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Holiness Writers

THE CORNERSTONE OF LIVING

By

I. Parker Maxey

*“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without
which no man shall see the Lord” Heb 12:14*

Spreading Scriptural Holiness to the World

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THE CORNERSTONE OF LIVING

An Aid To
Spiritual Conquest & Triumphant Living

By
I. Parker Maxey

Author of
Ministerial Ethics & Etiquette
Man's Ascent to God
We'll Get To That Later

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THE CORNERSTONE OF LIVING

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to my dear, faithful wife, Edith, who has truly been one with me in all aspects of our married life and in the call of God to the ministry in all of its varied phases. Her dedication to God and consistent, daily devotion to Him and His Word have been the inspiration of my life. Her God-given abilities are far above average and her love for children and home have made our home a "heaven" on earth. Her dedication to me, her husband, can be summed up in the words found in Ruth 1:16, ". . . for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge. . . . Without her patience, love and constructive criticism this book could never have been completed.

THE CORNERSTONE OF LIVING
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THE CORNERSTONE OF LIVING

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PREFACE

All of the chapters in this book except chapter one were selected out of more than two-hundred articles written over a period of a quarter of a century. (Only chapter one appears here for the first time.) We have been urged by many to make a compilation of at least some of these writings and put them out in a permanent form. As the title of the book suggests, we have chosen those articles that deal with living a victorious Christian life amidst the multitude of vicissitudes and providences that one passes through during a lifetime here on earth.

Faith in God, acceptance of the Bible as The Word of God, and submission to the Lordship of Christ are the chief emphases among the main thoughts upheld throughout this book. The greatest need of the church is still absolute surrender of the human will to the will of God. The Bible makes it clear. Someday, "..... at the name of Jesus every knee [shall] bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue [shall] confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:10,11). There appears in the first chapter a catchy aphorism by Hans Bruns that goes like this: "The most important thing is that the most important thing remain the most important thing?"^[1] That most important thing for immortal man is his personal relationship to God, his Creator. For a man's continued happiness and for God's glory and by man's voluntary choice, Christ must be made Lord of his life. However, Lordship must include more than just yielding. Lordship means control. An overemphasis on yielding tends toward passiveness in the Christian life. "But God wants more than yielded Christians; He wants control of your life. When He has control, we will take up our cross. When He has control, we will deny self and the flesh. When He has control, we will find ourselves saying . . . yes to the 'new man.'^[2] We will have yielded up the right to ourselves to God. Herein lies the secret of total and unending happiness and bliss. This book goes forth with a prayer that in its pages the reader will find help, strength, encouragement, and renewed faith to live daily a victorious life.

I. Parker Maxey
Rock Island, Illinois
1990

Endnotes

1 Koch, Kurt, Th.D., Occult Bondage and Deliverance, Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49501, page 73.

2 Towns, Elmer, The Names of Jesus, Accent Publications, Denver, Colorado, page 29.

THE CORNERSTONE OF LIVING

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SECTION I **BUILDING ON A FIRM FOUNDATION**

"Of old thou hast laid the foundations 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 thou shalt change them, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end."
Psalm 102:25-27

THE CORNERSTONE OF LIVING

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CHAPTER 1 BUILDING FOR ETERNITY

Before construction could begin on the Empire State Building in New York City workers dug down fifty-five feet into the earth until they struck solid granite bedrock. They knew they would have to anchor the 1,454 foot tall "Skyscraper Building" to an immovable foundation if they wanted it to endure across the coming years. Time has proved the wisdom in this procedure.

It has been reported that during the preliminary process of digging, excavators, assuming they had reached solid rock, were asked to send up a sample. This, as the report goes, happened several times during the process of excavation, but always the order came back down, "Keep on digging?" When solid granite rock was finally reached, however, the excavators knew they had struck the rock. Sparks flew as a witness that they had reached their goal. Construction of the "skyscraper building" could then begin.

Because of all the added labor and extra expenditure which it took to erect this building on the solid rock foundation, it has been able to stand against the high velocity of winds that have blown against it. On one occasion, on July 28, 1945, it withstood the crash of an Air Force B-25 airplane at the 79th floor level. Fourteen people died in this crash. Damage to the building cost \$1 million to repair. All this, however, took place without moving it off its foundation or impairing its skeletal framework which was securely anchored to the granite bedrock below. The Empire State Building stands today after well over a half century of time unimpaired in its structural integrity.

Building on a foundation that will endure the ravages of time is one thing, but to build for eternity is another. One cannot overestimate the importance of adequate foundations when it comes to building.

Man, an immortal being, is not living for time only but for eternity, and must maintain that perspective if he is to fulfill the potential of his being. I have now lived in this world three-quarters of a century and have witnessed the undermining of almost all things we hold sacred and essential to the God ordained purpose of our existence. The Psalmist asked the question: "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" (Ps. 11:3). Putting this question more forcefully and realistically for our day we could ask, While foundations are being destroyed what are the righteous doing? Like in the days of King Saul's unrighteous government the very foundations of law and justice were destroyed -- so it is in this day. The righteous must not give way to this apostate age, but must hold tenaciously to and continue preaching foundation truths. In the meantime we must suffer joyfully; hope cheerfully; wait patiently; pray earnestly; believe confidently; and triumph finally. That which is fundamental to our permanent joy and happiness we are determined not to forfeit even at the cost of our life. "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death" (Rev. 12:11). We also mean to be reckoned among this number!

There are fundamental foundations on which we must build if we would be wise -- and man cannot build for eternity apart from them if he is to fulfill the purpose for which he was created. We herein call attention to seven of these foundations.

THE BIBLE, THE WRITTEN WORD OF GOD

The Word of God is a sure foundation to stand on. As Haldor Lillenas expressed it,

"Sure is my foundation, for I stand today
On the Living Word that faileth never,
Earth with all its glory soon must pass away,
But the Word of God shall stand forever."

We call attention to three things which make the WORD OF GOD a sure foundation to stand on:

It is enlightening--a Divine Revelation from God to man. God, an infinite, omniscient being, is the only One who has full knowledge of everything. Man, a finite being created by God, would never have known with certainty about his origin, duty and destiny unless it had been revealed to him. But God has revealed this in His written WORD! Praise God! Glory!

We read in Psalm 119:45, "And I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts." Precepts in the Bible are instructions meant to be rules of conduct. God has a lot to say in His Word about how His children are to think -- how they are to speak, dress, walk and keep the Lord's day. There are instructions in His Word about one's personal devotional life and about conducting family devotions, etc. A true child of God delights to please His heavenly Father by obeying His precepts, and he is anxious to find out what those precepts are.

It is indestructible and eternal. This is so because it is TRUTH and truth never changes. "Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away" (Mark 13:31). "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (I Peter 1:23).

The devil has never been able to stamp out God's Word. Voltaire once said, "Another century and there will be not a Bible on the earth." That century is gone, and the circulation of the Bible is one of the marvels of the age. After he died, his old printing press and the very house where he lived was purchased by the Geneva Bible Society and made a depot for Bibles.

It is Divinely inspired and therefore, inerrant in the original manuscripts (2 Pet. 1:21; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). Furthermore God has so supervised its transmission from language to language that it has come down to us today as THE TRUE WORD OF GOD. For any honest student there is abundant evidence to prove this to be so without any reasonable doubt.

Satan is bent on damning the human race. He goes about this by tearing the foundation of the Word of God out from under humanity. He did this with Eve. By diverting her attention he planted in her a doubt concerning the simple, plain Word of God (Gen. 3:1-6). Eve, by questioning the

WORD of God was turned aside from the WILL of God -- a creature created in the very Image of God to share in His glory! How tragic this proved to be not only for Eve but for the whole human race. Oh, how magnificent! how glorious! how unspeakable was God's will for man! And by turning aside from the will of God she missed the WAY of God -- the way of eternal life. Satan is doing the same thing today!

It must be kept in mind that man has inherited from Adam". . . an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God" (Heb. 3:12). This "unbelief" the very essence of sin, is the placing of man's will at the control of life instead of God's will. It was a master stroke of Satan to plant this seed of unbelief in the hearts of humanity. This awful blight of unbelief is the underlying cause of the mighty forces that are at work today to remove man away from the authority of GOD'S WORD to the humanistic, materialistic teaching that has been prominent in this generation and the New Age Movement which teaches that man is his own god. Because of this carnal blight of unbelief men today are relying on their own reasoning instead of on the plain, unadulterated Word of God, and as a result, millions upon millions have passed from this life and are now suffering eternal damnation, while millions more are headed the same way.

Christian people today are faced with the spiritual lukewarm atmosphere of this Laodicean age which dulls their senses to the fear of God and the authority of His Word. These are the ones that make God sick and are in danger of being spued out of His mouth. (Rev. 3:16). It is no wonder Jude warned that we "should earnestly contend for the faith [the entire body of God's revealed truth from Genesis through Revelation] which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3).

JESUS CHRIST, THE LIVING WORD

"For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (I Cor. 3:11). As the Rock of our salvation (Ps. 89:26) Christ is the only foundation man can safely build upon. We sing it: "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, But wholly lean on Jesus' name. On Christ the solid Rock, I stand; All other ground is sinking sand." Sin closed the door to eternal life to man but Christ threw it wide open to "whosoever will" with His shed blood and outstretched arms on the cruel cross of Calvary.

The Apostle Paul, a prejudiced, carnal Pharisee, was the enemy of Christ until he got his eyes opened on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-9). When he saw who this Christ was, God Himself come in the flesh giving Himself a ransom to provide redemption for a lost race -- from that time on it was Christ and He alone that filled his life. Reader, if Christ does not fill your life, then who or what does? Apart from Him there is no enduring fulfillment.

We read about the two builders as recorded in Matthew 7:24-27. In this account we have a graphic illustration of what it takes to become solidly planted on the foundation, Jesus Christ, and be able to stand before God uncondemned. Both builders represent professors of Christianity.

There are three things that have been recognized as essential to a genuine experience of salvation: First, one must make sure that the past is clear. This is illustrated by the builder who dug down in his past life through things seen and known only to himself and God-hidden grudges, malice, ill-will,

an unforgiving spirit, pride, wicked thoughts, sexual impurities, lies told, things stolen, including all unholy things of his past life, until his feet were planted on the solid foundation of a genuine repentance (2 Cor. 7:9-11).

The main source of unsettledness in Christian experience results from a failure to confess and forsake all the sins of one's life. This is illustrated by the builder who built on the sand. He never bothered about confessing his past sinful life. The solid rock of Christian experience can not be reached until there is a total honesty of heart that will not only confess all known sin, but forsake it as well. Total honesty is very costly, but the reward is beyond calculation.

In the second place, all doubtful things must be laid aside. People who are determined and desperate to obtain a genuine "solid rock" experience will be more than glad, yea, anxious to lay aside any questionable or doubtful thing which would hinder them from securing a clear faith in the forgiveness of sins and the cleansing of the heart from sin's corrupt nature.

In the third place there must be immediate, implicit and continued obedience to every ray of light as it comes to one on the pathway of life.

HOLINESS OF HEART AND LIFE

God cannot build an everlasting kingdom on carnal, impure hearts. There is a slogan originated by Hans Bruns that goes like this, "The most important thing is that the most important thing remain the most important thing." There is a lot of truth in this somewhat monotonous saying, but what is the most important thing? It is not wealth or popularity where so many put the emphasis today. Neither is it one's health or physical well being as important as that seems. To most people nothing is too dear to pay when it comes to preserving one's health, but above that, the most important thing without exception is one's relationship to God, no matter the price. This foundational truth involves purity of heart and life. God is a holy being! Amos asks the question, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3). There must be a cleansing of the heart from the inherited nature of SIN and Jesus has provided for this cleansing in His death on the cross of Calvary (Eph. 5:25-27).

The teaching of a "sinning religion" has made deep inroads into the fulness of life and joy as God intended it to be -- far deeper than most people realize. It has so discounted the plain Bible teaching of the cleansing of the heart from self-centeredness -- "death to the carnal self," until many professed Christians are failing to get THE SIN question settled and themselves established on the solid foundation of a life filled and directed by the Holy Spirit according to the will of God. Here again we catch a glimpse of this awful sin of carnal unbelief.

The song writer, Mrs. F. W. Suffield, caught the significance and importance of digging to the solid rock of a genuine "born-again" experience of a first work of grace and subsequently a second

definite work of grace in the cleansing of the heart from depravity when she penned the song "Dig Deep and Strike the Rock."

Are you building for eternity, my brother?
Are you sure your house will stand the coming shock?
There's a full and free and uttermost salvation,
If you will dig down deep and strike the Rock.

When the storms of life upon your house are beating,
And your soul is bowed beneath the tempest shock,
There's a grace that will establish you, my brother,
If you will dig down deep and strike the Rock.

Many souls will turn back when the battle presses,
For they cannot stand the scorn of those who mock;
They have built their house upon a sand foundation,
And have failed to dig down deep and strike the Rock.

Don't be satisfied with just a little blessing,
But prevail with God whate'er may be your lot,
Just dig deeper; don't give up, but keep on digging.
Hallelujah! You will surely strike the Rock.

Chorus:

Dig deep until your soul can feel no tempest shock;
Dig deep until your feet shall press the solid Rock.
When the storms of doubt assail,
And your strength's about to fail,
Dig deep and strike the Rock.

THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT

"Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his" (2 Tim. 2:19). It is impossible to fool God. He knows who are His. He knows those who have forsaken all known sin and who have put their trust in Him, receiving the witness of sonship in their hearts. The Holy Spirit is the only infallible witness to the human heart that a divine work has been performed within one's soul. To bypass the Spirit's witness to a definite work of grace in the heart or to fail to lay a proper foundation in meeting Bible requirements until a genuine faith is generated is to build a counterfeit Christian life on a false foundation which will not stand the light of the judgment. The direct witness of the Spirit to a seeker's heart that a Divine work has been accomplished is a Bible truth. "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Rom. 8:15, 16). Read also Galatians 4:6; I John

5:10; Hebrews 11:4, 5; Psalm 32:5, and there are many other scriptures which refer to the witness of the Spirit.

THE FREEDOM OF THE WILL

The proof of man's freedom of will is inherent in his own consciousness. Dr. Samuel Johnson put it succinctly when he stated, "I know I am free, and that's the end of it?" Amos Binney said: "In every volition of a moral nature man is free to will the opposite." The power to choose is a divine bestowal. Why did God make us this way? He didn't want us to be a robot. All the rest of creation is programmed to do either as His omnipotent power orders, or created nature dictates. All such glorify God's omnipotent power and wisdom, but God wanted a being who would be free to choose -- one that would glorify Him by freely loving Him for what He is.

The sobering truth, however, about being created with freedom of choice is that man **MUST** make a choice. His God given freedom demands a choice of putting either his own will or God's will at the control of his life. He must accept responsibility to choose. Not to make a choice is a choice in itself. It is an inescapable part of being a member of the human race. In the end every individual must choose God or self, righteousness or sin, happiness or wretchedness, heaven or hell. The power of choice involves a personal responsibility. There can be no "buck passing" when it comes to this matter of choosing.

I never shall forget when this truth first gripped my heart. I was not yet in my teens and under deep conviction. I did not want to be lost and fully expected to be saved some day. Then one day I suddenly realized that my own personal salvation would never happen unless I exercised my own freedom of will in full repentance along with faith in the blood of Jesus Christ. How faithful the Holy Spirit was to my soul! It was then that the fear of God so gripped me that I would be forever lost and that no one would come to my rescue unless and until I myself made a move. Christ had done all He could to make salvation a reality to my soul. It was up to me as a person of free choice to make actual in my life what Christ had made possible. Thank God I did and was gloriously saved!

THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS

By perseverance we simply mean the continual cooperation of the free will of man with divine grace in performing the will of God in our lives. This is a Bible doctrine foundational to the continued and final victory of the Christian life of faith. The initial experience of salvation from sin by Christ's blood and by faith is an instantaneous experience but can be lost unless followed on by a life of personal application of daily discipline and devotion. The promise of eternal life is not offered unconditionally to those who have been converted, but we read in Matthew 10:22b, "he that endureth to the end shall be saved." Neither does it follow that if one receives the experience of cleansing of the heart from the nature of sin, he would be unconditionally promised a place in Heaven but again we read in Revelation 2:10, ". . . be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

In Romans 6:19 Paul exhorts those who have experienced the "death of the old man," in the following words, ". . . for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity

unto iniquity; even so now yield your members . . . unto holiness." This all speaks of the necessity to persevere.

Basic to the doctrine of perseverance is the freedom of the will. One must keep in mind that in the experience of purity of heart, the sin nature, the carnal "ego" is destroyed, but not the essential "I." This essential "I" must be constantly exercised to render implicit obedience once the will of God is known. Scriptures clearly warn against the danger of apostatizing. Paul speaks of his own concern: " . . . lest . . . I myself should be a castaway" (I Cor. 9:27). Christ himself warns of the danger of not abiding in Him and being cast into the fire (John 15:4-6). It is, therefore, perfectly clear that man as a free moral agent must cooperate with God's grace by a continual perseverance. (Col. 1:2-23; 1 Tim. 1:18-20; 6:12; Heb. 3:12; 5:9; 10:26; 12:1-17; Rev. 2:5). At no time in this life is man's free agency taken from him.

THE IMMORTALITY OF MAN

Immortality simply means that all men have had a beginning but will have no end. He will live on for ever and ever in a conscious state either in a place of endless bliss or a place of endless torment. The Bible does not teach, as some people do, a continual cycle of the transmigration of the soul from one existence to another until it finally either reaches an eternal state of bliss or a state of "nirvana" -- a state of the extinction of individual existence.

"The question of immortality first arises in connection with the nature of the divine image in man.

. . . Every man believes in the immortality of his own soul, although he can neither demonstrate it nor disprove it. This fundamental conviction is the strongest proof of immortality outside the teaching of the Holy Scriptures. The life of man never ceases to be. . . . The nature of this future existence is determined by personal character; and this in turn by the attitude of the soul toward the atoning work of Jesus Christ. To the believer, it is eternal life; to the unbeliever, eternal death." (H. Orton Wiley) (Dan. 12:3; I Cor. 15:51-57; Job 19:25-27)

Since man is immortal it should govern the kind of life he lives here on earth in his fleshly body. He should live with eternity in view. I John 2:15-17 brings this out clearly and gives the reason why. Read carefully what it says, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (emphasis mine).

"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

"For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven:

"If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked.

"For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.

"Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.

"Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord:

"(For we walk by faith, not by sight:)

"We confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

"Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him." (2 Cor. 5:1-9)

THE CORNERSTONE OF LIVING

I. Parker Maxey

CHAPTER 2 STANDING ON GOD'S WORD

"Until the time that his word came: the word of the Lord tried him." Psalm 105:19

God's providential care for His people is revealed in this division of the Psalms. Joseph's name is mentioned in particular, and reminds us of his rejection by his brethren, his suffering, his humiliation, his imprisonment, his exaltation. He suffered because of and according to "The Word of the Lord," and he was finally exalted "according to the Word of the Lord." We note:

I. The authenticity of the Word.

The integrity of the Holy Scriptures is substantiated by evidence tenfold more various, copious, and conclusive than that which can be adduced in support of any other ancient book, even the most highly prized Greek and Latin classics. If, therefore, the facts relating to the origin, nature, and progress of Christianity are not established, nothing in human history can be believed." (Binney's Theological Compend, page 59)

II. The perpetuity and durability of the Word: "Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away" (Mark 13:31).

While millions of learned volumes, which promised immortality to their authors, have sunk into oblivion, the Bible has survived even against opposition such as no other book ever knew. The loftiest pretensions of learning, science, and philosophy; the most malignant arts of wit, satire, and scurrility have been employed against the Bible in vain. Thousands of times it has been condemned, banished, burned. Still it survives, and will survive the dissolution of worlds. "The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth forever." (I Peter 1:25). (Ibid, pages 59, 60).

III. The mission of the Word. The Word of God comes to bless humanity It blesses by enlightening (Psalm 119:105), encouraging, guiding, heartening, strengthening, instructing (II Tim. 3:15-17), healing (Psalm 107:20).

The Word also comes to test men. The Word of the Lord that came to Joseph in his youth laden with such wonderful promises, was followed by a long season of unfulfilled hope. This "Word" was the ground on which he rested, but it was also that by which he was tested. God's Word to him was like a refining fire: "tried" is in the Hebrew "smelted" and "word of the Lord" refers to the promise of greatness given Joseph when a lad. This vision "smelted" his soul.

The Word of God comes in like manner to the children of God today: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear,

we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (I John 3:2). As Joseph was tested by the Word, so we will be tested. Between a promise and its fulfillment is the testing.

(1) The Word will test our character. In Potiphar's house opportunity arose in which nature suggested compliance with the wicked desires of his master's wife, but "the Word of the Lord" forbade Joseph's yielding, and the grace of God enabled him to flee the lusts of the flesh and to cry, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" The "Word" holds up a standard of righteousness and character is tried in its relationship to this standard. Are you holding fast according to the Word? Your soul is in the furnace of the promises. Shall it come forth metal or slag? Joseph stood the test, his character was strengthened, he became worth more to himself, to Pharaoh and to God.

(2) The Word will test our faith (a) in the veracity and trustworthiness of God. The Word tested Joseph -- what "stuff" he was made of, and whether there was staying power enough in him to hold on with unconquerable faith to a promise made long since, while no sign of its fulfillment had appeared for many years. This test proved the depth and vitality of his faith and his ability to see "those things which be not as though they were." The trivial, short-lived anticipations which do not look beyond the end of next week are far less beneficial in making strong and noble character, than are those which look far ahead and wait years for their fulfillment. (b) The Word also tests our faith in the justice of God. There Joseph was in prison -- for what? Why? -- for an action so pure that had he been set on a throne for it he would have desired the promotion. No doubt many questions perplexed him while he languished in prison -- Is there a moral Governor of the universe? Why does he allow the innocent to suffer? Why am I in fetters and the lewd woman in favor? Could not an omnipotent God deliver me? Why does He leave me here? Could Joseph in the face of such questions still cling to the faithful Word? He could and did; but the Word tried him, and proved his constancy, his faith and his integrity.

