

The background of the cover is a photograph of a field of tall, golden-brown grasses or reeds. In the upper left, two silhouettes of people are walking away from the viewer. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright, hazy glow. The overall color palette is warm, dominated by yellows, oranges, and browns.

COUNSEL

AUTUMN 2014

*Misplaced Loves
Consciences in Conflict
and more*

The Ages To Come

“That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.” Ephesians 2:7

The Christian life is lived in expectation of better things to come. This has always been the character of the one who lives by faith. Hebrews 11 reminds us: “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. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God... These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from when they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better county, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.”¹

Salvation has made such a change in the life of the believer that we now live, not merely in the natural realm of things, but the spiritual as well. We are looking for something better than this world can offer. We have changed so that this is no longer our native home.

Notice Paul’s words from the Ephesians – ‘the ages to come’. The ages are plural. Eternity will be an

unfolding of successive periods of revelation of the spiritual lessons on the inexhaustible character of God. We will not know everything on entrance to heaven, but the ages will reveal more and more for eternity.

Notice too the content of that endless revelation. It will be ‘the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness.’ His grace overwhelms us now in salvation. But Paul tells us there is more – much more yet to come.

But also notice that it will be ‘toward us’. He will continue to lavish His kindness upon us for eternity!

This is why we are called to be pilgrims and strangers in this world. It can offer us nothing compared to the coming glory. The Christian life is one that rejects the world and lives in light of that eternal reality. Yet the fact remains that often as Christians the hope of heaven remains vague, distant and unreal. We naturally cling to this world and seek our happiness and security here. It should not surprise us therefore that the Lord allows things into our lives that are intended to pull us away from this realm. Trials, difficulties, and disappointments are signposts that this life and world is not our home.

Hymnwriters of a past generation captured the truth. Consider these words by John Nelson Darby:

*This world is a wilderness wide,
I have nothing to seek or to choose;
I’ve no thought in the waste to abide;
I have nought to regret nor to lose.*

*The path where my Saviour is gone
Has led up to His Father and God,
To the place where He’s now on the throne;
And His strength shall be mine on the road.*

*With Him shall my rest be on high,
When in holiness bright I sit down,
In the joy of His love ever nigh,
In the peace that His presence shall crown.*

*’Tis the treasure I’ve found in His love
That has made me a pilgrim below;
And ’tis there, when I reach Him above
As I’m known, all His fullness I’ll know.*

Or these words of Henry Francis Lyte:

*My rest is in heaven, my rest is not here,
Then why should I murmur when
trials are near?*

*Be hushed my sad spirit, the worst
that can come*

*But shortens the journey and hatens
me home.*

*It is not for me to be seeking my bliss,
And building my hopes in a regions
like this;*

*I look for a city which hands have not piled;
I pant for country by sin undefiled.*

*The winds of affliction around me
may blow,*

*And dash my lone barque as I’m
sailing below;*

*I smile at the storm as I lean on His breast,
And soon I shall land in the haven of rest*

*Let trial and danger my progress oppose,
They only make heaven more sweet at
the close;*

*Come joy or come sorrow, whate’er
may befall,*

*A home with my God will make up
for it all.*

*With Christ in my heart, and
His word in my hand,*

*I travel in haste through an enemy’s land;
The road may be rough, but it cannot
be long,*

So I journey on singing the conqueror’s song.

We are looking for a city. Like Abraham they did not think about the land they came from, but thought about the one they were going to. Likewise, we too, need to lift our thinking heavenward and hold earth’s experience in light of this reality.



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Too Busy

*Forgive me, Lord, that I allow
My days and hours to be
So filled with trifling tasks, that oft
I find no time for Thee.*

*My thoughts so oft are occupied
With countless earthly things,
When Thou wouldst have them
mount on High
By faith with eagle wings.*

*So many duties round me press,
That rob me of the time
I fain would spend with thee, my Lord,
In fellowship divine.*

*Too busy-O forbid, dear Lord,
That I should ever be
Too much engrossed in worldly tasks
To spend an hour with Thee!*

*That I should let the din of life
Drown out Thy voice of love,
And, groveling in the “sands of time,”
Lose out on things Above.*

*O help me Lord, to take the time-
To set all else aside,
That in the Secret Place of prayer
I may with Thee abide;*

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*To hear what Thou wouldst say to me,
And hold communion sweet;
To praise Thy precious worthy Name
And worship at Thy feet:*

*To hearken to Thy holy will,
To feel Thy cleansing pow’r-
O may I ne’er let aught deprive
My soul of this blest hour!*

-Avis B. Christiansen

BRIAN GUNNING | St. Catharines, Ontario



MISPLACED LOVES

2 TIMOTHY 3:1-5

Do we really love like we should? What and how we love tells what kind of people we are. According to our text, one of the signs of the last times is the manifestation of misplaced love. God created us with a capacity to know and love Him. That was soon perverted in Eden, as Genesis 3 and 4 record, and has only gotten worse in the ensuing ages. This sinful disposition, like a cancer, cannot become something good. When the inspired prophet Isaiah began writing, he was moved to point out right away the terrible inner condition of the ‘sinful nation’ (Isa. 1:4) of Israel, the elect nation. ‘the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint’ (v. 5). The sick head indicates the defective thought life: we don’t think rightly. The faint heart indicates weakness and failings in the emotions and will: we don’t love rightly. People tend to think that love solves all problems, but they fail to realize that not all love is good, and love doesn’t solve everything or make all right. For example, we read, “But king Solomon loved many strange women” (1 Ki. 11:1). God had expressly forbidden it, but Solomon abused God’s favor and

did as he pleased. How many have followed in his steps over the centuries? ‘Solomon clave unto these in love’ (1 Ki. 11:2). And what happened? “And his wives turned away his heart” (1 Ki. 11:3-4). “And Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord” (1 Ki. 11:6). It all started with misplaced, illicit, disobedient, unholy love. Satan is a master strategist. Control the heart and you control the person. What more deceptive way to gain entrance to the citadel than through love? And our Lord warned in Matthew 10:37, “He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.” The Lord demands first place in our affections, and He is worthy. “And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.” (Mark 12:30). Paul describes to Timothy the “perilous times” (Gr. *chalepos*) that prevail in the last days. They are marked by three wrong loves, three misplaced loves. There is plenty of love, but all the wrong

