

DIVINE VIEWPOINT A SCHOOL OF GRACE



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Divine Viewpoint

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DIVINE VIEWPOINT

A SCHOOL OF GRACE

“For the GRACE of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men.” “Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.” “Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” “Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” Titus 2:11-14.

A church, a local church, like Houston Bible Church, scripturally speaking is a school. The only ordained, appointed method of teaching the Word of God is within the framework of a local church. This is what Houston Bible Church has fulfilled through the years, a School of GRACE for believers to come and “Grow in GRACE by the knowledge of our Saviour Jesus Christ.” Because it is a teaching ministry, a School of GRACE, we have students come during the week to learn the GRACE of God.

Here is a course given on the subject of what GRACE teaches us. It has five courses: the appearance, gift and discipline of GRACE, the life and conditions and possibility of living a GRACE life, the GRACE of God that has appeared, the glory of God which will appear, and the blessed hope of the glory of God. Christ’s self-bestowment of GRACE, Christ’s gracious emancipation, and Christ’s great GRACE acquisition. Finally, GRACE teaches us to be zealous of good works, and to maintain good works, as a result of GRACE teaching

A COURSE AT THE SCHOOL OF GRACE

Course One: What GRACE teaches us.

1. The appearance of GRACE.
2. The gift of GRACE
3. The discipline of GRACE.

Course Two: What GRACE teaches us.

1. What every one’s life should be like.
2. The conditions that are imposed upon us who live so.
3. What the Lord gives us to make such lives possible.

Course Three: What GRACE teaches us.

1. The GRACE of God hath appeared.
2. The glory of God is to appear.
3. The appearing of the glory of God is a blessed hope.

Course Four: What GRACE teaches us.

1. Christ’s great self-bestowment, Christ’s gift of Himself.
2. Christ’s great emancipation.
3. Christ’s great acquisition.

Course Five: What GRACE teaches us.

1. Zealous of good works.
2. Maintaining good works.

THE SCHOOL OF GRACE

PART ONE

1. The appearance of GRACE.
2. The gift of GRACE.
3. The discipline of GRACE.

“The GRACE of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us,” Titus 2:11, 12. The apostle has been given fatherly admonitions as to the very elementary pieces of morality, addressed to both sexes, and to all ages. He winds up with inculcating on Christian slaves some obvious duties, such as obedience and honesty. In our text he bases all on what was to him the motive and the power for all sorts of “righteous living,” the fact of Christ’s mission.

The word, “for” which this text begins with carries with it the whole relation between Christian thinking and Christian action, and shows us that the loftiest truths are then most honoured when they are brought to bear on the lowliest duties. Slaves are not to pilfer nor wrangle. “For the GRACE of God that brings salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching.”

Now there are two remarks that we must make of an expository kind in order to come to the understanding of the words which we have before us. One is the location in our Authorized Version, “hath appeared to all men,” is not what Paul means. But these last words, “to all men,” should be connected with the previous ones, “that bringeth salvation.” It is not a part of his purpose to declare what was not in fact true then, and is not true now, that the GRACE of God has appeared to all men. But it was part of his purpose to declare that that GRACE brings salvation to all men, however the present range of its manifestation may be historically contracted.

The other remark that I would like to make is that “teaching” is by no means a suf-

ficiently comprehensive expression to cover the apostle’s thought for the word which he employs, while it does mean the communication of instruction carries with it inseparably the other ideas of correcting faults and of chastisement.

It is the same word which is used in the well known words, “Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth.” So that what the apostle says here is that the GRACE of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, “schooling, or training, or disciplining.” “Schooling” is the Greek word PAIDEUO, which means instructing.

First, let us look at the appearance of GRACE.

Now, that word “GRACE,” CHARIS, played a much larger part in the thoughts of our fathers now than it does in ours, and I am not so sure that many things are more needed by the ordinary Christian of this generation than that he should rediscover the amplitude and the majesty of that old fashioned and unfashionable word, for what does “GRACE” mean? It means a self-originated love. God is love, that has no motive but itself.

GRACE is self-motivated love that is in full energetic exercise. GRACE is a self-motivated love, ever-acting, love that delights to impart. GRACE is self-motivated, ever-acting, communicating love which bends in tenderness over and floods with gifts those that stand far beneath itself. GRACE is self-motivated, ever-acting, communicating, and stooping love which brings in its hands the gift of forgiveness, and deals with those on whom it lavishes this tenderness, not according to their merits, but according to the pulsations of its own heart.

Thus GRACE is the short-hand word for the self-motivated, ever-acting,

communicating, stooping, and pardoning mercy which has its very home and throne in the heart of God Himself.

It is this galaxy of stars blended into one diffused light, add yet capable of being resolved into so many suns, which the apostle here says, "Hath appeared."

He uses a most significant and picturesque word, for it is the expression which is proper to describe the raying out in the heavens of its great lights, and in the only place in Scripture in which it is applied to physical things is in reference to the sun and stars, which clouded by tempest for many days, did not "appear" nor could beam their sweet light on the darkened Earth.

In all other cases where the word is employed, it has a definite and plain meaning. It always refers to the coming of Jesus Christ, either His first coming in the incarnation, or His second coming to judgment. That manifestation is the raying out, as it were, of a sun, which has been obscured by the mists of sin from the undrained swamps of our hearts, and it pours itself down upon the mists, and thins them away until its radiant light is spread all over the glittering and rejoicing Earth.

"Hath appeared." So the apostle has a definite meaning, and points to a definite historical fact, when he declares that, in the Person and life of the Lord Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, all this self-originated, active, communicating, stooping, pardoning, love finds its highest manifestation. The fire-mist, if I might say so, which was diffused through a chaotic universe is gathered together into a sun, and it blazes down upon the world.

Now, of course, that conception of the life of Jesus Christ as the appearance of the GRACE of God rests upon the other belief that Jesus Christ has a special and unique relation to the God whose love He manifests. And this is the point of view from which the approaching Christmas festival has to be regarded by Christian people. Unless we can say, "The Word was made flesh and dwelt

among us." we cannot go on to say, "We beheld His glory as of the only Begotten of the Father, full of GRACE and Truth."

Christmas celebrates not merely the birth of a man, but the incarnation of God. "The GRACE that bringeth salvation, hath appeared." There is the great peculiarity, there are the power and the blessedness of Christianity in its teaching, that now we no longer need to grope after God, searching painfully for traces of His footsteps in the maze of the world's history, or consulting the ambiguous oracles of nature, or looking for Him in the intuitions of our own hearts, our hopes and fears, but that we can turn to historical facts and say "This is the Lord. We have waited for Him, and He will save us." The day of peradventures is past, when we listen to His, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, That he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father."

"And so the Word became flesh, and wrought,

with human hands the creed of creeds,

in loveliness of perfect deeds,

higher than all poetic thought."

"The GRACE of God hath appeared." Secondly, note the gift of GRACE. "It bringeth salvation to all men." One reason which recommended what we have already designed as an erroneous connection of words in our Authorized Version is the difficulty of believing in the face of the facts that Christ, in His character of the embodied GRACE of God, did bring salvation to all men.

But the explanation of the seeming difficulty is not to be found in twisting the words out of their proper order, but in understanding the words in the order in which they occur.

For when the apostle says that this GRACE brings salvation unto all, he does not say that all receive the salvation which is brought to them. There is a whole world of difference between the two

expressions. And the word that he employs for it is one word in the original which is rendered in our version by the three, "That bringeth salvation." does not describe an actuality, but a potentiality and a possibility. This verse is literally "For the GRACE of God appeared saving to all men." The aim and purpose, not the realized effect, is what is pointed out in this great word of our text.

For there is a condition necessary from the very nature of the case. **If God could save all men, be sure that He would do it.** The love that thus takes its rise in the councils of eternity, and flows on forever through the waste and barren ages of human history, and is ever waiting to bestow itself, in its tenderness and in its liberality upon all men, is not made less universal, but it is conditioned by the nature of the gift that it brings.

Salvation cannot be flung broadcast and indiscriminately upon all men of all sorts, whatever their relation to God. If it could, be sure that it would be. But just because it is a deep and inward thing, affecting men's moral and spiritual state, and not only their position in regard to some future hell, it cannot be given thus broadcast. It must be sown in the fitting places. **The one thing that is requisite, and it is indispensably requisite, is that I shall trust Him who brings salvation, and, trusting Him, shall take it out of His hand.**

If the medicine stands on the shelf in the bottle with the stopper in, the sick man will not be cured. That is not the fault of the medicine, it is a panacea, but no remedy can work where is not applied.

This great ocean of Divine love goes, as it were, feeling through along the black cliffs that front it, for a cranny into which it may pour itself, but the obstinate rock can fling it all back in impotent spray. Though the whole Atlantic surges against the cliff, it is dry an inch inwards.

Thus the universality of the gift, the universal potency of the gift, is not in the slightest degree affected by the fact that where it is not taken, its benefits are not realized.

Have you shut your hearts to it, or have you opened them?

Paul recognized that this GRACE of God came with a gift that was meant for everybody, mainly because he knew that it had come with a gift that had done what it aimed at for him. Like every true Christian, he felt, as you and I ought to feel, that if it were able to save me, it is able to save anybody, and that if it can cast out my faults and sins, though I may not have fallen into gross sins, or what the world calls crimes, there is no man whose iniquities will foil it.