(3) The Word will test our patience. Joseph was sure that God's lingering Word would be fulfilled, and did not falter, though, in the interim, he was made to be the object of his brothers' treachery, the Midianites' chattel, Potiphar's slave, Pharaoh's prisoner, and a servant of servants in the dungeon. Because he believed the Word of God, he could in patience trust the providences of God.

(4) The Word will test our willingness to do humble tasks. It was so with Joseph. So it will be with us. The measure of our willing acceptance of our present state, with its tasks, burdens, humiliations, and limitations is the measure of firmness of our faith in the promise that tarries.

IV. The fulfillment of the Word. The same Word which tried Joseph in due time set him free. The text says, "until," for the Lord appoints the bounds of the proud waters, and they shall no more go over your soul when they reach the boundary of the divine "until." In the exaltation and triumph of God's children who are providing true through the long period of unfulfilled hope while the kingdom of evil and wickedness is having sway. But God's Word is sure and that day will come when the kingdom of evil and wickedness shall forever be banished and the Kingdom of righteousness shall become the only and everlasting Kingdom.

"Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: . . . For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (11 Peter 1:10, 11).

"Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (II Peter 3:13).

"And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever" (Rev. 11:15).

THE CORNERSTONE OF LIVING

I. Parker Maxey

CHAPTER 3 REPRODUCING GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS

What are the earmarks of a righteous life? Micah sums them up in three things: ". . . what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly; and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah 6:8). Jesus summed them up in two requirements: ". . . Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Matt. 22:37-39). The Apostle Paul sums them up in one all-inclusive statement: "The just shall live by faith" (Rom. 1:17). We could more literally and accurately put it this way: He who through faith is righteous shall live. The one earmark of a righteous life for Paul is unending life in Christ. But how can we tell if we have this righteousness which is by faith? What are the evidences? What are the marks of a righteous life?

Before we examine the marks of a righteous life let us notice the two questions in the first verse of the fifteenth Psalm and their significance: "Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle?" This first question deals with the thought of permanence. The Christian life is not meant to be a life of victory one day and defeat the next. To abide in the tabernacle of the Lord means to establish one's life in God. Jesus promised that He would ". . . give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever" (John 14:16). The second question, "Who shall dwell in thy holy hill?" adds the thought of being at home, a member of the household, having permanent status in the family. This thought of permanence in the Christian life is taken up again in the last verse of this Psalm as we shall see. In this 15th Psalm we can sum up seven marks of a righteous life.

Righteousness involves conduct. To be righteous means that one's conduct will be above reproach -- "He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness. . . ." Conduct must be godlike at home, at church, on the job, with one's neighbors, in business transactions, with one's self. In short, in every phase of life. Conduct involves the outward expression of the inner man. This involves a righteousness that is by faith. It does not come automatically, but must be inwrought by the regenerating and sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit. Genuine saving and sanctifying faith is not a passive thing, but produces fruit in the conduct of life -- the fruit of right living.

Righteousness involves purity of character. The Word of God teaches us that "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jer. 17:9). Our character is what God knows us to be. But we read, "Behold, thou [God] desirest truth in the inward parts: . . ." (Psalm 51:6). A righteous man is one that "speaketh the truth in his heart" (Ps. 15:2). He is one who has been delivered from deceit and deceitfulness and his prayer is, "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer" (Psalm 19:14). We read in John 14:15-17, "If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth: whom the world cannot receive. . . ." God will not come to abide in a heart until He has first cleansed it from its inner deceit and made it a temple fit for His dwelling. We must become

in character like God. When the Blessed Holy Spirit of God can find a dwelling place within our heart, then we are candidates to be dwellers on the Holy Hill.

Righteousness involves our conversation. "He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbor, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbor" (Ps. 15:3). A prevalent form of destruction is that of slander. Slander is speaking evil on hearsay rather than proof, or on half-knowledge. According to the Bible, unrighteous conversation involves slander, whispering, backbiting, evil-surmising, tale bearing, babbling, tattling, evil-speaking, defaming, bearing false witness, judging uncharitably, raising false reports, repeating injurious matters. Such surely is opposed to righteousness and not regulated by the Golden Rule. It took the UPPER ROOM experience to deliver the tongues of the followers of Christ from this "root of evil" and to set them free to bless instead of curse mankind. It will take the same today to qualify a soul to live a righteous life and finally to be a dweller on God's Holy Hill.

Righteousness involves right companionship -- associations that are Scriptural. "In whose eyes a vile person [one who is rejected by the Lord] is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the Lord" (Ps. 15:4). When the Thessalonians were soundly converted, one of the evidences was that they changed from their worldly companions and ". . . became followers of us [Paul] and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction with joy in the Holy Ghost" (I Thess. 1:6). In I John 1:3 we read "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." If we are to become dwellers on God's Holy Hill we will have to be made fit companions with those who are dwellers there.

Righteousness involves our convictions. "He that sweareth to his own hurt and changeth not." A person who is settled, rooted and grounded in convictions that are Bible-based will be equipped to hold steady under pressure by the power of the Holy Spirit that dwelleth within. People who are not settled in the Lord will live more by convenience rather than conviction. The Apostle Paul put it this way, "And therein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offense toward God, and toward man" (Acts 24:16). Again Paul states, "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost" (Romans 9:1). His convictions were Bible-based and he held to them, let the price be what it may. Imperishable convictions are not built on nothing. The very thing that made Daniel a lovable, useful person and gave him such an excellent spirit was fierce loyalty to sacred convictions -- convictions that cost him the lion's den. He purposed some things in his heart. When the pressure came on, his character came shining through. He had his convictions. God help us to build on Bible Convictions and move off the shifting sands of convenience.

Righteousness involves our commitments. "He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward [a bribe] against the innocent" (Ps. 15:5). There is a principle laid down here that involves more than the handling of one's finances. If holiness will do anything, it will make a person liberal and cooperative in every part of the work of the Lord. His life will not be characterized by a quest for personal gain, but a desire to be a channel of usefulness for the Master. God intends that spiritual life should flow through us to others. The very principle of life is to give. To withhold is to die. We, as Christians, must let the Christ-life flow out in every way possible if we want to retain spiritual life and increase in godliness. We are all familiar with the saying of John Wesley -- "Make all you can,

save all you can, give all you can" -- but I am afraid we interpret him wrongly, especially where he said to "save all you can." By this he meant to save all you can by frugal living so that you would have more to give. "For God so loved the world that he gave. . . ." He gave to redeem lost humanity. His commitment to humanity in the great plan of redemption is beyond comprehension. Righteousness, to say the least, will involve one in selfless living and a commitment that, in essence, is like unto God's.

Righteousness involves constancy. "He that doeth these things shall never be moved" -- he whose experience is founded upon a firm foundation. The literal rendering is, "Doing these things he shall not be moved forever." Jesus said, ". . . whosoever heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock" (Matt. 7:24). It was this man whose house withstood the storm. This rock is Christ and unless we build on Him, we will not be dwellers on God's Holy Hill. If we do, "We will stand the storm. We will anchor by and by."

THE CORNERSTONE OF LIVING

I. Parker Maxey

CHAPTER 4 HEARING GOD'S VOICE

"There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification" (I Cor. 14:10).

Monitoring a space ship in outer space would be impossible without a computer. The multitude of operations that need monitoring and are happening simultaneously during a space flight (the breathing and heart beat of the spacemen, their body temperature, the temperature inside and outside the space ship, its speed, etc.) are radioed back to earth by beep, beep sounds of different frequencies and pitches. All these scores of sound coming in together make one loud roar indistinguishable to the human ear. The computer breaks these down and feeds them into different channels so that the heart beat (for example) of one of the astronauts can be clearly and separately distinguished from all the other sounds.

The human mind is a marvelous computer and with the freedom of the will has the inborn ability to pick out and concentrate on what it wants to hear and heed.

There are a multitude of voices that call to us from the cradle to the grave. Rocks, tin cans, trees, all have a voice. To the carefree lad a rock says, "throw me"; the tin can says, "kick me"; a tree says, "climb me." Our physical appetites and passions have a voice that calls for attention. Our body has a voice. It calls for food, for ease, for rest. There are voices that allure to evil. The unregenerated "self" has a voice. It calls for the way of least resistance. It hears the voice of evil calling to sin.

Voices get stronger as they are heeded and tend to tune out other voices. The voice of materialism and earthly living, the voice of lust, the voice of covetousness, when heeded weaken the voices of purity and morality. In the midst of all these voices is the voice of Wisdom. "Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets: . . . in the chief place of concourse, . . . in the city. . . Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you" (Prov. 1:20-23). It is the voice of God penetrating the sound barrier of every soul and demanding a hearing.

We are admonished in the Scriptures to heed how we hear. Voices come to us unbidden and call for attention. The truth is, we hear what we give our attention to. We have the ability to tune out voices that come to make themselves heard. We are constantly doing this, oftentimes unconsciously, and thus habits of thinking develop which affect our moral being. More often than not our spiritual poverty results from a hearing problem. If we had only listened to what God had to say, but we were too busy listening to other voices. Seven times in the second and third chapters of the book of Revelation Jesus warned, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches" (emphasis mine). How much trouble, suffering and heartache could be avoided if only we would set our wills to hear and heed what God has to say.

It is risky not to hear rightly. When we are young and healthy and our hearing is keen it is no problem to tune out what we do not want to hear and tune in what we desire to hear. This is not the case with older people, when time and age have taken their toll. They lose that ability to understand clearly when a multitude of voices are all speaking. Likewise we can impair our spiritual hearing until the voice of God can no longer be discerned amidst many voices that scream at us. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Rev. 3:20). The implication here is that a person may get to the place where he cannot hear God's voice in a way to discern it from other voices. Loss of hearing with the physical ear, as a rule, takes place gradually and at first unnoticeably. It begins with the higher and finer pitches of sound. Likewise in the spiritual realm. The cause for the loss of hearing in this realm usually begins with carelessness in heeding the voice of the Spirit in little, seemingly insignificant things, crowding out that gentle voice or check of the Spirit, failing to heed His voice in a dress requirement, not giving priority to the voice of the Holy Spirit as He endeavors to lead us into a closer and deeper walk with Christ. We let the pressures of life's duties drown out His tender, still, small voice. How many today have had better "hearing" days in the past than they now have! The call to prayer now has grown dim. His tender voice is not clear any more. It now has become the nagging voice of conviction and a reminder of a better day and of duties left undone. The call to intercessory prayer, to witnessing to lost humanity, to praise, are voices that cease to call. The romance is gone. Have we become a burdenless, prayerless people, having lost the voice of the Spirit? God stir us and awaken us until we will one more time be able to hear as we should.

The admonition of the Scripture is to learn to hear well. Build habits into your spiritual life of right hearing.

To build these habits we need first of all to learn His voice. This can be done only as we heed and obey when we do hear! Many have never learned this lesson. "And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers" (John 10:4, 5). Again in John 18:37 we read, "Everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice?" It takes a sanctified heart to hear rightly the voice of God and to distinguish it from the voice of "self." On the Mount of Transfiguration the "chosen three" heard the voice of God saying to them, "this is my beloved Son . . . hear ye him." It took Pentecost to solve the "hearing" problem of the disciples. It will take the same today.

If man will tune in to the voice of God it will mean for the sinner, salvation from a life of sin. To the regenerated it will lead unerringly to the land of perfect rest and purity of heart. To the sanctified it will lead to a life of service, to a life of prayer, of suffering, of sacrifice, of witnessing, and of constant victory over sin and self.

How is your hearing?

THE CORNERSTONE OF LIVING

I. Parker Maxey

CHAPTER 5

CHOOSING GOD'S WAY -- or -- SEEING WHAT MOSES SAW

"By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward." Hebrews 11:24-26

In seeking God's will for his life, Moses saw four things revealed in this Scripture that determined the choices he made.

He saw Christ and His salvation. Oh, that we might really see this wonderful Christ. When the Apostle Paul was struck down on the road to Damascus with the blinding light from heaven -- a vision of this glorious Christ -- it was Christ and Him only from then on. He saw who Christ was, why He came to earth; that ". . . there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). He saw that "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (I John 5:12). From that moment on Paul ". . . determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified" (I Cor. 2:2). His one obsession was to know Christ, to win Christ, to magnify Christ, to be conformed to Christ, to be found in Christ, to be able to rejoice in the day of Christ and to be ever with Christ. The song writer, Mary D. James, must have seen this Christ when she penned these words: "Since my eyes were fixed on Jesus, I've lost sight of all beside, So enchained my spirit's vision, Looking at the Crucified. Oh, what wonder! how amazing! Jesus, glorious King of Kings, Deigns to call me His beloved, Lets me rest beneath His wings?"

Why would any soul want to turn away from this wonderful Christ and choose dark damnation and an eternal hell? Perhaps they have never seen Him, or having seen Him they have lacked the "fixed gaze," the continual ". . . Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith. . . ." The great weapon of Satan and tendency of the carnal heart is diverted attention. Oh, for a "fixed gaze" on this unsurpassable Christ and His eternal salvation!

He saw the reproach. To live in this present world for none of self but wholly for Christ's sake, no matter what that may mean or where it may lead, is to suffer the reproach of the cross, and is to go cross-current to this sinful, Christ-denying, devil-exalting, hell-bent world. Jesus made this plain in His talks to His disciples just prior to His crucifixion. "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you" (John 15:18-20). To be a Christian in this world will not only bring the hatred of the world but many times even the hatred and opposition of one's own family. "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth . . . I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother. and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes

shall be they of his own household" (Matt. 10:34-36). But wait a minute! Moses saw something here that we must not lose sight of. He esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt (Heb. 11:26). The glory of Christ's presence and blessings even in the midst of reproach, no matter to what extent or how severe, far outweighs all the pleasures that might come to us apart from Christ. Glory! (Daniel in the lions' den; the three Hebrew children in the furnace of fire). Peace of mind in the midst of suffering is worth more than all the world can afford. Oh, for a sanctified, satisfied heart and mind that can weigh the reproach of the world and find that it does not outweigh the blessings of an ever present Redeemer! The song writer, Bill Gaither, expressed this in these words: "He touched me, Oh, He touched me; And, Oh, the joy that floods my soul. Something happened, and now I know, He touched me and made me whole."

He saw what the reward amounted to. By faith Moses saw, in part at least, the recompense of the reward, and he respected it. The reward of grace is certain, complete and eternal. Irrespective of the illumination of God's Word, the voice of conscience, the inequalities of providence, and the sanctions of law and human government all point to a state of future rewards and punishments. Every promise breathes in balmy sweetness, and every warning rolls in deeper thunder by this thought, that you and I must give an account. He weighed the pleasures of sin in the scales of eternity. Moses had faith in the "recompense of the reward." He said thus within himself, "I must renounce much and reckon to lose rank, position, and treasure; but I expect to be a gainer notwithstanding, for there will be a day when God shall judge the sons of men; and I expect that those who serve God faithfully shall then prove to have been the wise men, while those who truckled to gain a present ease shall find that they missed eternity while they were snatching after time and that they bartered heaven for a paltry mess of pottage."

The Apostle Paul also had respect for "the recompense of the reward," for his stated goal in life was that he ". . . might attain unto the resurrection of [out from among] the dead." His drive in life was to "press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 13:14).

At one time Moses desired to see God face to face. This request was denied him, for God said, ". . . there shall no man see me, and live." But God did grant to put Moses in a cleft of the rock and cover him with His hand while He passed by, and then removed His hand and allowed Moses to see His back parts (Ex. 33:18-23). We can well assume that at this time in Moses' life he desperately needed something from God that would reassure him that the overall purpose of what was taking place in the history of His chosen people, Israel, was of God's planning. He, therefore, earnestly entreated God to give him some discovery of it, that his own mind might be satisfied. God mercifully condescended to meet his wishes in such a way as no doubt gave him full satisfaction. It was a revelation God granted Moses alone. This vision settled him, as is revealed in his subsequent life, for he was enabled to see once again that the glory to come far outweighed the suffering he was having to face at that time. What assurance this brings to our own hearts in those dark and inexplicable experiences we face as we pass through our life here on earth. We, as yet, see only through a glass darkly; by and by we shall see face to face. We can be assured that the Lord's presence is with His people and where we cannot see or understand, we can "commit the keeping of [our] souls to [God] in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator" (I Pet. 4:19).

He saw that if he was to receive the reward it would determine his conduct in the present. Moses knew that he would have to renounce his interest in the promises of God and in life eternal to which they led if he did not obey the divine call at the present moment. How weighty the present moment is in regard to future reward and blessedness! How personal this matter of obedience becomes in the light of God's inner dealings with the soul! Good intentions will not suffice. Partial reformation of life is not the answer. Being as good as the people around us is not the correct measuring rod. Being religious, but not filled and directed by the blessed Paraclete will put us in the camp of the cursed. A silenced or dulled conscience as to present duty puts one in dire danger of infinite loss. To take refuge in a place of future reconciliation is to miss the impact of the duty of the present moment.

This present moment living is the secret of perfect victory now and eternal rewards to come. Multitudes of professed Christian people will miss it in eternity because they are missing the "present moment" obedience that is required. The tendency is to live in the past -- we point back and say we were saved and we were sanctified -- and thus avoid the keen edge of the challenge of the immediate moment. We fall back on crisis experience instead of walking with Jesus now!

What do you suppose present, perfect obedience, moment by moment, would produce in individual lives, in local churches, on mission fields, in the entire Christian movement as a whole? May God help us to see what Moses saw! And may it be finally said of us ". . . they overcame him [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death" (Rev. 12:11).

THE CORNERSTONE OF LIVING

I. Parker Maxey

CHAPTER 6 AVOIDING SPIRITUAL DRYNESS

Drought is caused by water shortage. Man, animals or vegetation cannot long survive apart from water.

In the spiritual life water is a type of the life giving and sustaining presence of the Holy Spirit. Many things may contribute to dry up life's joys and cut one off from the water supply. Spiritual drought can be deadly to the soul. We need not be without this supply. Jesus said, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" (Matt. 5:6).

Lucy J. Rider wrote:

I will pour water on him that is thirsty,
I will pour floods upon the dry ground:
Open your hearts for the gift I am bringing;
While ye are seeking Me, I will be found.

Many things tend to dry up the soul's water supply and leave it barren, desolate, and void of freshness and vigor. Let us look at some of these and pray God we will not let them rob us of that inner fountain that promises never to run dry.

The sameness of life -- the day by day grind. Monotony wears on the soul. Most of life for the average individual is lived on this plane. The secret of freshness here is the means of grace -- personal devotions, the faithful day by day reading of the Word, secret prayer, family altar, faithful attendance of the regular church services, witnessing to the lost, a purpose of heart through the means of grace to keep the freshness of God on one's soul. "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season" (Ps. 1:3). Not dried up because of the monotony of life, but kept fresh by that tap root that reaches to the secret source of an inexhaustible supply.

The silence of God. How would you like to be treated like Jesus treated the Syrophenician woman? When she cried unto Jesus for help "he answered her not a word" (Matt. 15:23). Job experienced this silence of God. God hid himself from Job. How did Job react? Listen: ". . . he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold. My foot hath held his steps, his way have I kept, and not declined . . . I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food" (Job 23:10-12). In drought he kept the faith and his confidence in God.

Job not only suffered the silence of God, but the seeming absence of God. I say, His seeming absence, for God is omnipresent. He is never absent from any part of His creation. There are times when God does withdraw Himself from our consciousness for reasons we may not always understand. Paradoxical as it may seem, God has the ability to go away from a place without leaving

and coming back when He never has been gone. "In the words of Augustine, 'He knows how to be everywhere in His whole Being and to be limited by no place. He knows how to come without departing from the place where He was; He knows how to go away without leaving the place whither He has come.'" (Wiley)

The slowness of God. King Saul was rejected of God after he had at one time been given a new heart. Why? He could not endure the slowness of God. God did not come to his aid when he thought he should. The slowness of God is one of the greatest sources of temptation and trial that can befall mankind. However, history proves that God is always on time. The secret of victory and freshness in these instances is total and continued submission and trust where we cannot see nor understand. They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.

The vicissitudes of life. By this we mean those perplexities and irregularities and changes of circumstance that come in the life of every individual. So many fail here to make the proper adjustments to keep their souls alive and in touch with God. They lose the secret source of freshness. The secret of continual victory and freshness amid these circumstances is to keep in touch with the one who is changeless, to make it a rule to seek God first regardless of upset plans and interferences; of changing conditions and circumstances.

The sin of man -- carnal people. We never get away from people. People will rob one of God and victory unless, like Paul, one experiences a "deliverance from the people." Paul talked about being "in perils among false brethren" (2 Cor. 11:26). Pressure from people will either cause us to compromise convictions or to become cynical and critical in attitudes and heart. We must not let people cut the tap root of our spiritual life line.

The suffering and sickness one faces. Life's sufferings will either make us better or bitter. When these providences come they are often blessings of God in disguise. They are God's tools to perfect His saints and bring them to maturity. A soul cannot, as a rule, survive too long a time of smooth sailing. To be thankful for the times of suffering and to be willing they continue on as long as God sees best is the secret of victory and freshness in the soul.

The insufficiency of funds. In this age of materialism, easy credit and an inflated standard of living, it is easy to fall victim to the temptation to overspend. The result is an insufficiency of funds to satisfy all the creditors and a desperation to balance the budget. Mom goes out to get a job, Dad starts moonlighting while the freshness and vigor of the spiritual life fades and spirituality in the home is finally eclipsed. The secret is to keep humble, live within one's means and be willing to be poor if that is God's wish for you, but keep the freshness and anointing of God on your soul.

In a different vein, insufficiency of funds has always faced God's people when it comes to doing God's work. To allow this to discourage and rob one of his faith and spiritual vitality can be and is a danger to be faced.

In both these above mentioned instances Matthew 6:33 is the secret of success, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

The onslaught of Satan. Satan works in many ways to rob a soul of victory. He makes an appeal through reason; through our bodily appetites; through natural desire. He comes as an angel of light; he lays snares. These are a few among the countless number of ways Satan will employ against the soul.

