just that His strength and dominion are high, above all others; no, but they are exceedingly so. For we read that God’s power is even “*exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think.*” In all the billions of lives that exist and have existed and will exist, not one of them was able, nor is able, nor ever shall be able to imagine something greater than God can perform. There is absolutely no limit to what our

King can do. Jesus Christ and His power are infinite. He can do far, far above all that we can dream up or imagine, let alone ask. If we can think of it – and let us see that every circumstance in our lives thus far and heretofore has been thought of by our minds – God can do far more. Therefore, there is not one circumstance, not one trial or affliction, which our wonderful Christ cannot conquer nor offer solution to. Nor yet is there an enemy which He cannot overcome. His power knows no limits. Long ago *“Asa cried unto The LORD His God, and said, LORD, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power.”* [2 Ch 14:11] As Asa prayed, so it is true: *“it is nothing with [God] to help.”* Whether we have much or little; yea, even nothing – it is nothing with God to help. No matter what problem ails you, dear Christian, see this clearly: the amount of energy, strength, and power necessary to complete it, answer it, fix it, or whatsoever else is needed, is so miniscule, so infinitely small in the scope of God’s capacity, that it is as of nothing, as but one speck of dust in the universe.

Truly, our God is great. As it says rhetorically, *“who is like unto The LORD our God? Who dwelleth on high[?]”* [Psa 113:5] Yes, and again, *“O LORD God of Hosts, who is a strong LORD like unto thee?”* [Psa 89:8] To these things we must humbly, gloriously confess as many saints of old have before us – *“There is none*

like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and His excellency on the sky;" and, "all my bones shall say, LORD, who is like unto thee, which deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him, yea, the poor and the needy from him that spoileth him?" [Deut 33:26, Psa 35:10] Our God is strong; therefore, let us do as The Spirit writes, "trust ye in The LORD forever: for in The LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength." [Isa 26:4] And let us trust too because there is no other source of strength but God, as it is written, "God hath spoken once; twice I have heard this; that power belongeth unto God." [Psa 62:11] We have spoken of and seen the mighty strength of The God of Jacob, and thus of Christ and His Spirit, and I pray each heart might be pricked to greater devotion through this truth. But let us ponder also what has been written in Ephesians chapter three, "according to the power that worketh in us."

The power that we have seen here works in us! That power of God, present in His Holy Spirit works in and through us. Again, Paul writes earlier in the same epistle, praying that we all might know "*what is the exceeding greatness of His power which is for the benefit of the believing, according to the working of His mighty power.*" [Eph 1:19] God's power, present in His Spirit, and thus in us, is for our benefit: for our overcoming of sin, for our evangelism, for our being a witness of His resurrection. As Jesus said to the

disciples before He ascended to God's right hand, "behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be clothed with power from on high;" and speaking to them regarding the selfsame thing, He said, "but ye shall receive power, after that The Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses." [Lk 24:49, Acts 1:8] May we clearly perceive this truth: it is through The Holy Spirit given of Jesus alone that we have power. All our ability comes from Him. As Paul says, "I can do all things through Christ which is empowering me;" [Phil 4:13] and as the prophet speaks, "not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith The LORD of Hosts." [Zech 4:6]

Having therefore seen that God is powerful, even above all else, far above what we can perceive; and having seen that this selfsame power has been graciously gifted unto us by Christ for His glory and good purposes, let us remark upon our verse for today and see one example of this power in action. Let us read again from Acts,

"And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them."
[Acts 16:25]

To fully appreciate the magnitude of this praise, let us remember briefly where Paul and Silas resided that midnight. When they went "to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony,"

[Acts 16:12] there was “a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination...which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying.” [Acts 16:16] This woman was following them and crying out, saying, “these men are the servants of the Most High God, which shew unto us the way of salvation.” [Acts 16:17] Evidently grieved in his spirit by the source, and not so much the message, Paul rebuked the evil spirit, “and he came out of her the same hour.” [Acts 16:18] When the masters of this certain woman found out, they were troubled, for the possessed woman was bringing them gain and wealth. In response therefore, we read,

“And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them. And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely: who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.” [Acts 16:22-24]

It is in this doleful state that we do read, “and at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God.” In that wicked prison, bruised and beaten, suffering miserably, these two men, full of The Holy Spirit, did sing unto God, giving their Lord thanksgiving for His glory and His name and His care. What a testimony of God’s power and God’s love! Not in that they were imprisoned and beaten,

but their response; for their response was not of men, nor in themselves, but of God. Let us see that the life and love of Jesus Christ is what motivated and empowered these brave men; as Paul once wrote by The Spirit, *“the love of Christ constraineth us.”* [2 Cor 5:14] And let us see too that it was the power of The Holy Spirit which provoked them to such things; for, *“the fruit of The Spirit is...joy.”* [Gal 5:22] The fruit of the flesh is complaining and bitterness, but the fruit of The Spirit includes joy. That deep joy which spurred on this praise was no doubt of The Holy Spirit, coinciding with what Paul once prayed for the Roman believers,

“Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of The Holy Spirit.” [Rom 15:13]

And it is the same Spirit which resided in Christ when He was on earth, which though He fared even far worse than Paul and Silas, upon the cross, exclaimed in the Spirit through David,

“I foresaw The Lord always before my face, for He is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.” [Acts 2:25-27]

May we praise and thank God for the exceeding great power He holds, and which is available for us to lay hold of, for it is offered to us and present in The Holy Spirit who has taken up residence in our hearts. May we see this strong example, from Paul, Silas, and above-all Christ Jesus, and follow suit, “*for this God is our God for ever and ever: He will be our guide even unto death.*” [Psa 48:14]

Day XI: A Spotless Bride

Song of Solomon 4:6-7 – Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense. Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee.

We know that marriage is ordained of God to be a picture of Jesus and the church, His bride; for in Ephesians Paul says of marriage and how husband and wife “*shall be one flesh,*” that, “*this is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.*” [Eph 5:31-32] Marriage ought to be a blessed and accurate picture of how Christ Jesus loves us, and how we submit to Him in reverence and humility. Though it is not always so in practice, yet Jesus, the model and goal, never changes, for “*Jesus Christ [is] the same yesterday, and today, and forever.*” [Heb 13:8] The failed attempts of men do not diminish the glorious, unfading love of Jesus. Therefore, we may be encouraged, though the shadows and types of it are falling short, of Jesus’ husbandly love, when the groom of Songs says to his bride in typification of it, “*thou art all beautiful, my love; there is no spot in thee.*” [Songs 4:7] And again, speaking of the same, the

Psalmist writes, “so shall the King greatly desire thy beauty.” [Psa 45:11] That our Lord sees us so spotless and pure is evident, for it is included amongst our glorious and abundant New Covenant promises, The Spirit thus encouraging us through Paul,

“And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in His sight: if ye continue in the faith having been grounded and firm, and not being dislodged from the hope of the gospel...” [Col 1:21-23]

In The Father’s sight, through Jesus, (and in Jesus’ sight too), we are presented as spotless and pure, without fault. This view which Jesus holds toward us is not merely professional nor legal, but it is saturated in His love, by which He also shed His blood. And regarding our salvation, let us remember that it is according to “*the kindness and love of God our Savior...according to His mercy;*” according to “*His great love wherewith He loved us,*” that we have been saved and brought into fellowship with Him – for, “*ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ.*” [Titus 3:4, Eph 2:4, 1 Cor 1:9] Jesus “*first loved us*” [1 Jn 4:19] – even when we were “*dead in trespasses and sins,*” [Eph 2:1] Jesus came and died for us. “*But God commendeth*

His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." [Rom 5:8] Yes, "God so loved the world," [Jn 3:16] that He sent Christ Jesus for us; and Jesus, being a willing participant, came too for love's sake, for He told us, "*he that hath seen me hath seen The Father,*" [Jn 14:9] and thus we can attribute any love of God to Jesus as well.

Praise be to Jesus for this simple truth: He loves us. And in His love for us He sees us as spotless; yes, even sinless and pure, for, "*as far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us;*" [Psa 103:12] and,

"In those days, and in that time, saith The LORD, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found." [Jer 50:20]

As it says in our verse today from Song of Solomon, let us do; let us, "*until the day break,*" until "*the day star arise in your hearts,*" [2 Pe 1:19] until "*the day of Christ*" [Phil 1:10] fully dawns, "*get [us] to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense.*" [Songs 4:6] That is, may we, for all our present days upon earth, find sanctuary in Christ and His covenant. Let us "*get...to the mountain of myrrh,*" to "Mount Zion" where our Lord was slain; let us get ourselves swiftly to the foot of the cross, upon that mountain of Myrrh as it were, where our sweet Jesus did die for our sins. Yes, may we go "*to Jesus the*

mediator of the New Covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling,” [Heb 12:24] which “washed us from our sins” and in which we have “washed [our] robes, and made them white in the blood of The Lamb.” [Rev 1:5; 7:14] Let us come with peace to that place and remember Jesus’ blessed sacrifice, which atoned for our souls, taking away our sins once and for all. Let us never stray far from that place of propitiation, where Christ bore our sin; it is there that each of us remember individually that Christ “loved me, and gave Himself for me,” [Gal 2:20] and that because of love.

Yes, and further, let us get “*to the hill of frankincense;*” let us come to the throne of God, to the Mount of God, to that blessed hill from whence we were once estranged, but now have come to trust under the healing wings of Christ and so find ourselves accepted. Yes, let us get quickly to that hill too, and see our Lord not dead but risen, taking heed to the angel’s great exhortation, “*come, see the place where the Lord had been lying,*” and entering therein we shall see Him risen, as the women, so long ago, “*entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus.*” [Mt 28:6, Lk 24:3] May we come to that hill and see our Lord’s priesthood, eternal and shining brilliantly; may we take heart and remember,

“He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them. For such an High

Priest is fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.” [Heb 7:25-26]

So, dear Christian, having come to these two hills, remembering therefore Jesus’ death and resurrection; His atonement and His priesthood; His blood and His intercession, may we hear what our Lord speaks: “*thou art all beautiful, my love; there is no spot in thee.*” Ah! What glorious truth! If it has not struck you, hear it again, good man – Christ sees you as “*all beautiful*” and without spot, as He says through the groom, “*there is no spot in thee.*” He does not see us as foul, unclean, nor dirty, but He sees us as lovely and without spot. He sees us as His bride, an object of His desire and love, as it says again in Songs, “*how fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights!*” [Songs 7:6] And again, “*I am my Beloved’s, and His desire is toward me.*” [Songs 7:10] Jesus loves us and views us with exceeding much grace. His joy over us is evident too, in that we read,

“The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; He will save, He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love, He will leap for joy over thee with singing.” [Zeph 3:17]

We have seen briefly of God’s love; and though these things are delightful and sweet, wonderful in their majesty, they shrink back to nothing in comparison to the full reality of His love and

kindness toward us. But thanks be to God that we have eternity to see such grace displayed; for as it is written, “[He] made us sit together in the heavenlies 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.” [Eph 2:6-7] But how is it that Jesus could say such things? How is that God sees us so purely? For we all know that in practice we still sin. Surely at times we have all felt the grim reality of our fallen bodies and lustful desires. How is it then, that God could proclaim such glorious truths to us? May we consider only two points regarding this. One, through Jesus’ high priestly duties, He presents us as holy; and two, through the New Covenant, we are not under sin nor the law, and thus, remain always uncondemned.

Taking up the first point, let us read in Exodus, concerning the high priest.

“And thou shalt make a plate of pure gold, and grave upon it, like the engravings of a signet, HOLINESS TO THE LORD. And thou shalt put it on a blue lace, that it may be upon the mitre; upon the forefront of the mitre it shall be. And it shall be upon Aaron’s forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts; and it shall be always upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before The LORD.” [Ex 28:36-38]

Notice two things: one, the engraving, *“Holiness to The LORD;”* and two, the result/reason, *“it shall always be upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before The LORD.”* Herein there is a great encouragement; for just as Aaron represented the people before The LORD as holy, so too Jesus does for us. Our *“advocate with The Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous [One],”* [1 Jn 2:1] continually presents us before God as *“holy and unblameable and unproveable in His sight.”* [Col 1:22]

And regarding the second point, God tells us in Romans,

“For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? Shall we sin, because we are not under the law but under grace? God forbid.” [Rom 6:14-15]

And,

“But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” [Rom 6:22-23]

Paul, by God’s Spirit who cannot lie, says matter-of-factly, *“sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace;”* and, *“being made free from sin...ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the*

end everlasting life.” This is not optional, but necessary. It is God’s promise to us. Praise be to Jesus Christ who has come to “*save His people from their sins,*” [Mt 1:21] and who has indeed saved us from ours, freeing us from sin’s power and effects, even as Jesus said regarding a man’s slavery to sin, “*if The Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.*” [Jn 8:36] Jesus has freed us from sin and freed us from the law, “*that being dead wherein we were held.*” [Rom 7:6] And the law being dead, and Jesus having “*blott[ed] out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us...nailing it to His cross,*” [Col 2:14] sin retains no power; for it is also written, “*the sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*” [1 Cor 15:56-57] Because of Jesus’ work upon the cross, we have been freed from sin, as Romans says. We are no longer under sin nor the law, and now, regardless of our obedience or lack thereof, “*ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.*” Through Jesus Christ our sins are done away; though in practice we sin, and “*if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves,*” [1 Jn 1:8] yet their power and effect has been removed. And thus, as Romans declares to us, whether we sin from time-to-time (and are not practicing/walking in sin), or not, God will see to it that we are growing in holiness and in the knowledge of Him, which is eternal life. [Jn 17:3]

This is truth; these are the words of Jesus Christ through The Holy Spirit. Let us rejoice in them and take heart, for our sins are dashed to pieces as the chaff of the threshing floor and they have been utterly removed from us. God even goes so far as to say our sins have been utterly voided – that is, annulled. As long as we are practicing/walking in truth, they no longer have the power to condemn us or prevent us from laying hold of God’s grace. As it says in Hebrews, “*now once in the end of the world hath He appeared to the annulment of sin by the sacrifice of Himself;*” [Heb 9:26] and again, “*there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after The Spirit.*” [Rom 8:1]

Indeed, these are glorious truths. But what of this grace? What if a man hears this truth and uses it, as it says, using this “*liberty for a cloke of maliciousness[?]*” [1 Pe 2:16] This grace is not for sin; as Paul said, “*what then? Shall we sin, because we are not under the law but under grace? God forbid.*” [Rom 6:15] And again, “*what shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?*” [Rom 6:1-2] And as it says in Titus, showing us what things grace instructs us to pursue,

“*For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present*

world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” [Titus 2:11-14]

The man who is truly saved does not use these truths to sin. Rather, having heard the glorious effects of the gospel, that he is seen as pure and spotless, altogether holy, a recipient of God’s lavish grace, he uses such knowledge not to sin, but to obey God’s laws. The saved man, in whose heart dwells The Spirit, uses God’s grace not to live in sin – for then he should not be a Christian, (for, *“whosoever has been born of God does not practice sin...and he is not able to continue to sin, because he has been born of God.” [1 Jn 3:9]*) – but rather, the saved man uses this grace to do as Paul wrote, *“live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.”*

So, dear brethren, take heart and be of good courage; for our glorious God views you as Christ, without spot and blameless. Go forth therefore with joy, allowing His love and His life to overflow from your heart and your mouth.