"Of whom I am chief," is not an exaggeration, but it is the verdict of an honest conscience that knows the inside of one man, at all events, and knows how much of his surface innocence is deceptive, and how much of it is due not to himself, but to circumstances. "The arms of love that compassed me, would all mankind embrace."

You know, some of you, that He has cleansed you. You know that He would have cleansed you more completely if you had let Him, and, knowing that, can you doubt that He would cleanse everybody?

The universality of the gift is manifest in the fact that it addresses itself only to needs which belong to every man, **for the deepest of all needs is the need that our relations to God shall be set right, and that we shall be delivered from the bondage and tyranny of our sins.** And that universal potentiality and universal aim are still further written in unmistakable characters upon the mission and work of Jesus Christ, in as much as it requires only, as its condition, that which all men can render. For if it had been meant for sections, it would have called for qualifications which only classes can possess.

If our understanding had been the organ for receiving the Truth, it would have been a Gospel for the wise men of the world, and the wayfaring man, the fool, would have been shut out. But now there is but the one condition of trust in the one omnipotent GRACE. And since all men, if they would, could put forth a believing hand, the very condition,

instead of being a limitation, is a demonstration of the universality of the gift. We have to look out over all the world, the outcasts, the slum-dwellers, the barbarian races, and as the main thought about them, to cherish the undying assurance that not one of them but is capable of being lifted by the GRACE of God from the depths into which they have fallen. That is not the way in which people look at "the dangerous classes" of civilization and at the savage races outside its pail.

Some of us are looking now at the later mainly as beasts of burden, and hoping to exploit their muscles in the search after wealth and glory. **Jesus Christ looks at them, and you and I ought to look at them, as possible candidates for the elevating influences of His GRACE.**

There is no metal so hard but, cast into the furnace of love, it will melt and flow. There is no reed so broken and trampled into the mud but that His gracious hands, with His deft and loving gentleness of touch, can bind it up and make it whole, and make it blossom.

There is no foulness so black but that this detergent can wash it white. There is no man on the face of the Earth, nor ever has been, so brutalized but that by the GRACE of God, He may be deified, made "partaker of a Divine nature." "GRACE brings salvation to all men." Christ died for the sins of the whole world, it is unlimited atonement, simply because He is not willing that any one should perish. So He makes His GRACE appear unto all men, so that all are without excuse and that anyone can have eternal life.

Lastly, there is the discipline of GRACE. As we have already said, "teaching" here implies not only the communication of instruction, either outwardly or inwardly, but also a disciplinary process of correction that includes necessarily chastisement. Jesus Christ comes to us, and brings the external means of communicating instruction in the record of His life in the Bible. And He comes to us, also doing what no other teacher can do, for He passes into our spirits, and communicates not only instruction but the Holy

Spirit which teaches them in whom He abides, and guides them with gentle illumination into "all Truth," concerning God, Christ, and themselves, which it is needful for them to know.

His work does not stop there. He corrects and rebukes. And His Word does not stop there, for He Himself has said, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." He comes with a rod sometimes, but always "in the spirit of meekness." He uses not only inward but also outward chastisements. The knife mercilessly cuts away the tender, pliant tendrils of the vine, and the sap bleeds out at the wound, but the life dies not, and the result of the pruning is larger and mellower clusters, ruddy in the sunlight and full of generous juices.

So be sure of two things, that it is GRACE which chastens, that the knife is held by a loving hand, and that the purpose of our outward sorrows, as well as of our inward discipline, is "that we may be partakers of His holiness."

That GRACE is not like some unskillful surgeon, who cuts so deep that, in the effort to remove the tumor, he kills the sufferer, but his surgery knows to a hairbreath where to stop, and when the incision has served its purpose.

"The GRACE of God hath appeared disciplining." Disciplining? What for? Is the discipline to be sedulously carried on for three-score years and ten, and there an end? If we will only think of life as Christ's school, we will understand it better than from any other point of view, and be certain that all these capacities, which are imparted and unfolded and trained by us, exercised here, will find a better field beyond.

Jesus Christ, the embodied GRACE, has appeared to us. He prays with us with much entreaty to receive His gift. If we will enroll ourselves in His school, and learn His lessons, and accept His corrections, and submit to His chastisement as tokens of His love and of His desire that we shall bear better fruit, then, as schoolboys say, "We shall get our remove," when we are ready for it, and

go up into the top form. And there not only GRACE but glory will be our teacher, and we shall learn from the glory more than ever on Earth we learned from the GRACE. "From GRACE to glory," found only in the School of GRACE.

The purpose of the School of GRACE
"That denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world," Titus 2:12. In order to appreciate the full force of these words, we must observe that they are the apostle's statement of the ultimate design of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, and of all the wonderful powers and gifts which Christ brought with Him. (Christ our true Santa Claus).

In our text, the end for which that GRACE has appeared and exercises its corrective discipline is defined. It comes, "in order that, denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly."

Now remember that Paul thought that the life and the death of Jesus Christ were the most stupendous of miracles, nothing less than the entrance of Divinity in human form into the limitations of our lives, and His participation in the darkness of our deaths. Re-

member he believed that Jesus Christ's coming had led to a continual gift of an actual Divine life to men who trusted Him, then you will see the grandeur and significance of the words of my text.

What has this Divine miracle of mercy been for? Nothing but this, to help men here today to live good lives. If there were no future at all, says Paul, the expenditure of the Divine love is amply vindicated. The sun does not disdain to shine in order to ripen the vegetables in the humble cottage garden, and the love of God did not conceive that it had too small an object to warrant all that lavish gift which is in Christ, in helping us to live as becomes us. **How precious we are to God, and how infinitely important in His eyes must conduct and character be if such an abundance and variety of Divine influences were set in motion to produce such an effect.**

Now, the first thing that strikes me about these words is the fair picture that they draw of **what every life should be**, and next, the hard conditions which they impose upon men who would live so, and then, what God has given us to make such lives possible.

So we have three principles here.

SCHOOL OF GRACE

PART TWO

WHAT WE LEARNED

First, what every life should be like, and secondly the conditions they impose upon those who live so, and thirdly what God has given us to make such lives possible. So **GRACE gives us a picture of what the Christian way of life should be like.** And what a hard task it is for those who live the Christian way of life. And finally, **GRACE teaches us that God has made it all possible.**

The first, a picture of what our lives should be.

Paul is saying nothing more than conscience, reason, the instincts of men everywhere endorse. His requirements in the rough division of virtues which he adopts, not for scientific accuracy but for practical force, are really said "amen" to by every honest conscience.

"Soberly, righteously, godly."

That is what everyone who is fair, feels to be sort of the life we ought to live. This can be generalized by saying that this covers the ground of a man's responsibility to himself and to the Lord, and to other members of the human race.

Soberly = to self.

Righteously = to others.

Godly = to God.

"Soberly," that is what you owe to your nature. "Righteously," that is what you owe to those around you. "Godly," that is what you owe to God.

The word, "soberly," has by no means the narrow significance which the besetting sin of America has been given to it now, abstinence from, or a very restrained use of in-

toxicating liquors, nor even the wider one of a curbing of the desires of sense. But the meaning may be better represented by the word "self-control," than by any other translation.

Now if there were no man in the world but ourselves, and if that man had not thought of knowledge of God, and if there were no other standard to which we ought to conform, I should have to my own self, with its crowd of desires, tastes, inclinations, and faculties, plain indication that self-government was essential. For human nature is not constituted on the plan of a democracy or an ochlocracy, a mob rule, but there is a clear hierarchy and order of predominance in it. And, as plainly as a ship is made to need a rudder, so plainly on your frames is there stamped the necessity for rigid self-control. This includes a sound mind, or a stabilized mind.

We all carry with us desires, inclinations, appetites, some of them directly connected with our physical frames, and some of them a little more refined, which are mere blind inclinations to a given specific good, and will be stirred up, apart altogether from the question of whether it is expedient or right to gratify them. To a hungry man the odor of food is equally enticing, whether the food belongs to himself or his neighbor, and if he had to steal for it, it would still tempt him.

Because, then, we are to a large extent made up of blind desires which take no account of anything except their appropriate food. The commandment comes from the deepest recesses of each nature, as well as from the great throne in the heavens.

“Live soberly.” The engines will work on all the same, though the bows of the ship be turned to the rocks, and driving straight on the reef. It is the engineer’s business to steer them and keep them going, it is their business to turn the screw. It is somebody else’s business to look after the navigation. We have our humors under lock and key, in order that we may control them. And if we do not, we shall go all to rack and ruin. So, “live soberly.” says Paul.

The next requirement is “righteously.” DI-KAIOS. Now we mentioned that this might apply to one another. But that is not by any means an exhaustive and perhaps a scarcely approximate description. For the attitude expressed in “righteously” does not so much point to other people as to the existence of a certain standard, external to ourselves, to which it is our business and wisdom to conform. If there were nothing in the world except a man and his own nature, the duty of sober self-government would necessarily arise, but the supposed isolation does not exist. We stand in creation in relationship to a whole universe of things and of people, and there does rise before every man, however it may be accounted for, or explained away, or tampered with, or neglected, **a standard of right and wrong.** This is the filling of the Holy Spirit.