When we fail to receive the love of truth in our hearts or we get careless with truth, we lay ourselves open to the workings of Satan to get our eyes off Christ. If this ever happens we soon lose our connection with the life giving power of the Blessed Holy Spirit. The secret of victory here is to "take unto you the whole armour of God, . . . above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked . . . Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit . . ." (Eph. 6:13-18).

The stupidity of our own acts. If we had only been a little more careful; if we hadn't acted in such haste; if we had prayed more and waited on God a little longer; if we had used our time more wisely, and on and on the "ifs" go. With the help of God we can use our stupidity as aids to a more careful and fruitful life or we can let them defeat us to the point we begin to lose ground spiritually and lose that vital connection to the life giving power of an indwelling Holy Spirit. We can grieve the Spirit out of our lives by letting these things get the upper hand.

The consternations or fears of life. Gazing too long in the wrong direction can be the undoing of a soul. It was C. W. Ruth who said, "We can look ahead until we are dismayed; we can look around until we become discouraged; we can look at ourselves until we become disillusioned; we can look at others and become infidels; or we can look to Jesus and keep the victory." Job said, "For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me" (Job 3:25). Isaiah, however, had the answer to life's consternations and fears when he wrote, "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation" (Isa. 12:2).

The satisfaction with the mediocre. Webster defines mediocre as "not very good or very bad." It is doing less than our best. It is a sign of waning spiritual health -- a soul weariness and fainting. Back of this is a failure in those means of grace that keep a soul alive and in vigorous spiritual health.

The subtlety of this lukewarm age. One of the greatest dangers that we face is the lukewarmness of this day. We live in an age and an atmosphere that anesthetizes its victim and it comes on a person almost undetected. There is not a soul that is not affected in some measure by this age of lukewarmness. Except for God's grace and our cooperation, we will be among those that make God sick (Rev. 3:16). It is this crowd that God will spue out into the tribulation and not claim at the rapture of the saints. Even in this day there is a secret source of the life giving water that will keep a soul fresh and alive. Let's not let the worm of lukewarmness sever that tap root that reaches to this secret source which will keep us alive and fresh spiritually.

THE CORNERSTONE OF LIVING

I. Parker Maxey

CHAPTER 7 POSSESSING LIKEMINDEDNESS WITH CHRIST

"But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus . . . unto you. . . . For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state." Phil. 2:19, 20

The history of the founding of the church in Philippi, the birthplace of European Christianity, is narrated in Acts chapter twenty-six. Eleven years had passed from the time of the founding of this church until the Philippian Epistle was written. Paul had visited his Philippian brethren twice and they had sent supplies three times to their suffering apostle. The book of Philippians was a response to their loving gift, with the simple purpose of showing his thanks and deep interest in them. Paul had been wonderfully refreshed and encouraged by the visit of Epaphroditus (the messenger from Philippi) and he is now preparing to send back a messenger of his own to encourage and strengthen their faith. Timothy (see the text above) was the only one he had who was "likeminded" and would generously look out for their affairs. "For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's."

The question immediately arises, why should a "likeminded" man be hard to find? What does it mean to be "likeminded" and how important is it?

There are various words in the original Greek which are given this meaning in the English translation. Each one throws a slightly different shade of meaning on the entire concept of "likemindedness." Briefly, here in verse 19, the meaning is "equal-souled"; in chapter 2:2, the meaning is "to be concerned about the same thing"; in 4:2 the meaning is "to have the same attitude?" In the book of Acts, reference is made to the apostles being of "one mind," "of one accord."

"Likemindedness" implies a similarity to some other mind. Somewhere there must be a model or a standard for our likemindedness.

The natural man, i.e., the unregenerate man, is very much interested in this matter of likemindedness. His whole business, consciously or unconsciously, is trying to bring others to his way of looking at things so they will do what he thinks they ought. The whole program is centered in the big "I," and various methods and pressures are used to bring others to a likemindedness in harmony with this big "I." The characteristic of man, from babyhood on up, is to have everyone else see things his way. Man will go to any length to accomplish this. Thus, it is very obvious that the "likemindedness" with Christ could never be obtained by this route.

When we turn to chapter two and verses five through eight, we learn that likemindedness for the Christian has reference to the Lord Jesus Christ and the attitude which He showed. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." His was not an attitude of getting and gaining but an attitude of yielding and giving, a willingness to go to the cross for others. Christ came as a servant. He came not to do His will but the will of His Father. He came to give Himself a ransom in order to make provision for the salvation of lost humanity. His was a wholly selfless mind, not a

self-seeking mind. He demonstrated this when He washed the disciples' feet just prior to His trial and crucifixion. None of the disciples would lower themselves to this menial task. It was customary that someone should do this. Provisions were at hand for this "foot-washing" and no one but Jesus and His disciples were in that room.

Let me ask you, reader, how would you have felt if you had been there in that room with Jesus that night as one of the twelve, and because you were not willing to lose status among your associates, you had turned away from this "foot-washing" task and then later had seen Jesus lay aside His garments, gird Himself with a towel and then stoop in front of you to wash your feet? How humiliating this would have been to the disciples had they been exemplary in their attitude and actions prior to that moment, but how convicting this was, after they had quarreled and vied with each other as to who was the greatest!

When Jesus had finished washing His disciples' feet, He asked them, "Know ye what I have done to you?" Then he added these words, "Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (John 13:12-17). There is little reason to suppose that our Lord was here instituting a perpetual sacrament of "foot-washing." In this act, Jesus performed the most humble of menial services as a lesson that, renouncing "strife for superiority," they should condescend to the lowest offices for the good of others.

"Likemindedness!" Where can it be found? Timothy was likeminded, equal-souled, with Christ. Paul said he could not find another of this stature. Why? "For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's" -- not this lowly, humiliating servant attitude.

"Likemindedness" was not found among Christ's followers prior to Pentecost. "This mind" means above all else, love -- perfect love. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). Jesus WAS this perfect love Incarnate. His purpose was to give up His life. His disciples, prior to Pentecost, could not understand Jesus. They were seeking to save their own lives, for when the pressure came on "they forsook him and fled."

The mind of Christ was a mind of compassion. He took upon Himself the burden of others. The disciples wanted the Syrophenician woman sent away; they told blind Bartimaeus to "hold his peace." They wanted the crowds dismissed, lest they should be responsible for feeding them. Who among us wants to be bothered today?

The mind of Christ was a mind of humility. He girded Himself with a towel and took the position of a menial slave, washing the feet of the guests.

Pentecost made the difference with the disciples. There they learned to continue "with one accord in prayer and supplication." On down through the book of Acts, we find them continuing "with one accord." They had become likeminded with their master. The one most needed thing in our midst today is this "likemindedness" with Jesus Christ. There is nothing that so disqualifies a person for

Christian service as much as "self-mindedness." Paul went through a crucifying experience. He records this in Galatians 2:20. The carnal "I" was put to death and self-mindedness exchanged for Christ-mindedness. With the carnal mind crucified, Paul became a love-slave of Jesus Christ. It was Christ who lived in and through him. If we are ever to be effective for soul-winning in this world, then we must move into that realm of "likemindedness" with Christ.

What joy, what privilege, what satisfaction to move into that realm of holy living.

"Jesus, plant and root in me,
All the mind that was in Thee;
Settled peace I then shall find;
Jesus' is a quiet mind.
Anger even, always still,
Always even, always still.
Meekly on my God reclined;
Jesus' is a gentle mind."

-- C. Wesley --

THE CORNERSTONE OF LIVING

I. Parker Maxey

SECTION II DEVELOPING A STRONG FAITH IN GOD

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

"God nothing does, nor suffers to be done, But you yourself would do, could you but see The end of all events as well as He." --Author Unknown

"True faith regards the distresses and sufferings of this life as 'ways of the love of God.'" --Erich Sauer

"Faith must be tested, because it can be turned into personal possession only through conflict." --Oswald Chambers

"Faith in the Bible is faith in God against everything that contradicts Him -- I will remain true to God's character whatever He may do. 'Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him' -- this is the most sublime utterance of faith in the whole of the Bible." --Ibid.

"Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth . . . for whatsoever is not of faith is sin." --Romans 14:22, 23

THE CORNERSTONE OF LIVING

I. Parker Maxey

CHAPTER 8 FAITH VERSUS CHANCE

"Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls, to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator." I Peter 4:19

Volumes could be written on the subject of human suffering. Men suffer as murderers, as thieves, as evildoers, as busybodies in other men's matters, because of their own stupidity. Men also "suffer according to the will of God." The Bible pronounces a blessing upon those who suffer in this manner. 'Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you" (Matt. 5:10-12).

Much could also be written about man as a servant. Being a dependent, created being naturally constitutes man a servant. "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" The Apostle had the right concept of life when he testified to being a servant (love slave) of Jesus Christ.

Our text views God as a "faithful Creator" It does not say we are to commit the keeping of our souls to chance, or fate, or law. We are not the offspring of a blind, unintelligent, unknown force. God is a God of design and purpose. All through the Scriptures there is evidence that purpose and planning are behind it all. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork" (Ps. 19:1).

There is foresight in God's plans. Consider three incidents in the Bible that testify to this. The first can be summed up in these words: "a ram caught in a thicket by his horns" (Genesis 22:13). When God commanded Abraham to offer his son Isaac as a burnt offering upon Mount Moriah and Abraham obeyed up to the very act of slaying this son of promise through whom all the world was to be blest, some how (I don't know how and neither do you) God caused a ram to be caught in a thicket on the top of that same mount at that particular time. In this providence God had provided a substitute. There are no blind alleys nor dead end streets with God.

The second incident is found in Genesis 42:2 and can be summed up in these words: "there was corn in Egypt." Seven years of plenteousness had ended with seven years of dearth and famine. This famine had spread to all the countries so that the famine was sore in all lands. But again God had worked ahead of time and in the midst of what would have been starvation and death, "there was corn in Egypt," and plenty to feed all the famine stricken countries besides.

The third incident has to do with drought. The story is told in I Kings 17. We read these words in James 5:17, "and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months." One man

had laid hold of the Word of God by faith and had locked up the heavens "that it rained not." God's design back of this incident was to bring a showdown as to who was the true God.

There is love in God's plans. Men have always been prone to judge God by segregated "moments" in life -- moments that produce suffering and agony. In so doing they never come to know the God of love. Life is tragic -- sin makes it so -- and men endeavor in their shortsightedness to shun suffering and take the way of least resistance. There is only one way to real life and that is through death. It seemed cruel for God to command Abraham to slay this son of promise, but He did, and Abraham obeyed without hesitation. He committed himself to a faithful Creator. This took an act of heroic faith on Abraham's part and in the end he was richly rewarded. In so doing he got a revelation of the love of God in providing a substitute. We note three things here: there was a Divine plan, mixed with heroic faith, followed by a great reward. In the end the love of God came shining through.

For Joseph's brothers to threaten his life and then to sell him into slavery and finally to deceive their father into thinking that Joseph had been slain by a wild beast was cruel, and for God to allow it through His permissive will -- how could that be reckoned with the love of God? Men in such moments of life bring unjust accusations against God. But once again, when time has run its course, we can see behind this historic incident a Divine plan. When God's plans are interwoven with heroic faith there always follows a great reward and in the end Divine love comes shining through.

In the days of Elijah God brought drought on the land for three and a half years. For this to have been done purposefully -- how cruel! To view history and judge it by an unattached segment is to miss the Divine workings. Here, once again, behind this three and a half years of drought can be seen a Divine plan, heroic faith and a great reward. When we look at this segment of Israel's history, we understand that by this drought the true God was finally brought to light. This reveals the outshining of God's great love for His creature, man. What a faithful Creator!

There is triumph in God's plan. Was there not triumph ultimately on Mount Moriah? Was there not triumph ultimately over the cruelty Joseph endured at the hands of his brothers and Potiphar's wife? Was there not triumph on Mount Carmel at the end of three and a half years of drought when the fire from heaven fell and consumed Elijah's sacrifice?

We may suffer in this life. In fact, suffering is inescapable, but God is a faithful Creator and is worthy of our trust even in the face of seeming cruelty. Behind the seeming contradictions and inexplicable events of life there is a Divine plan. God help us to furnish the heroic faith by committing the keeping of our souls to God in well doing. He is a faithful Creator and there will be a great reward to those who commit their ways to God.

Man is not alone in this business of suffering. There is no suffering to be compared to the suffering of God in the sacrifice of His Son, nor the suffering of Christ that was involved in His incarnation and death. In this we get a full orb'd view of a Divine plan and of an heroic faith and of a final triumph. When we view life as it really is, the cross becomes central. The final answer to all life's sufferings, heartaches and sorrows is found in Calvary.

In the cross of Christ I glory
Tow'ring o'er the wrecks of time.
All the light of sacred story
Gathers round its head sublime.

When the woes of life o'ertake me,
Hopes deceive, and fears annoy,
Never shall the Cross forsake me.
Lo! it glows with peace and joy.

Bane and blessing, pain and pleasure,
By the Cross are sanctified;
Peace is there that knows no measure,
Joys that thro' all time abide.

--John Bowring --

THE CORNERSTONE OF LIVING

I. Parker Maxey

CHAPTER 9 FAITH IN THE MIDST OF TRIAL

The scope of our faith is the exact scope of what we are getting from God today. There is no limit to what God can do. But because we believe for and get so little, we blame the apostasy of age and difficulties. "According to your faith be it unto you" (Matt. 9:29). So it is ourselves, not God, who determine the degree of our answer.

When we turn to the first chapter of Philippians we find God's number one apostle in jail -- the one who seemed indispensable to the Church. Paul knew that God could get him out. Had He not done so in the very city to which he was now writing? Did He not miraculously bring Peter and John out of prison (Acts 5)? On another occasion had He not delivered Peter (Acts 12)? But now Paul was languishing in jail. There was no earthquake -- no angel. Rome held him, and his bonds were real. It is wonderful to believe God when He sends the needed answer immediately and the jail is opened!

How much more wonderful it is, however, to believe God when the gates remain locked! It is interesting and refreshing, and faith-building to notice Paul's reaction under this kind of circumstances, especially when you consider the situation under which he was arrested and imprisoned. It all started in Jerusalem on a false supposition that he had taken a Greek with him into the holy precinct of the temple. It was a capital crime for anyone but Jews to enter. On this mere supposition, of which he was innocent, he was imprisoned by the Roman government for two years in Caesarea and suffered a hazardous journey to Rome. In Rome his liberty was taken away. He was chained to a Roman soldier night and day. God had built a fence around the apostle and it all issued out of a falsehood.

Paul, however, refused to be classified as a prisoner of Rome. He took advantage of his prison experience as an opportunity to witness for his Lord -- "so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places;" (Phil. 1:13). Actually Paul's prison-home in Rome became the pulpit of the entire Roman Empire. How could Paul be chained night and day to a Roman soldier without that soldier going forth as a witness of the Gospel? There is no doubt that one soldier after another, by being chained to Paul, upon being released, became a mighty witness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. History tells us that it was the Roman soldiers that first carried the gospel to England. Is it not a Christian's calling in life to witness for his Lord in every place providence places him? How many, do you suppose, spoil their witness by complaining about their lot in life or the circumstances that befall them?

Paul claimed that the effect of his imprisonment on the Church was beneficial. "But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel. . . . And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear" (Phil. 1:12, 14). What would have happened to the Church in Paul's day if his faith had weakened and he had begun to question God over his imprisonment? Can we not trust God in the midst of adversity as well, when all is seemingly going

wrong? What is our lack of faith doing to the Kingdom of God? Paul was willing to suffer in the midst of trouble and keep faith in a Sovereign, Omnipotent God. By so doing he would harvest good from a situation he might not altogether be able to understand. His response was, "Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. What then? notwithstanding every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice" (Phil. 1:15-18).

Paul knew the secret of a faith that remained radiant in the midst of perplexities and adversities. Uppermost was his unswerving confidence in God. Hear him: "According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed but that . . . Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death" (Phil. 1:20). It has been said, "You can't treat God with too much confidence." Peter adds, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promises. . ." (II Peter 3:9).

To be of value in the world before men however, confidence in God and His providences must be demonstrated in unwavering courage every day. So Paul goes at it "with all boldness" For the most part, what a weak and complaining lot we are in this our day. God have mercy on us! It has been ably stated that God not only tempers the wind to the shorn lamb; He also grows wool on its back, so it can face the wind. Sometimes we ask God to change the weather when we should have asked Him to let the "wool" grow on us a little faster. Sometimes we want God to perform miracles for us when He would rather make a miracle out of us, if we would let Him.

Another characteristic of Paul's faith was his constancy. In verse 20 we read these words, "as always" Paul was steady in his faith and confidence in God whether in fair weather or foul Paul knew, by faith, that the distressing circumstances of his life would change -- "this shall turn" (v. 19). He knew that God would not change and that he himself had settled it that he would not alter his outlook of steadfast trust in God. And is not this our confidence that God and good shall triumph over Satan and all evil?

Even beyond Paul's unswerving confidence in God was a commitment that surpassed all reservation -- "Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death." Paul's commitment was unto death. We miss it when we look for advantage in this life and fail in a total commitment to God. The old timers used to call it what they termed "death bed consecration" -- a complete releasing of themselves (all they have and are and hope to be), into the hands and will of God as one is compelled to do at the moment of their physical death.

Paul grasped the divine norm when he said, "For me to live is Christ." Life without a purpose or goal is sheer drudgery. The divine purpose for every life is to live it for Christ. Paul accepted this commission. If your life is empty or meaningless or without purpose, then you have not found the exciting romance of living for Christ. Follow Paul in an unreserved commitment to God and life for you will become a thrilling experience.

One final thing that we can learn from Paul's experience as depicted in this wonderful first chapter to the Philippians -- he grasped the significance of life's consummation -- "To die is gain." What an outlook! No fear of death but a looking forward to that time when we can be with Christ.

Seek that faith that will hold you through every variance of life and in the end, admit you into the presence of Him who redeemed us with His blood.

THE CORNERSTONE OF LIVING

I. Parker Maxey

CHAPTER 10 FAITH VERSUS UNBELIEF

Experiential evidence deprives the skeptic of every rational objection to the reality of personal salvation, makes a fool of the atheist, puts to shame the unbelieving, and condemns the disobedient. The invitation has gone forth, . . . prove me, . . . saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing . . ." (Mal. 3:10). "If any man will do his will," saith Jesus, "he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (John 7:17).

God has given us in His Word proof after proof of His faithfulness and reliability and we, personally, only have to put it to the test through a simple trust and obedience to find that God never fails, but always keeps His Word. Joshua testified in his day that "There failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass" (Joshua 21:45).

We are so slow to believe God! Unbelief is the one cardinal sin of them all. As I read the Bible through in my childhood years, I marvelled at the awful stupidity and slowness, and the senselessness of God's chosen people in their rebellion and failure to believe and obey God. What blessings they forfeited! What sufferings they reaped -- all because of their unbelief. What sufferings and deprivations they brought on themselves and their offspring because of their unbelief at Kadesh-barnea. I did not, as a child, fully grasp or understand the nature of unbelief -- that their unbelief was not intellectual ignorance but moral corruption.

How unreasonable it was for Naaman the Syrian Captain to hesitate to ". . . Go and wash in Jordan seven times . . ." to be healed of his leprosy. (2 Kings 5:10). What if the blind man in John 9:7, whom Jesus directed to wash in the pool of Siloam, had refused to comply? He would have deserved to grope in darkness all his days had he given himself over to endless reasonings instead of willing and ready obedience. What deserved loss the Syrophenician woman (Mark 7:24-30), would have sustained had she given over to unbelief. By her humble, persistent faith she sealed the word of God as true for ". . . God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (Acts 10:34, 35).

Today the picture is the same. Humanity from the cradle to the grave -- through babyhood, childhood, youth, middle age and declining years -- is suffering agonies in body, mind and spirit that would not be their lot but for the awful sin of unbelief.

God identifies Himself with His WORD. The Bible is full of promises waiting to be fulfilled in behalf of those who will trust and obey. Christianity has not, will not, cannot fail when the simple conditions laid down in the Word of God are met.

Empty are the arguments of the haughty skeptic who urges his senseless reasonings against Christianity upon others, but who will not consent to test the questions by an experimental criterion.

Jesus said, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine" (John 7:17). In other words Jesus is saying, "Submit to the requirements of the gospel, obey My commands, and you shall have evidence to convince you, beyond the possibility of a doubt, that My religion is divine."

Unbelief grieves God's heart more than any other sin.

Unbelief ties the hands of God -- ". . . ye have not because ye ask not" (James 4:2).

So little is accomplished among us because of unbelief! It shuts the door of salvation to the sinner. It keeps the child of God from obtaining a holy heart. It robs the sanctified of many rich blessings he could be receiving.

The greatest hindrance to faith is the inward principle of unbelief. This principle in the unsanctified soul acts to produce fear, causes reasonings, defeats the purposes of God, robs one of power, causes us to depart from God and brings condemnation to the soul.

There is a mystery to faith, but it dissolves at the feet of the humble and obedient and those of pure conscience (I Timothy 3:9). To the trusting soul, the interior eye of faith is opened by the Holy Ghost, to understand and appreciate spiritual realities.

Faith is a substance and a conviction. We must act out faith by taking sides with God against unbelief -- like the Syrophenician woman -- until this act of voluntary faith passes into the gracious state of believing.

In another place in the Bible we are told to "fight the good fight of faith." How are we to do this? One put it this way:

Sure, I must fight if I would reign.
Increase my courage, Lord.
I'll bear the toil, endure the pain,
Supported by Thy Word.

Abraham, the friend of God and father of those who are of faith, proved the Word of God by a naked faith and won the approbation of the Almighty. Against hope, he yet believed, and being not weak in faith, "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief." Being fully persuaded, he steadied himself on the plain Word of God by nesting in the divine purpose when there was absolutely nothing in outer circumstances to warrant his belief. He proved God and found Him to be true and faithful to His Word.