kinds. Love is not a feeling, but a commitment, a value placed on something/someone, an esteem. We don’t “fall in love” as Hollywood has duped many into thinking. It isn’t getting smitten with a feeling or impulse. It is a spiritual virtue meant to be used for God’s glory and our blessing. Verse 2 speaks of “lovers of their own selves.” Truly this is the root of most if not all of the other sins. Selfish love says “me first,” “look out for number one.” The pervasive influence of psychology and sociology has reached levels never before seen. In one generation teachers changed from calling ‘self-love’ a sin (egotism), to an ingredient necessary for a normal life. In June, 1976 Intervarsity Press published a book by Walter Trobisch entitled **Love Yourself**. This opened the way for a spate of books on self-image, depression, etc. in which psychology and philosophy were popularized among Christians. None of this is substantiated by Scripture, but it is hard for fallen human nature to resist. But self-occupation is like entering a house of mirrors with a labyrinth of hundreds of distorted images.

The theme is “me first,” “my rights,” “my feelings,” “my opinion,” etc. Even professing Christians refuse advice, counsel and instruction saying, “It’s my life,” forgetting that they have been bought with a price and they are not their own (1 Cor. 6:19-20). Individualism is seen everywhere, and in the church this makes fellowship and the task of shepherding more difficult than ever. Marriages suffer, parent-child relations, friendships and even business partnerships, for self-love proves to be destructive rather than edifying.

Verse 2 also warns that men will be “covetous” (lit. *lovers of silver*). 1 Timothy 6:10 identifies the love of money to be the root of all kinds of evil. People will do for love of money what they wouldn’t do for love of God. And some will even preach and serve if the money’s right. Some spend more time on the stock market and their investment portfolio than they do in the Bible. Their first waking thought is money-related. Again, it is hard for human nature not to be attracted by money and its power, the things it can buy, the pleasure it can provide and the people it can influence. Someone has said that money is the universal passport to everywhere but heaven. We can’t take it with us, either, but some won’t part with it until they die. It’s the only friend they have left, and a poor one at that.

In verse 4 we have the third misplaced love, “lovers of pleasure.” Some count it pleasure to riot in the day time (2 Pet. 2:13). James accuses the rich, “Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter” (Jas. 5:5). It is common to take pleasure vicariously in the sins of others (Rom. 1:32). We wouldn’t commit certain sins, perhaps, but we are entertained by stories of others committing them. A few, like Moses, by faith choose “rather

to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season” (Heb. 11:25). Sin can bring temporary pleasure, and this is its attraction, but the end is bitter. Many today live hedonistic lives –that is– devoted to the pursuit and enjoyment of pleasure. It’s just another form of ‘self-ism.’ Drinking, partying, carousing, sports, romance, sex, computer games and console games such as Xbox, Playstation and Nintendo. Even such things as music, food, flowers, and pets are among the

These misplaced loves, and all the other sins named in verses 1-5 are nothing new. They have always been in our fallen world. So what makes these last days “perilous times”? Verse 5 gives the answer. “Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.” In the last days, the sins and misplaced loves of verses 2-4 have moved into the church, into Christendom: “having a form of godliness.” Now as never before in history people can live in self-love, avarice, worldly pleasures

THE LORD DEMANDS FIRST PLACE IN OUR AFFECTIONS, AND HE IS WORTHY. “AND THOU SHALT LOVE THE LORD THY GOD WITH ALL THY HEART, AND WITH ALL THY SOUL, AND WITH ALL THY MIND, AND WITH ALL THY STRENGTH: THIS IS THE FIRST COMMANDMENT.” (MARK 12:30)

many things that people love, pursue and live for. Who can count the total hours, money and energy spent on these?

And the most condemning phrase follows immediately: “more than lovers of God,” or more literally, “lovers of pleasure instead of lovers of God.” As evangelicalism has become increasingly shallow and worldly, entertainment, programs and activities have become more important than God to many. Music has become the focal point instead of Christ and Scripture in many places. God has been replaced. He is on the lips but not in the heart (Isa. 29:13). He is there in theory, yes, but in practice, in day-to-day life self, money and pleasure occupy the citadel of the heart. All of life is affected. It cannot be otherwise. And so the perilous times have come; they are upon us. We are living in the last days foretold by the apostle Paul.

and manifest all the other sins here named, and still call themselves “Christians.” No one is questioned, because we mustn’t judge, we’re told. They can manifest these traits and be in fellowship in many churches. What was once in the world is now in the church, destroying it from the inside. Careless evangelistic work, false professions and a lack of discernment have united to produce the conditions for the perfect storm, “the falling away” spoken of in 2 Thessalonians 2:3, and the revealing of the man of sin. May the Lord help us to identify and expel from our lives any love that occupies our hearts instead of the Lord Jesus Christ. God deserves the first and best in our lives, not just on Sundays, but every day, all the time. “And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ” (2 Th. 3:5).
To be continued...

CARL KNOTT | Seville, Spain



ISAIAH 53:10-12

God's Servant Will Be Satisfied

PART 5 OF 5

The final stanza of this servant song can be summarized in one word: satisfied! God is satisfied! The Lord Jesus is satisfied! And we are satisfied too!

1. God is satisfied: 53:10

"It pleased the Lord to bruise Him." One can readily understand other statements about the pleasure God found in the Lord Jesus: *"It pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell"* (Colossians 1:19); *'this is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased'* (Matthew 3:17). And the Lord Himself could say, *"I do always those things that please the Father"* (John 8:29). His person, His life and His ministry were all pleasing to God. But in what sense could this be said of His death?