Day XII: Nothing Too Hard and Nothing Too Big

Psalms 102:25-27 – Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end.

We know how scripture says, “*in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth,*” [Gen 1:1] and how that it was in six literal days, for The LORD says, “*in six days The LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day.*” [Ex 20:11] But let us also be careful to remember Christ Jesus, God’s Son, was instrumental in creation (as well as The Spirit, for, “*by the word of The LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath/spirit of His mouth.*” [Psa 33:6]). For it is written in John’s gospel,

“*In the beginning The Word had been existing, and The Word had been existing with God, and The Word had been existing as God. This One,*

[that is, The Word], had been existing in the beginning with God. All things come into being through Him; and without Him not one thing which has been created comes into being.” [Jn 1:1-3]

Jesus Christ, who is The Word – for John goes on to say, *“The Word was made flesh, and tabernacled among us.” [Jn 1:14]* – created all things. When we read in the Old Testament, *“by the word of The LORD were the heavens made,”* or, *“He commanded, and they were created,” [Psa 33:6; 148:5]* we understand, through The Spirit’s New Testament revelations, that this was Christ Jesus. For it is through Jesus, who is The Word, that all things were created. As it is written by Paul, that Jesus is,

“The image of the invisible God, the firstborn [the most important, having the highest rank and position] of every creature: for by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him: and He is before [superior to] all things, and by Him all things hold together.” [Col 1:15-17]

Not only were all things created by Jesus, but *“all things were created...for Him.”* Just as it says in Romans regarding God The Father, *“for of Him, and*

through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever," [Rom 11:36] so too it is true of Christ Jesus, so that we might truthfully read of both The Father and Christ, who are one, "*thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they exist and were created.*" [Rev 4:11] And even further than this, through Jesus "*all things hold together.*" That is, all things, whether tangible or intangible, all things are held together by Jesus; as it likewise says in Hebrews that Jesus "*is upholding all things by the word of His power.*" [Heb 1:3] Jesus Christ, by His will and by His word, upholds all things. Each atom that is in existence is upheld by Him; every molecule of our bodily structure, by Him; every good marriage, relationship, fellowship, entity, by Him – Jesus Christ is upholding all things and is superior to all things, possessing "*a name which is above every name,*" and being "*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.*" [Phil 2:9, Eph 1:21] This concept is not just novel to New Testament language, for the passage set before us today is speaking of Christ. As Hebrews quotes,

"But unto The Son He saith...thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: they shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall

be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail." [Heb 1:8, 10-12, Psa 102:25-27]

Seeing as Jesus created all things, we can rightly conclude, as we are assured in this passage, that Jesus shall never change, not being created but eternal, as it says, "*thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail;*" and again, His "*origins have been from old, from everlasting.*" [Mic 5:2] This trait of Christ is also true of any person in the God-head, for "*in [Jesus] dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead in bodily form;*" [Col 2:9] as The Father says, "*for I am The LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.*" [Mal 3:6] And again of Jesus, The Spirit says, "*Jesus Christ [is] the same yesterday, and today, and forever.*" [Heb 13:8]

Though the heavens, which seem to be so permanent, and though the earth, which has remained firm since the foundation of it a few thousand years ago, yet they shall "*perish...and...wax old as doth a garment.*" Just as a garment acquires holes and tears, so too creation will grow old. But though it grows old, yet Christ remains, God remains, and His glorious word remains. If there be something we can see, it shall vanish eventually; but praise be to God that neither He nor His truth shall ever vanish. And to this, let us be reminded of the correct focus:

“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 temporary; but the things which are not seen are eternal.” [2 Cor 4:18]

Therefore, let us look unto Christ; let us take great heed to the exhortation given and be *“looking away from all else to gaze at Jesus the Originator and Completer of the faith.”* [Heb 12:2] Yes, and further, let us be encouraged by His power. For again we read regarding creation, *“as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed.”* When the time is appropriate, The LORD shall create *“a new heaven and a new earth.”* [Rev 21:1] This present world and its heavens shall be changed. The Lord shall even change them as easily as one changes garments. Has there ever been a healthy man who struggled and sweat and strove to change shirts? Yea, there may have been, yet our God shall change the heaven and the earth as easily as one changes garments. Imagine for a moment the vastness of the stars and planets, the billions and billions of lightyears of expansive space; imagine, stand in awe, of the behemoth mountains and fascinating creatures; yea further, of the depth of the seas, caverns, and trenches – see and remember the power and majesty and glory of creation. And now read again the immense and overflowing power of Christ which knows no bounds, who, though creation be so great, yet He

shall with ease “*fold them up*” as a single garment. The ease with which one folds cloth is the same ease with which God creates an entirely new heaven and earth. What power our Lord possesses! As it says, “*now unto Him that is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think.*” [Eph 3:20]

Meditate upon this truth, dear Christian. For the same God is over you and in you! The same Christ which created all things, upholds all things, and will change all things – and who did such things with great ease – is the same Christ which dwells in you, as we are encouraged, “*Christ in you, the hope of glory.*” [Col 1:27] His power knows no bounds. Whatever we face, He is able to conquer, He is able to help. May He ever receive our praise and our supplications, for He is worthy and able. But if we have faltered, if we have not believed His power, may we be reminded of what The LORD Himself says, “*behold, I am The LORD, The God of all flesh: is there anything too hard for me?*” [Jer 32:27] And again, from Jesus’ own mouth, “*with God all things are possible.*” [Mt 19:26] Let us take heart and believe Him! For there is not a situation that exists today in all the world, in all our life, (nor has there ever been or will be), which has even begun to test our Lord’s limits of strength. No, for He is utterly and exceedingly able to do above all we can imagine.

Day XIII: Saved From the Dunghill

Psalms 113:7-8– He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill. That He may set him with princes, even with the princes of His people.

In Philippians, speaking of his past life and those things wherein he used to trust for righteousness, Paul says,

“But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ.” [Phil 3:7-8]

Paul’s language is quite extreme: everything that he used to trust in, all those things which he once counted as gain, he now counts as loss and as dung. In his listing of the well-desired attributes of his past life, Paul mentions, *“touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.”* [Phil 3:6] All of Paul’s former adherence to the law, that which many would look upon with admiration, thinking it to be quite a load

of treasure and gold, Paul looked back on, after coming to Christ, as nothing but foul excrement. It was as the dung of the sacrifices, regarding which God said, *“but the...dung, shalt thou burn with fire without the camp.”* [Ex 29:14, Lev 8:17] As pictured in the law, so it is true: our righteousness apart from Jesus is as foul as an animal’s excrement. The Bible does not stop there; God has yet another image for us regarding our righteous deeds. In Isaiah it says, *“but we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as a menstruous cloth...”* [Isa 64:6] Let us vividly see our sins: a pile of dung and bloody, menstrual rags, and nothing more. Is there an image more to be despised? Do we think now our righteous deeds shall be accepted of God? In no wise, for they are an abhorrence at best. This is the conclusion Paul reached as well, who said He *“count[ed] them but dung, that [he might] win Christ.”*

Considering what our righteousnesses are compared to, which in reality now seem more like sin, what must our sins be compared to? What wicked and lowly thing could all our transgressions be compared with, seeing our righteous things are but dung and menstruous cloths? It is a wonder and a praise that The LORD could say as He does in Isaiah,

“Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that

her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of The LORD's hand double for all her sins." [Isa 40:1-2]

In that The LORD means well when He says, "*she hath received...double for all her sins,*" is more apparent when we also read what is written to us of The LORD,

"For your shame ye shall have double; and for confusion they shall rejoice in their portion: therefore in their land they shall possess the double: everlasting joy shall be unto them." [Isa 61:7]

For Christ's sake God has accepted us; for Jesus' work upon the cross and resurrection, and our belief in it, The LORD has taken all our sins and given us in return, for no work of our own, a double inheritance. That inheritance which Christ rightly deserved, He being "*the firstborn of every creature,*" [Col 1:15] and the one "*to whom the promise was made,*" [Gal 3:19] is gifted to us. "*The Spirit Himself 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.*" [Rom 8:17] And, "*he that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.*" [Rev 21:7] And these things, God does with joy; as Jesus tells us, "*fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*" [Lk 12:32] Praise God that He has

taken all our sins, all our dung, and in return gifted us a double portion with Jesus His Son. We have not deserved Him nor what He has given us, and yet, He has freely done so, *“for by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.”* [Eph 2:8]

With these thoughts, let us come again to our verse for today, wherein we read,

“He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill. That He may set him with princes, even with the princes of His people.” [Psa 113:7-8]

The LORD lifts, has lifted us, out of the dunghill. From out of our hill of dung, of self-righteousness and works, from our hill of blood-soaked menstrual cloths – yes, from this The LORD has lifted us up. He has thought sweetly upon us, not being abhorred with us nor rejecting us, but for Christ’s sake loving us and saving us, pulling us up. And why has He done such a thing? *“That He may set him with princes, even with the princes of His people.”* The LORD has transformed us from lowly beggars in excrement to glorious princes and princesses in His kingdom. He has *“delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of The Son of His love.”* [Col 1:13] By His blood and in great love, God has pulled us up out of the dirt and the

muck and the crud, making us beautiful. As it is written,

“He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.” [Isa 61:10]

Truly, as God promises Jesus would, He has, giving us *“beauty for ashes.”* [Isa 61:3] It was The Lord Jesus who stepped down into our suffering – who *“tabernacled among us,”* [Jn 1:14] taking upon Himself *“the likeness of sinful flesh”* and *“the form of a servant,”* [Rom 8:3, Phil 2:7] – that He might *“save [us]...from [our] sins,”* might rescue us. [Mt 1:21] Jesus *“emptied Himself,”* [Phil 2:7] and came to earth: *“for ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for [our] sakes He became poor, that [we] through His poverty might be rich.”* [2 Cor 8:9] Christ Himself, the King, The Son of God, entered into our suffering willingly, becoming poor, that He might graciously deal with us in our sorrowful, doleful, dirty state. And because of that, we have been gifted every spiritual blessing freely, becoming heirs and becoming exceedingly rich. *“Blessed be The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ.”* [Eph 1:3] And again,

“Blessed be The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, guarded in heaven for you.” [1 Pe 1:3-4]

Praise be to our glorious God who loved us, and loves us, so dearly. That He, who is high above all things, would step down to our level, that He would free us from our sinful and stupid clutch of dung, giving us freedom and true riches, is as Paul says, an “*indescribable gift*.” [2 Cor 9:15]

Day XIV: Silver, Barley, & God's Redeeming Love

Hosea 3:1-2– Then said the LORD unto me, Go yet, love a woman beloved of her friend, yet an adulteress, according to the love of the LORD toward the children of Israel, who look to other gods, and love cakes of raisins. So I bought her to me for fifteen pieces of silver, and for an homer of barley, and an half homer of barley.

Perhaps the most glorious of God's traits is His love. John tells us, by The Spirit's inspiration, that "God is love." [1 Jn 4:8] Among all of God's high and lofty character traits, that which rises above them all is love, so that one might say, despite God being a God "full of compassion, and gracious, [and] longsuffering," [Psa 86:15] that He "is love." What magnificent heights of love – it is that wonderful fruit of God's Spirit which Paul says, "constraineth us" to "not henceforth live unto [ourselves], but unto Him which died for [us], and rose again;" [2 Cor 5:14, 15] and of which He prays that God might grant us,

"[To] have full strength to overcome any obstacles in personally comprehending with all

saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; to firsthand know the love of Christ, which is surpassing all experience, that ye might be filled to individual capacity with all the fulness of God.” [Eph 3:18-19]

God’s love is always pleasant to dwell upon, and never something to fear losing. For “*perfect love is casting out fear;*” [1 Jn 4:18] and, as it is also written regarding the immortal love of God toward us,

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, for thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” [Rom 8:35-39]

The LORD’s love for us is everlasting; He says to us through the prophet, “*yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.*” [Jer 31:3] Though “*all we like sheep have gone astray; [though] we have turned every one to his own way,*” [Isa 53:6] yet The LORD loved us still,

entering into our suffering to die for our sins. Jesus “*first loved us.*” [1 Jn 4:19] Even when we were “*dead in trespasses and sins*” and walking “*according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, [satan];*” [Eph 2:1, 2] yes, even in that sorry state, The Lord loved us and died for us. For though we were enemies of His kingdom, the scripture declares,

“*But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath made us alive together with Christ, (by grace are ye saved).*” [Eph 2:4-5]

May God always be praised for His act of love and passion, wherein He lowered Himself to take upon Himself human flesh and die for our sins. The love which He displayed was so strong that “*for the joy set before Him, [He] endured the cross.*” [Heb 12:2] Jesus’ redemption of our souls was not just out of duty, but out of joy and love; for “*God so loved the world, that He gave His One-and-only unique Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*” [Jn 3:16] And it was not just God The Father who loved us, but that same love which provoked God to give Christ His Son to us was present in Jesus as well. He was not given but by His own volition, for Jesus “*gave Himself a ransom for all, the witness in His own timing;*” [1 Tim 2:6] and, “*Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us*

an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling fragrance.” [Eph 5:2]

Our verse for today reminds us of this overflowing love, which came to us by the zeal of God (for regarding Jesus’ work it is written, “*the zeal of The LORD of Hosts will perform this.*” [Isa 9:7]). As The LORD said to Hosea, “*go yet, love a woman beloved of her friend, yet an adulteress, according to the love of The LORD toward the children of Israel,*” so too it could rightly be said of God’s love toward us Gentiles. For let us not be high-minded, thinking ourselves above the idolatrous mischiefs of Israel; as Paul admonishes, “*let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall;*” and again, “*for if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.*” [1 Cor 10:12, Gal 6:3] But even as Israel was a harlot, effectively being adulterous toward God, so too we were when we were in the world. For it is written regarding “*fornicators*” and “*idolaters*” and the like,

“And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of The Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” [1 Cor 6:11]

Even though we, like Israel, were dead in sin, without God and without hope, “*fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath,*” [Eph 2:3] yet God, as He did with

Israel, loved us, redeemed us, and saved us. For in the account of Hosea's life we see His love, and thus the love of The LORD toward us, when He, "*bought [Gomer] to [himself] for fifteen pieces of silver, and for an homer of barley, and an half homer of barley.*" [Hos 3:2] Gomer, the woman which The LORD told Hosea to love, was an adulteress. She was unfaithful to her husband and had run off with another man, even with multiple lovers. And to boot, she had sold herself into slavery; for we see that Hosea had to buy her back; that is, redeem her. Gomer had in lust for her sexual appetite and in treachery to her marital covenant, played the harlot, selling herself perhaps even for sexual use. And so, there she stood, most likely naked and ashamed in the market, having sold herself into slavery. If we could place ourselves into the situation, even into her heart and mind, surely we would hear her soft, sorrowful reflections to herself, regretting her decisions. Gomer probably would not have ever thought Hosea would take her back, let alone redeem her. But because Hosea was commanded of God, "*go yet, love a woman...an adulteress, according to the love of The LORD,*" he sought her out and loved her still. In mercy and in grace, as The LORD did for us, though we were equally shameful and adulterous and evil, Hosea redeemed Gomer for all that he had. For he did not just purchase her with silver; but, presumably spending all the coinage he had, resorted to barley – anything to retrieve his

beloved bride. And in similar fashion, our Lord and true Groom, Christ Jesus God's Son, "*emptied Himself*" and "*became poor, that [we] through His poverty might be rich.*" [Phil 2:7, 2 Cor 8:9]