What Paul here means by, “live righteously,” is, **do as you know you ought to do.** And to shaping your character, have reference not merely to its constitution, but to its relations to all the universe of outside facts.

So far as the Word may include our duty to others, I have to say that righteousness in reference to others demands mercy. The common antithesis which is drawn between a just man who will give everybody what they deserve, and not one scrap more nor less if he can help it, and a kindly man is erroneous, because every man has a claim upon every other man for lenient judgment and undeserved help. He may not deserve it, being such a man as he is, but he has a right to it, being a man at all. And no man is righteous

who is not merciful. We do not fulfill the prophets’ exhortation, “Do justice,” unless we fulfill his other, “Love mercy,” for mercy is the right of all men. This is love, joy, peace, long suffering...

The last of the phrases under which the perfect life is represented here takes us up at once into another region. If there were nobody but myself in this world, it must be my duty to live controlling myself, since I stand in relations manifold to creatures manifold and to the whole order of things. **It is my duty to conform to the standard, and to do what is right.** And just as plainly as the obligations to sobriety and righteousness press on every man, so plainly is godliness necessary for perfection. For I am not only bound by ties which knit me to my fellows, or to this visible order, **but the closest of all bonds, the most real of all relations, is that which binds us each to God.**

If “man’s chief end be to glorify God,” and then and thus, to “enjoy Him for ever,” then that end, in its very nature, must be all pervasive, and diffuse its sweetness into the other two. For you cannot sliver up the unity of life into little sections and say, “this deed has to be done soberly, and that one righteously, and this one godly,” but godliness must cover the whole life, and be the power of self-control, and of righteousness.

“Bodily exercise profiteth a little, but godliness in all things.” “All in all or not at all.” Godliness must be uniform and universal. Lacking their supreme beauty are the lives of all who endeavor to keep these other two departments of duty and forget this third.

There are many men, I have no doubt there are some of them among us, punctiliously trying to control their natures, and to live righteously, but all their thoughts run along the low levels, and they are absolutely blind and deaf to the voices and sights from Heaven. They are some of those truncated pyramids, broad-based upon the solid Earth, and springing with firm lines to a certain height, and then coming to a dead stop and so being but stumps, which leave a sense of incompleteness, because all the firm lines

have not gathered themselves up into the sky piercing point which aspires still higher than it has reached.

“Soberly,” that is much. “Righteously,” that is more. “Godly,” that is not most, but all. The word “godly” is the EUSBEIOS. As believers when we are in fellowship, God the Holy Spirit controls us and we produce the character of Jesus Christ. Galatians 5:22, 23, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.” **When in fellowship we fulfill “soberly,” “righteously” and “godly.” This is the Spirit-filled life.**

Secondly, notice that a hard task the man has who will live so. The apostle puts first in our text a negative clause. The things that he says we are to deny are the exact opposites of the characteristics that he says we are to aim for.

“Denying ungodliness.” (ASEBIOS). Now that is the clear opposite of “godly,” and “worldly-lusts,” the antithesis of “soberly,” and “righteously.” The word “lusts” here has not the carnal associations cleaving to it which have gradually accrued to it in the changes of language since our translation was made. But that it implies simple “desires,” longings, of however refined and incorporeal a sort, which attach themselves to the fleeting things of this life. Pride, ambition, and all the more refined and less sensual desires are so much included as the grossest animalism in which any swine of a man can wallow. Worldly lusts are desire which say to Earth, and to what Earth can give, in any of its forms, “Thou art my god, and having thee I am satisfied.”

Now, says Paul, there is no good to be done in the matter of acquiring these positive graces, without which a life is contemptible and poor, unless, side by side with the continual effort and the acquisition of the one, there be the continual and resolute effort at the excision and casting out of the other. Why? Because they are in possession. A man cannot be godly unless he casts out the ungodliness that cleaves to his nature, nor can he rule himself and seek after righteous-

ness, unless he eject the desires that are in possession of his heart. You have to get rid of the bad tenant if you would bring in the good one. You have to turn the current, while it is running in the wrong direction. So we “Confess our sins and God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins (worldly, mental attitude sins) and cleanse us from all unrighteousness,” and the God the Holy Spirit controls our lives and we live soberly, righteously and we are godly.

People talk about what we need to do is cultivate what we have. That is true in a sense, but there is something else that is needed. The good expels the bad. The Holy Spirit controls the old sin nature with all its lusts, trends, sins and human good. There are plenty of young men and young women who have tried time and time again, and have failed to live soberly, righteously, and godly, simply because the old sin nature is in control. **But you must confess your sins, judge yourself, examine yourself before the Lord and be restored back into fellowship with the Lord by means of God the Holy Spirit controlling your life and producing the character of Jesus Christ without measure.**

Thirdly we come to the strength of the first word, “in order that,” (HINA) which reminds us that God has given us the means to make such a life possible. “The GRACE of God that bringeth salvation to all men, hath appeared disciplining us, for this purpose, that the things which are impossible with men may be possible with God.” Christ and love, Christ and His life, Christ and His death, Christ and His Spirit, Christ and His GRACE, in these are new hopes, motives, powers, which avail to do the thing that no man can do.

An infant’s finger cannot reverse the motion of some great engine. But the hand that made it can touch some little tap or lever, and the mighty masses of polished iron begin to move the other way. GRACE reverses the thrust. **And so God, only God, can make it possible for us to deny ourselves ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live**

soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.

Jesus Christ who comes to us to mold our hearts into hitherto unfelt love, by reason of His own great love, and who gave to us His own Spirit to be the life of our lives, **gives us by these gifts new motives, new powers, new tastes, new affections.** He puts the reins into our hands, and enables us to control and master our unruly tempers and inclinations. If you want to clear out a tube of any sort, the way to do it is to insert some solid substance, and push, and that drives out the clogging matter. Christ's love coming in the heart expels the evil, just as the sap rising in the tree pushes off the old leaves that have hung there withered all the winter.

You cannot clean out the stable with barrows and shovels, turn the Elbe into it. **Let the great flood of life pour into our hearts, and it will not be hard to live soberly. He comes to help us live righteously. He gives us His own life to dwell in our hearts.** "The love of God shed abroad in our hearts by means of the Holy Spirit." "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace," etc.

Those who trust in Jesus Christ are righteous by no mere fiction of a righteousness reckoned, **but by the blessed reality of a righteousness imparted.** Christ comes to make it possible for us to live godly, for He, and He alone, has the secret of drawing hearts to God, because He and He alone, has opened the secret of God's heart to us.

As long as we think of God the Father in Heaven as demanding and commanding, we shall not love Him, nor serve Him, nor live

godly. "I know thee that thou wast an austere man, therefore I was afraid, and hid my talent in the Earth."

But when we learn that "God" and "love" spell the same letters, and that He gives us in Christ the power to be what He command us to become, then our spirits are stirred into thankful obedience. Many Christians have tried over and over again to mend themselves, and have failed, listen to this Gospel.

You have been sitting at the foot of the mountain, and seeing the shining towers of the fair palaces and the temple on its summit, and have made two or three feeble and foiled efforts to reach it, and then have fallen back again. Do not despair or fancy that the heights are inaccessible. Confess your sins and allow God the Holy Spirit to control your life, and He will make your feet as hinds' feet, to tread upon the high places. He will be the path, and will show the path, and will give His angels charge concerning you, to bear thee up in their hands, and to carry you at last, where He desires to bring you.

Say not in your heart, "Who shall ascend up into the heavens? The Word is nigh thee." Trust yourself to that Son of man who came down from Heaven, and was in Heaven, then He came, and He will become the ladder, with its foot on the Earth, by which even your feeble steps may rise to God. "Walk in the Spirit," "Walk in Truth," "Walk worthy of your vocation," "Be filled with the Spirit," "Stop quenching and grieving God the Holy Spirit" who can lead you and teach you all Truth through GRACE.

SCHOOL OF GRACE TEACHES US

PART THREE

The GRACE of God hath appeared,

The glory of God is to appear.

The appeared of the glory of God is a blessed hope,

The teaching, discipline of GRACE, prepares us for the expectation of the glory from GRACE to glory.

THE HAPPINESS OF GRACE.

A beatitude of hope. “Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ,” Titus 2:13.

There are two appearances of the “GRACE of God that bringeth salvation,” and parallel with that, as though at the same time contrasting with it, as being in very important senses one in nature and principle, though diverse in purpose and diverse in manner, is what the apostle calls here, “The glorious appearing of the great God.”

The antithesis of contrast and of parallel is still more striking in the original than in our version, where our translators have adopted a method of reordering of which they are very fond, and which very often obscures the full meaning of the text. Paul wrote, “Looking for the blessed, or happy, hope, even the appearing of the glory of the great God and our Saviour,” where you can see he contrasts even more sharply than our Bible makes him do, the last appearance of the GRACE, and the future appearance of the glory then. Further, this appearance of the glory, however bright with the terrible beauty and flashing lustre of Divine majesty it may be, seems to the apostle to be infinitely desirable, and become to him a happy hope. The reality, when it comes, will be pure joy.