God found no pleasure in the fact that He suffered

Clearly God found no pleasure in the way men rejected and crucified His Son. Creation was convulsed at the death of Christ: the sun refused to shine, the earth quaked, and the graves were opened. Everything suggested that God was deeply involved in what was happening. We would have understood if He had intervened directly and poured out His wrath upon those

responsible for that monstrous act. But, instead of that, as we sometimes sing, *'the Holy One did hide His face, O Christ, 'twas hid from Thee...'*

God found pleasure in His death as an offering for sin

God brought much suffering into the life of Joseph but he looked back on it and explained it to his brothers in this way, *"As for you, you meant evil against me; But God meant it for good in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive"* (Genesis 50:20). It pleased the Lord to bruise Joseph because his sufferings were the divinely prescribed means by which blessing would be brought into the lives of others. In a similar way God was pleased to bruise His Son. At Calvary God's holiness was involved: He could not arbitrarily ignore sin. God's justice was involved: He demanded satisfaction for sin. God's love was involved: He desired to reach out to and save men and women. The resolution of all of this was: *"You made His soul an offering for sin"*, an offering that was all that God required and that satisfied Him.

God found pleasure in the results of His offering

"He shall see His seed." An indication of divine favour and blessing to the Jews was to have numerous children and especially to see one's children's children (e.g. Psalm 128:6). The Lord Jesus has a seed: those who believe in Him.

"He shall prolong His days." Another indication of divine favour was long life (eg. Psalm 91:16). His death would not be the end and so He says, *"I am He Who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore"* (Revelation 1:18).

"The pleasure of the Lord will prosper in His hand." *"In His hand"* suggests authority and control. For example, the angels of the seven churches are in His right hand (Revelation 1:16), under His control and subject to His authority. Paul writes about *'the mystery of God's will, according to His good pleasure which he purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ...'* (Ephesians 1:9-10). Thus God's pleasure will find fulfillment in the Lord Jesus when everything is united in Him.

But *"in His hand"* can have another meaning. If someone leaves something in my hand, he is making me responsible to look after it. And so, when we read about the Lord Jesus *"knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands"* (John 13:3), it may point to the responsibility He was given. Within the Godhead there was this commitment to do something about a world gone wrong and it was agreed that the Lord Jesus would handle it. It was in His hand because God entrusted Him with the work of redemption. And God has not been disappointed. On the contrary, the Lord Jesus accomplished all that was desired, such that in every way His work has been satisfactory and God is satisfied.

2. The servant is satisfied: 53:11

"He shall see the labour of His soul, and be satisfied." The work He undertook was no easy, simple task. It was "labour", hard, trying, laborious, wearying and yet satisfying. This satisfaction came from knowing that:

His work was completed

The Lord Jesus could say, *"I have glorified You upon the earth. I have finished the work which You gave me to do"* (John 17:4). On the cross He made that triumphant announcement, *"It is finished"* (John 19:30).

His work was appreciated

Notwithstanding the fact that He was rejected, the Lord Jesus was appreciated where it mattered most. This was especially so in His resurrection, as is suggested by the NIV translation of this verse: *"After the suffering of His soul He shall see the light of life..."* The resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus were God's "amen" to His work. It looked like He had been abandoned but what He was doing was acceptable to His Father and was appreciated by Him.

His work was effective

That's the principle thought in this text. He shall see all that follows from His atoning sufferings: His Father is glorified, the devil's power is nullified, and men and women are justified. He will see us (the fruit of *'the labour of His soul'*) and He will be satisfied. We sometimes sing, *"It will be worth it all when we see Jesus."* In that coming day the Lord Jesus will look at us and He will say, *"It was worth it all!"* Referring again to the story of Joseph, I expect he felt that way when he looked at his brothers and recognized the hand of God in it all. But, if anyone could look at what he had accomplished and express satisfaction with it, that person was the Lord Jesus.

3. We are satisfied: 53:11-12

He shares His righteousness with us: 53:11

"By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many." That says something about His character: He is righteous. It also says something about His actions: His was a *"righteous act"* (Romans 5:18). What Adam did was a transgression and an offence and an act of disobedience; what the Lord Jesus did was a work of righteousness and an act of obedience which results in justification.

"His knowledge" may be understood in an objective sense, referring to our knowledge of Him. It is only as we come to know Him and trust in Him that we are justified (cf. Romans 3:26). Alternatively, *"His knowledge"* may be understood in a subjective sense, referring to what He knows. When Joseph was sent by his father to get news of his brothers, he came to Shechem and they were not there. He might have returned home and advised his father that he had done what he was asked to do but his brothers were not at Shechem. But Joseph knew his father and understood what his father wanted. He enquired and discovered that they had gone to Dothan and he went

after them and found them there. The Lord Jesus said, *"...I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep"* (John 10:15). He knew His Father, His concern for the sheep, His desire to save lost men and women and bring them back to Himself. He knew how that was to be accomplished and He was willing to do what was necessary and lay down His life for the sheep. His knowledge of the divine will and His submission to it has resulted in many being justified.

He shares His reward with us: 53:12

God rewards His servant as a victor on the field of battle shares in the spoils of victory: *"I will divide Him a portion with the great."* And He in turn *'shall divide the spoil with the strong.'* The 'strong' are we who are trusting in Him and who benefit from all that He has done. Joseph had a portion in the Egypt: *"God has made me lord of all Egypt."* And he desired to share it with his family: *"Come down to me, do not tarry. You shall dwell in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near to me... I will provide for you... Joseph situated his father and his brothers and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land... Then Joseph provided his father, his brothers, and all his father's household with bread according to the number in their families"* (Genesis 45:9-11; 47:11-12). So it is that the Lord Jesus shares with us the results of His work, since it was for us that *"He poured out His soul unto death."* He identified with us and *"was numbered with the transgressors."* Mark quotes this passage with reference to the two thieves who were crucified with Him, one on either side (Mark 15:27). But Luke appeals to this text as a general description of what was involved in His sufferings (Luke 22:37). We were the transgressors; He identified with us and bore our sin and made intercession for us. All this He did on our behalf and we are blessed through Him. Surely we are satisfied!



The Disney classic “Pinocchio” popularized the saying “Let your conscience be your guide.” In a previous article we cautioned against individuals thinking that because they have peace about acting in a certain way, it is something of which God approves. We saw that, in the Scriptures, the charge to “let the peace of God rule in your hearts” is addressed to a group and not just to one person. That begs a question: What then is the value of an individual’s conscience?