Jesus' love is beyond comprehension and comparison. When we were at our worst, unable to save ourselves, slaves to the world and to the flesh and to satan, it was then that The Lord Jesus, our Rescuer, our Redeemer, bought us and secured us forever. What love is this! What lofty heights Christ's love does reach, and what plunging depths His arm did stretch that we might be plucked up from out of the pit wherein is no water; and what expanses His eyes did see across, when He saw us afar and lost, and ran to our aid in His meek and wonderful love. Praise be to Christ our King! His love is indescribable. As The Holy Spirit speaks in Romans,

"And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us. For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God is demonstrating his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." [Rom 5:5-8]

May we ever be encouraged and prodded on to more passionate devotion because of Jesus' love. Truly, His love and mercy toward us is great and overflowing. If Hosea, a mere man, could enact such gracious love toward his adulterous wife, the reality of God's redemptive love must far exceed this. And this statement is not just supposition but truth, for The Holy Spirit tells us as much through Paul, who writes, "*for now we see through a mirror, in an enigma; but then face to face...*" [1 Cor 13:12] And again, "*but we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of The Lord, are being changed into the same image...*" [2 Cor 3:18] If we have seen and tasted of The Lord's good love, then let us rejoice and take comfort that the realities of such a love are far, far beyond what we have presently experienced. There are yet oceans and vast expanses to explore and learn of, even as Paul speaks concerning God's ever-growing and never-ending grace, writing, "*...in the ages to come, [that is, for all eternity], He [will] shew the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.*" [Eph 2:7]

There is no language available for us to properly describe and speak of God's love. If we have thought God's love to be above the heavens, it is yet a thousand more heavens in height; if we have thought it an ocean trench, we may estimate the reality to be so vast in comparison that the deepest ocean would be but the depth of a bathtub. Indeed,

if God's love is so great toward us that He would purchase us with His own blood, humbling Himself and emptying Himself to such a degree, then let us not fear. For we are of great value to our Redeemer and King.

Day XV: Jesus' Better Fruit

Romans 8:11-13– But if The Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through The Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

In Hebrews we are reminded of the faith of Sarah, which was much like Abraham's, of which Paul comments, saying,

“And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb: he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He as able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.” [Rom 4:19-22]

And as it relates to Sarah, Hebrews reminds us,

“Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised. Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sea which is by the sea shore innumerable.”
[Heb 11:11-12]

Though “Abraham and Sarah were old and well stricken in age; and it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women,” [Gen 18:11] yes, and though Abraham was “an hundred years old[.] And...Sarah [was] ninety years old,” [Gen 17:17] yet both Abraham and Sarah, according to the scriptures, believed God. Both Abraham and Sarah’s bodies were, as it says in Hebrews, “good as dead.” They were old and their bodies were past the time of children; it was not possible, according to the flesh, for them to produce life. Ah, but we give God glory: for though “it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women,” yet it did not cease to be with God! For Christ is “He that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth.” [Rev 3:7] As Jeremiah praises, “Ah Lord GOD! Behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee.” [Jer 32:17] Yes, and so, God Almighty, the giver of the promise and of all good gifts, the One of whom it is written, “He maketh the barren woman to keep house,” [Psa 113:9]

opened the womb of Sarah and gave Abraham vitality, though their bodies were “*as good as dead.*”

May we take great encouragement from this account; for just as Sarah’s body was good as dead, unable to produce life, so too were we as unbelievers. We were “*dead in trespasses and sin,*” [Eph 2:1] unable to produce any life; for though we were living in the sense of animation, we were as the women described in Paul’s letter to Timothy, “*but she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth;*” [1 Tim 5:6] for we were those who “*walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air...fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind,*” [Eph 2:2, 3] having “*given [ourselves] over unto unrestrained living.*” [Eph 4:19] Yes, we were like Sarah: unable to produce life. For Jesus says, “*because I live, ye shall live also,*” [Jn 14:19] implying what John wrote, “*he that hath not The Son of God hath not life;*” [1 Jn 5:12] and again, “*if one died for all, then were all dead;*” [2 Cor 5:14] and once more, “*we have passed from death unto life.*” [1 Jn 3:14] But though we were dead in sins, without any true life because we did not have Christ in our hearts, yet as Ephesians triumphantly proclaims,

“*But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath made us alive together with Christ (by grace ye are saved).*” [Eph 2:4-5]

Just as Sarah was dead in her body, but was given, through faith, the ability to produce life, so too it is with us. For though we inhabit bodies which were formerly dead in sin, unable to produce Jesus' life – the fruit of The Holy Spirit – yet now, because of Jesus and His Spirit, we have been granted the ability to produce life. These wretched bodies, of which Paul yearned for deliverance, saying, “*who shall deliver me from the body of this death,*” [Rom 7:24] have been, as The Holy Spirit also says through Paul, “*annulled.*” [Rom 6:6] And because of this fact, which thing is opened unto us through Jesus and His resurrection, (for through His resurrection we receive The Holy Spirit [Jn 7:37-39]), we can now use our bodies to live unto righteousness instead of sin, thus producing the life of Jesus Christ; as it is written,

“Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of The Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with [Him] in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection...Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him...Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves

unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.” [Rom 6:4-5, 8, 12-13]

It is an awesome responsibility and blessing to be able to produce the very life of The Messiah. Indeed, it reveals to us the power and grace of Jesus Christ. It shows us the exceeding, magnificent grace, which could transform a lowly sinner into a prince in God’s kingdom: into one who practices righteousness and is loved dearly by He with whom he used to be at enmity. And as often as we take up our cross with joy as Jesus showed us, [Heb 12:2, Mt 16:24] and put to death the deeds of the body, The Spirit who dwells in us will of a truth display Jesus’ life and glory through our bodies: those very bodies He has chosen to inhabit. For again, Romans states,

“But if The Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also give life to your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you.” [Rom 8:11]

And seeing that we have this great promise, let us take advantage of it! In fact, we must! For Paul goes on, writing to Rome and to us,

“Therefore, brethren, we are continually being debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye

through The Spirit do put to death the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” [Rom 8:12-13]

To be a debtor means, to be “*one who is under obligation to do something.*” [Webster] We thus, because we have Jesus’ Spirit – because we are “*an habitation of God through The Spirit.*” [Eph 2:22] – are obligated: obligated not to be directed and led of our fleshly passions, but instead to be directed and led by and submitted to The Holy Spirit, to Jesus, and as a result to be “[*putting*] to death the deeds of the body,” so that as it says in our passage for today and also in Corinthians, “*the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.*” [2 Cor 4:11] We are in debt to produce the life of Jesus Christ, that those around us might be blessed thereby, and God might enjoy that fruit for which He saved us. As it says of the Groom’s fruit, “*I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste,*” [Songs 2:3] may it also be said of our fruit. Not because we have done anything, or are anything, but because we are connected to Christ, The Root and The Branch. If we have been “[*partaking*] of the root and fatness of the olive tree,” [Rom 11:17] of Christ, then our fruit shall be as His, sweet and lovely. And in this word, “*put to death the deeds of the body, [so that] ye shall live,*” we see implied that even the least of Jesus’ fruit is better than any deed of the flesh. Jesus’ life is so much better as to always be preferred, and because we

have the power through The Spirit to produce it, if we put to death the flesh, we must.

Jesus holds the power to transform the vilest sinner into the brightest saint; to recreate a dead dog on the doorstep of hell, into an eagle, on course to heaven's gate. The Lord Jesus' grace and power know no limits, which could give us such life, which could use even the lowliest body, the lowliest person. Let us recognize this great gift, and our God's great power and submit to Him.

Day XVI: Our Savior's Unfailing Righteousness

Acts 2:24– Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that He should be holden of it.

Imagine for a moment, if you will, that “*the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to [the] gospel,*” has come. [Rom 2:16] Yes, imagine that great and dreadful day when all shall stand before The King and give account has finally risen to its height as the noonday sun and as it says, “*the judgment shall sit.*” [Dan 7:26] Let us imagine too, though it shall not be such, (for in Christ “*we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as [Jesus] is, so are we in this world,*” and, “*there is no fear in love.*” [1 Jn 4:17-18]), but let us imagine that you are called to the throne to give account, and God booms with a voice and asks you: ‘why should I let you into my kingdom?’ What should be your defense? What shall you say, dear reader? Well, I suppose you may say as most, “for Christ’s sake!” Ah, yes, for Christ Jesus our Lord’s sake! Look not one second upon my righteousness nor merit, dear

Father, but look only upon Jesus your Son's! For it is in Him I find my all-in-all; it is in The Son of your Love that I find myself washed pure white, that I find myself loved and cared for, covered in that sweet, atoning blood. This would be a good answer indeed! For we read in Romans that glorious gospel truth,

“But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that are believing: for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and are falling short of the glory of God; [and those believing are also] being freely justified by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus...” [Rom 3:21-24]

But let me ask you, dear reader: upon what pillar do you place such trust and rest that Christ's righteousness shall hold you in that day? When the great hammer of God's judgment, as it were, comes falling down – how do you know of a truth that Jesus' righteousness shall protect you? How can we be certain that Jesus' righteousness is God's righteousness? How can we prove of a fact that Jesus' life – not just His deeds and words which we have seen, but also His heart and thoughts which we have not seen – be accepted of God The Father? What if there was one miniscule, sinful thought in

Jesus' early life that was not recorded? How can we be absolutely sure there was not – how can you, dearest reader – be sure?!

Let us not fear, for our verse for today assures our hearts most clearly of Jesus' righteousness, and its acceptance of God. And it does give us a firm, unfailing confidence that we too shall be accepted by our Father on that day. Let us read from Acts again,

“Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that He should be holden of it.”
[Acts 2:22-24]

And let us also note Peter's comment upon these things, when he says that “[David]...before spake of the resurrection of Christ.” [Acts 2:31] So we see that when Peter says, “*whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death,*” that he spoke of Jesus Christ, who was resurrected on the third day, “*because it was not possible that He should be holden of [death].*” To see the significance of such a statement,

let us first remember what is written, “*the wages of sin is death.*” [Rom 6:23] And so we see, the wages of sin being death, that Jesus had no sin indeed. For it was “*not possible*” that Jesus should be captured and held by death. No, but because there was not one, single iota of sin in Jesus’ entire being – because Jesus our Lord, for every waking and sleeping millisecond of His thirty-some years on earth never sinned: no not in deed, thought, word, emotion, or any such thing – yes, because He had no sin, neither knew any sin, death could not hold Him. And just as it is written of Jonah, “[*the fish*] vomited out Jonah upon the dry land,” [Jon 2:10] so too the grave spewed Christ out of its mouth, for there was no sin for death to feed on, there was not one ounce of corruption in Jesus’ soul. Just as the belly of the fish rejected Jonah by God’s word, so too Jesus’ soul perfectly mirrored God’s word and so He was rejected by the grave. Praise God! For by this we can be certain, everlastingly certain, that Jesus had no sin: for He was resurrected! He was resurrected out from among the grave: and that, in a far different fashion than we shall be. For truthfully, all shall one day be resurrected. But the chief difference is that Christ was not resurrected generally, as we shall be, but specifically and uniquely, of His own accord, by His own power, through His own righteousness and not another’s.

My brethren, may all praise and honor be to Christ our King, of whom death could not hold Him. For because of Jesus' great work, we can take to hear the triumphant promise,

"...Death is consumed in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin;; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." [1 Cor 15:54-57]

Because Jesus was resurrected, we too shall be resurrected; and because His righteousness was accepted of God, so too shall ours: for He is our righteousness, *"The LORD our Righteousness,"* [Jer 23:6] as it is written, *"but of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us...righteousness;"* [1 Cor 1:30] and, *"in The LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory."* [Isa 45:25] And even beyond a merely literal sense, we can have life presently. Even now we can experience the resurrection power and life of Jesus, for it is no longer possible that *"the body of this death,"* [Rom 7:24] should have dominion over us and submerge us into death and sin, for in Christ Jesus we have been given victory. As we read in Romans,

"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by

baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have become untied with [Him] in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be annulled, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin.” [Rom 6:4-7]

Death and sin no longer have any power in our lives. The Righteous King who came to earth has conquered and prevailed, and offers the same to us. We are no longer under “*the law of sin and death*” but have been placed under a new law, “*the law of The Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.*” [Rom 8:2] And as such, in Christ Jesus we can always experience life, knowing assuredly that Jesus’ life was legitimate and acceptable to God, for He rose out from among the dead on the third day “*for our justification,*” and we are “*saved by His life*” [Rom 4:25; 5:10] both presently and in the time to come, for God has “*delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that He will yet deliver us.*” [2 Cor 1:10]

Day XVII: Christ's Power & A Lad's Lunch

John 6:8-9– One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him, There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?