The Bible is full of the promises of God, and God is waiting to prove His faithfulness to His Word. We prove God by simply believing His Word! The people asked Jesus, "What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?" (John 6:28). Jesus answered. . . "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent" (v. 29). Faith is more than "easy believism"!

We cannot set God's Word aside and prosper spiritually. It is Scriptural to pay tithe and beyond that to give offerings just because we love God and are zealous to obey His Word. We prosper spiritually by doing so and suffer spiritual loss when we fail at this point.

We prove God by keeping the Christian Sabbath holy and free from unnecessary labor. No one can prosper spiritually and will only suffer spiritual leanness and even spiritual death by failing to observe God's fourth commandment, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy." Be careful, reader, how you treat God's holy day.

We prove God by seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, putting our spiritual welfare and faithfulness to the means of grace ahead of secular interests.

We prove our faith in God by enduring trials patiently rather than complainingly and putting our trust in His Word and "In everything [giving] thanks" regardless.

To what extent, I might ask myself, am I willing to prove God, yea, even more, to what extent does God require me to go in my proof of His faithfulness to preserve me unto eternal life? The answer is found in these words: "... they loved not their lives unto the death" (Rev. 12:11). Physical life in this world must be forfeited sooner or later, along with all the living that goes with it in this "passing" mode of life. By faith in the unchanging Word of God that abides the dissolution of all things, we understand that eternal life is granted to those who have become alive spiritually by a second birth and who will, through the power of the indwelt Holy Spirit, live a life of righteousness, sealing their consecration even unto death. Thus have martyrs proven the Word of God and in doing so have gained a place in God's eternal home.

Yes, God identifies Himself with His Word. May God grant that none of us in our period of probation will back down from this proving ground of faith.

THE CORNERSTONE OF LIVING

I. Parker Maxey

CHAPTER 11 FAITH IN THE FURNACE

"I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction. Isaiah 48:10

In the context of the Scripture where this verse appears God is saying to His chosen people, the Israelites, "I have put you in the crucible of affliction, in captivity, that you may acknowledge your sins, and turn to me." In the verse following, verse eleven, He makes it clear that He is doing this primarily for His own glory. The very purpose of our existence is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.

This verse also has a spiritual application that we want to consider in this meditation. In the refinement of metals, the severity of the process to bring them to purification is in direct proportion to their preciousness. To this process the intense heat of the furnace is indispensable. Metals of highest value are refined by being placed in the central fires of the furnace and heated to the greatest intensity. Silver may be refined without this severest of intensities, thus, in the text, "I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction" (emphasis mine). God is dealing now with His specially chosen saints in anticipation of ". . . that day when I make up my jewels" (Mal. 3:17). It is the sanctified believer who is here addressed by his Maker. God's design is to develop virtues in the heart that could not otherwise be realized. One use of the furnace is to prove, or test metals. It is a law of nature and it is a law of grace, that everything that can abide the fire -- everything that is precious -- must be tried.

In the Book of Divine Revelation we readily see that God employs various ways and means to develop virtues in His chosen ones. This is our claim upon Him. He created us and it is not presumptive to think that we have a right to expect that He should make out of us the best He can, and should do a refining work on the creatures He has created. It is His purpose to burn up our dross, and bring out our full beauty and worth. Love impels him to do so. For this purpose He employs "the furnace."

This furnace is afflictive. Severe trials sent by the great Proprietor and Manager of this furnace are His way to purge and refine the souls of His people. Chastisement may come through bodily affliction, the scantiness of temporal things, domestic heartaches arising from an ungodly companion, or abusive blood kin, or the injustices of men. They may come suddenly, unsolicited, and with no apparent reason or for any known good. Abel suffered the furnace of his brother's enmity and persecution; Enoch, the wicked "conversation" of the age in which he lived. Noah stood in the furnace of slander and abusive laughter. Of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, it can be said, "these were God's tried people." Joseph stood in the intense heat of enmity and jealousy and evil design. Moses suffered the abuse of aspiring position seekers and the loneliness of high office; Joshua and Caleb, the furnace of wilderness sufferings brought on by the rebellion of others; David, the intense heat of murderous jealousy while wandering in caves and dens, being hunted like the partridge by a

remorseless foe. Job stood in the fiery intensity of a thousand furnaces, knowing not that he was the tool of a controversy between his Maker and Satan. He withstood the furnace heat of an apparent abandonment of God; and so we could go on down through the history of man to this present time. "Time would fail me to tell" of all the furnace experiences of God's Jewels.

The furnace is Divinely appointed. It is not the result of chance. Afflictions arise not out of the dust. They are not the works of our enemies alone. They arise from the moral government of God, and the wise and gracious arrangements of His Providence. Every event in our lives is either His appointment, or has His all-wise permission (Gen. 50:20; Ps. 6:10; Isa. 10:5; John 13:27; Acts 4:27, 28; Rom. 9:17, 18), and accompanying these events His all-sufficient grace is vouch-safed to the soul who will by faith appropriate it to himself.

The furnace is designed to be beneficial to God's children and God's Kingdom. Even as a furnace is prepared for the refining of gold, so afflictions are appointed for the saints who are compared to gold (Lam. 4:2; Job 23:10). The Divine Being places a high value upon His people. They are His Jewels, His chosen, His peculiar people and it is His will that they should shine in the world, and exhibit the glory and power of His grace. Adoniram Judson carried a great burden for the Jewish people and supposed God would send him as a missionary to accomplish their salvation. Judson was not permitted to go in person, but instead God put him in the "furnace of affliction" in Burma. The account of Judson's cruel treatment and suffering, which was only the Divine instrument to mature and then bring to light Judson's love for his enemies, so convicted the Jews that they turned to God by the scores. This unparalleled turning to God was not known by Judson, for God, in the meantime had taken him to his eternal home.

This furnace is proportionate. God will regulate its heat according to the circumstances of His people who may be placed there. "He sits as a refiner" (Mal. 3:3). As a refiner adopts this posture for minute inspection, that He may quicken the fire, or lower its temperature, as He sees the need may intimate, so the Divine presence, Divine inspection and Divine compassion deal with the afflicted saint (I Cor. 10:13; Isa. 43:2).

The furnace is designed to be selective. "I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction." It is out of this furnace that God makes up His Jewels (Mal. 3:17; see also Prov. 17:3). As we have intimated earlier, afflictive providences in themselves are crushing evils coming upon us for no visible reason nor for any apparent good. They seem at the moment as deadly strokes falling upon our sensitive natures. "Whether they shall issue in life or death to us, depends wholly upon the moral state in which they are received, and endured. If, while we are in the crucible or in the furnace, 'patience has her perfect work,' we then become 'perfect and entire, wanting nothing.' If, in the same circumstances, the mind loses its spiritual balance, becomes chafed and fretted, restless and despondent; above all, if it loses hope and faith in God, then it loses its reward, and Satan takes the crown." (A. Mahan) (Ezek. 22:18, 22).

The root of the matter, dear reader, is within thee. Matthew Henry gives this beautiful exposition, "I have made thee a choice one by the good which the furnace has done thee." It is sad but true, however, that all persons in the furnace of affliction are not chosen as God's Jewels. Some are cast off as refuse (Ps. 81:12, 13; Hosea 4:17).

We must allow the design of the furnace to induce in us patience and submission. The time of trial is short in comparison to eternity (Ps. 30:5; 2 Cor. 4:17). It is called "the day of adversity; the hour of affliction but for a moment."

We conclude with the admonition by Asa Mahan: "Hereafter, when days of darkness come, when pain afflicts, when bereavements melt and adversity chastens our hearts, when the floods purify and the furnace refines our spirits, and the weight of great sorrow presses us down upon the bosom of God, let the fixed language of our soul be, 'Welcome, Cross of Christ! Welcome, everlasting life.'"

THE CORNERSTONE OF LIVING

I. Parker Maxey

CHAPTER 12 FAITH IN GOD'S FAITHFULNESS

It is a miracle that anyone is saved -- a miracle of Divine grace. This miracle, however, involves the freedom of the human will. The disciples raised the question, "Are there few that be saved?" (Luke 13:23). Jesus did not answer the question directly. He stated a fact, when He said, "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat; Because strait is the gate and narrow the way, which leadeth into life, and few there be that find it" (Matt. 7:13, 14). In place of giving a direct answer to this question He exhorted them to "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able" (Luke 13:24).

Let me testify. I do not consider myself an exceptional person -- just one among the multitude of common, ordinary people. Yet I must admit that God has been fair with me. I will have to say with the song writer, "He stood at my heart's door 'mid sunshine and rain, and patiently waited an entrance to gain. What shame that so long He entreated in vain." God was faithful to my soul. I am glad I responded one day. I did so of my own volition, and He saved me. Had I never responded I could never have charged my loss to Him, but only to myself. The responsibility for the condition and destiny of my soul was mine alone -- God had done His part and I knew it.

In the parable of the marriage supper (Matt. 22:12), the King asked the question, "Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless." The plain inference here is that his unpreparedness was solely his own responsibility. A wedding garment had been provided, but he did not avail himself of it.

"God is no respecter of persons." If I can testify of God's faithfulness to me and that because of this the responsibility for the destiny of my soul will be forever mine, then, on the authority of God's word, so can every member of Adam's race. But perhaps you feel, reader, this does not adequately answer the question of "Why so few?" Then let us take a look at what the Bible records about Jabez, found in I Chronicles 4:9, 10.

In the midst of the recording of genealogies the Holy Spirit passes over great men and men of renown, but stops at the name of Jabez. In the sight of men and measured by the standards of those days Jabez was worthless, insignificant and overshadowed with sorrow and poverty He was born into a family who had lost their inheritance and were counted unworthy of a place in Israel. Evil ways had ruined family fortune, broken the mother's heart and brought disgrace on the entire household.

We are prone to look upon many people from every standpoint they can be viewed as practically damned even before they are born -- souls born into a drunkard's home or to God-hating parents, or into an infidel's home, or into an environment separated from all godly instruction or atmosphere. Man's freedom of will is affected and its power is diminished by want of harmony in his inward being. The passions and affections influenced by inherited sinful nature strike for control.

It is true that heredity and environment do determine the context into which our present life is set. These two forces can and usually do destroy life at its first spiritual budding, but they do not need to. In the case at hand the Holy Spirit takes us to Jabez' prayer chamber. Jabez is one of those persons whom we would be prone to consider as born without a chance -- born to be damned. But God is a God of light, "... the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (John 1:9). This light -- dim as it may have been -- caused Jabez to cry out. He "cried" unto God; he put his heartache into words, "Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed." His cry was for a true blessing -- something that would meet his deepest need, "And God granted him that which he requested."

Oh, if man would call on God out of all sincerity when God (and it is God who does it), puts that impulse, that longing, that deep cry for reality into their hearts. Truly He is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34). He will hear that cry and meet and satisfy the longings of that soul with His salvation. He will deliver from sin.

One's mind is not turned into this channel of thought very long until the age-old question is asked, will the heathen who have never heard of the gospel of Jesus Christ be lost in eternal hell fire? We turn to God's Word for the answer. In Romans 1:18 we read, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness." The word "hold" by most if not all authorities means "to hold down," "to hinder," "to suppress." We can safely conclude, then, that the Word of God here is telling us that it is the truth which is "held down," hindered, thwarted, checked in its free and expansive operation by men in their unrighteousness. In the following verses in this first chapter of Romans, (verses 19, 20) we read, "Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." It is freely admitted that the light of those who are born and raised in heathen darkness is very dim. They had the light of nature and the awareness of a supreme being and with that, as moral beings, a dim light of right and wrong. But the fact is that what little light they did have they suppressed, resisted, held down, so that "they are without excuse." According to God's Word they are without excuse just as men who have had an abundance of light but have suppressed it and resisted it are without excuse (Rom. 1:20).

Joseph Stalin's daughter, Svetlana Aliluyeva, is a living illustration of God's universal faithfulness to every soul. Born in an atheist's home, she testifies to the fact that the reality of a living God cannot be obliterated from the conscience or consciousness of one raised apart from God's word and in a home where one is taught to be an atheist and materialist. In the book, *Svetlana, the Story of Stalin's Daughter*, by Martin Ebon, on page 163 Svetlana is quoted as saying "Since my childhood I have been taught communism, and I believed in it, as we all did, my generation . . . I was brought up in a family where there was never any talk about God. But when I became a grown-up person, I found that it was impossible to exist without God in one's heart. I came to that conclusion myself, without anybody's help or preaching. But that was a great change, because, since that moment, the main dogmas of communism lost their significance for me." In another statement in her book, *Twenty Letters to a Friend*, page 72, she states, "I, who'd been taught from earliest childhood by society and my family to be an atheist and materialist, was already one of those who cannot live without God. I am glad that it is so."

Because God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34), because He is the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world (John 1:9), all men who do not heed that light will stand at God's judgment bar speechless and condemned.

Oh, the faithfulness of a loving God who will not leave Himself without witness to any soul. Reader, how have you treated this true and faithful God? You cannot deny His faithfulness to you. Oh what a price He paid to justify the ungodly. The salvation of every member of Adam's race now rests completely on their own shoulders. If you have not already responded to His overtures, do so before you are forced to stand before His throne of judgment unprepared.

THE CORNERSTONE OF LIVING

I. Parker Maxey

CHAPTER 13 FAITH THAT PRODUCES FAITHFULNESS

There is a principle laid down in Luke 16:10 that carries through every phase of life: "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much." Seven hundred years before Christ was born, God, through the Prophet Isaiah, instructed us with these words, "Learn to do well" (Isa. 1:17). Judah had sinned greatly, but God had promised to forgive them if they would repent. He said, "... cease to do evil; Learn to do well" (Isa. 1:16, 17). God meant not only to refrain from doing evil, but we are to do good in a positive way. This "Christian" approach to life will reflect itself in all of one's doings.

A duke came upon a workman one day who was taking infinite care and pains with his work. He asked the laborer, "What is your purpose in making this box?" "I intend to plant flowers in it, sir." The amused duke continued, "It will be filled with dirt. Why take such pains with it, to make each joint and surface perfect?" "Because I love perfect things," the workman replied. "Ah, wasted effort! No one will observe its perfection. A mere flower box does not require such perfection." "But my spirit does," insisted the workman as he continued his labors. The duke grunted in disgust. "Do you suppose," asked the laborer, "that the Carpenter of Nazareth ever made anything less well than He could make it?" The duke's anger was aroused as he replied, "Sacrilege! Your impudence deserves flogging! What is your name?" "Michelangelo, sir," was his reply.

No wonder the work of Michelangelo stands to inspire all who look at it. His conception of work and its dignity made each task a noble stewardship. Paul had the same view when he wrote, "Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as unto the Lord." (Col. 3:23).

In contrast to this is the spirit of slovenliness. Webster defines a sloven as one who is careless in his habits, behavior, appearance, or methods of work; a dirty or untidy person. The first cousin to a sloven is a slothful person, a sluggard, both of whom the Bible condemns severely. (Judges 18:9; Matt. 25:26; Heb. 6:12; Prov. 18:9; 24:24-30; Prov. 6:6; 13:4)

Man's spirit demands perfection. Whether or not one attains this in heart or life is another question. Faithfulness is one of the ingredients of perfection of accomplishment. God implants in man a spirit of carefulness that will produce a faithfulness in performing life's duties if this God given quality is cultivated and matured (read 2 Cor. 7:10, 11). Many, however, fail to nurture this gift from God and thereby drift into slovenliness.

A spirit of carefulness will produce a faithfulness to devotion. This quality of a Divinely imparted spirit of carefulness is expressed in the words of the Psalmist when he said: "O God, thou art my God; early [my emphasis] will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is" (Ps. 63:1). Again, in Proverbs 8:17 the Inspirer of Holy Writ would urge the saint on to a faithfulness and carefulness in spiritual exercise that would keep him in a perfect relationship to his Maker when He stated: "I love them that love me: and those that seek

me early shall find me." The word early which appears in both passages just quoted is expressive of that quality of earnestness and faithfulness to high spiritual ideal which is so lacking in the slothful, but which produces a high quality of spirituality in the faithful.

In Hebrews 6:11-12 we read: "And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." In this Scripture along with the context, we are warned against drifting into spiritual slothfulness which is sure to lead ultimately to spiritual death. It was indelibly impressed on my mind as a youth that there would always be a place and demand in the Kingdom of God for any one and every one who would pay the price, whatever it would take, to maintain a Holy Ghost filled life. We could well ask, why the many spiritual dropouts? Why so many spiritually anemic Christians? Why so much apparent weakness among the professed body of Christ? It is a failure in diligence to cultivate the God-given desire to be spiritual.

Then, in the next place, there will be a faithfulness to service. No greater words of commendation can come from anyone than those spoken by Jesus when He said: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant . . . enter into the joy of the Lord" (Matt. 25:21). This is the reward of faithfulness in service for others. The royal life is a life of service. The road to greatness, according to the Master, is service. Tragic indeed are the gaps created by the absence of laborers in the unreaped fields of the world today; but indescribably glorious is the sight of toiling workers laboring arduously, devotedly and faithfully "in the smiling fields of corn, bringing in the golden sheaves!"

"An Indian legend tells of a good spirit who, wishing to benefit a young princess, led her into a golden corn field and said: 'See these ears of corn, my daughter? If thou wilt pluck them diligently, they will turn to precious jewels, the richer the ear of corn, the brighter the gem. But thou mayest pass only once through this corn field and canst not return the same way: The maiden gladly accepted the offer. As she went on she found many ripe and full ears of corn in her path, but she did not pluck them, hoping always to find better ones farther on. But presently the stems grew thinner and the ears poorer, with scarcely any kernels of corn on them. Farther on they were blighted, and she did not think them worth picking. Extremely sorrowful, she stood at the end of the field, for she could not go back the same way, and with deep distress she stood regretting vainly the loss of the golden ears she had overlooked or passed by, but lost. To each of us, golden opportunities are given. Let us therefore 'labour for the Master from the dawn till setting sun!' In Wesley's cheering words: 'God will not fail to reward us with the harvest. If we go on sowing all this life, we shall go on reaping through all eternity.' " (God's Revivalist) The lack of faithfulness, a sloven spirit, will bring us to the end of life as the maiden in the story above, with the deep distress and anguish of spirit vainly regretting life's lost opportunities.

We notice in the third place how quickly the gifts and qualities of the Spirit that are bestowed so freely and without respect of persons upon all deteriorate into slothfulness and slovenliness when not acted upon. To hesitate in obedience and faithfulness to the Divine urge has proven fatal to the spiritual life of the majority. "Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man" (Prov. 6:10, 11). The Bible speaks about "the mystery of godliness." This mystery dissolves in a simple, faithful obedience to the Divine urge.

In conclusion we would notice that the quality of faithfulness must be a continuing factor in our life. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev. 2:10). Slovenliness can creep in on a soul in the last moments of life if one does not continue faithful. In First Kings the thirteenth chapter we read about "the man of God" who faithfully performed the commandments of God and afterwards, on his way home, was found sitting under an oak tree. No doubt he was weary from the battle and sat down to rest. If he had just kept walking! This stopping to rest proved to be his downfall. The pressure of these last days tends to bring a weariness over the soul -- weary of protesting the evil, weary from holding Bible standards in the face of decaying morals, weary of continually facing the pressure of these days, weary of the awful falling away. This tends to foster a "what's the use of trying anymore?" attitude. But God promises, "as our days, so shall our strength be" and so we have the promised strength to be "faithful unto death."

God help us in these last days to meet the requirements of faithfulness that are demanded of God's stewards.

THE CORNERSTONE OF LIVING

I. Parker Maxey

CHAPTER 14 FAITH'S TESTINGS

"And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham" (Gen. 22:1). We understand that the word "tempt" in this verse means "to prove anyone, to put him to the test."

It would appear that God does not test very many souls. God put Abraham to a supreme test concerning his son Isaac, a test which certainly revealed the nature of Abraham's love and loyalty to God.

Most people are knocked out before God ever has an opportunity to test them. This was so in Lot's case. Lot was overcome before God Himself could test him -- Sodom knocked him out. "And Lot lifted up his eyes, and behold all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the Lord destroyed Sodom . . . even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt . . . and Lot pitched his tent toward Sodom . . . and Lot . . . dwelt in Sodom" (Gen. 13:10-12; 14:12).

Most people never get past houses and lands and people and self. Abraham got out where God alone could put him to the test. He got there through a grueling process. God required four things of him before he got right down to testing what he really was in his heart.

The first thing God required of Abraham was to "Get thee out of thy country," (Gen. 12:1). To place intrinsic value in this life only, or in the things of this world, can only end in eternal loss. People who put undue emphasis on materiality and value things, and earthly home and earthly associates above their love for God and a right relationship to Him, will sell their soul for a morsel of bread. We are closer to this than we would like to admit. Minds are being conditioned now for the "sell out" Jesus said of his followers, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (John 17:16). Carnal hearts who follow the world in their style of living will not be able to withstand the pressure that is on. Abraham obeyed God in his relationship to this world. He did not pattern his life after the manner of his day but became a "tent dweller," "for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11:10).

Abraham also passed the "family" test. Going with God is an individual matter that must be settled alone with God. No one can settle it for anyone but himself. Many times family ties influence individuals away from absolute and unreserved loyalty to God. When light comes to an individual he is to walk in it. This means, many times, going cross current with other members of one's immediate family. When these end-day pressures get on, more and more members of families who have not sold out to go with God will sell each other out. Jesus said, "For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household" (Matt. 10:35, 36). In the final judgment we will stand, not as family groups, but as individuals before God, the judge of all men. Far better to bear the cross now, whatever the price, rather than to suffer the loss in that day.

Another test that Abraham passed was the "relative test" One of the requirements that God put on him was that he was to "Get thee out . . . from thy kindred . . . " (Gen. 12:1). Not only to leave his immediate family, but all blood ties. God had given Abraham four specific directives to follow -- "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land I will shew thee." It was not until Abraham had obeyed in these four things that God began again to give him further leadership. God means for us to obey Him completely if we are going to walk with Him, enjoy His fellowship and continue to enjoy His leadership. How many start out but do not continue to walk with God? They hold on to some "link" with the past. They cannot enjoy the full blessing of God because of this tie.