Conscience is the inner voice that approves or disapproves of what you have done or are thinking of doing; it is more like a judge than a guide. The verdicts it hands down can be accurate or misleading depending on how long ago it was calibrated or tuned.

How Does A Conscience Develop?

When we entered this world it is as if we had an empty vessel within. It had nothing to offer us for nothing had been put into it; we were in a state of innocence. But gradually information was received and processed within that vessel that would give it the ability to make us

feel comfortable or uncomfortable with our actions. Whether it will comfort or condemn any individual is greatly influenced by a mixture consisting of his or her exposure to traditions, education, past experience and the standards of society. The conscience of Saul of Tarsus was no exception to this rule. His actions were approved according to the contents or

CONSCIENCE IS THE INNER VOICE THAT APPROVES OR DISAPPROVES OF WHAT YOU HAVE DONE OR ARE THINKING OF DOING; IT IS MORE LIKE A JUDGE THAN A GUIDE.

ingredients in his vessel as he traveled the road to Damascus. The tradition of his fathers (Gal. 1:14), his education (Acts 22:3), the backing of the council of elders at Jerusalem (Acts 22:5), all contributed to him having a good conscience while zealously pursuing an evil purpose. His claim, “I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day” (Acts 23:1) was not a lie.

Reprogramming

Renewing of his mind had to take

place; Saul had to receive and submit to information he received from a superior Source, One that would modify or expel the other ingredients in the vessel. This process began with the revelation which he received on the Damascus road, he now called “Lord” the one He had been persecuting. Saul’s conscience would no longer act favorably to any vestiges of past

ignorance and unbelief; he would renounce the confidence he might have had in the flesh and under the Law. For him to live was now Christ.

It must be the same with us who have not had such a dramatic awakening to the truth. Instead it might be truly said of many readers that, “From a child you have known the Holy Scriptures which are able to make you wise to salvation” (2 Tim. 3:15). Not that

we did not need to be converted and personally receive Christ, but as with a countless multitude of others, the revelation of Christ available in the Bible was at hand. The moment we received Him as revealed in its pages, we began to think about things differently and our consciences became sensitive to things that never bothered us before, and it also approved that in which we once had no interest. Conflict with the world around us, the flesh within us and the Devil wherever we thought he was acting began. These were sure signs of our new allegiance. With others, our conscience now marched to the beat of a different drummer. But alas, we found it possible to sometimes be out of step with our fellow soldiers - even those in the same battalion! Why?

A Different Mix

The New Testament epistles show that differences of opinion among Christians is not a problem that developed only recently. Consciences that have been fed from different sources are bound to disagree as to what constitutes acceptable behaviour. The trouble is we are not always willing to recognize that fact; we want others to conform to what our conscience may permit or forbid. We are not speaking here of doctrinal error; that must be handled differently.

Romans chapter 14 shows some of the situations in which trouble developed in the early churches. A Gentile convert might not share the concern that a Jewish convert was likely to have over meat bought in the market. Even if was approved by a pagan priest to be offered to a god or gods, did not the Jew understand that heathen gods did not really exist? Why was he asking where this meat was purchased? As his host, would he be serving his guest anything harmful? Each would be judging the other as to his spiritual condition.*

Other matters, like the observance or non-observance of special days, provided opportunity for one saint to despise another. In doing so he was ignoring the fact that God had received the one he condemned. One of the purposes of Christ’s death and resurrection was that “He [not they] might be Lord of both the dead and the living” (v. 9). “therefore, even those appointed to be guides of the flock are warned against ‘being lords over those entrusted to them’ ” (1 Pet. 5:3) and Paul was

THE REVELATION OF CHRIST AVAILABLE IN THE BIBLE WAS AT HAND. THE MOMENT WE RECEIVED HIM AS REVEALED IN ITS PAGES, WE BEGAN TO THINK ABOUT THINGS DIFFERENTLY AND OUR CONSCIENCES BECAME SENSITIVE TO THINGS THAT NEVER BOTHERED US BEFORE, AND IT ALSO APPROVED THAT IN WHICH WE ONCE HAD NO INTEREST.

concerned lest he might appear to “have dominion over your faith... for by faith you stand” (2 Cor. 1:24). And in Rom. 14:4 he says, “Who are you to judge another’s servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.”

Current Issues

This writer has observed how damaging pre-judgments can be to the fellowship of a local church, and how disruptive in a home. Sons and daughters can be adversely affected when parents voice or show their disapproval of what the consciences of others permit

them to do - the Sunday School teacher who attended a theatre, the elder who drank a glass of wine at a wedding, parents who sent their children to a Roman Catholic school when they could easily have home-schooled them, etc., etc.

We would recommend that before anyone associates with a local church they should read that fourteenth chapter of Romans and give it much thought lest their consciences become a cause for schools of opinion to develop and

disruption to occur. It is humbling to realize that sometimes we become enlightened and have to change our minds about issues we once stood strongly for or against. For us, that is often a necessary ingredient for growing in grace.

*Moslem influence is strong in the meat industry. Without realizing it you may soon be buying and consuming meat that conforms to Sharia law and has been blessed by an Imam. Will “meats” again become a controversial issue among Christians?