When a difficult, perhaps even impossible task, was set before Jonathan, Saul's son, in faith toward God he said, "*it may be that The LORD will work for us: for there is no restraint to The LORD to save by many or by few.*" [1 Sam 14:6] The word restraint means, "*the act or operation of holding back or hindering...limitation; restriction.*" [Webster] Whether a man has much strength or little, much wealth or hardly any: no matter what the present circumstances are, there is not one thing which could ever hold God back from action or bind Christ our Lord from working, for as Paul says, "*the word of God is not bound.*" [2 Tim 2:9] Again, in another place it is written, "*LORD, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power.*" [2 Ch 14:11] God's power is so extreme, so beyond our ability even to compare and contrast, that Asa prays truthfully, "*LORD, it is nothing with thee to help.*" If a

man had an hundred thousand soldiers to deploy, millions of dollars to spend, hundreds of hours to spare, or if instead, in great contrast, a man had nothing but a penny and a shoe: in each case the effort level from God would be the same; in each case the percentage of effort and energy it would require from The LORD's total supply would be a percentage so incredibly low, it is easier to simply say, "*nothing.*" What a powerful God we have! As it is written, "*great is The LORD, and greatly to be praised; and His greatness is unsearchable.*" [Psa 145:3]

And truly, God testifies to these facts Himself, saying, "*behold, I am The LORD, The God of all flesh: is there anything too hard for me?*" [Jer 32:27] The LORD asked Moses rhetorically, "*is The LORD's hand waxed short?*" [Num 11:23] The clear answer as we have seen is no; "*The LORD reigneth*" and there is no power nor obstacle nor name which He does not or cannot usurp; "*He is clothed with majesty; [yes], The LORD is clothed with strength, wherewith He hath girded Himself,*" [Psa 93:1] and He needs not any to give Him strength, for He clothes Himself with it and is the source of it, as it is written, "*God hath spoken once; twice I have heard this; that power belongeth unto God.*" [Psa 62:11]

Having seen a small glimpse of God's power, let us remember a certain time when having said to His disciples, "*come ye yourselves apart into a desert place,*

and rest a while,” [Mk 6:31] and having come to the place,

“Jesus, when He came out [of the boat], saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and He began to teach them many things.” [Mk 6:34]

When His disciples, no doubt tired, said to Jesus, “send them away, that they may go...and buy themselves bread,” Jesus said to them, “give ye them to eat.” [Mk 6:36, 37] But, as we see from John, not quite possessing the faith that Jesus’ command was even possible, viewing the situation purely from the flesh, Philip answered Jesus’ question/command, saying, “two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little.” [Jn 6:7] He said this because there “were about five thousand men, beside women and children;” [Mt 14:21] surely a great deal more than they could feed on their own with such short notice and with such little funds. Jesus’ disciples looked at the crowd of thousands of people, and looked at Jesus’ command, “give ye them to eat,” and saw a great disparity. The command was far above what they were able. But where the disciples saw only a great gulf of impossibility, The Lord saw a great opportunity to display His glory. And so instead of sending the people away, Jesus said, “how many loaves have ye? Go and see,” [Mk 6:38] to which Andrew reported, “there is a lad here, which

hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes.” [Jn 6:9]
These five barley loaves, the bagged lunch as it were of a small lad: hardly enough to feed over five thousand people. But in the eyes of Christ, it was more than enough: for in Christ all the fulness of the Godhead dwelt; all the power of God was, and is, at His disposal, as John wrote, “*God giveth not The Spirit by measure unto Him.*” [Jn 3:34]

The next words which Jesus spoke, after hearing of the amount of food, are the most important in the whole account. Jesus said, in reference to the loaves, “*bring them hither to me.*” [Mt 14:18] Had the disciples, had the lad, not given the food to Christ, it would have remained but “*five barley loaves, and two small fishes;*” enough to feed a handful of people, but not nearly enough to feed the crowd and fulfil Jesus’ command. But because they submitted what little they had, that which was formerly unable was transformed by Christ’s power into that which was able. Those loaves and fishes became, by Jesus’ power, sufficient for the crowd, for He “*took the loaves; and when He had given thanks, He distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would;*” [Jn 6:11] and as Mark records, “*they did all eat, and were filled.*” [Mk 6:42] And herein we see the power of Christ and a great application to the truths regarding God’s infinite power. There is no limit to what Jesus can accomplish; though the disciples had

but five *borrowed* loaves, Jesus multiplied them into thousands, more than enough to meet the need set before them. Though the disciples came to Christ with nothing but a lad's lunch, they left with an over-abundance.

The answer to Andrew's question, "*but what are they among so many,*" indeed has an answer: they are perfectly sufficient! Was Christ ignorant of their seeming lack? In no wise, for when Jesus said to Philip, "*whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?*" John tells us, "*and this He said to prove him: for He Himself knew what He would do.*" [Jn 6:5-6] Our weaknesses, like the disciples, are not a surprise to God nor a hindrance. If The LORD has told us to do something, He is already aware of our lack. But if we cling fast to the promise, "*God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work,*" [2 Cor 9:8] and again, "*in every thing ye are brought to fulness by Him, in all speech, and in all knowledge,*" [1 Cor 1:5] and entrust ourselves to Him, then He shall work and empower us for any task He gives.

Let us be encouraged, dear brethren, that whereas we may not have much, yet God would say unto us as He did Gideon, "*The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valor.*" [Jdg 6:12] Our limitations do not limit Jesus, for His power is always greater than the present need. If He has given us a task, and we submit ourselves and our possessions to Him, it

shall be done, for with Jesus nothing is impossible for us. As Jesus said, “*with men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.*” [Mt 19:26] So let us rejoice and submit ourselves to Jesus in faith, nothing doubting, for through Him we can accomplish all things.

Day XVIII: The Rich Dew of Christ's Head

Hosea 14:4-6– I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him. I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon.

By inspiration of The Holy Spirit, Paul uttered one of the sweetest promises in The Bible, he being urged upon and moved by God's heart, writing,

“We have known that all things are working together for the good, according to [His] predetermination, [for] them that are loving God, [for] those [who] are being called. For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.” [Rom 8:28-29]

We see here that all things, no matter their height or depth or length; yes, all things, no matter their supposed badness or supposed goodness, despite their hardness or ease – all things are unequivocally being orchestrated by God's divine will unto the

good. And what is that good? It is this: that as Christ's brethren, as those "*chosen in Him*," [Eph 1:4] we should be, no matter what, conformed by God into the image of Jesus Christ; even as it is also written,

"But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." [Rom 6:22-23]

And herein too we see that glorious and foundational truth, which was declared to us in Romans eight as well: mainly, that no matter the circumstance, the result of our lives always tends toward holiness, that is, toward a greater likeness to Christ, being set apart more and more unto Him and thus becoming less and less like the world. We have this great confidence in Christ, that despite our failings, God is well pleased and determined to complete us, as He promised, "*He which hath begun a good work in you will accomplish it until the day of Jesus Christ.*" [Phil 1:6] Yes, despite even those wayward times of sin, to those who walk in the light of Christ's glory, practicing truth, [1 Jn 1:5-10, Jn 3:18-21] they are promised that all things in their life, will by God's intentional design, work together for good – they will work together that we might become more like Christ, growing in holiness, growing in a likeness and application to Jesus' life.

This growth in our likeness to Jesus was told to us when The Spirit promised, “*the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*” [Rom 6:23] Because eternal life, besides being “[to] know...*The Only True God, and Jesus Christ,*” [Jn 17:3] is also to know and experience Jesus’ very life through our own. Though we often think of eternal life as life unending with God in heaven, it is described more accurately to us in the New Testament as intimate knowledge of Jesus: not just in word or thought, but also in application. John wrote, speaking of the latter, “*the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with The Father, and was manifested unto us.*” [1 Jn 1:2] Herein we see that “*that eternal life,*” was the very life of Jesus Christ being displayed to the apostles as they walked alongside Jesus on earth. And therefore, when we have such great promises, that we are being “*conformed to the image of [God’s] son,*” that “[we] have [our] fruit unto holiness,” and “*the gift of God is eternal life,*” then we can conclude, being assured with joy, that each circumstance of our lives – no matter what it be – is always working for our good, producing in us more holiness and likeness to our Lord.

Day by day, “*The Faithful God,*” “[The] Faithful Creator,” [Deut 7:9, 1 Pe 4:19] the One who “*daily bears us up,*” [Psa 68:19] is ensuring that we are

growing and becoming more like Christ; for “*great is [His] faithfulness.*” [Lam 3:23]

“And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it.” [1 Th 5:23-24]

He who promised is faithful to complete us and fulfil those blessed and divine oaths. And if we have done as we are exhorted, “*O taste and see that The LORD is good,*” [Psa 34:8] and we have indeed “*tasted that The Lord is gracious,*” [1 Pe 2:3] then let us rejoice and be glad: for God’s character, which is so lovely, and whose “*fruit [is so] sweet,*” [Songs 2:3] is that very same image into which every situation brings us further towards, and the very fruit which He desires to perfect in us. May God’s faithfulness be praised, and may He be thanked for His great and miraculous work of transforming us into Jesus’ very image. And that this work is miraculous is truth indeed, for that we, lowly beggars from the dunghill of this world, who were enemies of God and of His Son, could be transformed into new creatures that display God is a miracle of miracles. Regarding this, Christ says through Isaiah, “*behold, I and the children whom The LORD hath given me are for signs and miracles...*” [Isa 8:18]

But, as we must, let us come to our passage for today, which shows us yet another angle of Jesus' glory, noticing in particular what is promised of Israel and of us in Christ, "*his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon.*" Because God "*will heal [Israel's] backsliding,*" (yea, and has already healed ours in Christ, redeeming us from death and destruction, separating us unto Himself and placing us into the way of peace), He says, "*I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him.*" The clear indication to us here is that of salvation, for we see God say, "*mine anger is turned away from him.*" In the New Covenant, this subsiding of God's wrath against sin is due to our salvation and justification, as Paul writes, "*much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.*" [Rom 5:9] And as it shall be for Israel in that day, so it is already true for those in Jesus, in that God has healed us and turned His anger away from us. And being in such a state, God is determined to,

"Be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon." [Hos 14:5-6]

May we come today to enjoy two truths among many in this passage. One, that the image God is forming us into is very pleasing to Him; and two,

that we may acquire a deeper appreciation and awe at God's power.

Of the first, let us focus on the phrase, "*his smell [shall be] as Lebanon.*" In Songs, we read of the groom's love for the bride, and therein we see Christ's love and affection for His bride too, who is the church. He says, "*thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb: honey and milk are under thy tongue; and the smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon.*"

[Songs 4:11] No doubt the fresh smell of Lebanon's cedars is that smell to which the groom refers, and which no doubt gives him pleasure; for he says too in the same context, "*thou art all beautiful my love; there is no blemish in thee;*" and, "*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.*"

[Songs 4:7, 9] The groom, and thus Jesus, affectionately pours over the good qualities of His bride, and the smell of Lebanon is among them. Let us take comfort from this, for that smell is the very smell God desires to make us into; he desires to make us as a cedar of Lebanon, strong, righteous, and fragrant; for it is also written, "*the righteous...shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon,*" [Psa 92:12] and this, as we have seen, emits a pleasing fragrance to our Groom, for again, we read, "*we are unto God a sweet fragrance of Christ.*" [2 Cor 2:15] Herein we find our first truth: the person into which we are being formed by God is pleasing to

Christ. Jesus enjoys us; yes, He even *likes* us. We have all been in the company of one who smells unfavorably. It is rather discomforting, and in fact, often repels close company. And, in the same token, we have also no doubt been in the presence of one who smells very nice. Think upon the stark contrast between the two, and take encouragement, that Christ loves the way you smell.

Of the second, we see that God's power to transform us is very great. For the reason we "*shall grow as the lily, and cast forth [our] roots as Lebanon,*" and that "*[our] branches shall spread, and [our] beauty shall be as the olive tree, and [our] smell as Lebanon,*" is because God shall be, Christ shall be, "*as the dew unto [us].*" God shall rest upon us like dew! His blessed Spirit resting on us, shall afford us such growth and splendor as to make us grow, make us beautiful, make us fruitful, and make us a fragrant and righteous people unto Himself. The effects are no doubt miraculous, a transformation indeed; for whereas we once were beggars, dead dogs, slaves to sin cast upon the dunghill, God has pulled us out and made us new, giving us fresh life and fresh fruit, changing our very nature from that of sick and dastardly into healthy and beautiful, pleasing to Himself in Christ His Son. But let us notice again the phrase, "*as the dew.*" My good Christian, have you in your mind what dew is? Let us remember that there is probably not a cedar of Lebanon, nor a

mighty oak, nor any fruit bearing tree, nor any substantial plant, which ever did grow from only dew! Ah, but our God is so powerful, so absolutely mighty, so lush with abundance, that His very dew is enough to raise up a behemoth oak, a fragrant cedar, yea, and a thousand other fruit-bearing plants to boot. As it says of The LORD, “*thy paths drop abundance,*” [Psa 65:11] so we see here: the man who is in Christ, who walks on the way of peace and way of holiness, who has taken heed to Christ’s command, “*deny [yourself], and take up [your] cross, and follow me,*” [Mt 16:24] shall have that rich dew of Jesus’ head fall upon Him and make Him fruitful. [Songs 5:2]

Let us rest easy on Jesus’ breast and enjoy what fruitfulness comes for the man content to abide there. For Jesus Christ has dew enough for all of us. If we abide in His presence, continuing to behold His glory, we shall be changed into His very image. If we have seen Jesus as beautiful and to be desired, let us stay upon Him, let us allow His dew to fall fresh on us today, and let us bear fruit for our Mighty King and Husbandman.

Day XIX: Ascending Heaven's Ladder

John 1:51– And He saith unto him, verily, verily, I say unto you, hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.

When Jacob and Esau were in Rebekah's womb, it was said to her of The LORD, "*the elder shall serve the younger.*" [Gen 25:23] It was a promise akin to that given regarding Isaac, Jacob's father, when The LORD spoke to Abraham, saying,

"Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac; and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his Seed after him." [Gen 17:19]

In this promise the gospel appears, where The LORD says, "*I will establish my...everlasting covenant...with his Seed.*" The Hebrew word "Seed" is in the singular, thus indicating to us that which The Holy Spirit interpreted in Galatians, "*He saith not, and to seeds, as of many; but as of one, and to thy Seed, which is Christ.*" [Gal 3:16] Again, we can see the

gospel when we remember God's words regarding Abraham's Seed, when after Abraham went to offer Isaac in faith, God said, "*and in thy Seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice;*" [Gen 22:18] and The Holy Spirit again interprets, saying through Paul,

"And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed." [Gal 3:8]

This same promise, that through Abraham's son Isaac, The Seed, (that is, The Christ) would come, was also given regarding Jacob in that The LORD, "*that the purpose of God according to election might stand,*" said, "*the elder shall serve the younger;*" and again, speaking solely of God's sovereign choice of the Messianic line, "*Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.*" [Rom 9:11-13, Gen 25:23, Mal 1:2-3] And so, seeing that The LORD had predetermined the Messianic line – that is, the genealogic line through which God would bring forth His Son – Isaac being privy to such a promise, blessed Jacob unbeknownst to himself, but known to God and known to Jacob, saying,

"Therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine: let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren, and let

thy mother's sons bow down to thee: cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee." [Gen 27:28-29]

Isaac's knowledge of his blessing's significance is pronounced and felt in that he said, "*cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee,*" for this was also the promise of the gospel given to Abraham regarding the Messianic line which would come through him, we thus reading The LORD's promise from his early life,

"And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." [Gen 12:2-3]

After Jacob had deceived his father and taken that blessing which Isaac intended to give Esau, Jacob left home to go to Laban in order to find a wife. It was on that journey that Jacob encountered The LORD. It came to pass,

"[That] he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night...and lay down in that place to sleep. And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold, The LORD stood above it, and said, I am The

LORD God of Abraham thy father, and The God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy Seed...and in thee and in thy Seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” [Gen 28:11-14]

It is to this event and dream which Jesus pointed when He told Nathanael,

“Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? Thou shalt see greater things than these...Verily, verily, I say unto you, hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon The Son of Man.” [Jn 1:50-51]

Jesus our Lord is Jacob’s Ladder; He is the Ladder which Jacob dreamt of. For Jesus is the means by which we receive aid and help from heaven; the intermediary between heaven and earth, by which we can interact with God in His heavenly place and by which we can receive blessings originating from thence. Jesus Christ, that blessed Ladder, is He who shall be the way: God’s chosen and ordained way to reach heaven, a connection between earth and heaven which is only bridged through the glorious work of Christ Jesus.