The fourth thing that God required of Abraham was the test of the "unknown" He was to go "unto a land that I will shew thee." Abraham passed this test. "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went" (Heb. 11:8). So many miss it here. They fail to die out to everything but God's will, and so they live their life out of the will of God. Self must have something to say about it. They fail to "leave the unknown future in the Master's hands," and settle it to obey God. There can never be a resurrection into the perfect liberty of the sons of God until this step is taken. There can be no security in God or perfect rest of soul without passing this test. Call it what you will, it is a "death to the carnal self" route one must take. There is that carnal mind one is born with that does not and will not take this way. Man is free in his choices and he can take a stand against his own carnal self and stand with God, on His side. When he does, victory comes, freedom comes and a new life in God begins.

Sooner or later God will test a person's love. He did Abraham's! Would he give up the son of his love, Isaac, for God? Where a person's love is centered determines who his God is. If his love is centered in himself or someone or something other than God he will sooner or later suffer tragic loss. I know about a farmer who committed suicide when he lost a season's crops because of storms. His farm was his god and when it failed his god was wiped out. But the infinite God is eternal, immutable and sovereign, and to love Him with all one's heart and to love other things and persons in relationship to Him is the only wise, safe and enduring way. There can never be complete victory or rest of soul until we are dead to all self-love and tied to God.

Abraham passed all four tests in good shape and then God tested him for what he really was in his heart. It is possible for a person to pass all four tests and still not pass the real "heart" test. By sheer will power and determination with conviction, people have made an outward shift from following the worldly way of living and have lined up to Christian principles and standards -- they have gotten a good case of head religion. They have done this in spite of family and relative pressure. Numbers have gone to foreign fields in service for the Master and failed in the end to pass God's real "heart" test. The self-life and self-love they failed to get rid of asserted itself and instead of being a blessing they have been a hindrance to Kingdom work and a cause of tension among those they labor with.

God tests us to strengthen and help us and to reveal our real heart love. Many fail in this heart test and because of it they suffer eternal loss.

Can you pass God's heart tests?

THE CORNERSTONE OF LIVING

I. Parker Maxey

SECTION III **STRIVING FOR VICTORIOUS LIVING**

It is not so much the greatness of our troubles, as the littleness of our spirit, which makes us complain. --J. Taylor

When Daniel was faced with a decision, it didn't take him long to declare; He would rather sleep with a lion than to try to live without prayer. --C. W. Renwick

We have all eternity to celebrate the victories, but only a few hours before sunset to win them. --Amy Carmichael

Faith is not believing that God can, but that God will!

All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. --2 Tim. 3:16, 17

THE CORNERSTONE OF LIVING

I. Parker Maxey

CHAPTER 14 THE WAY OF JOY

Jesus prayed for His disciples "that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves" (John 17:13). Much is said in the Bible about the joy of God's people. We read in Isaiah 61:1-3:

"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;

"To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn;

"To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified."

Furthermore, Isaiah gives his own testimony by saying,

"I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for 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. 6:10).

Paul proclaims,

"For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. 14:17).

The eternal, omnipotent, immutable God is the source of the Christian's joy. Six hundred years before Christ, Habakkuk saw the coming of Nebuchadnezzar with his mighty army upon the Jews. He saw the whole country devastated and laid waste; herds destroyed, flocks scattered, fruits, grains and every vegetable swept away, his own people in chains, suffering slavery and starvation. Could a man rejoice amid such a scene of dire suffering and calamity? If so, it would take more than human power; yet we read in Habakkuk 3:17-19:

"Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fall, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls:

"Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.

"The Lord God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places. To the chief singer on my stringed instruments."

Real joy, as both Habakkuk and Isaiah expressed it, is the joy that our salvation brings. It is foreign to the one who is not experiencing the saving grace of God. Genuine joy necessitates an unflinching faith. Peter puts it this way,

". . .believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Believing what?

Believing that our sins are all pardoned.

Believing that our sin-stained hearts are washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb.

Believing ". . . that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

Believing that ". . . if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Cor. 5:1).

Believing that an all-wise, all-loving, all-powerful God rules and overrules in all the affairs of His children and thus that nothing intrinsically evil can ever come to one of His children.

Believing that God "can take all evil, even the mistakes and sins of a penitent child of God, and by the alchemy of His divine grace so transform them that they boomerang against Satan, enhance the character of the saints, and redound to the glory of God."

David cried out, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation" (Ps. 51:12). He had grievously sinned and lost his salvation and could see nothing but darkness and hell. When his salvation was restored God opened his lips and his mouth showed forth the praises of God.

The joy of the entirely sanctified, under the most dire calamities, has always been a wonder to many. His joy is unrelenting. It is not affected by his surroundings so that he can "count it all joy when [he falls] into divers temptations." James further says, "Blessed [happy] is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life. . ." (James 1:2). A holy heart calls down the wrath of Satan and the imps of hell and fiery opposition from unclean hearts. Yet a holy heart can still joy in the Lord, for by faith he can see final victory.

The joy of the sanctified abides in the midst of suffering and persecutions. All that live godly will suffer persecution. There is an odium that goes with being sanctified wholly and following the Holy Spirit closely. But there is a real joy and a romance that springs from the consciousness of being led by the Holy Spirit no matter the circumstance or suffering involved. It is those who oppose both the doctrine of perfect love and the ones who do not possess that experience that are miserable and unhappy. Who do you suppose suffered the most when the three Hebrew children were cast into the furnace of fire, they or their opposers? Who suffered the most the night Daniel spent in the lion's den, Daniel or the king? Would you have rather suffered with Joseph or his wicked brothers when

they were found out? The Apostles rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for Christ while their tormentors raged and gnashed their teeth. It is not the persecuted that have unremitting sorrow -- it is the persecutors.

But is there never sorrow? Speaking of the present salvation of God that the Christians after Pentecost enjoyed, Peter states: "Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations" (I Peter 1:6). Adam Clarke has this to say: "Those to whom St. Peter wrote rejoiced greatly, danced for joy, while they were grieved with various trials?" The word "heaviness" signifies "to grieve," "to make sorrowful." Clarke further states, "perhaps heaviness is not the best rendering of the original word, as this can scarcely ever consist with rejoicing; but to be sorrowful on account of something external to ourselves, and yet exulting in God from a sense of his goodness to us, is quite compatible: so that we may say with St. Paul, always sorrowing yet still rejoicing."

It is this joy that gives the Church power. ". . . the joy of the Lord is your strength" (Nehemiah 8:10). Joy is power. A joyless Christian is a powerless Christian. A joyless church is a powerless church. Genuine joy will send conviction to the hearts of sinners. The greatest drawing card a church can possibly have is members whose hearts constantly overflow with the joys of salvation.

Finally, we want to note that joy is an expression of "the fruit of the Spirit" which is LOVE. Only as we live in love can we fulfill the will of God in our lives. The believer must become love-inspired, love-mastered and love-driven. "The fruit of the Spirit is love," and it is manifested in joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.

"Joy is love's strength.
Peace is love's security.
Long-suffering is love's patience.
Gentleness is love's conduct.
Goodness is love's character.
Faith is love's confidence.
Meekness is love's humility.
Temperance is love's victory."

May God help us to possess and manifest the joy of the Lord!

THE CORNERSTONE OF LIVING

I. Parker Maxey

CHAPTER 16 THE GRACE OF SUBMISSION

Submission is something most people do not like, yet it is one of the Bible requisites of a happy, victorious life.

The Greek word that is translated either "submit" or "subject" is used at least forty times in the New Testament. It means to yield, surrender, obey; to humble one's self, to be in subjection to; to be obedient unto; to possess the virtue of meekness. We are exhorted to "be subject to the law of God, to be subject unto the higher power. For there is no power but of God." The church is to be "subject unto Christ," "servants [are to be] subject to [their] masters."

In Romans 10:3 Paul talks about those who ". . . have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." In Ephesians 5:21, 22 he talks about "submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord." Peter uses this word submit twice and subject once. "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake," . . . "ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility" (I Peter 2:13; 5:5).

Man in his carnal state does not possess the spirit of subjection. He is possessed with a Satanic spirit of independency and enmity and self-will, not subject to any one or any law except through force or fear or for personal gain.

Submission, however, is the way of life in reality. It can be no other way because of our origin as created, dependent beings and because of our relationship as being one in a society of many individuals. There is no place or position in this life or the life to come, for that matter, where submission is not required. Submission is the way of life, regardless, for both sinner and saint. Every individual submits either to Satan or to God. There is no neutral ground. "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? . . . Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness. . . 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" (Romans 6:16, 18, 13).

Most people have a wrong conception of what is involved in submission. It should not, and need not mean a cringing, slavish, fearful attitude. It does not mean the loss of liberty or freedom in the true sense of the word. Jesus said, ". . . ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. . . If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:32, 36).

Let me raise a question and then answer it. What does submission for the Christian mean? It means to yield or surrender one's self by a voluntary choice to his lot or position in life. It means total

liberty and freedom of heart to do, or accomplish, or let be accomplished in one, that for which he was designed or created. This is the only basis for true satisfaction and happiness.

There is a negative and positive side, however, to submission. On the negative side it involves a giving over -- a yielding of all that we are, and have, or hope to have, or hope to be. From the negative standpoint, submission involves the virtue of meekness. To fully understand this we must look to the example and teaching of Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Matt. 11:29). We read in 2 Cor. 10:1, "Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ. . . ." The New Testament regards meekness as a Christian grace and one of the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:23). Read also Eph. 4:2; Col. 3:12; I Tim. 6:11; 2 Tim. 2:25; Titus 3:2; James 1:21; 3:13; I Peter 3:15. "Christians are exhorted to cherish meekness and to emulate Christ's example, especially in relation to one another. The meek man does not fight for his own rights or insist upon vindication of his personal honor. He does not repay in kind when injustices are done to him. His is not the spirit of retribution; instead, he commits himself and his cause to God and leaves vengeance with divine justice and mercy. Thus meekness (and in our consideration we could add, submission and subjection) is not incompatible with legitimate self-regard, but it does not assert itself for its own sake. Meekness is the opposite of pride, which is basically a reliance upon and assertion of one's self independence of God, and thus the root of sin." (Ralph F. Powell)

But submission has a positive side as well as a negative. To be passively submissive only in life is to miss its meaning altogether. For example, a wife may submit herself to her own husband as required in God's word (Eph. 5:24), and even a Christian wife to an unsaved husband (I Peter 3:1). But if she does this from the negative or passive standpoint only, she reduces herself to being his slave and forfeits her dignity as a woman and as being on a par as a member of the human race. But let a woman submit herself to her God-given position as a wife and actively fill that place as a loving and kind companion, a homemaker and a home keeper and fill that home with cheerfulness, and support her husband in his efforts with her faith and encouragements; let her work at the job in preparing delicious, attractive meals, keeping the house clean, clothes washed and mended; let her keep the presence of God down on her own soul. In short, let her submit to her husband in her role as wife and as mother to his children. If more women would learn submission, first in a negative manner of accepting their God given place in life and then by positively filling their position by every means possible, it would be a hard-hearted man indeed that would not respond favorably. And is not this the meaning of the passage in I Peter where we read, "Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives"? But instead of this the world, and the church to a greater degree than we would like to admit, have followed this hell-inspired "women's lib movement" and women have not learned the true role of submission. For a wife who has not learned this grace of submission, "like the crowing of a hen, bodes ill luck to the family," and a family where neither husband nor wife fill their delegated place is like the rhyme that appears in Adam Clarke's comments in Ephesians chapter five, verses 21 and 22 (Clarke's Commentary. Vol. VI, pp. 463, 464):

"Ill thrives the hapless family that shows
A cock that's silent, and a hen that crows:
I know not which live more unnatural lives,
Obeying husbands, or commanding wives."

For an example of the positive aspect of "submitting one's self," let us take a look at the scripture which admonishes, "Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility. . ."(I Peter 5:5). In submitting we do recognize that God in His government over man has arranged a system of delegated authority in a descending scale. We are not, however, looking so much at the different levels of authority but at the responsibility of each individual under God, regardless of where he find himself on this scale. Submission is the rule if any organization is to operate smoothly and accomplish its end, whether that be governments, business organizations, schools, hospitals, or homes. The law of submission requires that every individual, whether president, superintendent, janitor, husband, wife, child or servant, not only submit in a passive attitude, but accept their place and cheerfully fill it actively to the utmost of their ability. There are those who have the ability to add dignity to any position they find themselves in, even the lowliest. These are the ones who have learned the grace of submission. How many, do you suppose, because they are not given a position or place they want or desire, lie down and do nothing? Surely they have not the spirit of submission.

How much better would it be if every individual, instead of vying for position or bemoaning their place in life, would submit to their role and fill it. Isn't this what Paul meant when he said, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content"? (Phil. 4:11). He who rebels against his position or lot in life, in the final analysis finds himself rebelling against God. In God's plan there is neither promotion nor demotion. It is "the will of God" alone that determines greatness, and submission is the key. In the ultimate it is the will of God that determines a man's proper place in the society of beings and in this light every one who does the will of God is equally great. The trouble begins on all levels when people do not submit.

Therefore, "submit yourselves"!

THE CORNERSTONE OF LIVING

I. Parker Maxey

CHAPTER 17 FORSAKING OUR IDOLS

When the kingdom of Israel divided and ten tribes broke off and chose Jeroboam as their king he "took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And he set one in Beth-el, and the other put he in Dan. And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan" (I Kings 12:28-30).

Over and over again, down through the rest of the history of the ten tribes, these words sounded out like the tolling of the bell of doom, "they walked in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin." One sin kept Israel from revival -- the sin they never departed from. It looked for a while as if there was going to be a genuine revival under the reign of Jehu, who was chosen of God to destroy the dynasty of the wicked king Ahab. Jehu had a real house cleaning, He completely cleansed out the Baal worshippers, destroyed their images, broke down the house of Baal and slew all the Baal worshippers. "Howbeit from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, Jehu departed not from after them, to wit, the golden calves that were in Bethel, and that were in Dan" (2 Kings 10:29).

In I Kings 12:26-27 we find the real reason back of this one sin that was so damning. "And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David: If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, [the only place God chose for the people to worship], then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah." Jeroboam was more concerned about himself and his kingdom than the good of the people and the will of God. The real reason behind this idolatry with which he made Israel to sin was his own selfish heart of carnal unbelief.

In this enlightened age the problem is still the same. God wants to give revival and He wants His people to be victorious. Self and unbelief are the "idols" that keep revival from the heart. Revivals come to churches to the extent the pastor and the people have revival in their own hearts. God will bless and help individuals to the extent that they rid themselves of their idols. Like Jehu, there are those who make an all out effort to clear the slate for God to come, but hold to ONE pet sin or idol. They may be clear on all but one thing, but that one idol they will not turn loose. What are these idols people hang on to? Let us look at some of the most prevalent.

Self versus sacrifice. Self is the big idol in the hearts of fallen men. Self stands in the road of sacrificial service to God and to man. Self has barred many a person from personal, victorious living. We reign by serving. Jesus said, ". . . whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:43-45).

Jeroboam was chosen of God to rule Israel. If he had only submitted in faith and obedience to God! If he had sacrificed self, if he had died to being somebody, if he had let God work His will through him, the story would have been different. But now, throughout the endless ages of eternity these words will ring in his ears: ". . . the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin?" How sad! Self destroyed him.

By becoming love slaves of righteousness Christians find true freedom. We read in Romans 6:17-18, "But God be thanked, that ye WERE [my emphasis] the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." The sacrifice of carnal self spells victory.

Status before men versus state before God. Men become great in God's sight by becoming little in their own eyes. "Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as a little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:4). Men are exalted by humbling themselves. "Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted" (Matt. 23:12). Men become wise in the eyes of God when they seem foolish in the eyes of man. ". . . Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (I Cor. 1:20-21).

We could put it this way: we can get more concerned about our position than our possession. Do we want to be known primarily as one who takes a strong stand against television, against wearing jewelry, against worldly sports, etc. (standards which we believe in and hold to -- see chapter 22), or do we want to be known primarily as holy people of God? Are we more concerned about our position, or our possession of a holy, Spirit-filled life? You can take a radical, Biblical stand and be proclaimed as a radical holiness person before men and have no real heart possession -- the victim of a sin that will bar a professed Christian from genuine soul victory. Oh, the idols people make of good things while missing the real! God help us to be marked as holy people of God who will make the world hungry to be like we are! Surely we want to be known and remembered as a people predominantly characterized by the glorious Presence of the Holy Ghost manifest among us, accompanied by holy lives and holy living.

The visible versus the invisible. God's people see things that are invisible. ". . . we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:18). Moses ". . . endured as seeing him who is invisible" (Heb. 11:27). Of all men, Moses had the opportunity to reign as king of a great dynasty or to suffer in this life to gain an eternal crown. He saw the temporality of that visible throne. He did not let it become an idol in his mind and heart. He chose the invisible.

Living versus dying. God's people conquer by yielding and live best by dying. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal" (John 12:24-25). Carnal people want to live their own lives their own way. Carnal self doesn't want to die. Self becomes their idol. Self will go to great extremes. It will spend its life on a foreign mission field; it will suffer hardships, if only it doesn't have to die. But as long as self reigns in one's life there is no real revival in the soul.

Things material versus things eternal. God's holy people, while having nothing, possess all things. "As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things" (2 Cor. 6:10). "Things" material are necessary while we live in a physical body and a material world. The difference is whether we handle things for the glory of God and the promotion of His will on earth or whether "things" own us -- whether we have allowed them to be an idol in our lives. Idolatry is setting something ahead of God, whether it be a material object or a desire for such.

Physical suffering versus poverty of spirit. Are you one who is more concerned about your physical well being than your spiritual? The Apostle Paul had a battle at this point until he learned to triumph over the physical. "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Cor. 12:7-9).

George Mueller, pressed hard by responsibilities, felt the pressure on his physical body and began to back off a little from the only time he had for his personal devotions to God in order to conserve his physical strength. This was costing him poverty of spirit. He saw that there would need to be some physical sacrifice if he was to avoid spiritual poverty. Is your physical well being the idol that is keeping you from the richness of His presence?

The letter of the law versus the spirit of the law. Rules and rule keeping become such idols to some that they will sacrifice fellowship, personal relationships, and the unity of the spirit, just so the rules are kept. They are sticklers for the law, like the Pharisees, who were so vicious toward Jesus and what they claimed was His "Sabbath breaking" Paul exhorts us in Ephesians 4:1-3, "I therefore, the prisoner of the lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." The verb "endeavoring" is σπουδαζο which literally means "to make haste, to be zealous or eager, to give diligence" about this matter of keeping unity. "By the unity of the Spirit we are to understand, not only a spiritual unity, but also a unity of sentiments, desires, and affections, [within the true body of Christ] such as is worthy of and springs from the Spirit of God." (Adam Clarke) If we are not careful we will make idols of our stand and thus bring schism in the body of Christ rather than preserving unity.

God help us to keep our lives in proper balance, avoiding the sin of idolatry as we continually seek God for His outpoured blessing!

THE CORNERSTONE OF LIVING

I. Parker Maxey

CHAPTER 18 BLAMELESS BEFORE GOD

"I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Thess. 5:23).

"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" (Phil. 2:15).

To be blameless means "not meriting censure." We learn from divine revelation that the body, soul, and spirit are debased and polluted by sin, but that each is capable of being sanctified, consecrated in all its powers to God, and made holy. We learn also that the whole man in his triune being of body, soul and spirit, by the power of the indwelt Spirit of God, is to be preserved blameless in this life. Luke assures us "That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before him [my emphasis], all the days of our life" (Lk. 1:74, 75). The blamelessness is before Him, God, who sees into the very recesses of the human spirit, who knows the motive behind every act, who observes the life that is lived in relationship to the physical body, and demands that man be blameless in his triune being so that He Himself can look upon that one and see nothing worthy of censure.

How utterly impossible this demand is to fulfill without the sanctifying power of God's grace operating within the soul. But after one has this grace in his love life with his Wonderful Lord, he longs to please Him and to welcome His close scrutiny. To such, God's laws are a delight; he delays not to keep His commandments. His testimonies are taken as an "heritage" forever. No man can by any means of his own raise himself to this level. It is the operation of divine grace in the heart, lifting it to the level of entire sanctification, which is the blameless life.

We are to be blameless before God in our body and mind. It is not a matter of duty but delight for the sanctified to walk before God in a way that would be undeserving of His censure in regard to his body and mind. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit not only to be our Sanctifier, but also our Helper to instruct us, guide us, and constantly inspire us to a deeper love life with Him. Paul said, "For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Cor. 11:2). This is the ministry of the Blessed Holy Spirit.

When this divine love dwells within us we find it a very part of our nature to yield quickly and spontaneously to every ray of light and the slightest bit of conviction brought to bear upon us by the Holy Spirit as He assists us in maintaining a blameless life before the all-seeing eye of God. How faithful the Holy Spirit is to guard us and to keep us above censure if we will fully cooperate with Him.

Pause here a moment, reader, and let the Holy Spirit search you. Is your life free from censure before God? Are you blameless in His sight? How about your private life that only you and God

know about? Can you testify with the Apostle Paul, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (I Cor. 10:31). How about the imaginations of your mind? Your motives? Your reasonings? On what ground can you excuse your bent toward worldliness -- that worldly look, that immodesty of appearance? It may be true that we are more modest than some and yet, at the same time, not be modest in the sight of God. How about your disposition? If there is any compromise, any slight departure from the Holy Ghost way, your inner thought life, the care of your body (how you dress it, feed it or pamper it), toward pleasing yourself or others instead of Him -- you cannot claim this blameless life. We are not to ". . . frustrate the grace of God. . . ." If you possess this blameless life there will be the inner witness of an absolute agreement with God's standard when He brings you up against it. When this is so you know that you are being preserved blameless in your body and mind.