The Glories Of Christ:

His Eternal Glories

We have previously considered the Pre-Incarnate and Incarnate Glories of Christ, and we now come to consider His Eternal Glories. Needless to say such is the brilliance and the extent of these glories, that here as before, we find ourselves overwhelmed, and feeling that the only possible response is to cast ourselves prostrate at His feet. In John 17, the Lord says to His Father, "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." (John 17:5 AV) However, in that same prayer, the Lord went on to say, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovest me before the foundation of the world." (John 17:24 AV) Note the two statements "...the Glory which I had with thee," and "...my Glory which Thou hast given me." We learn from these statements, that there are two aspects of the Lord's eternal glory: First, the recovery of His pre-incarnate Glory, but now in addition – those glories which the Father has given Him upon the completion of the work He had given Him to do at Calvary. We could call them the "acquired" glories of the Lord Jesus. Let us consider some of these glories together:

The Acquired Glories of the Lord Jesus:

The first thing we should note is that the glorification of Christ is always spoken about in the past tense. Sometimes we speak as though the glorification of Christ is some future event. But no! It is already an accomplished fact. He has already been glorified (Eph. 1:19-23; Phil. 2:5-11). Of course the display of His glory to a wondering universe awaits a future day of revelation,

when Christ will be worshipped by all created intelligences. We read "And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and such as be in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, 'Blessing and honour, and glory and power, be to him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.'" (Rev. 5:13)

His Positional Glories

There are several key scriptures that emphasise the glories that Christ has acquired "positionally" as follows:

HIGHLY EXALTED:

"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him..." Phil. 2:9-11

The word "wherefore," takes us back to the preceding verses. In these verses, the Spirit of God has been telling us about the self-abnegation of Christ - His becoming of no reputation, and describing step, after downward step, until we find Him obedient to the point of death, even the death of the Cross. So, it is because of the obedience of Christ, that took Him so low, that God has elevated Him so High, and there is coming a day, when in all the universe, and reaching even into Hades itself, every knee shall bow at His footstool. (Not that those in Hades will be saved, but they will acknowledge His glory.)

Joseph is perhaps the best illustration of Christ in His humiliation and exaltation. Joseph passed through deep waters in his lifetime. Hated by His brethren; sold into slavery; slandered by Potiphar's wife; suffered at the hands of the Gentiles. But all of this changed overnight. Pharaoh had dreams that troubled him and Joseph was summoned. Before the day was out, Joseph was Prime Minister of

Egypt. Later his brethren came down, and they bowed before him on several occasions even before they knew he was Joseph. But when the revelation came, they were afraid and bowed down before him. They, who had despised his dreams of their sheaves bowing down to his sheave, and of the sun and moon bowing down to his star, now fulfilled that dream by giving him glory.

Yes, God has reversed the verdict of men concerning His Son. They gave Him a cross; God has given Him the Crown. They gave Him a tree; God has given Him a Throne. They covered Him with shame but God has covered Him with Glory.

*He fills the throne,
The throne above,
He fills it without wrong,
The object of His Father's love,
The theme of angel's song.*

FAR ABOVE ALL:

"... He[God] 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..." Eph. 1:20-23

This verse brings before us further revelation regarding the glorification of Christ. It was the "working of God's mighty power," that raised Jesus from the dead. Nothing could stand in the way of Christ leaving the sepulcher. Neither the stone, nor the seal, nor the soldiers. These were swept aside - Hallelujah! Christ arose. Notice that He is now "far above." The phrase "principalities and powers," has to do with the hosts of spiritual beings - the angels and such like - whereas the term "might and dominion" would

refer to the authority delegated by God to men on the earth. But whatever, He is far above all. We sometimes sing the chorus:

*Far above all, Far above all,
Jesus the Crucified, Far above all,
Kings and their Kingdoms around us may fall,
But Jesus my Saviour is far above all.*

AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD:

"Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him." 1 Pet. 3:22

"He [God] raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand" Eph. 1:20

Throughout scripture, the "Right Hand," is seen to be the place of favour, the place of power, and Christ has been elevated to His Father's own right hand. The Lord Jesus said himself whilst here "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son:" (John 5:22) It is the Son who holds the scepter of universal power, and it is the Son who will "rule the nations with a rod of iron." God had decreed it, and it will come to pass - "Yet have I set My King upon My Holy hill of Zion." (Ps. 2:6) and again 'thou shalt break them in pieces with a rod of iron, thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.' (Ps. 2:9)

HIS INHERITANCE IN THE SAINTS:

"...That ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints," Eph. 1:18

We rightly revel in passages that speak of our inheritance in Him, and of course we look forward with anticipation to the day when we shall enter into it in fullness. However, we hear very little about 'the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the Saints' What a wondrous thought is this - that we as saints are the inheritance of the Lord. We are those whom the Lord refers to when speaking to His Father when spoke about "...those whom thou has given me." (John 17:24), and in this sense, we are His inheritance passed on by the Father

His Glorious Names:

In the last book of our Bible, accolade

after accolade is given to our blessed Lord. Title after illustrious title is conferred upon Him, to magnify His Glory. Here are some of those great titles he bears, all of them emphasizing a different aspect of the Glory that belongs to Him.

He is the faithful witness; the first begotten from the dead and the Prince of the Kings of the earth;

He is Alpha and Omega; The Almighty; He is Lord in the midst of the Churches; He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah; the Lamb in the midst of the throne; He is the Lamb who stands on Mount Zion; He is Faithful and True; The Word of God; He is the root and the offspring of David, the bright and morning Star; and He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords; Each of these titles carries a volume of truth in itself, that magnifies the person of our Lord in some unique way. Confronted with the many names and titles of our Lord Jesus, we agree with the hymn writer when he wrote:

*Join all the glorious names of wisdom
love and power,
Those mortals ever knew that angels
ever bore,
All are too mean to speak His worth,
Too mean to set our Saviour forth.*

His Ultimate Glories:

As we draw our meditation to its close we wish to look at scenes where the Glory of Christ comes to its climax. The final chapters of the book of Revelation tell the story of one victory after another -the ultimate triumph of the Crucified. Revelation 19 opens with four great Hallelujahs. Let's examine these four acclamations together:

"And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever." (Rev. 19:1-3 AV) and these first peals of praise finds a twofold echo in the Hallelujahs of the four and twenty elders and the four living ones, and again, in the thunderous voice of the great multitude, "as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty

thunderings saying 'Hallelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.'"

These outbursts of praise are occasioned by the fact that the false bride, that great whore, Mystery Babylon has been judged, and now the time has come to unveil the true bride -the Bride of Christ.