As it relates to angels, we read in Hebrews, “*are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?*” [Heb 1:14] Because we are heirs of salvation: heirs “*of the grace of life,*” [1 Pe

3:7] and “*joint-heirs with Christ*,” [Rom 8:17] we are those whom God is pleased to give aid through angels. Those great angels, described in Kings as “*chariots of fire round about Elisha*,” [2 Ki 6:17] and in Ezekiel as “*living creatures*,” each having “*four wings...and [whose legs/feet] sparkled like the color of burnished brass...[and whose] appearance was like burning coals of fire, and like the appearance of lamps*,” and wherein it is said, “*the living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning*,” [Ezek 1:5-14] yes, these very creatures are those whom God has ordained to help and serve us, heirs of salvation. What a glorious position we hold as men, as those whom Jesus The Lamb has redeemed with His own blood, that Christ would become one of us and save us, and that we should be served by angels who are no doubt presently higher in position, authority, and beauty. But as it is written temporarily of Christ on earth, so too of us, who “*shall inherit glory*,” [Prov 3:35] and shall even “*judge angels*,” [1 Cor 6:3] “*for thou hast made Him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned Him with glory and honor*,” [Psa 8:5] and again, “*for verily [Jesus] took not hold of angels; but He took hold of the seed of Abraham*.” [Heb 2:16] Therefore we should draw encouragement; for our LORD who is the LORD of The Heavenly Armies, and has all authority over their power and reach, is well pleased to send them on ministerial missions for our benefit.

Further, Jesus is the means by which we receive blessings from heaven. He is the only avenue by which a man may be blessed; as it is written, “*men shall be blessed in Him.*” [Psa 72:17] We are blessed in and through Jesus, even just as we have read regarding the promise given to the patriarchs, “*in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.*” [Gen 22:18] And again, “*for all the promises of God in [Jesus Christ] are yea, and in Him amen, unto the glory of God by us.*” [2 Cor 1:20] Thus, as it relates to Jesus being the Ladder to heaven, we see that He is the means by which a man receives blessings from heaven, from God. And this point should, even in time to come, remain true, as we are promised, “*that in the ages to come, [God] might shew the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.*” [Eph 2:7]

Finally, let us see how that Jesus is the way, the way for us on earth to be reunited and reconciled with God in heaven. For we read in Jacob’s account that there was “*a ladder set up on earth, and the top of it reached to heaven.*” Do notice here that the ladder was first “*set up on earth,*” and then “*reached to heaven.*” Thus, it is because of Jesus’ humanity, because He, verily God, took upon Himself human flesh, that we can be reconciled with God. It was necessary for a man; and not just a man, but God, and herein Jesus fulfills both: being both God and man, as it says, “*God was manifest in the flesh,*” and,

“there is one God, and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.” [1 Tim 3:16; 2:5] Because of this, Jesus can be the way, as Jesus said, *“whither I go ye know, and the way ye know...I am the way...no man cometh unto The Father, but by me.”* [Jn 14:4, 6] Jesus is the way: the means by which a man can reach God and have fellowship with Him. For, *“He is our peace”* and *“through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto The Father;”* [Eph 2:14, 18] and, *“[God] hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ.”* [2 Cor 5:18] It is not only through Jesus that we are reconciled to God, but Jesus is also, as He says, *“the way...and the life.”* Jesus is not just the way to God in a future sense, but also the way in a very practical and daily sense.

Jesus Christ is The Way of life; that is, He is the means by which, the power through which, a man lives. Jesus said, *“because I live, ye shall live also;”* [Jn 14:19] it is through Jesus that a man truly lives: by abiding in and following Jesus. And this way is an upward path, even as a ladder goes upward, so too Jesus as our way of life goes upward. We read in Philippians the attitude of Paul which we are encouraged of The Spirit to adopt, *“I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”* [Phil 3:14] Notice that it is *“the upward call.”* It is not downward, nor sideways, but upward. God is calling us upward upon Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ, for He is The Way, He is the Ladder. If we

are to progress and become more like God, more like Jesus, in our practical living, it is to Jesus' life that we look, and to His person that we cling, for, a man "*increaseth with the increase of God.*" [Col 2:19] And regarding this progress and this way, God is pleased to help us, giving us His eternally indwelling Spirit, and saying to us through the prophet,

"Thus saith The LORD, thy Redeemer...I am The LORD thy God who is training thee to ascend on high, which leadeth thee by the way which thou shouldest go." [Isa 48:17]

Notice that The LORD is training us upon a way, "*the way which thou shouldest go,*" and that this certain path which God has chosen for us is that which ascends on high, as God said, He is "*training [us] to ascend on high.*" The path is Christ Himself, to whom we gaze and to whom we fervently cling. It is Jesus' very life, shown to us in the scriptures, that we are led by and led on, and which causes us to rise and rise – for it is the upward call of God, not the downward call. Day by day, The LORD is renewing our new man, Jesus Christ within us, making us better and more like Himself; daily The LORD is calling us upward, out of this world into a lifestyle more like Jesus'.

May God be praised, for Jesus is The Ladder. He is that unique and single means of blessing, refreshment, help, and growth. There is not another

Savior like Him, who is so multi-faceted, master of all areas, and who has done all things well. May we ever look to Him and cling to Him, our blessed Ladder.

Day XX: The Great God's Humble Gaze

Psalms 96:4-5– For The LORD is great, and greatly to be praised: He is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the nations are idols: but The LORD made the heavens.

The word great means, “*expressing a large, extensive, or unusual degree of any thing...[important...momentous]...[highest in office or rank; principal]...*” [Webster] When considering all the powers in heaven and upon earth, and even under the earth, we must frankly conclude – and to no surprise to us – that God The LORD is great above all. There is no power nor authority, there is no strength nor able-body which could match or exceed our Heavenly Father. There is no active power today, nor ancient power of yesterday, no, nor is there anyone or anything in all of existence, which could even come within even ten thousand degrees of magnitude to God as it relates to His blessed character. Whatever scope is taken, whatever attribute of God one delves into, whatever angle is viewed: it is no matter, for “*The LORD is great,*” [Psa 96:4] and thus all others are not. And

again, “*thou art great, and doest wondrous things: thou art God alone.*” [Psa 86:10] To take God’s greatness even further, The Holy Spirit tells us, “*great is The LORD, and greatly to be praised; and His greatness is unsearchable.*” [Psa 145:3] The LORD’s greatness, His extensiveness, His importance, His office and rank – any definition or synonym of great – are likewise described here as “*unsearchable.*” The word “*unsearchable*” literally means, “*without investigation.*” Investigation means, “*...a careful inquiry to find out what is unknown...*” [Webster] Thus, we can see that God’s greatness is so vast, so expansive, so utterly momentous in its nature, that there is no possibility of ever inquiring to find out its total height or length or depth or breadth. In the same fashion to the surpassing work of Christ’s death and resurrection, it could be said too of God’s greatness, “*thanks be to God for His indescribable gift.*” [2 Cor 9:15] As Job’s friend rightly said,

“*Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? [He] is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? Deeper than hell; what canst thou know? The measure [of God] is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea.*” [Job 11:7-9]

“*O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!*” [Rom 11:33] Because God is so great, He is worthy of great praise and

great fear. He is *“greatly to be praised, [and] He is to be feared above all gods.”* Today, let us meditate upon God’s greatness, let us remember that it is He who has *“made the heavens,”* and it is God who *“created the heaven and the earth.”* [Gen 1:1] From out of nothing, while there was none to help Him, neither in deed, thought, encouragement, strength, or any such things; yes, by Himself, The LORD made the heavens and the earth. As The LORD Himself says, *“see now that I, even I, Am He, and there is no god with me...”* [Deut 32:29] And again,

“For thus saith The LORD that created the heavens; God Himself that formed the earth and made it; He hath established it, He created it not in vain, He formed it to be inhabited: I Am The LORD; and there is none else.” [Isa 45:18]

There is no god, nor is there any man, who could ever exalt themselves to our God’s position. As Job, who though he was being heavily afflicted, grew in pride and entitlement, learned from God – who said to him quite bluntly,

“Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me. Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare, if thou hast understanding.” [Job 38:3-4]

Truly, our Father is great above all: greatly to be praised and feared. Yes, as it is written, “O come, let

us worship and bow down: let us kneel before The LORD our Maker.” [Psa 95:6]

But though God is so great, so far above all men, women, and spiritual powers, yet He is a God of love, who cares for us. Though we are “*poor and needy; yet The LORD thinketh upon [us];*” yes, though we are like Jacob and “*not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which [The LORD] hast shewed unto [us],*” [Gen 32:10] yet, “[*The LORD’s*] *thoughts which are to us-ward...are more than can be numbered.*” [Psa 40:17, 5] And our Father’s thoughts regarding us, which “*are more in number than the sand,*” [Psa 139:18] are through-and-through “*thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give [us] a future and a hope.*” [Jer 29:11] God is far above us, exceedingly great. And yet, in all His greatness, He still loves us, still thinks about us, still cares for us. He humbles Himself to look at us with a tender countenance, as we are promised: “*He will turn again, He will behold us with the tenderest affection;*” [Mic 7:18] and as it says in Psalms,

“The LORD is high above all nations, and His glory above the heavens. Who is like unto The LORD our God, who dwelleth on high, who humbleth Himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth!” [Psa 113:4-6]

In our verse today, we are reminded that “*The LORD made the heavens.*” The stars, galaxies,

nebulae, planets, asteroids, black holes, and if there be any other object or beauty in space, were all created “*by the breath of His mouth.*” [Psa 33:6] The same mouth which breathes on us and gives us of His Spirit, the same mouth which speaks love and forgiveness to us, that same great and powerful mouth which “*spake, and it was done; [which] commanded, and it stood fast,*” [Psa 33:9] is the same God which takes thought for us. When we gaze upon the stars, when we research and learn of the seemingly infinite distances and inescapably powerful testimony of the heavenly host, whose “*line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world,*” [Psa 19:4] truly we must come in feeble awe at God’s love. As David writes,

“*When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man that thou art mindful of Him? And the son of man, that thou visitest him?*” [Psa 8:3-4]

And again, “*LORD, what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him! Or the son of man, that thou makest account of him!*” [Psa 144:3] Though as The Holy Spirit says, “*man is like to vanity: his days are as a shadow that passeth away,*” [Psa 144:4] yet God, though He is eternal and strong, thinks upon us and loves us. Though we are feeble and weak, and though “*heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain [God],*” [2 Ch 6:18] yet He has chosen to

dwell in our hearts by faith. Though “*all nations before Him are as nothing; and they are counted to Him less than nothing, and vanity,*” [Isa 40:17] yet for those who put their trust in Christ, He thinks upon us and hears our prayers; and even further, though we are as “*a worm,*” [Job 25:6] yet God “*raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill; that He may set him with princes, even with the princes of His people.*” [Psa 113:7-8] Truly as it is written, “*what is man, that [The LORD] shouldest magnify him? And that [He] shouldest set [His] heart upon him?*” [Job 7:17] As believers in The Lord Jesus, we hold an incredibly special and unique place. Once lowly sinners, dead dogs, strangers, and foreigners, without hope and without God – yea, though we were altogether born in sin and dead in sin, yet The LORD thought kindly upon us and saved us: sought us out and drew us in, lifting us up by His very own blood out of the pit wherein is no water but only miry clay, and set us up upon The Rock. May God be praised for His lavish and abundant grace, mercy, and love, which He has showed us through His Son, Jesus Christ.

Day XXI: Behold the Man!

John 19:5– Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, behold the man!

On a certain occasion, when The LORD spoke to the prophet Zechariah in times past, He told him to “take silver and gold, and make crowns, and set them upon the head of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest.” [Zech 6:11] After that, The LORD instructed further,

“And speak unto him, saying, thus speaketh The LORD of Hosts, saying, behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of The LORD. Even he shall build the temple of The LORD; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.” [Zech 6:12-13]

Herein we see a prophecy of The Messiah, that is, “The Branch;” whose title Jeremiah also

prophetically uttered, writing by The LORD's inspiration,

“Behold, the days come, saith The LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is His name whereby He shall be called, The LORD Our Righteousness.” [Jer 23:5-6]

We can also see Zechariah's words as prophetic of the coming Messiah, Jesus, in that God says, “[he] shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne.” In regard to the kingly line, The LORD had said, “the sceptre shall not depart from Judah;” [Gen 49:10] and, “Judah prevailed above his brethren, and of him came the chief ruler;” [1 Ch 5:2] and again, “Judah is my lawgiver.” [Psa 60:7] Further, regarding the priesthood, it is written, “and thou shalt give the Levites unto Aaron and his sons: they are wholly given unto him out of the children of Israel;” and, “Aaron shall offer the Levites before The LORD for an offering of the children of Israel, that they may execute the service of The LORD.” [Num 3:9; 8:11; 18:6-7] We can see through these scriptures that the kings were to come from Judah and the priests from Levi: there was to be no mixing.

The office of a priest and that of a king where to be distinct and separate in Israel. And yet, The LORD speaks about Joshua, whose name in Greek is translated Jesus, as holding a ministry which includes both kingship and priesthood. And in this, we see a hinting from God of a future covenant, of a time yet future during Zechariah's life, where, like Melchizedek, a ministration would exist, where a man could be both king and priest. For "*Melchizedek [was] king of Salem...and he was the priest of The Most High God;*" [Gen 14:18] and unto Jesus it is written, "*thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.*" [Psa 110:4] And for this, we do praise God; for we require not only a priest, to interpose between us and God, but a king to lead us and defend us, to snatch us from satan's rule as it is written, "*[God] delivered us from the authority of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of The Son of His Love.*" [Col 1:13]

Therefore, seeing that Jesus is ultimately in mind when The LORD commands Zechariah to speak on His behalf, saying, "*behold the man,*" we are reminded of our verse for today, wherein Pilate said, "*behold the man!*" But whereas for Joshua, The LORD had told Zechariah, "*take silver and gold, and make crowns, and set them upon [his] head,*" Jesus stepped out from Pilate's chambers with "*a crown of thorns...and...a purple robe,*" [Jn 19:2] being in appearance as is written by Isaiah the prophet, "*His*

appearance was disfigured beyond that of a man, and the outline of His body beyond the sons of men." [Isa 52:14] As it related to the flesh, what only the eyes could see, Jesus was presented before the crowd smitten of God and disfigured: hardly what most men would deem fit to be a priest and a king, and hardly accurate to Pilate's description: "*the man.*" For Jesus, Isaiah writes, was so marred that He did not even appear to be a man, broken to pieces, beyond the appearance of a human being. And yet, though Jesus' flesh was under severe affliction, in spirit Jesus was marching unto victory, as Psalms gloriously adorns Him, saying, "*who is this King of Glory? The LORD strong and mighty, The LORD mighty in battle;*" [Psa 24:8] and as Hebrews says, "*for the joy that was set before Him [He] endured the cross.*" [Heb 12:2] Jesus stood there, as "*The BRANCH,*" and yet, "*they cried out, saying crucify Him, crucify Him.*" [Jn 19:6] Jesus stood there, King of kings and Lord of lords, triumphant and joyful: a courageous General marching into battle to cut the head off Goliath. He, our Prince and our Savior, God of all flesh, "*the man,*" and "*The Branch;*" and though He was rejected and discarded in exchange for a murderer, through this very act of sacrifice and love Jesus conquered mightily. For it is written that Jesus, "*having stripped the principalities and powers of their armaments...exposed them openly, leading them in [a] triumphal procession [because of His death on the cross].*" [Col 2:15] Through the cross, that very means by

which satan sought to slay Jesus, (but only indeed doing as was written, “*thou shalt bruise His heel.*” [Gen 3:15]), Jesus utterly decapitated all the powers of darkness, of sin, of death, and of the law, rising again from the dead in glorious victory.