We are to be blameless before God in our social life. We are not called upon to be blameless in our life in the view of other people -- Jesus wasn't. "It was said of his bodily life -- 'Behold a man gluttonous, and a wine-bibber' of His soul life -- 'He is mad,' and of His spirit life -- 'He hath a devil'" (Oswald Chambers). But can God see anything to censure in your life as it is related to others? Are you self-seeking, position-coveting, evil-surmising and critical of others in order to be self-advancing? How utterly foreign this all is to one who has a deep love life with the Lord. The only way we can be harmless to others is to be blameless before God, and the only way we can be blameless before God is to let "the very God of peace sanctify [us] wholly. . . ." and preserve us in this state by obedience to Him.

Some people want houses and lands, others want honor. Still others want to be lauded for their learning -- for what they know. Then, some desire praise for what they think they know. Some people gratify their selfish desires if they have means and power to do so and die early from moral and physical consumption. The natural heart wants, wants, wants ten thousand things and bends its energies in that direction; but what it needs is a deep love life with the Lord that comes only by a crucifixion of every inordinate desire. If people would surrender all their likes and dislikes, get humble before God, and stay there until Jesus meets their heart's need, they would be saved from great suffering, great misery, and woe.

A selfish life not only robs the soul of joy and reward, but robs the world of a true representation of Jesus Christ among men, thus rendering them blamable before God. The crucified, Spirit-filled, Spirit-controlled life is the only life that is blameless before God in this world. That will mean a real interest and effort in personal soul-winning. Acts 1:8 makes the Baptism of the Holy Ghost and soul-winning inseparable. If an Eva Gardner could work in a factory eight hours a day and make five-thousand door-to-door calls a year and win hundreds of people to the Lord, how can we be blameless in our life among men if we do not have a compassion for the lost that is revealed in some kind of an effort to get men to God? Robb French in *THE REVIVAL SECRET* writes, "The secret of revival is to keep the avenue through which the Holy Spirit seeks to operate clear of any encumbrance. Often sinners are not saved for want of conviction; conviction does not come because the church is not burdened and lacks the drawing power; the church is not burdened and is powerless, because the Holy Ghost does not come upon her; the Holy Spirit does not come because something within her is offensive to Him."

"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" (Phil. 2:15).

We are to be blameless in our spiritual life before God. We read in Ephesians 1:4, "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." This is the meaning and purpose of the cross of Jesus Christ, His passion, His crucifixion, His resurrection and ascension, that our love life with the Lord may be made pure and single and kept at white heat -- blameless in His sight. Here is where the church at Ephesus was at fault. They failed to retain a blameless love-life with God. They were not without censure. Their lost "first love" required repentance to regain the favor of God. They possessed a fatal fault. Pity or remorse would not recover them from this sad condition. They must have the blood applied by sovereign power.

Two Scriptures bring out the secret and urgency of a blameless spiritual life. First, I John 1:7, "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." Second, 2 Peter 3:14, "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless."

Blamelessness is readiness! Yes, He is coming soon. "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless [my emphasis] before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever, Amen" (Jude 24,25).

Blameless now, faultless then and forever!

THE CORNERSTONE OF LIVING

I. Parker Maxey

CHAPTER 19 THE WAY OF UNDERSTANDING

"Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding" (Prov. 4:7).

"Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is." (Eph. 5:17).

Understanding is wisdom at work on the level of every day living. ". . . with all thy getting get understanding." "Getting" is of prime interest in this day. People are out to get -- get cars, get fun, get new thrills, get a divorce. It can all be summed up in the desire for fame, worldly pleasure and things -- get! get! get! But few are out to get understanding. They don't want it. It would stop too much of their other getting! The admonition in the above Scripture, however, is very suggestive -- whatever you get, don't fail to get understanding. How we need understanding these days!

We need to understand the times we are living in. Daniel "set his heart to understand," and speaking of David's mighty men, the Bible describes them as "men that had understanding of the times"--certainly a quality that the child of God can and should possess. The wicked are described as lacking understanding (Rom. 3:11). We need to understand the atmosphere of our times. A lack of understanding here could work havoc to faith and confidence. We are experiencing the combined atmosphere of every church age described in the second and third chapters of Revelation from Pentecost to the Rapture. Down through history the true church has had to face the atmosphere of a backslidden, licentious, spiritually corrupt, lax, dead church, and now this age with a predominance of Laodicean lukewarm, apostate atmosphere. If we allow it, the atmosphere of this age will rob us of our joy, exuberance and glory and put us into despondency and gloom. We cannot change the atmosphere of this age, as awful as it is to live in, but we can offset it with an inner heavenly atmosphere created by the indwelling Holy Spirit. Our place in history is unique. We are witnessing one of the greatest revivals the world has ever experienced -- a revival of the false, the occult, along with its demon and devil worship. This is the generation that will usher in the Antichrist and we need to understand that better days world-wise are not to be looked for or expected. Christ's coming is imminent and calls for the saints to watch and pray and suffer for righteousness sake. Our deliverance will be in Christ's coming in the Rapture. Faithfulness and steadfastness must be maintained in spite of what we face. Are you troubled and perplexed, saint of God, because of the pressure, burden and blackness of this hour? Hope thou in the Lord! He is coming soon to deliver His saints out of this ungodly atmosphere.

We need to understand the danger even the sanctified children of God face in yielding to the temptation to take on the coloring of their surroundings. Why? This is an age of lukewarmness, laziness, indifference, blindness and nakedness. We are physical beings as well as mental and spiritual, and the physical man has an affinity for the way of least resistance. There is an inborn affinity in man to want to be accepted and to conform to his surroundings. We need constantly to be reminded that we are but pilgrims and strangers on the earth and we are but passing through this vale

of sin and sorrow. There is a subtle danger here, even among spiritually minded people, to substitute "group conscience" for the tender, personal leadership of the Holy Spirit -- and in this conforming, even to the apparent good, there is grave danger of being unconsciously started on a course that could lead to ruin. Man as composed of soul and body becomes susceptible to the gratification of physical desires which, lawful in themselves, can become the occasion to sin.

We need to understand the slowness of God. 2 Peter 3:8. In the sphere of nature, if God wants a mushroom He grows it over night; but if He wants an oak tree He takes a hundred years. In the sphere of revelation, God reveals Himself little by little to those who tarry with Him. In showing the pathway of duty God shows us but a step at a time. In pronouncing judgment upon sinners sometimes it seems as if they will go unpunished, but the "mills of God grind slowly, but they grind exceeding fine." In rewarding Christian believers and workers the Bible uses such language as "after a long time" (Matthew 25:19).

We need to understand the workings of Satan. There is nothing original about Satan except wickedness. He has no capital of his own. He can only pervert the good. He patterns his whole kingdom and wicked reign after God. All the false cults and isms and perverted religions are patterned after the true and genuine. But herein lies the danger. Satan incorporates enough of the truth to make his program exceedingly dangerous. He can so closely counterfeit every part of God's program (except the glory) until it appears genuine and to the unspiritual mind can be deceptive to the point of eternal ruin. Added to this danger is Satan's ally, carnality, within the heart of every unsanctified individual.

We need to understand the end of the wicked. It is hard to understand the wicked in this life -- how they can prosper above the righteous -- how they speak boldly against God -- how they are allowed to oppress the saints. The Psalmist had trouble with this until he understood that their end was an eternal hell (Ps. 73). This life doesn't tell the whole story. The righteous are allowed to suffer for their own good, lest they be overcome with temptations of an earthly existence.

We need to understand the deep need of an unsanctified heart. The Bible states plainly that, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jer. 17:9). All men will readily admit the wickedness and deceitfulness of the human heart, generally speaking, but they do not by nature attribute to themselves the character given the human heart in the Bible. Herein lies the great danger. A deceitful heart hides itself from itself so that the owner doesn't know it. It renders one unable to know his own heart and makes him ignorant of his own character. Man's only hope is to turn to God for help and let the truth of the Word under the convicting power of the Holy Spirit reveal to him his deep need and then appeal to Calvary for deliverance.

We need to understand what the will of the Lord is. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever" (emphasis mine) (I John 2:15-17).

Finally, we need to understand how to get understanding. In Psalms 119:104 we read, "Through thy precepts I get understanding." The precepts of God are the minute instructions in His word, teaching man how to live. We are exhorted in Proverbs 3:5, 6 to "lean not to thine own understanding," but "In all thy ways acknowledge him. . ." Again in Proverbs 19:8, ". . . he that keepeth understanding shall find good," and finally in Proverbs 9:10, ". . . the knowledge of the holy is understanding."

Jeremiah states (3:15) that ". . . pastors shall feed you with understanding." Where the Word of God is being preached by godly pastors under the anointing of the Spirit, there you will find a prosperous, happy, victorious and spiritual people.

THE CORNERSTONE OF LIVING

I. Parker Maxey

CHAPTER 20 KEEPING THE BODY UNDER

It is plain in the Scriptures that the physical body we live in here on this earth is intended to be the temple of the Holy Spirit and that we are to live in our body in a way that will bring honor and glory to a Holy God. Who could conceive of anything more wonderful than to have the Spirit of God Himself indwell him! We were created for this purpose, that we might reflect the glory of God.

People today are in bondage to sins that are connected with the physical body because they have left God out of their lives. It is Christ's purpose to set men free from these sins and keep them from being entangled again with this yoke of bondage. (Read John 8:36 and Galatians 5:1) We, as Christians living in a physical body, become susceptible to the gratification -- of physical desires which, though lawful in themselves, can become the occasion of sin. Thus there is the necessity of constant vigilance at this point. Two things aid man in maintaining Christian liberty and integrity in relationship to his body. These are self-discipline and the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Strong language is used in the Bible concerning the body as the temple of the Holy Ghost. "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit which are God's" (1 Cor. 6:19, 20). Even stronger language is used against those who defile the body. "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are. . . What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. Flee fornication . . . he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body" (1 Cor. 3:17; 6:16-18).

We do not hold, as some have in the past history of the church, that the body is evil and that by abusing the body or by denying the body we are made more spiritual. We do hold with the scriptures that the body is meant to be the temple of the Holy Spirit and that He wants to dwell with us in our bodies, empowering us to keep them holy as we yield them over to Him to work through as He chooses (Rom. 12:1). There is nothing evil or sinful about the physical body. (1 Cor. 6:18, "Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body"). Our body was created with all its normal appetites by a holy God. He has made provision to sanctify and indwell the body and help us to live in every way pleasing to Him.

We need to realize that it is the Holy Spirit that will assist us in keeping blameless as we live in our bodies. We need to acknowledge Him and our reliance on His help to pre serve us blameless in regard to our physical bodies as well as our spirit and soul. "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" (1 Thess. 5:23) (emphasis mine). God has never failed in His promises to man. But man is free to choose and must cooperate with God if there is to be real victory and complete fulfillment of God's will at this point.

The Scriptures instruct us how we are to treat our bodies:

FIRST, in regard to its appetites. As sanctified saints we have an obligation to God concerning our relationship to our bodies. "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (I Cor. 9:27). This Scripture certainly suggests that the body is not to be the master of the man, but the man of the body. In the plan of God, every appetite of the body is provided a legitimate means of satisfaction. Sin perverts and accentuates these body appetites until men become slaves to them to the point where God is forced to give them over to uncleanness, to all kinds of lusts, to vile affections and to a reprobate mind. They dishonor their bodies that were meant to be the temple of the Holy Spirit. There is no way the Holy Spirit can dwell in a body where sin is allowed. (Read Romans 1:22-32).

The Apostle Paul recognized the awful danger his body could be to him if he failed to keep it "under" and bring it into subjection to the plan and power of God. His body could be the instrument of damning his soul.

SECONDLY, the scriptures instruct us in regard to our eating habits. "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31). We are to eat and drink in a way that will glorify God. We are living in an age of tension and the tendency is to eat too fast, too much, too often and at wrong times for the good of these bodies that are the Temple of the Holy Ghost. Far too many people are overweight today because of the lack of self-discipline in eating habits. This lack of self-discipline endangers our effectiveness in kingdom work and is detrimental to real soul victory. We are a feasting people instead of a fasting people. Eating and drinking characterizes these days of lukewarmness and carnal, fleshly living. Who would deny that this militates against the spirit of prayer, fasting and soul concern? Prayerlessness and lack of soul burden on the part of God's people are, in part, fruits of overeating and indulging the flesh. God help us that we be not castaways for lack of self-discipline over our bodies. When the stomach is stuffed it is hard to pray or get under a burden for the lost.

The Scriptures assume that God's people will be a fasting people. Jesus assumed that the children of God would fast. (Matt. 9:15). "John Wesley preached many sermons on fasting and prayer. He said, 'The man who never fasts is no more in the way to heaven than the man who never prays.'" (Wesley L. Duewel in *Mighty Prevailing Prayer*, p. 180). Fasting is a God-ordained form of self-denial. One of the purposes of fasting is to subject the physical to the spiritual and to give priority to spiritual goals. God calls His people to fasting (Isa. 22:12, 13). Fasting is essential to a life of personal spiritual discipline. We would urge you to make the habit of definite times for fasting a part of your life. If for physical reasons one is unable to fast food, there are other ways to enter into a program of self-denial. For example there could be times of abstaining from normal sleep habits in order to give more time for prayer or from times of recreation or other special enjoyments. There could be the abstaining from social relations with others while that time is given for special prayer effort. One more word needs to be added and that is, fasting will never be a part of one's life apart from a strict discipline of the body.

In the THIRD place, living to the glory of God includes the way we dress. We are to dress our bodies as the temple of the Holy Spirit. If the Holy Spirit had His way would you have to change

your wardrobe? The Word of God teaches us that we are to dress with Christian simplicity and modesty that becometh holiness. . . not with gold or pearls or costly array. Men are not to wear long hair and women are not to cut theirs (1 Cor. 11). God intends that there be a definite line of distinction between the sexes. Unisex in appearance disregards this and brings a curse instead of a blessing upon the human race. We are God's property and the owner of a house certainly has something to say about its appearance. God has done so for man's own good and happiness. Too many "bodies" are reflecting a "look like the world" appearance instead of the look of simplicity and modesty that becometh holiness. Do you suppose the Holy Spirit would indwell a body that does not outwardly reflect His holiness and presence?

In the FOURTH place the Scriptures instruct us in the way in which we should expend our strength. We are commanded to "love the Lord thy God with all thy. . . strength." Indulging the body, whether by overeating, oversleeping or needlessly overtaking our strength -- becoming slaves to body appetites -- militates against spirituality and can cancel it out altogether. God help us! There is far too much carelessness here.

In the FIFTH place we are to present our bodies "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God." It is the most reasonable thing we can do -- to present our bodies as the total property of God, ready to be used or sacrificed at His behest. We read in Revelation 12:11, "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death." They were willing to lay down their lives if necessary to preserve their souls.

One of the greatest romances of the Christian life is to live in a materialistic world, in a physical body, in a way that will glorify God. We read again in Romans 8:11, "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 the Spirit that dwelleth in you." If the blessed Holy Spirit of God is permitted to dwell in our bodies now, He will claim them at the resurrection of the just. Sad if He is forced to say at that hour, "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate" (Matt. 23:38).

Has your body become the instrument of sin or is it the Temple of the Holy Spirit?

THE CORNERSTONE OF LIVING

I. Parker Maxey

CHAPTER 21 DWELLING IN SAFETY

"Flee, get you far off dwell deep, O ye inhabitants of Hazor; saith the Lord. . . ." Jeremiah 49:30

This verse of Scripture (found similarly in verse eight of the same chapter) is an allusion to the custom of the Arabs, who, when about to be attacked by a powerful foe, would quickly strike their tents, pack up all their earthly belongings and flee deep into the great desert, with its rocks, cliffs, deep gorges and all the inaccessible caves, where few enemies would or could pursue.

The word "deep" as found in the New Testament is expressive of a spiritual truth that we need to get hold of in our day. Such expressions as "Launch out into the deep," or "dugged deep," or "the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God," are meaningful. The word "deep" conveys the very opposite of shallowness and superficiality. It suggests being firmly rooted in God, anchored in a wholehearted devotion to Him. This is a day marked by shallowness in Christian experience, irreverent trifling with eternal truth, careless compromise with holy standards. Our text suggests three things, if we are to overcome the lightness of conviction, stave off the compromise of standards and avert the frivolity of following the popular holiness -- we must flee the wrath of God, stay far off from worldliness and dwell deep in the grace of God.

Today there is a relentless foe threatening the spiritual life of the church and the spiritual life of every true Christian. For every saint of God, there are provided strong fortifications unto which he must continually resort, sure refuges to which he must flee and in which he may safely hide, divine retreats in the deep recesses of which he may securely dwell. We are admonished to ". . . exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" (Heb. 3:13). God means for us to flee to these strongholds.

We must learn to dwell deep in the love of God. A firm faith in the love that God hath toward us will prove a shelter and a strength and a solace that cannot be found on the highway the multitudes travel. Saint John says, "And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us" (I John 4:16). There are times when God's providence, God's grace and God's Word strongly and convincingly assure us of the love of God until our hearts are filled and flooded with joy. But it is not always this way. There are many times in life when adverse circumstances strike us, when our paths are rough and beset with thorns, when those we have trusted prove treacherous, times when friends turn against us, our home becomes desolate, dark clouds hang thick over our head. These are the times when we must learn to dwell deep in the love of God. When we are especially blest, we have a tendency to think we are better than we are and God is more pleased with us. Then when we are not so noticeably blest we have a tendency to think we are worse off than we really are, and God does not love us as much. God's love to us is founded in His nature and not in outward circumstances. Jesus left us an example of this. When He was beset with temptation -- "If thou be the Son of God" -- when all forsook Him and fled -- when He bore the cross alone with its shame -- He endured the one and despised the other in the strength of the love in which He ever abode.

Regardless of the darkness that may come over you, reader, learn to dwell in that love in which Jesus ever abode. Not a few have done this -- Abraham, David, Daniel, Paul and myriads more; and you can too, if you dare to believe.

We must learn to dwell deep in the knowledge of Holy Scriptures. There is no surer aid to help us to dwell in the love of God than to dwell deep in His Word. Who knows what the Word of God will do for him but he who dares to dwell in its depth? Dark problems cease to dismay, mysteries cease to shake one's faith, tokens of God's love appear on every hand. Integrity and uprightness preserve us as we run the way of God's commandments. The prayerful, habitual study of God's Word is fruitful to him who will therein dwell deep. The Word of God is the greatest faith builder available to man -- "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Rom. 10:17).

We must learn to dwell deep in the fellowship of Christ. Persistent indeed are the endeavors which Satan employs to destroy this communion. He works through secondary means and thus camouflages his diabolic purposes. At times when you kneel in prayer, thoughts wander, desires earth-bound spring into consciousness, faith becomes feeble, love tends to grow cold. How many neglect prayer or become formal in it because of the battle that is met at the threshold. Be aware, reader, there can be no real, continued communion with Christ without these battles. Therefore, we must rouse ourselves to earnestness lest we neglect or lay this means of grace aside. We must pray that we may pray. Let us resolve that we will not be conquered. The very difficulties we meet are evidences of the truth of true prayer. Such difficulties can be overcome, for they have been times without number.

But not only by prayer must we learn to dwell deep in the fellowship of Christ, but by a daily walk with Him in obedience and love.

To dwell in safety is to dwell in the impregnable fortress of God's love, spelled out in His eternal Word and made real through the fellowship of His Son.

THE CORNERSTONE OF LIVING

I. Parker Maxey

SECTION IV

AIMING TOWARD A TRIUMPHANT END

"It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: If we suffer; we shall also reign with him." --II Timothy 2:11, 12

"For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" --II Timothy 1:12

"Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator" --I Peter 4:19

"Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." --Revelation 2:10

THE CORNERSTONE OF LIVING

I. Parker Maxey

CHAPTER 22 PERSEVERANCE

Amos Binney states, "It is the birthright of every child of God not only to be cleansed from all sin in this life, but to keep himself unspotted from the world, and to live as never more to offend his Maker." However, it is possible for those who have been made holy and righteous and are such in the judgment of God Himself to so fall from grace as to perish everlastingly. Such has been emphasized and taught as a true Bible doctrine among holiness people. Charles Wesley penned these lines of warning and exhortation so familiar to all:

A Charge to keep I have,
A God to glorify,
A never-dying soul to save,
And fit it for the sky.

Help me to watch and pray,
And on Thyself rely,
Assured, if I my trust betray,
I shall forever die.

It has never been the purpose of such a doctrine to exalt or put emphasis on backsliding, but to warn of the danger of being overcome by a subtle enemy, and to encourage every true Christian to keep victory and one day make the City of God. Originally this doctrine of the final perseverance of the Saints was brought forth to counteract the damnable doctrine of "once a child of God, always a child of God," regardless of how you live, once you have been born-again of the Spirit. The doctrine of "eternal security," "predestination," and "election," as taught by Calvinism, has done more to delude, deceive and damn people than any other system of doctrine taught. This system teaches that in the atonement provision was made for a limited number of souls only; and these were predestined to salvation far back in eternity and to them will come the effectual call, which they will not be able to resist nor can they ever be lost no matter how far they may then go astray. The rest of mankind are left to perish eternally.

However, the Bible clearly teaches that a saint may fall from grace. We are living in the day of falling away. Angels fell from their holy estate (2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6). Our first parents fell (Genesis 3). King Saul fell (I Samuel chapters 10-16). Judas fell (John 13:8; 17:12 and Acts 1:25). Hymenaeus and Alexander fell (I Timothy 1:19-20). Demas fell (2 Timothy 4:10). The younger widows are warned, lest they should fall (I Timothy 5:12). Some of these recovered from their fall. Others of them perished eternally. Within the Church of God the pathway of Christian experience is strewn with wreckage. Among the "no hell" teachings and the bloodless "isms" there are thousands of backslidden hearts, while out in the sinning world are heart breaking tragedies of those who once ran well, but somewhere along the line badly failed. Multitudes of these who once knew the saving grace of God are perishing and going out into a Godless, Christless eternity.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PERSEVERANCE

First, we need to persevere to counteract the determination of the devil, the arch-enemy of God and the hater of every member of Adam's race, to destroy our soul in hell. Peter exhorts, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour; Whom resist steadfast in the faith" (I Peter 5:8, 9).