Also the corrupt city Babylon has been destroyed, and now the City of God is unveiled as the source of power and administration during the reign of Christ upon the earth, and ultimately in the New Creation. The Lord makes the final strokes that will subdue all enemies beneath His feet as He emerges as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, with all the armies of Heaven following Him, The scenes of victory and glory follow one after another in rapid sequence: The defeat of the Beast and the false prophet; The binding of Satan; The introduction of Christ's reign where once they cried "Away with Him. Crucify Him, we will not have this man to reign over us." Then the ultimate victory when at the end of His 1000 year reign, Satan musters forces against the Lord and His anointed, and Satan is cast into the Lake of fire with his cohorts - The Beast and the False prophet - and all their followers. The universe is rid of that 'trinity of evil' that sought to usurp the "blessed Trinity." Then God's great final assize, out there in the cold darkness of space - the Great White Throne - where the Lord Jesus sits as Judge of the dead small and great - where every last vestige of sin and rebellion that defiled God's creation, is expunged from the universe.

In closing these meditations on the glories of Christ, we readily confess that, at best, we see 'through a glass darkly', but even that is surely enough to inspire us to add our Hallelujahs to that of hosts above - to join in that great Hallelujah chorus that shall resound for all of eternity.

"And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, 'Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.'" (Rev. 5:13).

THE SEVEN CHURCHES

PART 4



This is the final of four articles examining, exploring, and explaining the message of the seven churches. The goal has been to be expositional in looking at the text and also practical in the application for us in this age. The Lord Jesus occupies the same place today as He did in Revelation 1; He is still in the midst of the churches. From that place of prominence He is intimately aware of all that takes place in each assembly and deeply concerned for what is lacking in doctrine and devotion.

His view of the local church is from heaven's perspective; the assembly as it is in reality. The earthly view of the assembly may be far different. The local church may look like it is flourishing and prospering with God's blessing whereas the Lord Jesus sees the true spiritual condition. He knows if the assembly has left their first love or are compromising with the world and bowing to its' pressure.

From His vantage point He offers words of commendation for that which is commendable. He also gives the needed correction for what is lacking. In each letter the Lord Jesus has an offer of compensation and a call to hear what is being said about the assembly.

The churches that have the strongest word of condemnation (such as Thyatira, Sardis, and Laodicea) are most like the culture and city where they are found. Those with the greatest

words of commendation (Smyrna and Philadelphia) are the least like the culture and characteristics of their home city. This reminds me of the illustration of a ship at sea. There is no problem with the ship in the water but it poses a great problem when the water is in the ship. So it is in church life, the church is designed to function in the world but there is danger of sinking when the world comes in to the church.

The two churches examined in this article graphically demonstrate this truth. Philadelphia did well in a hostile world. In contrast Laodicea had no influence because they were so much like the world around about.

Each of the previous articles has given the "progressive view" presenting the progress of the church age. This is not the primary meaning of these letters. However, based on the other groups of seven, feasts in Leviticus 23 and parables in Matthew 13, there is some precedent. The feasts of Jehovah give Israel's history in advance and the parables of the kingdom outline the progress of the Kingdom of Heaven through this period and on to the end of the age.

The progressive view of the seven letters would see Ephesus as the Apostolic Church, starting well and remaining active, but, having left their first love. Smyrna speaks of the persecuted church in the time of ten different Roman Emperors. Pergamum would

be the compromising church from the time of Constantine to the early 500's. From that point, through the dark ages and the domination by Rome, would be characteristic of Thyatira. Sardis would be the Reformation Church, having signs of life but spiritually dead.

Philadelphia would represent the revivals and progress of the church from the early 1800's. During this time there was numerical growth and sending out of missionaries to many foreign fields. There was also development of doctrinal positions in regard to the church, the person of Christ, and the second coming with a distinction between the rapture and the revelation.

The present age is often referred to as the Laodicean age. The characteristics of this church were complacency and consumerism. It speaks of a time when the church is so like the world and the believers so blind to their condition that they exert no influence in the place where they live.

The name of the city and the meaning of each are perhaps indicative of the potential in Philadelphia and the problem in Laodicea. Philadelphia means "brotherly love" which is fundamental to assembly life and testimony. Laodicea means "rule of the people" which suggests that the desires of individuals rise above the centrality of the person of Christ.

It is to be kept in mind that though the present period may indeed be the Laodicean age individual assemblies can be like Philadelphia. No one forces believers individually or collectively to conform to the values and morals of the world. There are in many countries in the world where local churches are more like Philadelphia than like Laodicea. The challenge in the affluent world is not to succumb to the pressures and pleasures of the world but to rise above it in love and devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Church at Philadelphia

The City: Philadelphia was about 40 kilometers southeast of Sardis on a plateau in the Hermus River valley. An imperial road that went from Rome, through Troas, and on to Pergamum and Sardis ran through Philadelphia. It was a significant city for agriculture, industry, and a center for Greek culture. For the latter it was, in a sense, a missionary city as it aggressively spread Greek culture and language through the surrounding region.

It was a city that was subject to a number of severe earthquakes over the course of history. As a result many people preferred to live in the rural areas around the city. Those in the city lived in near constant fear of another earthquake.

The Christ: The presentation of the person of Christ to this church is not drawn from the scene in chapter one as is the case in the other letters. Here is a fresh revelation of His person to a group of believers who are faithful in their devotion to Him. He is the One who is holy and true; these virtues speak of His righteousness and reality and stand in contrast to Bacchus who was likely the primary god for this city.

The Lord Jesus is also seen as the One holding the key of David. The background for this imagery is found in Isaiah 22 where Shebna was removed as steward was replaced by Eliakim who was given the key of the house of David. The key was a badge of office and a symbol of authority which is here held by the risen glorified Christ. The implication is that the Lord Jesus can open a door of opportunity that no one can shut. To the people of Philadelphia, Janus (from which comes January) was the key-bearer and the one who opened the New Year.

The Commendation: This is a church that did not receive a word of condemnation or correction. The Lord Jesus knew their works and also knew they had a little strength which suggested that there was a level of spiritual life unappreciated by the world. Their works were twofold; they were true to the scriptures and true to the Savior. The fact that they kept the word is suggestive of a life of obedience. To be true to the name of the Lord means that they refused to renounce their allegiance to Christ.