May God be praised, for as it says in Zechariah, this is the man, Jesus Christ, who shall “*build the temple of The LORD; and...bear the glory [of it].*” [Zech 6:13] It is Jesus, our priest and king, who shall build the church, “*and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it;*” [Mt 16:18] and that, not because of our strength, (no, for “*by strength shall no man prevail.*” [1 Sam 2:9]), but because of Jesus Christ, the “*Chief Cornerstone.*” [Psa 118:22, Acts 4:11] And it is Jesus who shall get the glory of it all, for He is the victorious Prince and we are but His servants and followers, as Psalms cries out, “*not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth’s sake.*” [Psa 115:1] Yes, may we ever behold Jesus, the man who bore our sins upon the tree. May we behold the beaten and bloodied man upon the cross; may we see Him, our King in battle, slaying the dragon and slaying our sins. May we behold the man who died for our rebellion, who bore the brunt of God’s wrath in our place so that we might live. May we behold The One who bears all the glory and fall at His feet in submission.

Day XXII: Sweet Comfort in Our Failure

John 13:38-14:1 – Jesus answered him, wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, the cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice. Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

When Jesus said, “*whither I go, ye cannot come,*” [Jn 13:33] Peter pressed the matter, asking Jesus where He was going – after all, could there be a place which Jesus could venture to which Peter could not also? Or so Peter thought. Jesus said again, “*whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards.*” [Jn 13:36] To this, “*Peter said...Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake.*” [Jn 13:37] Yes, even more specifically, Peter added, “*though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.*” [Mt 26:33] And if Peter’s obstinacy against Jesus’ clear revelation was not brazen enough, Luke adds that “*he said unto Him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death.*” [Lk 22:33] In this moment, Peter failed to take heed to that which Paul would later write, “*if a man think himself to be something, when he*

is nothing, he deceiveth himself;" [Gal 6:3] and, "wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." [1 Cor 10:12] For Peter looked at his brethren and then upon himself, and thought himself to be better and stronger; further, Peter saw in himself no weakness, boasting of his ability to drink that cup which Jesus was wont to drink, and thus, in this fulfilled the Proverb, "*pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.*" [Prov 16:18]

When we, like Peter, forget that even David who was "a mighty man," [2 Sam 17:10] yes, a "mighty valiant man," [1 Sam 16:18] said, "[The LORD] delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them which hated me: **for they were too strong for me,**" [Psa 18:17] then we too shall fall. For we must all come to the recognition that we are weak; that, "*there is no king saved by the multitude of an host: a mighty man is not delivered by much strength;*" [Psa 33:16] and that if we experience any victory, we might surely say as the saints of old,

"For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them: but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favor unto them." [Psa 44:3]

And again,

“For I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me. But thou hast saved us from our enemies, and hast put them to shame that hated us.” [Psa 44:6-7]

Truly, if I have any strength or power, it has come from God; if any victory, surely The LORD has wrought it; if any courage, His Spirit has prompted me and lifted me up in heart and mind. But on that last Passover night, Simon Peter was full of pride, thinking himself to be as Simon the Sorcerer did, “*some great one*,” [Acts 8:9] able to handle whatever may come, a true hero among saints. But though Peter’s sin was grievous, and he had yet further to plunge into the valley of humiliation, yet we must recognize that we are no better, and have sinned in like manner to Peter, for we are under the same passions and flesh. But even though these things took place, and even further, that Jesus said to him, “*Simon, Simon, behold, satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat*,” [Lk 22:31] yet Jesus’ attitude toward Peter was that of love, promise, and hope. For immediately after this word Jesus said, mercifully planting hope, consolation, and calling into Peter’s heart even before his fall, “*but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren*.” [Lk 22:32] And again, even after saying the stark truth, “*verily, verily, I say unto thee, the cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice*,” [Jn 13:38] yet Jesus went on to say

directly to Peter, *“let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.”* [Jn 14:1]

What a precious word from Jesus, that though Peter was doomed to fail, being full of pride and weak in the flesh, yet Jesus said tenderly one of the greatest New Testament promises in response,

“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many dwelling-places: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And 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.” [Jn 14:1-3]

When we are confronted with our inability and lack, when we see how we fail our Lord so often, may we take courage in Jesus’ words to Peter, which were in the same context. Have you failed? Have you fallen? Jesus would say to you as He did to Peter, *“let not your heart be troubled.”* If we have seen our wrong, if we, like those in Nehemiah’s day, *“wept, when they heard the words of the law,”* [Neh 8:9] having understood their sin, then let us take heart to those blessed words, *“this day is holy unto The LORD your God; mourn not, nor weep...neither be ye sorry; for the joy of The LORD is your strength.”* [Neh 8:9, 10] Let us be encouraged that Jesus is not looking upon us with a scowl; for immediately after

revealing to Peter that he would betray and deny Himself, He gave him promise of restoration as well as a calling, and He directed his eyes and heart to eternity and to God's love. And in addition to that, Jesus reminded Peter, as He also reminds us with these words, that no matter our failures, Jesus yet desires to be with us in eternity, for we are His bride and "*his banner over [us is] love.*" [Songs 2:4] And regardless of our sins in this present life, because of Christ's blood, God's disposition toward us, yes, and Jesus' too, is ever-loving and full of zeal, so that it is true what is written,

*"The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is
mighty; He will save, He will rejoice over thee
with joy; He will rest in His love, He will joy
over thee with singing."* [Zeph 3:17]

Let us be reminded that as Peter failed, so too shall we. But as it says, "*a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again.*" [Prov 24:16] We can take great comfort in our Lord's words, which directly followed that revelation to Peter of his imminent failure, "*let not your heart be troubled.*" Praise God, for through Jesus we can have peace. Let us stay ourselves ever on His words, for we are promised, "*thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.*" [Isa 26:3]

Day XXIII: Abiding in True Shalom

Micah 2:10– Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest: because it is polluted, it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction.

The word peace in Hebrew is shalom (שָׁלוֹם). In English, the word peace means, “*in a general sense, a state of quiet or tranquility; freedom from disturbance or agitation...as from fear, terror, anger, anxiety, or the like.*” [Webster] However, the Hebrew word for peace goes much deeper than quietness and lack of agitation; the word means healthy, sound, secure, tranquil, whole, safe, concord, friendship. It is a word which means to be whole, to be unbroken, to be safe. And it is something which only The LORD can give, which can only be truly enjoyed in His Son, Jesus Christ, who said,

“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” [Jn 14:27]

The LORD is such, His word and His character being so lovely and good in all respects, that He who cannot lie promises us,

“Thou wilt keep him in perfect shalom, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in The LORD for ever: for in The LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength.” [Isa 26:3-4]

The unbroken quietness of soul which our God promises us comes when we set our minds fixedly upon Him: upon who He is and what He has done. It comes when we set our gaze to the face of Jesus and meditate upon those things which “*are true...honest...just...pure...lovely...of good report,*” and of those things which are virtuous and worthy of praise. [Phil 4:8] When we steady our minds wholeheartedly upon the words of Jesus, we can rise above the agitations of life just as Peter did when he “*walked on the water, to go to Jesus;*” but as it was with Peter, so too it shall be with us if we, instead of gazing upon Jesus and His word, begin to take heed to the “*strong wind,*” thus becoming “*afraid, and [begin] to sink.*” [Mt 14:29-30]

Truly, our peace comes with God and from His Son Jesus; as we are promised, “*The LORD will bless His people with peace.*” [Psa 29:11] And again, The LORD promises to make “*an everlasting covenant with [us],*” which is “*a covenant of peace.*” [Ezek 37:26] The wholeness, the security, the tranquility of heart, mind, and soul, which is offered to us, comes through Christ, and is found only in that glorious New Covenant, written in Jesus’ blood: the

everlasting covenant of peace. For speaking of Christ Jesus, it says, "*He is our peace,*" [Eph 2:14] and again, "*the discipline [that brought us] peace [was] upon him.*" [Isa 53:5] And speaking of the security of this peace we most blessedly read from God's lips and heart,

"The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith The LORD that hath mercy on thee." [Isa 54:10]

So then, in Christ Jesus there is peace; in His covenant alone, washed in His atoning blood, there is peace; in a mind which is fixed upon Him, there is peace. But when we depart from Jesus, we depart from peace: for He is "*The Prince of Peace,*" [Isa 9:6] and "*the God of Peace.*" [Rom 15:33] There is no shalom apart from Him, for we "*are complete in Him,*" [Col 2:10] and that unbrokenness which The Lord's shalom promises cannot be obtained from any other source. In truth, there is a peace which the world offers, but it cannot bring shalom; for it is written, "*there is no shalom, saith The LORD, unto the wicked;*" and again, "*who hath hardened himself against Him, and hath shalom?*" [Isa 48:22, Job 9:4] The peace which God offers to us, that glorious rest and security which we experience as we dwell in Him and upon Him, is as Jesus said, "*not as the world giveth.*" The world gives peace through a lack of

difficulty or through ease, but The Lord gives peace which is “*surpassing all understanding.*” [Phil 4:7]

If we have found ourselves lacking peace, if we have felt agitated, troubled, at unrest, discouraged, up-in-the-air, or any other similar thing, let us not be surprised, for “[The LORD] *only is [our] Rock and [our] Salvation,*” [Psa 62:2] and not another. Therefore, let us not look at other things or people for rest, for they shall surely disappoint. But The LORD will never disappoint; those who wait upon Christ Jesus and cling to Him, who believe in Him, shall not ever be ashamed; “*for the scripture saith, whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed.*” [Rom 10:11]

Therefore, as the scripture for today urges, “*arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest.*” [Mic 2:10] Arise from that which will not give you the lasting and full rest of God; cease today, yes, cease in this very moment as you read these words, from that which does not promise everlasting rest. Christ alone possesses what we need; Jesus our Savior, God’s Only Son, gives rest, gives shalom. Again, “*arise ye, and depart [from the world, from the flesh, from any other source than Christ]; for this is not your rest.*” Let us not look to that which is of the world, that which we can see and touch and feel; for, “*the things which are seen are temporary; but the things which are not seen are eternal.*” [2 Cor 4:18] Depart from those things of which God says, “*they shall perish...and they shall all wax old as doth a garment,*” [Heb 1:11] for it is Christ

alone, God alone, who “*remainest*,” and of whom it is written, “*thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail*.” [Heb 1:11, 12] Depart from those tangible things upon this earth, which are so fleeting and weak that Christ shall “*as [easily as] a vesture...fold them up, and they shall be changed*,” [Heb 1:12] and rest instead upon the Eternal One, He who intends to one day fold them up and create a new thing. Yes further, depart from man, of whom it is written, “*vain is the help of man*,” and, “*put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help*,” [Psa 60:11; 146:3] and instead, rest yourself upon the bosom of Christ, The Son of Man, in whom there is much help. Our rest is not in this world nor anything in it, but in Christ alone, for “*here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come*.” [Heb 13:14] Arise therefore and depart; cease to look unto those things which were never promised to give you that glorious shalom of God, and look to Christ instead; do as it says, “*let us labor therefore to enter into that rest*,” into that “*sabbath rest*” which is Christ our Lord. [Heb 4:9, 11]

Day XXIV: The Breastplate of Christ's Love

Exodus 28:29 – And 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.

When The LORD gave commandment to Moses concerning the tabernacle and its effects, which were a “*shadow of heavenly things*,” (for as it says, “*Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle...‘make all things according to the pattern shewed thee in the mount.*” [Heb 8:5]), He said regarding the breastplate, “*thou shalt make the breastplate of judgment with cunning work...of gold, of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, and of fine twined linen.*” [Ex 28:15] This article was to be worn by the high priest. It was ornate and beautiful, containing twelve gems, as The LORD said, “*the stones shall be with the names of the children of Israel, twelve, according to their names, like the engravings of a signet.*” [Ex 28:21]

If the law was indeed a shadow of that which was and is heavenly and eternal, (as Hebrews said, “[a]

shadow of heavenly things”), then what was the figure upon which the light was cast? The Holy Spirit shows us through Paul’s writings that the figure was and is Jesus Christ, as he wrote, “[*these things*] are a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ.” [Col 2:17] If there is anything to be gleaned of the law and its ordered vessels, garments, and other like-things, it is that which pictures and points to Jesus Christ; for Paul said, “*but the body is of Christ.*” Therefore, when we see the description of the breastplate, for example, we should think to ourselves: what does this show us of Jesus Christ? For in the New Covenant, Jesus is our high priest, as it says,

“Christ [*has*] become 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.” [Heb 9:11]

Just as God tells us regarding the blood, “*it was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these,*” [Heb 9:23] so too the concept holds true for the high priest’s garments. “*The heavenly thing*” – in this case Jesus Christ – must be “*better*” than that which was on earth, “*the patterns of things in heaven,*” that is, the high priestly garments. Therefore, let us read again the verse for today,

“And 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.” [Ex 28:29]

The thought upon which we shall expound is simple. It does not take much understanding to hold it, but it may take a thousand understandings to fully plunge its depth and appreciate its beauty. It is this: that just as Aaron, the high priest, was to “bear the names of the children of Israel...upon his heart,” (for, “the stones [upon the breastplate] shall be with the names of the children of Israel, twelve”), so too Jesus Christ our High Priest bears our names upon His heart. May Jesus be ever praised even for this simple truth, for as one begins to meditate upon it, it becomes ever sweeter. For we must also notice the name of this particular piece of clothing: “*the breastplate of judgment.*” The breastplate that Jesus wears as it were, is that of judgment: it is that of the judgment He bore for our sakes, that we might be righteous and don in our priestly garb, “*the breastplate of righteousness.*” [Eph 6:14] And in that breastplate is all of our names. The Lord does not just bear our judgment in general, but individually; even as Paul said, “*I live by the faith of The Son of God, who loved **me**, and gave Himself for **me**.*” [Gal 2:20] It was for each of us individually that Jesus died, and as He performs His priestly duties in the heavenlies,

He bears our names with love and joy upon His heart. Jesus has not forgotten what He has done, nor has He forgotten us, as it is written,

“Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me.” [Isa 49:15-16]

Yes, even more thoroughly and lovingly than a nursing mother, Jesus remembers us, knows us, and sees us. He says through the prophet, *“I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands,”* and truly, this word from our Lord is not just symbolic but literal: for Jesus said to Thomas, *“reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands;”* [Jn 20:27] and John records, *“I beheld, and, lo...[there] stood a Lamb as it had been slain.”* [Rev 5:6] The scars upon Jesus’ hands, which He received when *“He was pierced for our transgressions,”* [Isa 53:5] remain upon His body. And surely, as He sits at God’s right hand, exalted and high, His scars remind Him of the pains He bore for our sakes. But praise be to God that His wounds do not stir up regret, bitterness, nor wrath, but only love, for the cross was, and still is, *“the joy being set before Him.”* [Heb 12:2] And again, we have great confidence that Jesus shall accept us with grace and love because, speaking of time to come, The LORD says, *“He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will*

rest in His love, He will joy over thee with singing.”
[Zeph 3:17]

It is a great thing that Jesus knows us and that we are upon His heart. And let us see also, that this knowledge of us is not general but specific. For if The LORD “*calleth [all the heavenly host] by names by the greatness of His might,*” [Isa 40:26] yes, if our great God “*telleth the number of the stars...[and] calleth them all by their names,*” [Psa 147:4] whose estimated number is two-hundred trillion billion, then surely He can keep our names too. But again, it is not just that The Lord Jesus knows our names: no, the love and mercy of God goes far beyond mere acquaintance – He *bears* our names upon His heart specifically and individually. The very heart of God, the heart of The Savior, The Redeemer, our Glorious High Priest, Jesus Christ – He personally bears each of our names upon His heart. And so, we conclude, that as Jesus “*walketh in the midst of the seven golden lampstands,*” [Rev 2:1] that is, in the church’s midst, He bears our names upon His heart, thinking and meditating upon us, even as it says, “*The Lord thinketh upon me.*” [Psa 40:17] May God therefore be praised continually for His great love and tender heart; may He be lauded and thanked for His zeal toward us, His steadfast love: for He bears our names upon His heart.