The irradiation of its approach shines from afar on his brightening face, and listens his heart with a hope which is a prophetic joy. And the attitude of the Christian soul towards it, is to be that of glad expectation, watching the dawning east and ready to salute the sun. And yet further, this attitude of happy expectation of the glory is one chief object to be attained by the GRACE that has appeared. **It came, “teaching,” or disciplining, that we should live looking for that happy hope.**

So then, we have here for our consideration three principles embodied in these words: the GRACE of God has appeared, the glory of God is to appear, the appearance of the glory is a blessed hope, the disciplining of the GRACE prepares us for the expectation of the glory.

First, take that thought, the appearance of the GRACE leads to the appearance of the glory. The identity of the form of expression in the two clauses is intended to suggest the “likeness” of and the “connection” between the two appearances. In both there is a visible manifestation of God, and the later rests upon the former, and completes and crowds it.

But the, “difference” between the two is as strongly marked as the analogy, and it is not difficult to grasp distinctly the difference which the apostle intends. While both are manifestations of the Divine character in exercise, the specific phase, so to speak, of that character which appears is in one case, “GRACE” and in the other “glory.” If one might venture on any illustration in regard to such a subject, it is as when the pure white light is seen through glass of different colors, and at one moment beams wild through refreshing green, and at the next flames in fiery red that warns of danger.

The two words which are pitted against each other here have each a very wide range of meaning. But, as employed in this place, their antithetical force is clear enough. **GRACE is active love, exercised towards inferiors, and towards those who deserve something less. So the GRACE of God is the active energy of His love, which stoops from the throne to move among men, and departing from the strict ground of justice and retribution, deals with us not according to our sins, nor rewards us according to our iniquities.**

And then the contrasted word, "glory," has not only a very wide meaning, but also a definite and specific force, which the very antithesis suggests. **The glory of God, in one very important sense, is His GRACE.** The highest glory of God is the exhibition of forgiving and long suffering love. Nothing can be grander. Nothing can be more majestic. Nothing, in the very profoundest sense of the word, can be more truly Divine, more lustrous with all the beams of manifest Deity, than the gentle raying forth of His mercy and His goodness.

But then, while that is the profoundest thought of the glory of God, there is another truth to be taken in conjunction with it. The phrase has in Scripture a well marked and distinct sense, which may be illustrated from the Old Testament, where it generally means not so much the total impression of majesty and power made upon men by the whole revealed Divine character, but rather the visible light which shone between the cherubim, and proclaimed the present God. Connected with this more limited sense is the wider one of that which the material light above the Mercy Seat symbolized, and which we have no better words to describe than to call it the ineffable and inaccessible brightness of that awful Name.

The contrast between the two will be suggested by a passage to which we refer. The ancient lawgiver said, "I beseech thee, show me Thy glory." The answer was, "I will make all My goodness pass before thee."

The eye of man is incapable of apprehending the uncreated Divine lustrousness and splendor of light, but capable of receiving some dim and partial apprehension of the goodness, not indeed in its fullness, but in its consequences. And that goodness, though it be the brightest of "the glories that compose His Name," is not the only possible, nor the only actual manifestation of the glory of God. The prayer was fulfilled when offered, for to answer it, as is possible for Earth, would have been to antedate the slow evolution of the counsel of God. But answered it will be, and that on this globe, "Every eye shall see Him."

The GRACE has appeared when Divine love is incarnate among us. The long-suffering gentleness we have seen. And in it we have seen, in a very real sense, the glory. For "We beheld His glory full of GRACE and Truth." But beyond that lies ready to be revealed in the last time the glory, the lustrous light, the majestic splendor, the flaming fire of manifest Divinity. Again the two verses, thus bracketed together, and brought into sharp contrast, also suggest how like, as well as how unlike, these manifestations are to be.

In both cases there is an appearance, in the strictest sense of the word that is to say, a thing visible to men's senses. Can we see the GRACE of God? We can see love in exercise, cannot we? How? "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father, and how sayest thou then, shew us the Father?"

The appearance of Jesus Christ was the making visible, in human form, of the love of God. The appearance of the glory will be the same, the making visible in human form of the light of throned and sovereign Deity. The one was incarnation and the other will be incarnation. The one was patent to men's senses, so will be the other. **The GRACE has appeared. The glory is to appear.** "Why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go."

An historical fact, a bodily visibility, a manifestation of the Divine nature and character in human form upon Earth, and living

and moving amongst men. As “Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, so unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation.” The two are strictly parallel. As the GRACE was visible in action by a man among men, so the glory will be. What we look for is an actual bodily manifestation in a human form, on the solid Earth, of the glory of God.

Then notice how emphatically this idea of the glory being all sphered and embodied in the living Person of Jesus Christ proclaims His Divine nature. It is “the appearance of the glory,” then mark the next words, “of the great God and our Saviour.” “The great God and our Saviour” refers to Jesus Christ as being absolute God and Deity. “Of the great God, even our Saviour.”

Now some disagree, but if this is referring only to God the Father, then Jesus Christ is God also because He is the only manifested glory of essence. God the Father is not come in the flesh, only Christ has. So Jesus Christ is our great God and even our Saviour. The same one indissoluble glory is ascribed to God the Father and to Christ our Lord, and the same act is the appearance of both. The human possesses the Divine glory in such reality and fullness as it would be insanity if it were not blasphemy, and blasphemy if it were not absurdity, to predicate of any single man.

The words coincide with His own saying, “The Son of man shall come in His glory and of the Father,” and point us necessarily and inevitably to the wonderful thought that the **glory of God is Christ’s glory, and the glory of Christ is God’s.**

In deep, real, eternal union the Father and the Son, the light and the ray, the fountain and the source, pour themselves out in loving kindness on the world, and shall flash themselves in splendor at the last, when the Son of man “shall be manifested in His own glory and of the Father.”

And then another point in contrast indicated between the two appearings. They are not only unlike in the subject, so to speak, or

substance of the manifestation, but also in the purpose. **The GRACE comes,** patient, sedulous, labouring for our training and discipline. Then the glory comes. There is no word of training there. What does the glory come for? The one rises upon the benighted world, lambent and lustrous and gentle, like the slow, silent, climbing of the silvery moon through the darkening sky. But the other blazes out with a leap upon a stormy heaven, “as the lighting cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west,” writing in fierce message across all the black page of the sky in one instant, “So shall also the coming of the Son of man be.”

Like some patient mother, the GRACE of God, has moved amongst men, with entreaty, with loving rebuke, with loving chastisement. She has been counselor and comforter. She has disciplined and fostered with more than material wisdom and love. “Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.” But the glory appears for another purpose and in another guise, “Who is this that cometh with dyed garments? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save, wherefore are thou red in thine apparel? I have trodden the winepress alone, for the day of vengeance is in Mine heart, and the year of My redeemed is come.” Isaiah.

Secondly, we have to look at the second thought which is involved in these words, and that is, **the appearing of the glories is a blessed hope.** The hope is blessed, or as we have already stated, the word, happy, may perhaps be substituted with advantage. Because it will be full of blessedness when it is a reality, therefore it is full of joy, while it is but a hope. The characteristics of that future manifestation of glory are not such that its coming is wholly and universally a joy.

There is something terrible in the beauty, something menacing in the brightness. But it is worth noticing that, notwithstanding all that gathers about it of awful splendor, all this is solemn and heartshaking in the thought of judgment and retribution for the past, the irreversible and irrevocable past, yet to Paul it was the very crown of all his expectations of,

and the very shining summit of all his desires for the future, that Christ should appear.

The primitive church thought a great deal more about the coming of Jesus Christ than about death. They thought a great deal more about His coming than about Heaven. To them the future was not so much a time of rest for themselves as the manifestation of their Lord. To them the way of passing out of life was not as much corruption as being caught up together in the air. And how far the darkness, which our Lord declared to be the Divine counsel in regard to that future coming, enwrapped even those who, upon all other points, received the Divine revelation which made and makes them for evermore the infallible teachers and authorities for the body of Christ, is a moot question.

If it were certain that the apostle expected Christ's coming during His own lifetime, I do not know that we need to be troubled at that as if it shook their authority, seeing that almost the last words which Christ spoke to his apostles were a distinct declaration that He had not to reveal to them, and they were not to know "the times and seasons which the Father has put in His own power." And seeing that the office of the Holy Spirit, as whose organs Paul and the other writers of the New Testament are our authoritative teachers, is expressly declared to be the bringing all things to their remembrance, whatsoever Christ had revealed. If, then, He expressly excepts from the compass of His revelation this point, it can be no derogation from the completeness of an inspired writer's authority, if he knows it not.

If one takes into account the whole of Paul's words on the subject, they seem to express rather the same double anticipation, which we too have to cherish, desiring and looking, on the one hand, for the Saviour from Heaven, desiring on the other hand to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better.

The numerous places in which Paul speaks of his own decease, sometimes as longed for, sometimes as certain, and, latterly, as near, are inconsistent with the theory

that he looked for Christ's coming as certain in his own lifetime. So, too, are other anticipations which he expresses as to the future course of the body of Christ, and progress of the Gospel in the world. He, like us, would appear to have had before his expectations the alternative. He knew not when the glory might burst upon the world, therefore, he was ever standing as one that waits for his Lord. He knew not when he might have to die, therefore, he labored that, "Whether present or absent, he might be pleasing to Him."