The Lord Jesus set before these faithful saints a provision and three promises. The provision is that He has put before them an open door. There are a number of references and inferences to an open door in the N.T. and all the references have to do with opportunities for evangelism. In Acts 14:27 it is a door of faith for the Gentiles that is open. In 1 Corinthians 16:8, 9, there was great door for an effective work, a door of opportunity but also opened to opposition. There were occasions when the door was closed such as in Acts 16:16 when Paul was forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach in Asia. In light of the usage in the N.T. it seems best to see this door in Revelation 3:7 as a door for the gospel.

One of the promises has to do with the response of those who were ethnically Jewish but were not so spiritually because they opposed the work of God. Their synagogue is called the synagogue of Satan, whether there was a literal synagogue or not the point is they aided Satan in his opposition to the gospel. The response the Lord anticipated is, that these Judaizers will have a change of mind as they see evidence of God's love toward these people.

The next promise was given because the believers persevered in obedience to the Lord's command. He promised them they will not go through the time of temptation or better the time of trial. The definite article suggests a specific time is in view. It will be upon the whole world and its' purpose is to try or test them and by implication to reveal the true character of mankind. This is an important verse in defense of a pre-tribulation rapture.

The third promise is that He is coming quickly. The assurance that believers will not go through the Tribulation is

based on the promises and the purposes of God. The Lord Jesus will come to take His own prior to the start of the time of testing on the whole world. The exhortation to the church is to hold fast to what they have and the result is that no one will take their crown. It is difficult to interpret the crown as to whether it was what marked them there at that time or is related to eternity.

The Compensation: The Lord Jesus offered the overcomer to be a pillar in the temple of God. The thought of a pillar is stability and honor. The two pillars in the O.T. temple were named Jachin and Boaz, (established and strength), and this was common in pagan temples. Philadelphia was subject to earthquakes so to these believers it would a great honor and spoke of stability.

The other honor was to have a name written on them. This would be the name of God, the name of the city, and the name of Christ which until then is unknown. Those who refused to deny His name in this age will have this great honor in the coming age.

The Conclusion: These believers were exemplary in a way that perhaps only the Lord Jesus, the Head of the church could appreciate. The fact they had little strength was perhaps indicative of their size and resources. There was so little of what mankind would value that the Lord could use these saints for His glory. He opens the door of opportunity and is also appreciative of their faithfulness to God's word and to His person.

The Church at Laodicea

The City: Laodicea was about eighty-five kilometers southeast of Philadelphia and was located in the Lycus valley. The cities of Colosse and Hieropolis were nearby in the same valley. The road from Ephesus to the rest of Asia ran through Laodicea. The city was famous for three industries and two products that were produced there. The banking sector was very well established and wealthy. There was a medical school famous for its eye salve. They also had a garment industry, mainly, though not exclusively, glossy black wool that was produced in Laodicea.

The city lacked an adequate water source. They got their water from almost ten kilometers away through a conduit.

The source was either hot springs or a cool spring but when the water reached the city it was lukewarm. Though it was a wealthy city there was no solution to this issue. The people were very self-sufficient even refusing imperial help to rebuild after an earthquake in 17 A.D. They also had a reputation of being very accommodating to the point of compromise. The characteristics of the city are mirrored in the church.

The Christ: The Lord Jesus gives a threefold description of Himself. Two of these three are alluded to in chapter one, the exception is the first title, "Amen." This familiar word when used by men is a word of assent literally, so be it. The word does appear in 1:6, used as the agreement to the ascription of praise given to Christ. When the word is used of God as in the "God of truth" or the "God of Amen" it means He is faithful. Here in 3:14 it occurs as a title of Christ "because through Him the purposes of God are established," 2 Cor. 1:20 (Vine's Dictionary).

The next phrase is "the Faithful and True witness." In 1:5 the Lord is referred to as "the faithful witness." The fact that He is the Faithful and True witness may be an expansion of His title as "the Amen." These titles stand in contrast to the church in Laodicea which contained people who were neither faithful nor true.

The final name the Lord Jesus uses is "the Beginning of the creation of God." A similar thought is found in 1:5 where Jesus is designated as the prince or ruler of the kings of the earth. The word Beginning is from the same root word as ruler, to be first in rank or order. The people in Laodicea were very sure of their condition and asserted that they needed nothing, the One who ruled over all knew better.

The Condemnation: This church had no word of commendation as they were characterized by pride and self-sufficiency. The condemnation and correction are the largest of any of the letters. The discerning eyes of the Lord saw through the outer facade and exposed the inner reality. "All things are naked and exposed before the eyes of Him with Whom we must give an account" (Heb. 3:13).

The Lord knew their works and also their words. They were both ignorant and indifferent to their true condition. Their indifference is displayed in that they were lukewarm. Like the insipid water of the city the Lord found the state of these people nauseating. He wanted to spit them out, the word spew or spit could also be translated as vomit. The point is not that the Lord wants them to be cold in a spiritual sense but in the analogy they were neither one nor the other.

Their ignorance is shown in their assessment of their own condition thinking that the prosperity of their physical state was reflective of their spiritual state. Their evaluation was that they were in need of nothing but the Lord exposes them to what they were in reality. He says they were wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked. What a scathing rebuke and revelation of their true condition. It is reminiscent of H. C. Anderson's fairy tale - The Emperor's New Clothes, where only the little boy stated the reality; the emperor has no clothes on at all.

The Correction: The Lord in heaven offers counsel to the church on earth. In the midst of such spiritual lethargy His advice is to get from Him the material that counts and that ultimately leads to vitality. The Lord draws from what the city was famous for and offers a contrast, holding out what is of eternal value and would represent true wealth.

Gold that is refined may refer to true riches such as Moses anticipated, "he looked to the reward" (Heb. 11:26). The white garment may be suggestive of the true righteousness and the practical expression of holiness the Lord desires in His own. The eye salve could be addressed to their spiritual vision that was impaired by the glitter of the world.

Whatever these three items represent the Lord is offering these people a different life. They were so tied to this world and its wealth that they had no clear view of that world. They assumed their physical prosperity was an indication of God's blessing and thus they were in need of nothing. They had little understanding that to love the world meant that they were not capable of the enjoyment of the Father's love.