Day XXV: The Lord's Invitation

Luke 14:23 – And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.

In a certain place, where Jesus “*marked how they [which were bidden to a certain event] chose out the chief rooms,*” [Lk 14:7] He said to them,

“When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him...but when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room...for whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.” [Lk 14:8, 10, 11]

The heart of the issue Jesus was putting forth was one which is common to the Scriptures: humility. That we are not to exalt ourselves before or above others, but as it is written, “*let nothing be done through carnal ambition or baseless pride; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.*” [Phil 2:3] It is not just that we ought to take the lowest room, the lowest seat, or the basest thing, but notice Jesus' words again, “*lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden.*” The foundation for this type of humility is

esteeming others better than oneself. Not just to pick out baser and more lowly things, but doing so because you see others as more deserving, as better, as higher than yourself, and thus are not having your manner of living in a proud, self-centered, and entitled manner. When Jesus says, *“whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted,”* He brings to our remembrance what is also written, *“before destruction the heart of man is haughty, and before honor is humility;”* [Prov 15:33] and, *“a man’s pride shall bring him low;”* [Prov 29:23] and again, *“the lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down.”* [Isa 2:11] And let us again be careful to notice: the act of humility Jesus is encouraging and commanding must be rooted in this recognition and belief: others are better than ourselves, for if we exalt ourselves to high positions out of a self-deserving spirit, no doubt we shall be abased.

Furthermore, Jesus spoke after this, now to those who held the event and who *“bade Him,”* saying,

“When thou makest a dinner or supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbors; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou

shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.” [Lk 14:12-14]

Again, there is a focus on humility. Do not invite and bless those, Jesus says, who can repay you; do not invite those rich friends, brethren, neighbors, etc., who will likely render a due benefit back to you. Rather, invite those who cannot repay, those from whom you can receive nor hope to receive any recompense or benefit, even as Jesus formerly spoke, “*if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? For sinners also do even the same...But...lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great.*” [Lk 6:34, 35] Those who are proud will not invite those they perceive as lower than themselves, nor those who cannot render them some pleasure or benefit. The world around us touts this as a spectacular virtue of self-love and self-respect, but God condemns it as evil and bitter, a selfish and proud attitude that is deserving not of praise but of the highest rebuke. Those who only ever do good to those who can repay, and those who choose the best for themselves, are proud, being deceived.

The ultimate example of these things, as all good characteristics and qualities, are found in Jesus Christ and our Heavenly Father. And to that effect, Jesus speaks next in a parable, saying after the first two teachings, “*a certain man made a great supper, and bade many,*” [Lk 14:16] and whereas those who were

first invited “*began to make excuse,*” [Lk 14:18] and neglected the invite, Jesus says,

“Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.” [Lk 14:21-23]

In the parable, the master of the house is God. The various guests invited are us; and whereas some accepted and some rejected, we remember that some accept The Lord’s invitation of salvation and some do not, for the great supper represents the kingdom of heaven, by which men may partake if they are saved. Let us therefore take heart and see the glory of God in that, speaking of the destitute, the lowly, the sinners, the poor, and the like, Jesus says, “*the lord said...compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.*” The word “*compel*” means, “*to drive or urge with force...to constrain; to oblige...*” [Webster] Herein we may find great encouragement and “*everlasting consolation.*” [2 Th 2:16] For even though The LORD is “*a Great King,*” [Mal 1:14] being “*King of kings, and Lord of lords,*” [Rev 19:16] yet He has humbled Himself to invite us, those who are poor, blind, maimed, destitute, and sinners.

Though He bears all riches and all pleasures in heaven, though His palace is ten thousand times as decorated as any on earth, He invites us still; and He does not just invite us, but compels us. The Lord, in His great love for us and desire for fellowship, urges us with force: “*now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation[!]*” and, “*come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;*” and once more, “*turn unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.*” [2 Cor 6:2, Mt 11:28, Isa 45:22] Our great God has not just casually invited us into His home, to eat of His bread and drink of His wine, to enrich our souls with the pleasures of His presence and of His Son’s graces, but He has compelled us, urged us!

Is there any king upon earth who has urged such lowly beggars to rise up to such heights? Hardly! But our Great King, our loving God, our Father, and His Son Jesus Christ, have urged us with force, be ye saved! And praise God that He has done so with such force; for had He not, we might be today sitting in hell, in the darkest and lowest pit. But thanks be to God, yes a thousand thanks be to His precious Name, that He has, as it says, “*delivered [our] soul from the lowest hell;*” and, “*by the blood of [Christ’s] covenant [He has] sent [us] forth...out of the pit wherein is no water.*” [Psa 86:13, Zech 9:11]

Let us see too that we cannot repay The Lord for what He has done, nor does He require us to. As Jesus commanded we ought to do, so He does Himself, *“but when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee...”* [Lk 14:13-14] Jesus and The Father have invited us free of charge; for we are the blind, the maimed, the poor, and the lame. We are those who cannot repay. We have nothing to give, for we are poor, as Christ says, *“blessed are the poor in spirit.”* [Mt 5:3] But God has not required anything back from us, but our love and our fellowship. We have not been called unto salvation and given such an offer because we could do anything for God or repay Him any amount; no, but He has saved us out of love, because He is gracious and merciful. As it is written, *“not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us;”* [Titus 3:5] and, *“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.”* [Eph 2:8-9] We are as Mephibosheth who though He was *“lame on both his feet,”* [2 Sam 9:13] yet David sought to *“shew the kindness of God unto him,”* [2 Sam 9:3] by inviting him into his home, saying, *“thou shalt eat bread at my table continually.”* [2 Sam 9:7] For again, as it is written,

*“He delighteth not in the strength of the horse:
He taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man. The*

*LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear Him,
in those that hope in His mercy.” [Psa 147:10-
11]*

May we rest in God’s love for us, who has invited us to the feast without expectation of repayment. Our God is abundant in His mercy and grace, having compelled us through His love, having drawn us into His fellowship, having called us unto eternal life. “*What shall [we] render unto The LORD for all His benefits toward [us]? [Let us] take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of The LORD.*” [Psa 116:12-13]

Day XXVI: Expecting God's Mercy & Restoration

Joel 2:25 – And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you.

Three times we are told that God, “*the God of [our] mercy,*” whose “*mercy endureth for ever,*” [Psa 59:10; 136:2] does not take any pleasure in those that die. In Ezekiel He says,

“As I live, saith The Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel!” [Ezek 33:11]

Our merciful Father is “*not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*” [2 Pe 3:9] The blood of His Son was not shed in vain, but He desires to receive the most benefit from such a grand sacrifice, from His “*indescribable gift.*” [2 Cor 9:15] This truth reveals to us the loving and merciful character of our God; as it is written, “*for thou, Lord, art...plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee;*” [Psa 86:5] and, “*He doth not afflict*

from His heart nor grieve the children of men.” [Lam 3:33] The LORD “*delighteth in mercy,*” [Mic 7:18] as we are also told, “*mercy exults over judgment.*” [Jam 2:13] This trait of God is everlasting, as God has said; and it is that mercy and compassion which also provoke God to offer us restoration and healing. In Lamentations, we read again,

“For The Lord will not cast off for ever: but though He cause grief, yet will He have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies.” [Lam 3:31-32]

If The LORD has cast off, if The LORD has hidden Himself, exercised judgment or anger, or any other such thing, He will not retain His anger forever. Even if that anger was spurred on by our sin: for He promises us, “*He retaineth not His anger for ever, because He delighteth in mercy;*” and, “*He will turn again, He will have compassion upon us...*” [Mic 7:18-19] If our God has caused pain in our lives, He must also cause comfort. If He has torn, He must heal; if His hand of anger has seemed to lay heavy upon us, it must be soon complimented with His mercy, grace, and the light of His countenance. It is not possible that we, as God’s saints, redeemed by Christ Jesus, should suffer God’s judgment for any great length of time without receiving mercy, healing, or restoration, for God is “*the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation...*” [2 Cor 1:3-4] And we are promised, “*as the sufferings of*

Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ." [2 Cor 1:5] The LORD, who is "[The God] that comforteth those that are cast down," has said, "I, even I, am He that comforteth you;" and, "as one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you..." [2 Cor 7:6, Isa 51:12; 66:13]

It is a great encouragement indeed that our God is such. That even in our deepest self-inflicted pains, even in our punishments from God, if we truly be His, we can confidently say: "*The LORD raiseth them that are bowed down: The LORD loveth the righteous.*" [Psa 146:8] Yes, The LORD loves us and cares for us and will raise us up; we who dwell in Zion, in the church, are the beloved of The Lord's soul, and "*The LORD loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.*" [Psa 87:2] Ah, so as David said, "*blessed be my Rock; and exalted be the God of the Rock of my Salvation,*" [2 Sam 22:47] for He is good, and His mercy endures forever. For even if The LORD were to send a great army among us and destroy us, as we see in our verse for today, He plans to restore. As The LORD says through Joel,

"And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you." [Joel 2:25]

Let us not see our God as an angry man, unwilling to receive us; but let us see Him as He truly is, as

The Father, who when he saw his repentant son “yet a great way off...had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him over and over.” [Lk 15:20] Let us say as Israel shall one day, “come, and let us return unto The LORD: for He hath torn, and He will heal us; He hath smitten, and He will bind us up.” [Hos 6:1] If we find ourselves in a grievous state, enduring God’s discipline or judgment, may it not push us further from Him, but draw us close; may we be confident in His love and care, and draw near to Him to receive comfort and restoration. And if we have not sinned, but are experiencing affliction and distress, let us likewise come with boldness to His gracious throne: for if God is so willing to impart mercy to those who have wronged Him, how much more so to those who have not?

Therefore, dear reader, dear brother, if you have stumbled; if you have sinned; if you have grieved The Holy Spirit; if you have gone astray; if you have failed God – or if you have merely fallen into despondence or despair, anxiety or sorrow: then, dear Christian, come again to your God, for He is ever compassionate, and “His merciful kindness is great towards us.” [Psa 117:2] In Christ we have been granted “the sure mercies of David,” [Isa 55:3, Acts 13:34] and by Jesus’ standing in heaven on our behalf, by His great mediation and intercession for us, His brethren, we may find at God’s foot,

abundant mercy, grace, life, peace, and all good things.

Day XXVII: Night and Day

Matthew 12:11-12 – And He said unto them, what man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days.

When Jesus encountered a man with a withered hand on the sabbath day in a certain synagogue, He asked the Jews which were there, “*is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? To save life, or to kill?*” [Mk 3:4] Surely to us, it seems like a simple question, but the Jews which were present “*held their peace,*” and, “*when He had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, He saith unto the man, stretch forth thine hand.*” [Mk 3:4-5] We can see here that the sabbath day had become something which it was not intended, for it prevented the Jews from loving their neighbor.

Jesus spoke in another place, saying, “*the sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath.*” [Mk 2:27] The sabbath day, which was “*a shadow of things to come,*” [Col 2:17] was not made so man could serve

it as a master, but it was made for the benefit of man. It was never intended by God, it being a picture of Christ, (for, “*there remaineth therefore a sabbath rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into His rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from His.*” [Heb 4:9-10]), to be a burden upon man. It was intended, apart from pointing to Jesus, for practical rest. And so, the obvious answer to Jesus’ question, “*is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days,*” is yes. As Jesus says in our verse for today, “*wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days.*” Think of the hypocrisy of God, if it were not. Shall we forbear from helping another, from saving a life, from representing God’s character, merely because that good work set before us falls upon a certain day of the week? Hardly, but we may do good, and we may exhibit ourselves as God’s ministers each day of the week, even as God is well pleased to help us when we require it.

Although The LORD has told us, “*remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy...in it thou shalt not do any work,*” [Ex 20:8, 10] yet surely we know that God works on the sabbath. In that sense, we understand that The LORD does not cease working on the sabbath, for if He did all things would fail. What chaos might ensue if even for a moment God failed to uphold us or was not ready to hear our calls upon the sabbath, especially since in the New Covenant “*one man esteemeth one day above another:*

another esteemeth every day alike,” [Rom 14:5] and we are also told, “let no man therefore judge you...[regarding] the sabbath days.” [Col 2:16] And again, we can see that all of The LORD’s works are sanctioned for the sabbath, for Jesus says, “it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days,” and it is written, “thou art good, and doest good.” [Psa 119:68] All of God’s works are good; it is not possible for Him to cease from doing good, for He is good and “good to all;” [Psa 145:9] and again, He, the One who “hast wrought all our works in us,” is ensuring that “all things are working together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.” [Isa 26:12, Rom 8:28]

Therefore, we can take heart, for The Lord does not rest upon the sabbath day; The Lord does not take a day off. Yes, even further, He does not grow weary nor tired: for it is written, “*The Everlasting God, The LORD, The Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary.*” [Isa 40:28] Our Father does not need a day off, nor does He take one, but continually and always, He faithfully upholds us, helps us, strengthens us, and works in our lives. But we can enjoy this even further, for not only does God not take a day off, He does not take even one night off. For it is written, “*He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.*” [Psa 121:4] This is a very good thing: for we are in constant need of God’s oversight. Praise God that “*He that keepeth*

thee will not slumber;” [Psa 121:3] His watchful and loving eye is always upon us, as He says, “*behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me.*” [Isa 49:16]

If we, as The Lord’s sheep, have fallen into a ditch as it were, we do not need to wait for The Lord, as if He were busy, sleeping, or too tired. When the evil prophets of Baal, upon Mount Carmel, cried out to their God, “*there was no voice, nor any that answered,*” and Elijah mocked, saying, “*cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is peeing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked.*” [1 Ki 18:26, 27] Our God is not so, but as it says, “*I sought The LORD, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.*” [Psa 34:4]

Praise be to God that we have our help in God, the Creator, The One who never sleeps nor takes a day off. Wherever we are and whenever we are, we can go to Him. But let us see another truth too: Jesus Christ, our High Priest is eternally interceding for us. It is well enough that God does not sleep nor rest; but without Christ, we would not be able to take advantage of such things. Truly, it is a wonderful attribute of our God that He is infinitely powerful, but what brings this so close and tender to our hearts, is that such care is accessible through Jesus, and that continually. For we read,

“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. For such an high priest is fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.” [Heb 7:25-26]

Our Priest and Mediator, Jesus, continually presents us before God: night and day. And God is continually open to His intercessions, prayers, and petitions on our behalf. If you have felt ignored, if you have felt overlooked, if you have felt uncared for: dear brother, remember that our God never sleeps, and His love always rests over you as a banner, and His Spirit upon you as an oil. Our help comes from the one who never slumbers nor sleeps; our strength is founded in He who never grows tired.