But that is not the point upon which we speak here. The point is that this hope is a happy one. **IF WE KNOW THE GRACE, WE SHALL NOT BE AFRAID OF THE GLORY. If GRACE has disciplined in any measure, we may be sure that we shall partake in its perfection.** They that have seen the face of Christ looking down, as it were, upon them from the midst of the great darkness of the cross, and beneath the crown of thorns, need not be afraid to see the same face looking down upon them from amidst the blaze of light, and from beneath the many crowns of the kingdoms of the world and the royalties of the heavens.

Whosoever hath learnt to love and believe in the manifestation of the GRACE, he, and he only, can believe and hope for the manifestation of the glory. We live by hope. **God indeed is above all hope.** To that infinite eye, before which all things that were, and are, and are to come, lie open and manifest, or, rather, are insphered in His own Person and Self. To Him, who is the living past, the abiding present, the present future, there is no expectation. The animal creation is below hope. But for us that live on the central level, half way between a beast and God, for us our lives are tossed about between memory and expectation.

We, all of us, possess, and most of us prostitute that wonderful gift, of shaping out some conception of the future, and what do we do with it? It might knit us to God, bear us up amid the glories of the abysses of the skies. We use it for making to ourselves pictures of fool's paradise of present pleasures

or of successful earthly joys. The folly of men is not that they live by hope, but that they set their hopes on such things.

“They build too low, who build beneath the stars.” As for every other part of human nature, so for this strange faculty of our being, the Gospel points to its true object, and the Gospel gives its only consecration. It is true that in our hearts there steals subtle, impalpable, but quickening as the land breeze laden with the fragrance of flowers to the sailor tossing on the barren sea, a hidden but yet mighty hope of an inheritance with Christ when He shall appear. With eye lifted above and fixed upon the heavens do I look beyond the clouds as to the stars?

The world drives this hope out of our hearts. We live for the present, do we not? And there, if only we would lift our eyes, there, even now, is the sign of the Son of man in the heavens. It is as much an element of Christian character, and a part of his plain, imperative duty, to look for His appearing as it is to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world.

Thirdly, and finally, one word about the last consideration here, the GRACE TEACHES US TO HOPE FOR THE GLORY. The very idea of discipline involves the notion that it is a preparatory stage, a transient process for a permanent result. It carries with it the idea of immaturity, of apprenticeship, so to speak. If it is discipline, it is discipline for some condition which is not yet reached. And so if the GRACE of God comes disciplining, then there must be something beyond the epoch and era within which the discipline is confined.

That just runs out into two considerations, upon which is needed the time to further study. Take the characteristics of GRACE. Clearly enough it is preparing men of something beyond itself. **Submit to the discipline and the hope will grow.**

Take the characteristics of GRACE. Here is a great system, based upon a stupendous and inconceivable act of Divine sacrifice, involving a mysterious identification of the

whole race of sinful men with the Saviour, **embodying the most wonderful love of God, and being the propitiation for the sins of the whole world.**

Here is a life perfectly innocent, perfectly stainless, brought to the extremity of evil, and having never swerved one inch from the Divine commandments, yet dying at last under a consciousness of separation and desertion from God. Here are a cross, a resurrection, and ascension, an omnipotent Spirit, an all guiding Word, a whole series of powers and agencies brought to bear. Does any man believe that such a wealth of Divine energy and resources would be put forth and employed for purposes that break short off when a man is put into his coffin, and that have nothing beyond this world for their field?

Here is a perfect instrument for making man perfect, and what does it do? It makes men so good and leaves them so bad that unless they are to be made still better and perfected, **God's work on the soul is at once an unparalleled success and a confounding failure, a puzzle, in that having done so much it does not do more, in that having done so little it has done so much.** The achievements of Christianity upon single souls, and its failures upon those for whom it has done most, when measured against, and compared with, its manifest adaptation to a loftier issue than it has ever reached here on Earth, all coincide to say the GRACE, because its purpose is discipline, and because its purpose is but partially achieved here on Earth, DEMANDS A GLORY, when they whose darkness has been partially made light in the Lord by the discipline of GRACE, shall blaze forth as the sun, in the heavenly Father's kingdom of glory.

Submit to the discipline and the hope will be strengthened. You will never entertain in any vigorous and operative power upon your lives the expectation of that coming of the glory unless you live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. That discipline submitted to is, like that great apparatus which you find by the side of an astronomer's biggest telescope, to wheel it

upon its center and to point its tube to the star on which he would look.

So our anticipation and desire, the faculty of expectation, which we have, is wont to be directed along the low level of Earth, and it needs the pinions and levers of that gracious discipline, making us sober, righteous, godly, in order to heave it upwards, full front against the sky, that the stars may shine into it.

The speculum, the object glass, must be polished and cut by many a stroke, and much friction ere it will reflect, the image of the heavenly. So GRACE disciplines us, patiently, slowly, by repeated strokes, by much rubbing, by much pain, **disciplines us to live in self-restraint, in righteousness and godliness.** And then the cleared eye beholds the heavens, and the purged heart grows towards "the coming" as its hope and its life.

As Christians we must fling away the treasures of our heart's desires upon trifles and Earth. And we can not set our hopes on that which is not, nor paint that misty wall that rings round our present with evanescent colors like the landscapes of a dream.

We may have a hope which is a certainty, as sure as a history, as vivid as a present fact. Let us love and trust the Lord who has been manifested to save us from our sins, and in whom we behold all the GRACE and Truth of God. If our eyes have learnt to behold and our minds to love Him whom we have not seen, amid all the bewildering glares and false appearances of the present, our hopes will happily discern Him and be at rest, amid the splendor of that solemn hour when He shall come in His glory to render to every man according to his works.

With that hope in the future, near or far, has no fears hidden in its depths. Without it, there is no real anchorage for our trembling hearts, and nothing to hold by when the storm comes. The alternative is before each of us, having no hope, or "looking for that blessed, purifying hope, the Lord Jesus Christ." We know that Christ has come for us. **And knowing that we will be glad to believe that Christ will come again and receive us unto Himself. Even so come. GRACE teaches.**

SCHOOL OF GRACE TEACHES US

PART FOUR

One. Christ's great self-bestowment, Christ's gift of Himself.

And secondly, Christ's great emancipation.

Thirdly GRACE teaches us Christ's great acquisition. He gave Himself that He might redeem us, and purify unto Himself a people for a possession.

GRACE bestowment.

GRACE emancipation.

GRACE acquisition.

Christ's gift of Himself. "Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people," Titus 2:14.

We have seen in this School of GRACE that the apostle has been setting forth the appearing of the GRACE of God as having for its great purpose the production of a holy and godly character and conduct. In these words which close the section, he returns substantially to the same theme, only, as a great composer will do with some favorite musical movement, he repeats it in a somewhat different key and with variations.

The variations are mainly two. Instead of the more general and less definite, expression, "the GRACE of God hath appeared," he now specifies the precise act in which that GRACE did appear. "He gave Himself for us." Christ's self-sacrifice is the "appearing of the GRACE of God," The different flame is gathered into a focus, and thus concentrated it has appeared to melt hearts.

Then there is a second variation in the treatment of the theme here, and that is that the actor is different. In the former case it was "we" who trained by, "the appearing of the GRACE," were to deny ourselves and "live soberly, righteously, and godly." But here it is "He" who redeems and purifies and

the Divine cooperation. If we "deny ourselves" and "live soberly, righteously, and godly," it is because "He has redeemed us." **If He has purified us, it is in the measure in which we deny ourselves and yield ourselves to His influences.** And so the two views stereoscope and become a solid reality.

Now then, there are three points to which we want to especially see in the words before us, Christ's great self-bestowment, Christ's great emancipation, Christ's great acquisition. "He gave Himself," the great self-bestowment, that He might redeem us, the great emancipation, and purify unto Himself a people for a possession, the great acquisition.

First, the great self-bestowment.

"He gave Himself." The supreme token of love every where, the natural expression of love every where. We know inferior instances of the same sort, and they make the very salt of life. The most self-engrossed recognizes their nobility, and the most cold blooded thrills at the sight.

We know what it is for benefactors, and well wishers, and enthusiasts of all sorts to yield up themselves joyfully for some great cause not their own, or for some persons who appeal to their hearts. The one noble thing in the devilish trace of war is that there sometimes we can see men flinging their lives away gladly in the thrill of devotion to the cause for which they fight.

In the narrow regions of our hearts and homes, happy husbands and wives, mothers to their children, know what it is joyfully to give themselves away. All these illustrations do help us, but they help us only in a very little bit along the road to understand that supreme and transcendent gift of a self of which Paul is speaking here as the basis of all nobleness in the character of men. After

we have travelled as far as any human illustration or analogy will help us, we are still infinitely far from that great fact. They lead us along a road, it is a question of springing from the furthest point attained up into the very heaven itself, for this gift is unique, and to be paralleled by naught beside.

It began earlier, the initial step, when “the Word became flesh.” There was one man who willed to be a man. **And whose not being ashamed to call us brethren, and taking upon Himself part of the children’s flesh and blood, was the supreme instance of condescending self-abandonment, and bestowment.** It began earlier, it went deeper. For not only in His self-surrender unstained by the smallest self-regard, as is manifest by the records of His life, but it goes down deep and deep and deep into such an utter gift of Himself as no mere human beneficence can ever emulate or ever approximate to.