We need to persevere because we are creatures of free choice. We are told not only to "choose you this day whom ye will serve," but we are exhorted also to "keep yourselves in the love of God." In Deuteronomy chapters 27-30 God sets a choice before Israel between His blessing and His curse. It is made very plain that God's blessings would continue on them conditionally. "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live. . . . But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear . . . I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish."

We need to persevere lest we be encompassed again with the law of sin and death. Paul warns "lest being lifted up with pride [we] fall into the condemnation of the devil" (I Tim. 3:6). To be in Christ is to be free from condemnation. This is a day of lawlessness. People do not want to be under the restraint of law, but Paul points out clearly that there are only two laws (regulative principles) that operate in the heart of man and we must choose which one we will be under. A. Skevintgon Wood in *Life by the Spirit*, page 22, said, "He [Paul] found that only law can liberate from law. He did not cast off restraint when he came to Christ. He submitted to a new law." "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8:2). If we do not choose to live under "the law of the Spirit of life," then we must perish under "the law of sin and death." There is no escaping law.

The privilege of every child of God is not only to be cleansed from all sin in this life, but to keep himself unspotted from the world. This has been made gloriously possible by God. God will work in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure, but it is up to us as individuals to "work out [our] own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12). It takes the cooperation of the human will with the infusion of divine power to fulfill God's revealed purpose. Herein is the real issue. If God has mapped out a way for a member of a fallen race to be redeemed and make it to a Holy Heaven and that individual is free to avail himself of such a privilege and opportunity, certainly, sound judgment would decree that that individual should persevere in that way until he has reached that desired Heaven. After all, we have nothing to save but our own soul. If we do not save our own soul, ultimately, we save nothing.

THE INSTRUMENTS OF PERSEVERANCE

But what does it mean to persevere in the way of life? The Psalmist asks the question, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?" This question is addressed to the Christian. How can a Christian keep clean and keep a fitness for a holy heaven? The answer comes, "By taking heed thereto according to thy word" (Ps. 119:9). The sad fact is that many professed Christians are not persevering in accordance with the Word of God, but have disregarded the authority of the Word of God under the guise of obedience to an imaginary law of their own.

We are witnessing a subtle departure from the Word of God in these days and need to be cautious lest we become victims in our thinking and practice of unscriptural patterns of living. We need to return to New Testament Christianity, not in creed only but in complete manner of life as well.

There is much said about "having my own convictions" and the cry of the day is that none are to force their own convictions on another, but each is to be privately guided in matters called "non-essentials." On the surface and at first glance this appears sound and right, but underneath is a subtle rebellion and disregard for the plain teaching of the Word. The early Moravians fell into a mysticism in which they claimed to be led in their individual lives by a direct communion with the Spirit. This led them far astray from the plain teaching of the Word and into fanaticism. The fact of the matter is, that where the Word speaks plainly we are under obligation to obey it or be subject to be judged by it. We quote from the booklet *Mysticism, Antinomianism and the Positive Gospel* by Sherwood Weeks. "The law has been effectively voided by the mystical practice of dependence upon convictions as a pattern for the individual Christian. According to the modern holiness mystics each one of us must get his own pattern for Christian conduct. This is called having your own convictions. These private convictions are as different in individuals as the vagaries of mysticism can make them. Like it was in the days of the Judges when 'every man did that which was right in his own eyes' (Judges 17:6).

"The primitive Christians followed so closely the same path that Christianity was called The Way. Today it is The Ways! The rule today is that no one is to force his convictions on another and each is to be privately guided in matters which are termed nonessentials, but which in the Bible are enforced as the path for the dear children of God to follow. . . . The primitive Christians developed a unique pattern of life, based on the teachings of Jesus and the Apostles, which was known as The Way. All the primitive Christians followed this way of life. None demanded the right to individually receive convictions." For example, they found in the Word that their women were to dress modestly, not in costly array or in men's attire. They were to refrain from wearing gold (including the wedding band) and pearls. Women were not to cut their hair. They were strict in keeping the Sabbath day holy, careful to pay their tithe. They separated themselves from all forms of worldliness including the television, public sports, and the like. Shouts of victory and the glory of God marked their lives and their gatherings.

It is the nature of a carnal heart to oppose Bible standards of living and to rationalize God's Word to mean something different than is plainly written therein. Thus some things were allowed that the Word forbids. But let me ask you, dear reader, do you have an open heart to God's truth, or is there something in you that draws back from the reproach of the narrow holiness way. Are you willing to be made of no reputation for the Gospel's sake?

We need to persevere in our study and understanding of God's Word and in our obedience to truth as it is revealed to us by His Spirit. We are exhorted in 2 Peter 3:18, "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." We should grow in grace as we grow in knowledge. We should, therefore, be constantly reaching out for new revelations of truth from God's Word as God opens them up to our understanding and be careful to avoid the broad way that leads to destruction "for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in there: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life,

and few there be that find it" (Matt. 7:13, 14) (emphasis mine). The free grace of God instills a hunger for truth in our heart and a desire to walk therein but we must persevere in ever increasing our knowledge of God's will if we are to continue to benefit from that God-given hunger.

THE EPITOME OF PERSEVERANCE

The sum and substance of victorious perseverance in Christian living has to do with life in the Spirit. Only then, as we continue life in the Spirit are we progressing toward a triumphant end. Paul puts it tersely, "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. . . . If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit" (Gal. 5:16,25). Herein lies the crux of victorious Christian living.

We are in danger from the natural inclinations of our humanness; from the pressures that we face living in a physical body in a materialistic age; from a lukewarm atmosphere of these "last days" of getting caught in a fatal drift. We are warned of this in Hebrews 2:3, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"

We are continually exposed to currents of opinions, of habits of life, of unavoidable circumstances, of the cares of life that carry us away insensibly from the position we ought to maintain. Because of these things we become careless in maintaining our love life with our Lord -- that daily tryst with the lover of our soul becomes hit and miss. We become guilty too many times of overriding those wooings and checks of the Spirit as He so faithfully endeavors to guard our relationship and intimate fellowship with Him. Too often that voice of warning becomes dim or is drowned out until we cease to experience that intimate fellowship. It is not a willfulness, not a refusal to obey. We mean to obey but becoming neglectful in these things we ought to do we are weakened in our perseverance to keep spiritually alive.

We face the question, "how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation" (emphasis mine). There is no way of escaping the consequences of neglect. God help us! As a result of having left our first love, Christian life becomes mechanical and we suffer lukewarmness in our experience. How easy it is to go to sleep spiritually and hardly realize it. One never realizes he is asleep until he is awakened. Life continues on as before. We attend church faithfully, maintain the outward standards, pay our tithes, but it is all now only routine.

The tragedy of it all is that an individual in that condition begins to live a mechanical, rationalistic life. Such a one becomes a law unto himself. He has ceased to have a life of perseverance in the Spirit -- the romance of walking with God is gone. It is easy, then, to rationalize away the Biblical standards of holy living. We cannot overemphasize the importance of God's Word and the place it should have in our heart and as the regulator of our life. Standards of holy living come as the fruit of a new life in Christ while seeking the perfect will of God as revealed in His Word.

How many set aside the plain teaching of the Word by a rationalistic approach. When this happens it signals the departure of the Spirit from that person or church and there begins the inroad of every kind of worldliness conceivable. God's Word is rationalized to allow human and carnal desires and interpretations. It is not long until they allow the things they once condemned. Television is brought

into their home. Although the wearing of gold is forbidden according to God's word, the wedding band is now condoned and soon other types of jewelry appear. Women begin to wear men's apparel and to cut their hair. Tithing becomes hit and miss. Carnal attitudes are reasoned away. The family altar is laid aside. People no longer contend for the "old paths." They have become "enlightened." It is a new day, they say. The pressure to cast aside the principles of God which have been the hallmark of holy people across the years is a clear indication that we are in the perilous days just before Christ's return (2 Tim. 3: 1-5).

There is only one thing worse than a worldling professing to be a Christian and that is a professed Christian who has nothing more than a set of standards that he insists every one must follow to be a Christian. Such a one has reduced Christianity to the keeping of a set of rules and knows nothing of a vital Spirit filled life. He is like the Pharisees whom Christ so unmercifully condemned.

CONCLUSION

The main burden and concern of this writer is to warn, encourage and exhort God's true saints to persevere. There is a way to the City of God and we must not miss it. This way is clearly mapped out in God's Holy Word. There can be a life of constant victory from the time one first is saved until he enters the gates of Heaven, but it will take a life of perseverance. The individual who will finally make heaven must "delight in the law of God," "meditate in the law of God day and night," obey the Word of God on the ground that it is the Word of God, suffer the reproach of the Word in his life, and pattern his life after the plain teaching of the Word. He must persevere in watching his mind lest his attention be drawn from the Word, watching his heart lest his emotions turn him into the broad and popular way of the masses; watching his spirit lest a root of bitterness spring up. He must persevere by standing fast against all forms and spirits of worldliness. He must persevere even unto death.

Reader, do not fall prey to carelessness in your spiritual life. We must persevere; we can persevere; we will be eternally lost unless we do persevere. Every effort we put forth to gain a holy heaven will be worth it all!

(For a more complete exegesis on the jewelry question and the Biblical reason why Christians should not wear jewelry including the wedding band, send for the cassette tape, "The New Jewelry," by Wingrove Taylor, (Catalog No. CM 7721), God's Bible School, 1810 Young Street, Cincinnati, Ohio 45210. Also you should obtain a copy of "Build Me a Sanctuary;" by Lavena M. Crooks, 7414 Robinson, Overland Park, KS 66212.)

THE CORNERSTONE OF LIVING

I. Parker Maxey

CHAPTER 23 DON'T SHUN SUFFERING

". . . After that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect." I Peter 5:10

Suffering! The thoughts of it are unpleasant. We shun it, yet it is universal. It is unavoidable. It is a vital ingredient in the process of Christian maturity. It involves the body, the mind, and the heart. We cannot be made perfect without it.

Paul testified to having a perfect heart (Christian perfection) while he was striving for a perfect body (resurrection perfection). Philippians 3:11-15. Peter is telling us about a perfection of maturity attained through suffering in this life. I Peter 5:10

Strange as it may seem on the surface, suffering has a vital ministry in the lives of God's children. It does its best and most lasting work in the heart and life of those who have been washed and been made pure in the blood of the Lamb. It produces a perfection of maturity that nothing else can!

Suffering is important in the ministry of bringing the perfect in heart to maturity. In this respect it is on a par with faith. Paul made this plain when he wrote, "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake" (Philippians 1:29).

Suffering is beneficial. It is dangerous to shun suffering. This is so in regard to the sinner and those who are not in spiritual victory. To shun suffering could mean the warding off of the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit. A great deal of suffering today, even in the body as well as the mind, is indirectly, if not directly related to sin and disobedience, and for one to desire peace of mind and relief from bodily suffering apart from true repentance would be a superficial attempt to escape and an actual dismissal of the convicting power of the Holy Spirit. Such would leave a soul to continue on its hell-bound course unchecked. And yet many are seeking to take this route. Psychiatrists are kept busy in an endless endeavor to relieve suffering minds. Healing lines are crowded with people seeking relief from physical suffering. In many of these cases it is suffering that is caused by the pressure of guilt because of sin -- a suffering that is permitted by the mercy of God in an endeavor to awaken the soul to its real need of repentance and deliverance. How dangerous it is to seek relief from suffering in such a superficial way!

On the other hand, suffering is also beneficial to the pure in heart and it would be detrimental and spiritually damaging to shun it. The Psalmist said, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes" (Psalm 119:71).

"A thousand benefits have come to us through our pains and griefs, and among the rest is this -- that we have thus been schooled in the law. "That I might learn thy statutes: These we have come to know and to keep by feeling the smart of the rod. We prayed the Lord to teach us (66), and now we see how He has already been doing it. Truly He has dealt well with us for He has dealt wisely with

us . . . for the truth to be learned by adversity is good for the humble. Very little is to be learned without affliction. . . . There is no royal road to learning the royal statutes; God's commands are best read by eyes wet with tears." (C. H. Spurgeon)

Physical life is dependent upon air, water and food and these have their parallel in regard to spiritual life. Most of us have to learn the hard way -- through suffering and affliction. What did you have to suffer before you really learned that you could not make it spiritually unless you consistently took time for a daily tryst with Jesus, the Lover of your soul -- before you learned that you must daily feed upon His Word? "Before I was afflicted," the Psalmist continues, "I went astray: but now have I kept thy word" (Psalm 119:67). Thank God for His ministry of affliction to the soul. Affliction has driven saints to the Word of God, there to learn of His assurance of steadfastness and faithful love.

In Psalm 66:12 we read these strange words, "Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water: but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place." What suffering, and from what trying source! But what glorious outcome from it all! Surely God's ways are "past finding out" -- His ways of bringing the pure in heart to the perfection of maturity.

Our text says, "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you" (emphasis mine) (I Peter 5:10). Do you want to reach a greater place of spiritual prosperity? That trying circumstance you are in -- don't fight it; don't try to shun it; don't even try to bring it to an end. Commit it to "the God of all grace and let Him use it to bring you to maturity in Him. Those individuals that "ride over you," that make life miserable for you, that if it were not for them you could be happy -- God allows them in your life for a purpose. Afflictions work for us, not against us. 2 Cor. 4:17. Bumper crops of nutritious food can be raised in the rich soil of the earth, but a whole season's crop can be lost if harvested before it comes to maturity. And so it is in the spiritual realm. God uses the "soil" of suffering and affliction to develop Christian maturity but impatience and lack of faith in God's ways can cost a soul poverty in place of richness of character. Thus the admonition: "Don't mow your crop down before it comes to fruition."

Humanly we are prone to ask, "How long, O Lord?" But even the time element in suffering we are to commit to God, remembering that however long (days or years) and how extensive the suffering may be, it cannot be long enough to exhaust God's grace. He is "the God of all grace. . ." (I Peter 5:10). God in His wisdom decides how long, and He cannot make a mistake.

Suffering is a preparation for that which is yet to come. We are called to share in God's eternal glory. This is what Jesus prayed for in His High Priestly prayer (John 17). God calls us to repentance; He calls us to faith; He calls us to holiness; He calls us to perseverance; He calls us to suffering -- all in order that He might call us to share in His eternal Glory! Whatever this may mean it would include all gratification that pure spirit is capable of receiving, with no liability to interruption or loss, and with all kinds of associated joys, each of which exceeds man's highest imagination. Who would want to forfeit such a prospect?

In such an hour we would be able to say with the Apostle Paul, "For our light affliction, which [was] but for a moment, [has worked] for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. 4:17).

THE CORNERSTONE OF LIVING

I. Parker Maxey

CHAPTER 24 KEPT IN THE MIDST OF TEMPTATION

"Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth" (Rev. 3:10).

Few are being "kept" from the spirit and evils of this day, yet this is the promise God has made to those who love Him -- "I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation. . . ."--indeed, a happy exemption from the spreading calamity, a calamity that is overtaking the whole earth -- Christians, Jews and heathen. Premillennial, pretribulationists interpret this as the rapturing of the church prior to the seven years of tribulation. Bypassing the thought of the rapture, we want to consider here the keeping power of God in the hour and article of temptation while we live our life out from day to day.

In the second and third chapters of the book of Revelation, the Divine Author has given us seven photographs of the church age that span the time from Pentecost to Christ's second coming. The Church of Ephesus became known as the backslidden church, having left their "first love." The Church in Smyrna was known as the persecuted or martyr church, and history records that during the ten persecutions that broke upon the church prior to Constantine's time, many recanted from the faith under the pressure of threatened death. Pergamos was known as the licentious or worldly church and represents those individuals or churches who have allowed themselves to become more like the world than like Christ. The Church in Thyatira has been called the lax or spiritually corrupt church and represents Rome and the stranglehold ecclesiasticism and popery has had and is still having on multitudes. It also represents those who are more bound by loyalty to their church than they are by loyalty to the Holy Spirit. Sardis is called the "dead" church -- "thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." The church in Philadelphia is the one bright spot, being known as the favored church. Finally, the Church of the Laodiceans, which represents this present age, is the lukewarm church. These are they who testify to having need of nothing but know not that they are "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." How sad! It is well to note that, although each church age is predominantly characterized by the one mark, each age has in it the characteristics, more or less, of all ages and this is especially so of the present age.

While Jesus was on earth He gave "security" talks to His disciples. These were concluded in His high-priestly prayer (John 17) in which He prayed, not for the world, but for His own that they might be kept. We make three observations:

We will be tested. Always, the main thrust of our testing is at the point of our faith in God's love for us. Peter warned, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you" (I Peter 4:12). Down through the ages God has always had a remnant of true, victorious saints who have come through their hour of temptation with victory. Like the saints in Ephesus, the genuineness and supremacy of our love will be revealed through testing. Abraham's was. For him it was a test between his love and faith in God and his love

for Isaac. Job's was. For him it was the matter of maintaining trust in God in the face of total loss of all earthly possessions, with added physical affliction and accusing "comforters." The Ephesians were. They left their "first love" for a mechanical operation of the church.

Like those in Smyrna who were persecuted unto death, loyalty to God is being tested today in a way and after a manner from which there is no escape. God will engineer us into circumstances that will force us to reveal what we really are. Daniel was, and he chose the lion's den in his unswerving loyalty to God. Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego were. They chose the fiery furnace and in doing so, proved their loyalty to God and His faithfulness to them. Nathan, the prophet, was when God called on him to uncover the sinful deeds of King David. Pilate was, and he refused to put himself on the line with Christ, but offered Him over to crucifixion and himself to eternal damnation. The Wright brothers were when as successful builders of the first aircraft, they refused to fly their machine on Sunday, the Lord's day, in the face of what appeared a "once-in-lifetime" opportunity for public acclaim and success.

Like those in Pergamos, many have gone down under the test of chastity and have given over to moral looseness and have let a worldly spirit gain the ascendancy. The test of moral purity is intense in these days. Joseph faced it in his day, overcame, and was used of God to bless his generation.

Social pressures have led multitudes to damnation like those represented by the Church in Thyatira, a lax and spiritually corrupt church. Very few stand the test of willingness to separate from a dead, apostate body while the most follow on in conformity. It is a sad picture, but true.

In this present time, the age of Laodiceanism, the test is to keep red hot for God in the face of a spiritually lukewarm atmosphere. God's word is true; "... because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold" (Mat. 24:12). Faith in God's love for us is being severely tested. Our total submission to God is being tested in this rebellious, self-willed age while so many are giving only lip service to God.

God can keep us! "He who is faithful to the grace of God is often hidden from trials and difficulties which fall without mitigation on those who have been unfaithful in his covenant" (Adam Clarke). God has keeping grace. He has grace wherein we are enabled to stand. Thus, he who will appropriate to himself God's sanctifying grace and will daily walk therein need never go down in defeat. The chief and foremost cause of failure among God's children is that inner "evil heart of unbelief" that causes them under the pressure of temptation (Peter at the trial of Christ, for example), to depart "from the living God." The failure to appropriate the sanctifying grace of God is the prime cause of spiritual failure and final apostasy among God's children.

But then, even in a sanctified life, we need to understand and realize that God does not preserve us in passivity. To be kept from the hour of temptation we must appropriate to ourselves God's keeping power through a daily and active trust and obedience. No doubt the Ephesians ceased in a measure to actively appropriate God's grace through daily communion, but allowed their spiritual life to become swamped with the "mechanics" of running a church program.

Those who through moment by moment obedience have kept the grace of God freely flowing through their hearts have found a sufficient supply to keep them in the hour of temptation when they have been called upon to go through the most severe testing. We must not go down in the storm.

Take a look at yourself, dear reader. Where does this present hour find you in regard to God's grace?

Testing is inescapable and "the hour" denotes the short time of its continuance. Temptation is short at any one point. Though very sharp, it is of short duration. Even then we have the promise, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (I Cor. 10:13). How many, do you suppose, have gone down in defeat in the very moment that victory would have come had they held steady?

Furthermore, our testing during our lifetime on earth is but for a moment, compared to eternity. "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (II Cor. 4:17).

In conclusion let us note the significance of these words, "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience" (Rev. 3:10). The Word is that which inspires patience. It is God's word of promise of those things that are invisible and yet future in Christ. By faith it is these things that are the subject of the believer's patient expectation and hope. It is for these things God has promised us keeping power as we pass through the "hour" of testing.

THE CORNERSTONE OF LIVING

I. Parker Maxey

CHAPTER 25 SECRETS OF A STEADY WALK WITH GOD

Paradoxical as it may seem, there are at least seven things we can do when we seemingly can't do anything. As we face perplexities in life, we need not give way to despair. Sane and sound advice in these times has always been "When you don't know what to do, don't do anything." Hold steady under the pressure of the moment until the way clears and definite light comes or a clear line of action is pointed out. Joseph had strange and inexplicable dream. They proved to be from God and pointed out a role he was to fill in life. It is well to keep in mind that "before honour is humility," a twice made statement found in Proverbs 15:33, and 18:12. Joseph's humility preceded his exaltation! Before his dreams became a reality, circumstances and providences of God seemed to hem him in and shut off his chance of doing anything about it. But he could and did do seven outstanding things that we can all profit by and participate in under like circumstances.

Maintain Integrity. No doubt this is what Peter had in mind when he wrote with the pen of inspiration, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (I Peter 3:15). In the midst of perplexity or threatened despair do not run out on God nor charge God foolishly. Maintain your integrity by maintaining your faith in God when the heat is on. When the pressure came on, Job's wife advised, "Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die." She panicked under pressure. But note what God said to Satan concerning Job, ". . . and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although, thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause (Job 2:3). The Psalmist prayed, "O keep my soul, and deliver me: let me not be ashamed; for I put my trust in thee. Let integrity and uprightness preserve me; for I wait on thee" (25:20, 21). Joseph valued integrity above position and favor of man and in the long run came out on top.