Day XXVIII: The Joyful Dance of Our True Groom

Zephaniah 3:17 – The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; He will run to support thee, He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love, He will dance and leap for joy over thee with a shout for joy.

By God's grace we have been saved; through the blood of Jesus, and our faith therein, we have been released from all debt to God, from all condemnation to sin, from all liability to the law. We have been "*freed from sin,*" and "*[we] are [no longer] under the law, but under grace.*" [Rom 6:7, 14] As it is also written,

"But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, [we] have [our] fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."
[Rom 6:22-23]

One of the glorious and ripe fruits of this salvation, of this free and full pardon we have received from The Lord, is our standing with God. For we no

longer stand as “enemies;” [Rom 5:10] no longer those destined to “perish” as it says: for, “*the enemies of The LORD shall be as the fat of lambs: they shall consume; into smoke they shall consume away.*” [Psa 37:20] No longer do we stand in trembling terror at God’s soon return; no longer shall we, as “*that Wicked one*” will, be destined to be “*destroy[ed] with the brightness of [Jesus’] coming.*” [2 Th 2:8] No, but now in Christ Jesus we stand accepted; for we are promised, “*He hath made us to be highly favored in the Beloved [Son].*” [Eph 1:6] Through Jesus we now have peace and stand accepted and loved in grace. Romans says,

“*Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and boast in [the] hope of the glory of God.*” [Rom 5:1-2]

Whereas we were formerly rejected by God, enemies of His, being trapped in “*the snare of the devil,*” who had “*taken [us] captive...at his will,*” [2 Tim 2:26] being those who “*walked...according to the prince of the power of the air...[being] by nature the children of wrath,*” [Eph 2:2-3] yet now in Christ we stand friends of God, brothers of Christ, adopted children. And as such, we can freely approach God through Jesus our High Priest; as it is written,

“Having therefore, brethren, freedom to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus...and having an High Priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.” [Heb 10:19, 21-22]

Without fear, without timidity, we can approach God, and that because of Jesus’ atoning sacrifice for us and our continued belief therein. But it is not just presently that we can approach God without fear, drawing near to *“the throne of grace,”* with *“boldness and access with confidence”* [Heb 4:16, Eph 3:12] – we shall also approach God freely and without fear on the day of judgment. For it has been written for our encouragement and consolation,

“Herein has our love been completed, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as [Jesus] is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but complete love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.” [1 Jn 4:17-18]

Boldness means, “courage; bravery...fearlessness...freedom from timidity; liberty...confidence...freedom from bashfulness.” [Webster] In this context, where The Spirit said, “we

may have boldness in the day of judgment,” the word boldness means “*fearlessness...freedom from timidity...freedom from bashfulness.*” Timidity means, “*fearfulness; [lack] of courage or boldness to face danger;*” and bashfulness means, “*excessive or extreme modesty...*” [Webster] What a consolation indeed that “*we may have boldness in the day of judgment.*” On that day, when we stand before God Almighty, the Lord of lords and King of the Universe; on that day when we stand before the Great I Am, before The Alpha and Omega, before The Creator and The Sustainer of all things: yes, on that day, we as mere men shall “*have boldness.*” We shall not be lacking bravery or courage; we shall not be fearful, neither shall we be extremely modest. No, but because of Jesus Christ, who has made us “*a sweet savor unto God,*” [2 Cor 2:15] we shall stand before God on that day in triumphant grace; we shall stand before our Dear Father, our Loving Brother, as kings and priests, as children accepted and beloved, prized and glorified.

Whereas most may think of the day of judgment as something to be feared, through Christ Jesus our Lord, who has “*delivered us from the wrath to come,*” [1 Th 1:10] we can look forward with anticipation. For Jesus’ coming is unto us even as it says, “*that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the Great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.*” [Titus 2:13] But it is not just us who look forward to this day with joy; Jesus our

Groom and Lord does as well! For our verse for today promises,

“The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; He will run to support thee, He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love, He will dance and leap for joy over thee with a shout for joy.” [Zeph 3:17]

Our Bridegroom, Jesus Christ, very King over all, (for, *“thy Maker is thine husband; The LORD of Hosts is His name.”* [Isa 54:5]), He shall *“rejoice over [each of us individually] with joy; [yes], He will rest in His love [for us], [and] He [will even] dance and leap for joy over [each of us individually] with a shout for joy.”* What an incredible promise to behold! Does it not give you much joy, dear brother, dear sister, to know that your Lord so desires you? As we also read in Songs, *“I am my Beloved’s, and His desire is toward me.”* [Songs 7:10] Jesus desires us, loves us, wants us; yes, even further, Jesus longs to see us, to be united with us in heavenly glory; as He prayed earnestly to His Father,

“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.” [Jn 17:24]

And again, *“so shall the King greatly desire thy beauty: for He is thy Lord; and worship thou Him.”* [Psa 45:11]

May we ever be comforted and pleased to meditate on this truth: Jesus longs after us. He desires us. For we are His bride, His inheritance, and His brethren. We are those whom He, “*in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,*” thought it “*all wisdom and prudence*” to shed His precious blood for us and save us. [Col 2:3, Eph 1:8] And now, Jesus patiently and expectantly awaits us in heaven, not for our ruin nor for our condemnation, but that He might, as it says, “*rejoice over [us]...[and] dance and leap for joy over [us] with a shout for joy.*” So then, let us put on “*for an helmet, the hope of salvation,*” [1 Th 5:8] and patiently wait for “*the marriage of The Lamb,*” [Rev 19:7] which is soon to come; let us take great courage, for “*the righteous hath hope in his death,*” [Prov 14:32] – we have a great hope and a great day awaiting beyond these “*things which are seen [and which] are temporary,*” [2 Cor 4:18] a great day wherein Jesus our Lord shall rejoice and exult and dance over us in all His glory, and “*we shall be ever with The Lord.*” [1 Th 4:17]

Day XXIX: Light in the Darkness, Freedom in the Prison

Isaiah 49:6, 8-9 – It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth....I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages; that thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves...

In one of His most well-known sermons, perhaps the most famous, often called the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, regarding us, His disciples, “*ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.*” [Mt 5:14] As Christians in whom God dwells – but not just in whom He dwells, but through whom He now lives, (even as Luke wrote of “*all that Jesus **began** both to do and teach,*” but did not stop, for “*after [He was taken up]...He through The Holy Spirit had given commandments unto the apostles,*” and to us. [Acts 1:1-2]) – yes, as men and women in

whom The God of Eternity dwells, we are the light of the world. What an awesome and incredible thing that He whom “*the heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain,*” would come to dwell in our hearts, seeking a “*place of...rest,*” making us a source of His light. [1 Ki 8:27, Isa 66:1-2] And because He has come to make our hearts His dwelling place, He therefore lives in and through us; and so, Jesus can rightly say, “*ye are the light of the world,*” for truly it is Christ Jesus who is the Light: as He said, “*I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.*” [Jn 8:12]

It is only because Jesus is “*the light of the world*” that His saints can also be called lights of the world. And just as Jesus said, “*neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house,*” [Mt 5:15] so too we are to allow Christ, The True Light, to shine and live through us. For again, as we are admonished and encouraged,

“*Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. **For** it is God who is working in you both to design and to do of His good pleasure. [Therefore], do all things without murmurings and disputings: that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding*

forth [Jesus], The Word of Life..." [Phil 2:12-16]

Because The Lord lives in us, we are obligated to allow Him to live out of us: to be lights, as He was a light. But what reveals to us here the awesome glory of God, is the vessel. For, "*we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.*" [2 Cor 4:7] God is so powerful; the light and life of Jesus Christ is so magnificent and awesome, (for, "*the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness could not overcome it.*" [Jn 1:5]), that He can even use vessels so earthy, so dirty, so impure, so inefficient, so unworthy, as ours. A thousand praises to God who chooses to live through us and use us. Isaiah speaks of this also, when The LORD says regarding Christ, The Messiah,

"And He said, it is a light thing that thou shouldest be my Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth." [Isa 49:6]

In the immediate context, The LORD speaks directly to His Righteous Servant, who is Jesus, The Christ. However, reading in Acts, it says,

"Then Paul and Barnabas said...lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath The Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the

Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.” [Acts 13:46-47]

That which was commissioned and promised to Christ, is given to us; for He lives in us and through us. What glory, and what honor! That we should be for His tool and for His glory; that we should be used to do that which God promised Jesus. Again, we do see the wonderful power of God who can use such lowly saints as us. It is even as if a master musician were to play a gloriously complex sonnet upon an instrument of only one string, and half broken at that. Praise be to God, the master musician, and the master craftsman: for we are “*His workmanship, [His creative invention].*” [Eph 2:9] And so, with only clay vessels to use, our God fulfils that which is written, using us to create the most brilliant of attracting lights to a dark and dying world; as it is written,

“For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but The LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.”
[Isa 60:2-3]

The second portion of the passage to which we come today is also found in the forty-ninth chapter of Isaiah, which reveals to us another role and commission given to Jesus. The LORD said one

reason He has come is, “*that thou mayest say to the prisoners, go forth; to them that are in darkness, shew yourselves.*” [Isa 49:9]

There was a certain occasion in Jesus’ life on earth where, “*as He spake [certain] words, many believed on Him.*” [Jn 8:30] And to that, Jesus said, “*to those Jews which believed on Him,*”

“*If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*” [Jn 8:31-32]

It was not just enough, Jesus said, for them to have believed on Him: for belief without fruit is erroneous belief, even as it says, “*faith without works is dead.*” [f.f., Jam 2:20, 26] One of the good fruits of true belief is an abiding in Jesus’ words, as He says. And that constant abiding, which produces life and fruit, (for again, Jesus said, “*Abide in me, and I in you...No more can ye [produce fruit], except ye abide in me...If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered...[and] burned.*” [Jn 15:4-6]), also produces freedom. As Jesus said, “*the truth shall make you free.*” In context, Jesus speaks of sin, saying, “*verily, verily, I say unto you, whosoever is committing sin is the servant of sin,*” and that, “*if The Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.*” [Jn 8:34, 36] We can see therefore, that Jesus promises us freedom. Freedom, liberty from sin, is one of God’s main and greatest promises to us. This is shown to

us too in that Jesus' name means Yahweh Saves; as the angel said, "*and thou shalt call His name JESUS: for He shall save His people from their sins.*" [Mt 1:21]

But whereas this freedom sometimes appears elusive, God frankly gives it to us, and says that Jesus, and as we have seen – we too – came/was sent "*that [He] mayest say to the prisoners, go forth; to them that are in darkness, shew yourselves.*" [Isa 49:9] What a beautiful word from our Lord. Are you a saint of our dear God? Are you, dear man, dear woman, those whom God views tenderly, even as His own? Are you saved, having believed and continuing to yet believe? And if so, do you dwell in darkness? Do you feel bound? Then feel it and be there no longer, good Christian: as Christ has said, so may you hear today loudly and triumphantly as your word from God to experience light and freedom: "GO FORTH," and, "SHEW YOURSELVES." As Paul steadfastly perceived a certain man "*had faith to be healed,*" thus "*said with a loud voice, stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped [up] and walked,*" [Acts 14:9-10] so too may your faith, if so be you have faith, be released in this word: "*go forth[!]*" Or, if you be in darkness, "*shew yourselves[!]*" Yes, if you be imprisoned by sin, be there no longer; you abide in a cell with no lock and without warrant or law: be free! For you have been crucified with Christ and have been raised up in glorious freedom, having been seated with Him in the

heavenlies. If you are trapped in darkness, swallowed up in the pit, be there no more: for the blood of Christ has bought the rope to which you may cling and be lifted out! Good Christian, dear reader, today be in prison no longer; today be in darkness no further – come forth, and be free: yea, show yourself, and step into the glorious light and favorable countenance of your God’s glory.

Day XXX: The Faithful Attitude of Our Righteous King of Glory

Psalm 22:22 – I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.

When Jesus said truthfully upon the cross, “my God, my God, *why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring,*” [Psa 22:1] what was His reaction? When “*it pleased The LORD to crush Him,*” [Isa 53:10] and Jesus bore the full brunt of God’s wrath, what was His attitude? Through the Psalmist, Jesus cries out, despite the injuries and judgment of the cross, “*but thou art holy , O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.*” [Psa 22:3] And when Jesus was being dashed to smithereens by the Father’s heavy foot – for Jesus was as the promise regarding our sins, “*He will trample under foot our iniquities.*” [Mic 7:19] – yes, when Jesus was smitten of God and bruised to no end, beyond the appearance of a human, [Isa 52:14] He joyfully exult, “*therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope.*” [Acts 2:26] It was Jesus’ joy to go to the cross, as Hebrews

says, “for the joy being set before Him [He] endured the cross,” [Heb 12:2] and as such His attitude, words, and actions proved it. There was no point during His afflictions and suffering that Jesus cursed God, but said very much in spirit with Job, “*blessed be the name of The LORD,*” and, “*though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.*” [Job 1:21; 13:15] And whereas Job’s servants were in error saying, “*the fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep, and the servants, and consumed them,*” [Job 1:16] (for such things had come of satan), yet, with Jesus it was not so: the affliction and suffering was laid upon Him from The Father alone. And so, Jesus’ proclamation of joy and trust rise higher than a thousand responses from righteous Job, for Jesus sinlessly suffered at the hand of His Father.

With these thoughts, let us therefore read again our verse, keeping in mind that what Jesus says here through David, comes after His suffering. His words come after He said truthfully,

“I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.” [Psa 22:14-15]

Jesus said therefore in spirit to God, the one who smote Him, “*I will declare thy name unto my brethren:*

in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.” [Psa 22:22] Herein lies our great comfort, and the glory of God to a thousand generations. For these things are easy to say when one bears well from God. But on the cross Jesus bore only evil, hatred, and a great tempest. Yet even still, Jesus pointed others, and points us still, to God The Father. Jesus, with all love and with all faith, in all integrity, though punished of God for our sins, though smitten sore by His Father, zealously and eagerly points all to The Father.

Have you been afflicted, dear reader? Has God saw it fit to try you? Have you been in such a case as Peter describes, saying, *“though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold trials[?]”* [1 Pe 1:6] And if so, what is your countenance like? Do you shine as Christ, zealous to point others to Him, even though He has harmed you? Or do you sulk and whine, and fear to give others over to the King of all kings? My brethren, today may we do such no longer. Let us be as Jesus; let us reflect His glory and point others to Him no matter what, for as it is written,

“Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all.”
[1 Ch 29:11]

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