And it brought with it heavier burdens and deeper sorrows, which culminated in that great act which, by its very greatness, has sometimes led men to separate it from the life of which it was the climax and superlative degree, and to declare that only in His death does the Lord give Himself for the life of the world, whereas the life among men, with all the pains of contact, with all its pains and sympathy, with all its self-oblivion, was as really a part of Christ’s giving Himself to the world as was even that death upon the cross, by which the gift was perfected and sealed.

So then while we thankfully accept the analogies which lead us a little way, let us never forget that in this matter degree is not the only difference, and quality as well as quantity are unlike.

But notice, the other word. “He gave Himself for us.” Now the apostle uses a word here which does not imply “instead of,” but **for our behalf.** He is not for the moment dwelling upon the way in which that gift benefits, that comes in the next clause, but simply upon the fact that it does benefit. And Christ gave Himself in a way to be subsequently de-

clared, for the advantage of whoever may be included in the “us.”

And who are the “us?” Paul was talking to Titus, and was including with him these Cretan Christians, none of whom had ever been seen by or seen Jesus Christ. So that “us” is universal, and includes all humanity. But it does more than that.

Jesus Christ’s giving of Himself to us was no indefinite gift of a generous beneficence, which had no knowledge of, or feeling towards, the individual units that make up the company, but as I believe, and as I wish all to consider, whether our Christian conception of Jesus Christ as the incarnate Word does not necessarily carry with it, the human heart of Christ which loved each unit of the mass, that the Divine eye separated and distinguished. We “cannot see the wood for the trees.” We generalize our beneficence and we lose sight of the individuals who are so benefited by it.

Who of us can specify the single souls or bodies that may be helped by one contribution to a fund for dealing with some general disaster? But Jesus Christ takes men one by one, and “He gave Himself for us.” because He gave Himself for me and thee and thee, and all the single souls that make up mankind. Each was in His loving desire a recipient of the gift.

I venture to assert, though it is impossible for me to go on here at any length in this particular study to establish this assertion, that this conception of a Christ who not merely spoke, and was gentle and gracious, and the type of excellence and the realized ideal of human perfection, but who came to do and to give Himself for the behalf of every soul of man, is the heart of Christianity. This is the view which like a key, will unlock the rusty gates of our wills and spirits.

This is the conception which alone adequately represents the teaching of Scripture, the requirements of the deepest reason, and which is even more authoritative, the instinctive needs of hungry, sin-laden hearts. Here

is the lever that moves the world. “He gave Himself for us.”

Secondly, notice Christ’s great emancipation. The apostle states the object of the gift in a two-fold fashion. “That He might redeem us all from iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” Let me deal now with the former of these two expressions. **The object of Christ’s gift is man’s redemption.**

And what is redemption? Redemption is a metaphorical expression, having the image of a slave set free by a ransom. That is in the word, and no fair interpretation of the word can strike that out of the depth of its meaning. So we begin with the fundamental fact, without which we shall never come either to understand the meaning of Christ’s whole appearance, or get the meaning of the highest good out of it for our own souls, with the conception of our condition, that we are in bondage to what the apostle calls “iniquity,” or lawlessness.

Now that is not strictly pauline, but these are Christ’s own words. Do you remember when He said when the people, with that strange but yet universal forgetfulness or ignorance of the facts of their condition, said to Him, while the Roman garrison in the castle might have heard the boast. “We are never in bondage to any man?” He answered, “He that doeth sin is the slave of sin.” You may like it or you may not like it, you may believe that it is the deepest view of human nature or you may brush it aside as being narrow and pessimistic and old-fashioned, and all the rest of it, but it is Christ’s view.

So we can’t say, as others, that it is Paul’s. It is Paul’s, but he got it from Jesus Christ, and you have Him to reckon with and Him to contradict, if you do not.

A great many of us do not recognize that after all is said and done, **the fact of sin, considered as setting up myself as my own center and law, in antagonism to, or in neglect of God, who ought to be my Center, is the universal experience of humanity.** The fetters are on our limbs.

I remember a story of an English author in the early part of the last century, who was put into prison for some imaginary offense, and who pleased himself in a puerile fashion by twisting flowers round the grating of his window, and making believe that he was a free man.

Yes, that is what a great many of us do. We try to hide the fetters by putting a silk handkerchief over them. We too like these presumptuous Jews, say, “we were never in bondage to any man.” No, not in bondage to any man, **but in bondage worse than that.** What about those tendencies in yourself, those lusts and passions, those temptations to ignoring God and living for self and to other sins that, like springing tigers, have fixed their talons in us and keep us down, in spite of our kicking and struggling?

The root cause of almost all the inadequate conceptions of Christ and His work which depart from the plain teaching of Christ and Scripture, lies here, that a man does not recognize the fact of his bondage to sin. Wherever that recognition is weak, you will have a maimed Christ and an impotent Christ. It is of small profit to argue about theological doctrines unless you can get a man to feel that he is a sinful man in God’s sight. And when he has learnt what sin means, what guilt means, what the tyranny of a committed transgression means, what the awful voice of a roused conscience means, he will be ready to fling aside all his superficial, easy-going thoughts about Jesus Christ and to clutch as his one hope the great Word. “Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.” “He gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us.”

And so we come to the conception that giving Himself for us is more than a giving of Himself on behalf of us, in some vague way, and that the way **in which Jesus Christ gives Himself for us is that He gives Himself instead of us.** There I believe is the point of view at which we must stand, if we would give due weight either to His Words or to His cross. There is the point of view at which, I believe we must stand if we would

receive into our souls the greatest blessing that the Lord can give, **emancipation from sin's guilt by the great sacrifice of His**, emancipation from sin's power by the presence within us of His own life and Spirit. Christ came into the world, "to give His life a ransom for many." Therefore, we do not pooh pooh such teaching as this of our verse, or such teaching as we try to give out, with an easy and superficial remark that it is pauline. It is Christ's, "the Son of man came to give His life a ransom for many."

There is the power. Christianity minus that sacrifice is not a Christianity that the world or the flesh or the devil have ever been, or ever need to have been, much afraid of. We may gather metaphors in crowds to illustrate that sacrifice, but they all fall, for it is unique and transcendent.

Men have given themselves up to fetters that others might be made free. Men have given themselves up to the death that others might live. There was a Swiss soldier into one fight who gathered the spears of the enemy into a sheaf, and pointed them to his own breast, that a path might be cleared for the advance of his comrades.

The angel that came into Peter's cell touched him and the fetters fell from his limbs. **Christ has come into the dark prison of our humanity, and His death effected the fetters that bind me to my sin, and my sin to me**, and it corroded into dust, and my limbs were set free. He fronts all our tyrants, as He fronted the Roman soldier and says, "I am He. if ye seek Me. let these go their way." "He gave Himself for us that He might redeem us."

Thirdly, the last point is here, and that is Christ's great acquisition. "That He might purify to Himself a people for a possession" as is the proper rendering, "zealous of good works." The apostle is quoting, as we all know, from the ancient words which make the charter of the Israelitish nation, in which God declared that they were to Him a "people of a possession above all the nations that

are on the Earth." And He now transfers these great words to Christ and our relation to Him. He too has won a people for His very own. **Christ wins us for His because He has given Himself to be ours.**

Mark how beautifully the reciprocalness of the relation is suggested by the former clause of our text. "He gave Himself for us, that He might win us for Himself for a possession." Yes, in love nothing but a heart can buy a heart, nothing but a heart can pay for a heart. **Jesus Christ gives Himself to me, that I may give myself to Him. That is the only gift that satisfies Him.** The only result which He recognizes as being the fruit of the travail of His soul, which is sufficient for Him, is that we poor men, delivered from our selfishness, emancipated for our sins, with our wills set free, should go to Him and say, "Lord, Thou art mine, and I, poor as I am, little as the gift is, I am Thine."

We shall only be His in the measure in which we are "purified." And it is His love that purifies us and His gift that purifies. For that gift sets in operation within us a multitude of new motives and new desires. And more than that, He gave Himself that our sins might be taken away. But there is the present gift, as well as the past one, for He is giving Himself still, moment by moment, and hour by hour, to every one that cleaves to Him. And that gift of Himself comes into our souls as, according to Luther's old metaphor, the Elbe was turned into the stable to sweep out all the filth, and makes all things clean.

So we cleave to the Lord. Let us see to it that we have fathomed, and not only fathomed, but accepted the great gift of Christ Himself, in its most transcendent form, in its mightiest efficacy, the gift by which, by His death, He has taken away the guilt and by His life within us, breaks the power of our sins, and makes us eager zealots, enthusiasts for all manner of good works. Created unto good works, His workmanship.

That is what GRACE teaches us. **Trains us into learning.**

SCHOOL OF GRACE - GOOD WORKS

PART FIVE

1. Zealous of good works.
2. Maintaining good works.
 - A. An over mastering recognition of the greatness of some Truth or cause or person, for which we are zealous
 - B. A glow of emotion arising from that recognition.
 - C. And a conscience of obligation to strain all our powers for the diffusion of the Truth, or the advancement of the cause, or the honour of the Person for whom we are zealous.

ZEALOUS OF GOOD WORKS

Zealous of good works, verse 14. Titus 2:14. We have seen in our previous study how emphatically the apostle reiterates that the end of the Gospel is the production of Christ-like and Christ-pleasing character. For this purpose our Lord came, and in Him the GRACE of God broke through the clouds which wrapped men in dark folds of ignorance and sin. For this end Christ died, giving Himself for us, that He "might redeem us from iniquity and purify unto Himself a people for a possession."