Their lack of love for the risen Christ did not diminish His love for them. His love is seen in His concern, His rebuke, and discipline. The Spirit in us is jealous for our affections (Jas. 4:5), and the Savior in heaven is as well. The correction included a call to repent; to agree with God, to exhibit godly sorrow, and to change the direction of life. The Lord is looking for zeal, that they would neither be cold nor lukewarm but have heat, some fervor for the Lord.

The Lord standing at the door knocking has been interpreted in two distinctly different ways. One's interpretation is dependent on their view of what is meant by the word church. Some would see the church here as being filled with unsaved and the Lord is giving an invitation to salvation. This in essence involves seeing the church as the kingdom of heaven.

The other primary interpretation sees the church as it is throughout the New Testament, which is a called out company comprised of believers. The invitation is to individuals to open the door of their heart to the Lord Jesus and to enjoy fellowship with Him. Those within this church are so indifferent to their condition and are thus unaware of the enjoyment that can be found in Christ.

The Compensation: The overcomer is offered the privilege of reigning with Christ. The intimacy He seeks here with us will be the eternal portion of God's people.

The Conclusion: The Laodicean church and age is characterized by worldliness and spiritual apathy. This seems to be true of the church in the Western world so much that many Christians may well say, "we have need of nothing." The Lord Jesus seeks to have fellowship with His own, which is the foretaste of heaven on earth. In Holman Hunt's famous picture of the Lord Jesus in the garden, the Lord is pictured with a lantern and is knocking on the door. There is no latch visible, the door handle is on the inside reminding us that the Lord Jesus gently knocks but will not force His way in.

THE SOUL'S WARNING SYSTEM: OUR CONSCIENCE

ROMANS 2:14-15

Large commercial aircraft have what is known as "A ground proximity warning system" (GPWS) that warns the pilot the plane is getting near the ground or mountains. In the late 1980's a Colombian based airline (Avianca) was flying through the night in Spain. Suddenly a computerized voice said "pull up, pull up." The pilot apparently ignored the warning. So a second time the voice said "pull up." Again the pilot ignored the warning and soon after the plane crashed into the hillside killing the pilot, co-pilot, all the crew and all the passengers. The GPWS had warned of danger.

God has given us a soul warning faculty that the Scriptures call the conscience. This word is found at least twenty-nine times in the New Testament. Understanding the conscience is vital to living a healthy Christian life. To constantly ignore or violate the conscience can lead to a life of guilt and even disobedience.

"For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or defending them." (Romans 2:14-15)

Romans 2:14-15 tells us three important facts. Paul is stating a divine principle that God will use in the day when He will judge the secrets of men. He states that those (Jews) who are under the Mosaic Law will be judged by the Law and Gentiles who were not under the law will be judged without the Law. (v. 12) He writes three things regarding the Gentiles.

(1) They show the work of the Law written in their hearts. By this he means

that the moral law of God is written on the heart. The Jewish people had the written law which included the God's moral law. But the Gentiles have the moral law written on their hearts. That is, they have an innate sense of right or wrong. All men have this regardless of language or culture.

(2) Man has a conscience. This has been described as a witness within man that tells him he ought to do what he believes to be right and not to do what he believes to be wrong. The conscience monitors our behavior in respect to the standards we have accepted for ourselves.

(3) Man's thoughts either accuse the person or defends his actions. If a man violates his conscience in his mind he will feel condemned and if he obeys his conscience he will feel exonerated.

The above definition of conscience is important because it shows that the conscience functions according to the standards we have accepted for ourselves. One's standards can be wrong or misguided. If the standard is wrong the conscience will still function on that basis. So it is not infallible. The advice to follow your conscience is not necessarily good. It is conditioned by culture i.e. customs, habits and prejudice.

So where do our standards come from? They can come from false religions. In countries where a certain religion is accepted by the majority of the people the tenets of that religion becomes the standard for the people.

Other standards come from one's home, from cults, from legalistic churches, etc. Whatever standard a person has accepted the conscience will function on that standard.

When India was still under British rule there was a practice of burning the widows of their dead husband on a "pyre." A pyre was a large mound of wood on which a dead husband was burned. This was outlawed many years ago. One day a national came to a British administrator and said, "Our conscience tells us we can burn our living widows on the pyre with their dead husbands." The administrator responded saying "And, our conscience tells us that we can hang you if you do."

Both men had different standards and their conscience functioned on both!

When a Japanese man was once asked why he went year after year with an offering to the spirits of departed ancestor he replied, "If I didn't my conscience would bother me!"

So the big question is "what is the standard for the believer?" It is the written Word of God. God has revealed to us His will for our lives. When we disobey clear commands our conscience and mind will "accuse" us. Romans 13:1-4 outlines our responsibility toward the government. We are to be in "subjection" to this institution established by God Himself. In verse 5 Paul says, "Therefore it is necessary to be subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience's sake." If we disobey the conscience monitors our actions and in our thoughts we will be condemned.

When Martin Luther stood before church leaders at the Diet of Worms in 1521 he was being pressured to recant his views. He bravely declared, "Unless I shall be convinced by the testimonies of the Scriptures or pure reason... I neither can nor will make any retraction since it is neither safe nor honorable to act against conscience. Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me."

God Knoweth

*I know not what awaits,
God kindly veils mine eyes,
And o'er each step of my onward way
He makes new scenes to rise;
And every joy he sends me, comes
A sweet and glad surprise.*

*Where he may lead I'll follow,
My trust in Him repose;
And every hour in perfect peace
I'll sing, He knows, He knows.*

*One step I see before me,
'Tis all I need to see,
The light of heaven more brightly shines,
When earth's illusions flee;
And sweetly through the silence, came
His loving "Follow Me."*

*O blissful lack of wisdom,
'Tis blessed not to know;
He holds me with His own right hand,
And will not let me go,
And lulls my troubled soul to rest
In Him who loves me so.*

*So on I go not knowing,
I would not if I might;
I'd rather walk in the dark with God
Than go alone in the light;
I'd rather walk by faith with Him
Than go alone by sight.*

- Mary G. Brainard & P.P. Bliss