Flee Temptation. Temptation means testing. The Lord tests His people to bring out the good, as He did Abraham. Satan tempts to get rid of the good and bring ruin upon man. We need to realize that the devil is a powerful foe who works with malice and cunning to wreck us, and no one in his own strength nor all the saints with their combined strength without God's help can outwit him or escape his clutches. The Bible admonishes us to resist the devil. We must learn to resist him instantly and determinedly. Joseph kept out of sin and the clutches of the wicked one by instant flight from the scene of temptation. Likewise, we must learn to resist instantly, boldly and continuously. Yesterday's resistance will not keep us out of today's temptation. When pressure comes on, the human reaction is to do the wrong thing. The promise is that if we resist the devil he will flee from us. (James 4:7). The secret, however, is not only in resisting the devil but drawing nigh to God. He is our defense.

Let God work His plan. "God works in mysterious ways His wonders to perform." We must let Him work His own plan in His own way with patience and resignation. Sometimes God works through a permissive will. He does not always at the moment exert His power to prevent men from sinning, even when their sins often cause others to suffer. Saints may sometimes be tempted to

wonder about the justice of God. In such an hour we must appropriate His abundant grace and power. Sometimes God works through a preventative providence. In Genesis 31 we read that God spoke to Laban to "prevent" him from carrying out any evil intent he had against Jacob. God often times works through a directive will in which He overrules the evil acts of man, and brings consequences out of them which are unintended by the evil agencies. "But as for you," spake Joseph to his brethren, "ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive" (Gen. 50:20). This whole affair brought suffering to Joseph but he was willing for God to work His plan. No doubt in the midst of it there were many times when Joseph did not know what to do or what to expect, except only to do nothing himself and let God's plan unfold. God also works through a determinative plan. He does set bounds beyond which He will not allow evil to progress. "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way of escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (I Cor. 10:13).

Keep faith regardless. It is fatal to throw faith away. "Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him" (Heb. 10:38). Abraham, "Who against hope believed in hope," is our example here (Rom. 4:18). Being not weak in faith, he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief. He steadied himself on the promise. He allowed his soul to nestle in the divine purpose when there was nothing in outer circumstances to warrant it. We can do the same by the grace of God.

Carry through with your assignment. Jesus is our great Example here. He came to die on the cross to redeem man. He literally planned, prayed, fought, suffered and even staggered under the load on the final trek to Calvary in order to die on the cross for us. He made it! Praise God! He would let nothing deter Him from this one great plan and purpose of the Father for Him. God has a plan, purpose, and will for every individual. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21). It is our responsibility in life to keep ourselves in the will of God. That means living a holy life wherever the providences of God place us. By maintaining his integrity Joseph carried through with his assignment and was ready for each step God put him through.

Commit vengeance to God. "For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord" (Heb. 10:30). For man to take upon himself vengeance is to lay hold of something that belongs to God. It reveals a spirit of impatience and unbelief in the faithfulness of God to do what is right -- an unwillingness to let God have His way. In short, it reveals a carnal, vindictive spirit and purpose. Our part is to be willing to suffer and die if God designs it, and that at the hands of wicked men, if this is what God sees will bring the most honor to Him and benefit best His plan to redeem the lost.

Give God the Glory! The glory rightfully belongs to God. We read in Matthew 6:13, "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever." To God belongs all the honor and praise. The very purpose of our creation and existence is that through us God's Name and perfections may be manifested. It is His glory first and foremost that we are to seek when we approach Him. We are to suffer, losing sight of our concerns in the superior glory and honor of His Name and dominion. We

are to seek temporal and eternal life chiefly because the honor of our Maker will be promoted and His name be more illustriously displayed to His creatures.

May God help us to possess these seven essential elements of a victorious spiritual life.

THE CORNERSTONE OF LIVING

I. Parker Maxey

CHAPTER 26

"THEY CONSTRAINED HIM"

Luke 24:28, 29

Jesus joined the two and went with them on their way to Emmaus on the first day of His resurrection. "And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further. But . . ." (It was that "but" that made the difference). "But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent:' Three things stand out in this passage found in Luke 24:13-48.

Christ will not abide where He is not desired. We must desire Him. "Desire" is a strong word. It means to crave, to long for, to covet with intensity. We must desire Him first and foremost. He must be first in our thoughts, first in our affections, first in our plans, first in our ambitions. He must be given the preeminence. He must be above and ahead of every being and thing. It can be no other way, for He is eminently above all others, excelling and surpassing them in quality and prominence. These two desired Him, and He tarried with them. What are your desires, reader? Desires finally determine destiny.

If we desire Him enough to give Him preeminence it must, of necessity, involve a death to self. Someone has to reign and it will be either self or Christ. Paul said, "I am crucified with Christ: Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. . ." (Gal. 2:20). In Romans 6:6 we read, "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." Again we read in Galatians 6:14, "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

This desire must include a determined perseverance to maintain the preeminence of the indwelling Christ. Many, many things are out to rob us of His presence these days. It is here that a man's will becomes the key to traveling the high road of spirituality that finally leads to Heaven or the low road of mediocrity that will end in remorse and despair. Every soul as it journeys down life's pathway reaches crisis times, points of climax in which he is compelled to advance to higher spiritual living or start a downward course. These crisis times may not come often but they are the "great divides" in life. From those points of time one moves to either a more dilatory and useless type of Christian life, or to deeper depths and higher heights of spiritual attainment. At those times a fixed desire and a determined perseverance to give Christ preeminence will assure to him the high road that leads to the City of God.

Not only this, but definite blessings accompany the determined walk with Christ. Christ did something to these two (Luke 24:32, 45). He opened their eyes; He opened to them the scriptures; He opened their understanding. What blessings will come to those who desire Him!

We must desire Him. It is a personal matter. We determine for ourselves what we will be. We must desire Him. There is a moral oughtness about this matter of our relationship to Jesus Christ that we cannot escape and that carries with it eternal consequences. We must desire Him. We must desire Him and Him alone. Christ is heir of all things and having Him we have all things. His Presence with them as He joined them in the way and went with them warmed them and made them desire His company and fellowship until:

"They constrained him . . . to tarry with them." Multitudes ignore Him while few constrain Him. They offered Him hospitality, and He accepted it; and then He gave them hospitality. They constrained Him by their invitation. We constrain Him by earnest faith and prayer. Jesus had joined them unbidden and went with them to a point. He went as far as He could and to a point where He could go no further with them without their consent. It is true, their hearts were warmed with His presence and conversation and the pressure of nightfall urged them to extend hospitality to this apparent stranger -- and now they must take action or suffer a parting of the ways. Obligation would require them to extend hospitality: they asked Him to stay, that they might care for Him. The road farther on for this Stranger was dangerous, and they urged, "The day is far spent; abide with us." And He went in. These two said, in the words of Evelyn Davies:

"Abide with us, the nightly shadows fall,
The road is lone and rough for one and all;
But Thou, a Stranger here, wilt lose Thy way,
So come and be our Guest until 'tis Day.

And this Stranger answered:

"Abide with us! Oh, do I hear aright
That you will give Me shelter for the night,
And welcome Me, as Guest, within your home?
Oh, happiness, I'll bring you to My throne!"

And so it is with every soul! Christ comes to every heart but He will not linger long unbidden. Many times He comes in disguise as He did to those two. It is in the common, day by day experiences of life that Christ comes -- that interruption that is so trying -- that routine that is so monotonous -- that individual who thrusts his problem on you. How vital is that daily confidence that He is with us giving us that moment by moment undergirding as we willingly submit to His providences. It is in that attitude of submission and faith that He makes Himself known and our hearts are blessed and enriched. They constrained this stranger to tarry with them and lo, it was the Christ!

The Scriptures say this took place when the day was far spent. This is the third thing that stands out in this passage that has particular significance for our time. The night time was close, and it would have been nothing short of criminal to leave a stranger alone with night coming on. Every sign points to the fact that the midnight hour is on us. Bible prophecy and world events unite to warn us that the end is at hand. Surely the day is far spent! What a tragedy to be without Him when the

shadows of night are gathering around us. Have you turned the Christ of Calvary away? Or have you welcomed Him as your Guest?

THE CORNERSTONE OF LIVING

I. Parker Maxey

CHAPTER 27

FACING THE FUTURE WITH CONFIDENCE

Deuteronomy 33:27-29

"The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. . . ." Deut. 33:27a

The great eternal truths of God come to us clothed in providential garb and often amid the most trying circumstances. These lend their coloring to enrich God's truths to the human heart and indelibly impress them on the mind until the soul cries out in wonder, "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!" (Romans 11:33).

Such is the passage we have now under consideration. At this particular time in the life of Moses, everything earthly was receding and heaven was beginning to open to him. He had finished his work. He had been God's channel to give the Law; had led the children of Israel within sight of Canaan and now he was invited by God to the top of Mt. Nebo to see the land and then to die, but even though he was face to face with "the king of terror," the last enemy called death, he spoke forth one of the most sublime truths of faith, namely that "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are [present tense] the everlasting arms" (Deut. 33:27). This assures us that:

THE EVERLASTING ARMS BELONG TO THE GOD OF ETERNITY. "The eternal God is thy refuge" (v. 27). We have expressed here the great Biblical principle that man was made for God and, therefore, is the creature of eternity. He cannot find his ultimate purpose in perishing surroundings. This is a materialistic age that seeks security and satisfaction in a vanishing substance. But is materialism the answer? Jesus answered this in the form of a question when he asked, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matt. 16:26).

Multitudes today are taking refuge in alcohol and drugs. Others are turning to the occult, witchcraft, demon worship. But are they finding the answer that will enable them to face the great events of the future with confidence? No, they are not! The Bible talks about "lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition" (I Tim. 6:9), and the teachings of ". . . damnable heresies which bring upon themselves swift destruction" (2 Peter 2:1).

Moses, as we have observed, was facing death. He was never to see the faces of Aaron, Joshua, or the Children of Israel again in this life, and in the light of his approaching death he could say, with utmost confidence, "The eternal God is [my] refuge. . ."

Every passing year brings us closer to the end of this dispensation, with the return of the Lord in glory, fearful tribulation, the reign of Antichrist, death, judgment, and eternity. "And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity. . . . Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming

on the earth. . ." (Luke 21:25, 26). Can we look forward to these events with confidence knowing that the eternal God is our refuge? Not unless we are rightly related to the God of eternity and know that His everlasting arms are about us. Mrs. C. H. Morris was aware of the secret of an abiding confidence when she wrote:

"I have found sweet rest for my weary soul,
Found a harbor safe tho' the billows roll;
Found a Mighty One who can storms control,
Leaning on the everlasting arms.

"Oh, the everlasting arms how they hold me!
Ever hold me, and enfold me!
I am safe in life or death, for around and underneath
Are the mighty everlasting arms."

THE EVERLASTING ARMS BELONG TO THE GOD OF SECURITY. "The eternal God is thy refuge. . ." (v. 27). The word "refuge" refers more correctly to "dwelling place." The children of Israel were homeless and their national future was uncertain and obscure. But, regardless of these facts, they were living in the presence and security of the eternal God. He had proven Himself an adequate "dwelling place" indeed! All along life's way and now particularly at the end of the road of life, the security we find in God is the one and only thing that matters. Outside of this the world is a place of emptiness, loneliness, and homelessness.

Only God can give security and fullness in the place of emptiness. Bodies and souls may be satisfied to a degree in this world, but only God can satisfy our spirits. People seek to drown their sense of emptiness in pleasure, drugs, the mad whirl of continuous activity, or failing these, they commit suicide. But Jesus said, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" (Matt. 5:6).

Next to emptiness, and even worse, is loneliness. Look at Moses alone on the mountain. Would he not have experienced complete abandonment if he could not have said from the depth of his soul, "The eternal God is [my] refuge?" It is of great interest to note that Moses was "abandoned" to the "Everlasting Arms" both at his birth and at his death. There is a haunting loneliness that pursues mankind even in the midst of populous cities that is indescribable. God is the only true Refuge to such. "In [His] presence is fulness of joy; at [His] right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (Ps. 16:11). Oh, the fellowship and friendship in communion with God!

But God also gives security in the place of homelessness. For nearly forty years the children of Israel had wandered in the wilderness, living without any permanent dwelling; and yet, in the midst of it all, God had proved to be their refuge. Home brings to mind a place of security from outside pressures, a place of understanding and love, of shelter, food, and rest. But in this world how transient it is. There is nothing an earthly home can provide, however, that means anything when the shades of darkness fall and life begins to ebb away. A sense of homelessness overwhelms the soul, and all that matters is that you know the God of security!

When my way grows dark and no light I see,
When my friends forsake and life's comforts flee,
Then I know His grace will sufficient be,
Leaning on the everlasting arms.

THE EVERLASTING ARMS BELONG TO THE GOD OF ABILITY. "Underneath are the everlasting arms (v. 27). When God chose to give Abraham and Sarah a child after they were "well stricken in age," he challenged their faith by asking, "Is there anything too hard for the Lord?" (Gen. 18:14). Jeremiah answers this question in these words, "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). As great, however, as God's power was in creation, it did not match the power of God manifested in the resurrection of Christ from the dead. In creation His power was not challenged by any opposing force, but at the resurrection of Christ all the power of Satan and his kingdom of wicked spirits was aligned against God. While the outstretched arms of Christ on the cross reveal to us the love of God, His ability to lift us out of hopelessness and the clutches of the devil and enable us to fulfill the purpose of our existence was assured us when He raised Christ from the dead. Paul assures us ". . . that ye may know what is the . . . exceeding . . . power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come . . ." (Eph. 1:18-21).

Thank God for this assurance not only of God's ability to redeem us from sin and its consequences but to succor us in the hour of temptation and give us the confidence of final victory.

There is naught too hard for my Lord to do;
I can safely trust all life's journey thro'.
He will bear me up and my burden too,
Leaning on the everlasting arms.

THE CORNERSTONE OF LIVING

I. Parker Maxey

CHAPTER 28

"AS YE SEE THE DAY APPROACHING"

The Apostle Paul lived in anticipation of one great event -- The Rapture. ". . . that I may win Christ, And be found in him. . . . That I may know him. . . . If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of [from among] the dead" (Phil. 3:8-11). Then in Hebrews 10:25 the author writes these captivating words, ". . . and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."

We are aware of the different views concerning "end-time events." In all these varied teachings we must not allow the great facts concerning these events to become obscured -- the certainty of Christ's second coming (John 14:1-3, Heb. 9:27, 28); His coming suddenly and without warning (I Thess. 5:2, 3); the Rapture of the Church (I Thess. 4:16, 17); the fact that the exact day and hour of His coming are unknown to man (Matt. 24:35-42); Christ's coming back to earth in bodily, visible form as He went away (Acts 1:11, Rev. 1:7). Our only safety is to be ready and keep in readiness for that time (Luke 12:40). The main consideration before us now is The Rapture of the Church.

"As ye see the day approaching." We are now in sight of this great event -- the birth of the true church into immortality; the first grand, visible meeting of the great invisible church of all ages! The great, glorious and climactic event, The Rapture, is now in full view of the present generation. We have rounded the last bend in the road and the end is in sight! The Bible makes this clear. "This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled" (Matt. 24:34). Ours is the only generation that has lived in the day when all "these things" spoken of in the 24th chapter of Matthew are taking place. The calendar of events makes this clear. Man is now within sight of the end of his "sixth" day on earth, at which time the rapture of the church and tribulation on earth will take place, and all just prior to the "seventh" day of the Millennial reign of Christ. The events now transpiring make it clear that the great event is imminent.

"So much the more." Ever since Pentecost the church has anticipated the return of the Lord and in all the subsequent generations Christians thought to have foreseen it in their day and thus lived in constant awareness of this hour. No doubt the writer of Hebrews had this in mind when he wrote "so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Heb. 10:25, emphasis mine). In other words, the generation that will be living on the earth at the time of this great event will be able to see that they are living in that hour and should live "so much the more" in readiness: "so much the more" since the exact day and hour is a secret known only to God; "so much the more" because of the great unbelief and falling away that characterizes the last days; "so much the more" because of the drowsy condition that will grip the "end time" Christians and lull many to sleep in unpreparedness; "so much the more" because the great foundation truths of the Kingdom of God will be outmoded by the generation then alive! The new and present social order proves this.

To live in readiness for this hour should be the obsession of every eternity-bound soul. The task of the church should be geared to produce a preparedness for this hour. These are times not for internal strife, but for serious consideration of how we can best serve mankind in a distraught world.

We need God's help. It is available to us if we will make ourselves aware of His Presence in our lives.

One of the key phrases of the book of Hebrews is "let us." In the tenth chapter the group of "let us" passages is intended to encourage us in our sainthood and keep us alert to that coming great event. Many things, perhaps, could be left out of "programming" a church's activities, but there are essential ingredients that cannot be omitted without fatal consequences. Such are the "let us" group of this tenth chapter. "So much the more":

"Let us draw near." This speaks of ready access, of intimate fellowship. It also speaks of freedom from guilt and an evil conscience and the removal of barriers to the Divine Presence. It speaks of His manifest glory. Christianity is a spiritual theocracy. We have been brought nigh by the blood of Christ. There is no excuse now for barriers to exist between God and His people! "Draw nigh" is both a command and a promise. While the enemy is in an all-out effort to ". . . scatter the power of the holy people. . ." God's saints should "so much the more" be in an all-out effort to maintain and promote Christian fellowship. The means into this "new and living way" is Christ; the grace, that of humbleness, obedience and faith. Zephaniah gave us the key when he wrote, "Gather yourselves together . . . before the fierce anger of the Lord come upon you, before the day of the Lord's anger come upon you. Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth. . . seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger" (2:1-3). Those who strive to draw nigh to God will find themselves drawn to each other.

"Let us hold fast" is certainly a necessary injunction in these days of apostasy from the faith. It is senseless to hold fast to un-Biblical convictions that tend to bring divisions. Human traditions, useful as they may be, should be shunned when they make the Word of God of none effect. Sad when a church gets divided over such. Sad also when a church divides over theological speculations, such as a group, in existence now, that is about to divide over whether to call the third Person of the Trinity "The Holy Spirit," or "The Holy Ghost." We should hold fast, however, a determination to live and die in the faith. We should hold fast the profession or confession of our faith, the essentiality of confessing with the mouth as well as believing in the heart for one's salvation (Romans 10:9-10). If we are to be prepared for the event of all events we must not, we dare not, lose our Christian witness. We must hold fast the "confession" of our faith without wavering. "And they overcame him [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death" (Rev. 12:11). In the midst of all our church affairs are we confessing Christ to lost men? We should, "so much the more as we see the day approaching."

"Let us consider." We are to consider one another. The cross with its vertical beam represents Christ's relationship to the Father while the horizontal beam represents His outreach to men. Likewise does every Christian bear a twofold relationship to God and to his fellow men, but especially to other Christians. The heart of vital Christianity is revealed at this point -- love for one another. This leaves no room for evil suspicioning, imaginations and surmisings. Adam Clarke puts it this way: "Let us diligently and attentively consider each other's trials, difficulties, and weaknesses and feel for each other." And, we would add, "so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." We should look upon one another as if we would have to go to judgment together NOW. The author of Hebrews lists three specific ways we are to consider one another.

First, we are to provoke unto love and good works. The word "provoke" here signifies excitement, a stirring up. It also carries the thought of competing with. We are to compete in love and good works. The expression of love to God, my consuming zeal for good works, the depth of my spirituality, going beyond my present state, striving to please God and serve man, desiring nothing but what God would be pleased for me to have, should be such that would encourage and "provoke" others to do likewise. Such would nullify the type of competition that brings divisions and schisms into the body of Christ and ill fits its propagators to meet their Lord at His coming.

Secondly, we are to forsake not the assembling of ourselves together. This is essential to vital Christianity. There are perils in religious isolation and lack of communication. As a rule isolation will result in either defeat (Ecclesiastes 4:10, "For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up"), or dullness (Proverbs 27:17, "Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend"). We can easily lose the keen edge of our experience by total isolation from other Christians whom God uses to sharpen us where we ourselves are prone not to hone! Those, however, who suffer isolation in God's appointed providences will find grace to sustain them, for where God guides He provides!

God's people need to meet together regularly. Take the sun for an example. The sun is necessary to life and health. The sun's light and heat make all the difference between an earth without life and one with life. For the power to live and move, for the plenty with which we are surrounded, for the beauty with which nature is adorned, we are immediately indebted to one body in the countless hosts of space, and that body is the sun. It is the great source of power which sustains all life. It makes the rain and the rivers, gives every visible part of the earth its light and color and beauty, supplies the food of the green plants on which we feed. The natural world without the sun would be a howling waste in which neither animal nor vegetable life could possibly be sustained. Now, what the sun is to the earth, Christian fellowship is to the soul and to the body of Christ. Wherever you find children of God withdrawn from the genial influence of Christian fellowship you will observe traces of religious abnormality, weakness and melancholy. Christian fellowship is the sun of the soul. It stimulates, strengthens, and gladdens our whole being. It is the time and place where we can most actively "provoke one another to love and good works." How desperately needful, and "so much the more as ye see the day approaching."

Thirdly, we are to exhort one another. In The Wesleyan Bible Commentary; Vol. VI, page 132, we read: Christians are "to offer mutual encouragement: exhorting one another" (v.25). Henry Drummond says, in effect, that in an atmosphere of suspicion and distrust the fattest soul will grow thin and shrivel, but that in an atmosphere of confidence and trust the leaner souls will grow fat and flourish. Generally, people strive to live up to the confidence that others for whom they have respect have in them. Such confidence is the Christian's contribution to the salvation of his fellows. Men usually respond and grow when people believe in them, but lose self-confidence when others withhold their confidence in them. Of all people, Christians should believe in one another, and so much the more, as we see the day approaching."

In conclusion, we note that this great "let us" exhortation and encouragement to "end-time" Christians can be summed up in the great trilogy of faith, hope and love, of which Paul was so fond, and which occurs in this three-fold admonition: Draw near with the full assurance of faith -- the

Christian's upward attitude; hold fast the confession of hope -- the forward attitude; provoke unto love and good works -- the outward attitude.

God help us in all our plannings to keep these three essential things as priorities!

THE CORNERSTONE OF LIVING

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NOTES

Chapter 1

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