Verse 14. That insistence on practice as the upshot of doctrine is characteristic of the three last letters of the apostle, which are called the pastoral epistles, and it is very natural in an old man.

Just as tradition tells us that when John was too feeble to walk, and too old to say much, he was carried Sunday by Sunday into the assembly of the church to say nothing more than "little children love one another." So Paul, having laid the foundations in the great doctrinal epistles of his early time, now an old man, deals rather with practice than

with doctrine. But the practice is, in his mind, the offshoot of and inseparably connected with, the doctrine, and to put the one against the other, as some people do now a days, is to say, "I do not care much about root, fruit is what I want," or "I make little account of what a man eats, what I look to is his muscle and his strength."

But will there be any fruit without a root, or any muscle and strength that is not nourished? Paul's Gospel is ethical because it is a Gospel. Now the words of our text, "zealous of good works," are a kind of an appendix to what precedes them, in which the apostle has been sketching the sort of people that Christ's mission and work are intended to make. He says they are to be **redeemed**, they are to be **purified**, they are to be **won** for Christ's own, **and to be conscious that they are His**. And then He adds this remarkable expression which is, "Zealous," well what for? "Good works." Now if we study these words we will find that they have some lessons for us which are always important, and extremely important for the body of Christ in this time.

The first principle

A consistent Christian will be a zealous Christian. We all know what zeal is. When we approve of zeal's object, we admire it and call it beautiful consecration. When we are not in sympathy with its objects, we call it ridiculous exaggeration and fanaticism. Its elements are **an overmastering recognition of the greatness of some truth, or cause, or person, for which or for whom we are zealous. It is also a glow of emotion arising from that recognition. And it is also a consciousness of obligation to strain all our powers for the diffusion of the Truth, or the advancement of the cause, or the honour of the person for whom we are zealous.**

Now when a man gets hold of some Truth that masters him, there is always the danger of his losing the sense of proportion, of his getting his perspective wrong, and being so swallowed upon in the one thing that he sees, except that, like a horse with blinders, he does not see anything except that one narrow line that lies in front of him.

And so zeal is always in danger of being deformed into fanaticism. **But it is God's way in working the world onwards**, to raise up succession of men, each of whom recognizes with overwhelming clearness some one little segment of the great orb of Truth, and the world advances because there are men that believe in one thing, that see one thing. **And that give themselves, body and soul, to the setting forth of that one thing.**

And all the rest stand by and say, "What ridiculous exaggeration. How entirely oblivious he is counter-balancing considerations. How he has narrowed himself down into being the instrument and the apostle of this one thing. Yes, and if you want to bore a hole through a six-inch plank, you have to put a pretty sharp point upon your drill, to make it very narrow. **The world never gets to see any Truth until it has been hammered into by some man who did not see any other Truth.** There will come with that overwhelming conception of the greatness of the Truth, or of the person, or of the cause, a glow of emotion.

Argument may be worked in fire or in frost, and the arguments that melt are warm, or if I might go back to a previous figure, your boring drill will penetrate more quickly and easily if it has been heated as well as pointed. **And zeal glows, and it is the glow rather than the reasoning that convinces men.**

The burning conviction and ministry of God the Holy Spirit. We don't need to dwell any more on zeal. We all have a pretty good idea about it, we have been zealous about something in our own personal lives. But the thought is that Christianity is such as that, if a man really and fully accepts it, he cannot

help being zealous. "God forbid if I teach not the Gospel of Christ."

Look at all the truths that we say we believe. We believe in ideas about the significance and issues of this earthly life, so solemn, so great, and so transcending all present experience, that it is incredible that they can enter into a man's mind in any deep sense, and leave him cold and indifferent.

We believe in such truths about sin and judgment and eternity that they might kindle a soul beneath the ribs of death and burn up all indifferences, so as that the extremist's enthusiastic grasp of them is only moderation and rational. We may say that we believe that the infinite, Divine nature was incarnated in a man, and that that man lived and died because He loved every soul.

And that death brings to the world life, and that these things are true for all men. What I maintain is, that if a man really believes these things, not with mere conventional faith that characterizes multitudes of professing Christians, it is impossible that he should be left cold. First love.

If the sun is shining the temperature will go up, and if the thermometer does not rise, it is because something or other has come between the sunbeam and the mercury. If the iceberg floats down into the warm oceans of the temperate or tropic zones it will melt into sweet water and it cannot remain ice. If it continues grim and cold, it is because there is only the sun of the Arctic winter, which has a pale light and scarcely any warmth at all, shining down upon it.

An indifferent Christian, who believes in sin and in redemption and in an incarnate Christ and in a sacrifice on the cross and in a Divine Spirit, and in a future judgment **and remains cold, is all but an impossibility, he is a contradiction in terms, and a living monster.**

There are few things which the conventional Christian and Christianity of this day needs more than to awake to the fact that the "sober standard of feeling in matters of religion" which some so much admire, is

contrary to the genius of the Gospel and the importance of the truths which it contains. And when I say a sober standard I do not mean the sobriety which the conventional Christianity of this day so much admires, and which is scarcely distinguishable with a microscope from absolute indifference.

We are frequently besought to be aware of enthusiasm. Now you are getting too much of the Word, you are lop-sided, you should be more well-rounded. You are too zealous for Bible class. And to say that I say, what the Lord Jesus Christ said, "Would thou were cold or hot."

This Christianity that never turns a hair, that does not know what zeal means, seems to me uncommonly like no Christianity at all. We want to be roused from our torpor.

This community, like every church of professing Christians, is weighted by a mass of loosely attached and half believing professing Christians who are nothing better than clogs on the wheel, and instruments for bringing down the temperature of the whole mass. **Don't take on the temperature of the crowd, set the temperature for them.**

What we want, I believe, more than anything else, is that we should be zealous, as dominated by the overwhelming greatness and solemnity of the truths, and melted into a passion of love by the overwhelming greatness and love of the Person whom the Gospel reveals to us. We are to be "zealous" and while I dare not say that a true Christian will be a zealous one, I still conceal my conviction that a consistent Christian will be zealous. If you maintain fellowship with the Lord, you will produce the character of Jesus Christ and He was zealous. "Be zealous of good works."

Zealous is, ZELOTES, an adjective of being jealous, an uncompromising partisan. Zealots nursed the fires of revolt, which bursting out afresh in 60 A.D. led to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

ZELOO, means to be jealous, signifies to seek or desire eagerly, taking a very warm

interest in, in being the object of warm interest on the part of others.

Secondly, the word suggests pictures of men devoted to a cause. And going out into the world, to try and persuade other people to believe it, becoming the apostles and missionaries of some Truth or of some movement or of some great principle, spiritual or social.

But Paul suggests here another region in which zeal is to find exercise. "Zealous for good works." Now do not let us interpret these last two words in the narrow, conventional sense which they have come to bear in the church. It is a very significant and a very bad thing that this wide expression "good works," which in the apostle's mind covered the whole ground of Christian morality, has been narrowed down to mean specific acts of beneficence, bit of charity, giving away blankets and soup, visiting the poor, and the like, which have got stamped on them, with just contempt in the expression, the name, good works, "KALON ERGON."

He means a great deal more than that. He means exactly the same thing which he had already twice described as being the end of the Gospel, that we should "live soberly, righteously, godly." And again, that we should be redeemed from all iniquity and purified. With the four corners of this expression, "good works," lie, "whatsoever things are lovely and of good report," every virtue and every praise.

That is the width of the object which the apostle here proposes for Christian zeal. The production of KALON ERGON, Divine Good, the filling of the Holy Spirit, gold, silver and precious stones. Anything that is done in the filling of the Spirit, the Spirit-filled life, the concept of "a cup of cold water in My Name."

Now the word which he here employs, and which is rightly translated "zealous" is literally **a zealot**. In Jewish history the zealots were a class of men who from the days of the Maccabees downwards, were fanatically devoted to the ritual and law of Judaism, and vehemently opposed any relaxation of or de-

parture from it. But their religious zeal, as they thought it, did not keep them from the blackest crimes, and there were no more turbulent and no more immoral men in the dying agencies of the Jewish state than **these zealots who had a zeal for God, but neither according to knowledge nor according to morality.**

One of the apostles, Simon Zeleles, the zealot, had probably belonged to that class, and had found out a better object for his soul, zeal, when he turned to Jesus Christ and became a believing apostle of Christ. Luke 6:15, Acts 1:13. Simon the zealot.

Paul uses the word here and in reference to himself when he speaks about himself as "having been exceedingly zealous for the traditions of the fathers," and it is used in Acts of the many Jewish Christians who are spoken of as "being zealous for the law."

Now that is one type of zeal. A zeal that fastens on externals, that tries to enforce specific acts of conduct, that is devoted to ceremonies and regulations and red tape. And Paul points us here to another type. "Zealous for good works." This is the filling of the Holy Spirit. Jehu, with his hands carmined with wholesale slaughter, turned on the sons of Rechab and said, "come and see my zeal for the Lord." Yes, a little bit for the Lord and a great deal for Jehu.

That is the sort of thing that we find in this world called zeal. A turbid river in spate picks up and carries along a great many foul elements and zeal is always in danger of becoming passionate indignation, against a man who will not believe what I want him to believe, not so much because it is true, as because I think it is. **A great many very impure elements mix themselves up with our zeal, when it is directed to amending the world.**

Often we set to amend ourselves, and direct our zeal in that direction. We shall find "ample scope and verge enough for its operations." And what different lives we would live if instead of feeling bound to the exercise of virtues and graces which do not come

sweet and easy to us, and instead of feeling that we ought to do so and so, and that we do not one bit wish to do it, we had this overmastering enthusiasm for holiness and passion for perfection which is involved in the words before us.

To be "zealous of good works" is to be **eagerly desirous of being beautiful and pure and true and noble and Christ-like, to be panting after perfection, and casting ourselves with all the energy of our souls into the work of growing like Christ.**

That is what Paul wants us all to be. Let us ask ourselves, "Is it the least like what I am? Does my Christian zeal go all out in the work of amending other people, or do I begin with amending myself?" "Zealous of good works," is inward. **This is a challenge to being in fellowship.** This is the principle of confessing our sins to God, examining ourselves, of judging ourselves and being in fellowship and thereby producing good works, KALOS ERGOS, Divine Good. And not dead works.

Thirdly and lastly, **this passion for perfection will come to us just in the measure in which we let the Gospel lie upon our souls and minds and influence us.** The truths will produce it, but not unless they are wrought into our minds and souls. Christ, whom the Truths reveal, will produce it, but not unless we keep ourselves by honest effort of mind and soul and will in close contact with Him.

The upshot of all that I have been trying to say is this, that the one thing which the superficial half and half Christianity of this day needs is that it should come into closer contact with the Truths of the Gospel. I plead for no blind, unintelligent zeal, I plead for no worked-up, artificial fervor, I want no engine without a driver, I want no zeal that, like Phaeton, will upset the car and set everything on fire. I want that Christians should believe what they believe, and that they should meditate on the Truths of the Gospel intelligently systematically as a whole and that they should be in touch with Christ whom the Truths reveal.

A ruminant belief that chews the end of the Truths it professes is what today's Christianity sorely wants. And if we in such a fashion keep ourselves under the spell of these Truths, then the zeal will come, not else. The spurious zeal which is excited by other stimulants will do more harm than good, and will be not like the river that flows, bringing fertility and freshness, but like the furious torrents of the spring when the ice is melting and the snows running down, which sweep away the very soil where growth was possible, and leave behind only barren rock.

Fix in your hearts, your minds, and God grant that they may influence your conduct, these two things. On the one hand, **that your Christianity is very suspicious if it has no flow in it towards Jesus Christ, and if it**

has no passion towards perfection. And on the other hand, that the surest way to bring all beauties of a moral and spiritual sort into your character and out into your lives is to gaze believingly on the appearing of the GRACE which God has sent us for the very purpose, even of Him who gave Himself for us. When we are moved thereby to give ourselves to Him, we shall "covet earnestly the best gifts, and be zealous for and not merely reluctant and grudging doers of good works."

The production of Divine Good, by maintaining fellowship with God in time in the Spirit controlled life. Good works, not dead works. Hay, wood, stubble versus gold, silver, and precious stones. "Zealous for good works."

MAINTAINING GOOD WORKS

“These things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works.” Titus 3:8.

There is so much about “good works” in the so called pastoral epistle, the two in Timothy, and this in Titus, that some critics who think they have sharp eyes have concluded that Paul was not their author. But surely it is very natural that as a man gets older he shall get more practical, and it is equally natural that he should fight the enemies who are in front of him at the moment, and not thrice slay the slain.

Obviously the churches whom he had in view in his letters to Timothy and Titus did not stand in need of the elaborate and far reaching argumentation of the epistle to the Romans, or of the great protest against Jewish ritualism in the epistle to the Galatians, or of the profound teaching about the Church which is in the epistle to the Ephesians. The foundation had been laid, and like a sensible man, Paul proceeded to build upon it.

So instead of the difference in tone between those more theological letters and this more practical one being a cause of suspicion as to the authorship of the letters, it seems to me to be an argument in favour of the identity of authorship.

The variation in tone corresponds to what happens in the case of every thoughtful Christian teacher as he grows in years, and comes to feel more and more that **all doctrine is for practice.**

Here, then, we have the apostles last will and testament, so to speak, left to all the churches, that “they which believe in God might be careful to maintain good works.” According to that **hall mark of a Christian is conduct, “good works.”** But we must beware of narrowing the meaning of that expression as too often is done, so as to include in it mainly certain conventional forms of charity or beneficence, like slumming, or tract distrib-

uting, or Sunday school teaching, and the like. These and such as these, are no doubt one form of good works, but by no means the whole, and their having all but monopolized the name is one reason why many Christians fail to understand the full significance of the New Testament teaching on the subject of good works.

These acts are but as a creek in a great sea. Paul tells us what he takes to be included in the designation, when he bids the Philippians think on “whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure,” and having thought on these, do them.

I have omitted one word in that quotation, for Paul speaks also of “whatsoever things are lovely.” Loveliness is an essential quality of the highest kind of good works. **Loveliness means that you are in fellowship, controlled by God the Holy Spirit and producing the character of Jesus Christ.** And then everything you do is good works, Divine Good. “The fruit of the Spirit is love, etc.” And the principle of “The love of God which is shed abroad in our hearts by means of the Holy Spirit.” Many of us know that the Greeks, wise beyond many who have clearer light but use duller eyes, use the same word to express goodness and beauty.

Love is the Greek word AGAPE. The apostle uses the pregnant word in our text, and we should well ponder the teaching given by that word. For it tells Christians that they are to take heed to make their goodness lovely, or Spirit-filled, not to “graft GRACE on a crab stock,” not to present a frowning goodness to the world. **It is not enough that they who believe in God should be careful to exhibit conduct which commends itself to every man’s conscience as right and pure.** They should also commend themselves as being air with a more than earthly radiance. There are many Christians who spoil the effect of high principle, selfsacri-

ficing conduct by forgetting that beautifulness is an essential part of the highest goodness. Sour grapes are not the grapes that are intended to be grown on the true vine.

But now you will notice a further light upon Paul's notion of how to go about growing these grapes. What goes before? "These things, I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which believe in God might be careful to maintain good works." What are "these things?" "These things" are a brief summary of what we call the Gospel, the evangelical teaching that "the kindness and love of God our Saviour, had appeared." And that He saved us by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Spirit. That "we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." Titus 3:5-7.

In effect Paul says to Timothy, "Now keep on insisting upon that." The words translated, "affirm constantly" are very strong. They mean a forcible and continually repeated enunciation, and the plain English of Paul's injunction to Timothy is, keep on preaching the Gospel as the surest way to produce disciples full of good works.

People say, "Come down to daily life and conduct, never mind your dogmas." If you leave out what these critics mean by dogma and try to make daily life beautiful without it, you may as well hold your tongue. And the men who forget to "affirm these things," constantly and preach morals with Gospel, are like builders who begin to build on the second story, whose baseless castles in the air are sure to come down in ruins. The true way to produce moral conduct is to bring into clear prominence evangelical Truth.

But notice again, it is these which believe in God who will be careful to "maintain good works." **That is to say, faith is the productive cause of good works, and good works are the hall mark of faith.** If a man believes, then he will do good works. The converse must also be true. If a man does not do good works, what then about his belief? "Show me thy faith without thy works." That is an impossible demand. **The only way to show faith is by our works,** and so all

attempts to rend them apart, either in theory or in practice, are as absurd as it would be to take a piece of cloth, and try to tear away the inside from the outside.

Faith is the underside, good works is the upper, and the web is one. **Faith is the principle of works, works are the manifestation and making visible of faith.** "Without faith it is impossible to please Him." "The just shall live by faith."

The apostles command here implies a principle, that Christian work should always, and will always, if the faith is genuine, be in advance of all other sorts of good work, that is implied in one of the words used here which means literally, "be foremost, stand in the front."

I see no reason why the literal meaning should not be retained here. If it is retained, we have the thought implied, if you are a Christian you should be ahead of the world in your goodness. You should lead, and not follow, or keep step with those who are not Christians. **Unbelievers cannot produce "good works," only dead works.** The Church's morality on the wide scale and individual practice on the narrow, ought to be, and will be, if we are true to the Gospel, far in advance of the ordinary opinion and practice of the day in which we live.

If we are Christians we are meant to be leaders, and that means that we shall often, like other leaders, have to endure a great deal of obloquy and calamity from the people whom we are trying to lead, and who are loitering behind us.

The Christian Church, as the apostle James says, is meant to be a "kind of a first fruits, of God's creatures." ripe before the others, riper than the others always. Does the Christian Church lead the conscience of America today? Does it even try to do it? Does it recognize that its function is not to re-echo the morality of the street or of the newspaper, but to peal out the morality of Jesus Christ?

Is it enough that Christians should be as good, or as charitable, as beneficent as

much interested in social questions as others, or should have the better, the purer, and the happier lives of the community for their great aim, as much as other people have them? Bright would it be enough today, the electric light is about as bright as a fellow candle? Is it enough to say, Christians keep abreast of the world's morality?

Let them go in advance, and if they go very far ahead sometimes, none the worse, the laggards will perhaps come. But at all events, whether they do or not, I will that these things soon affirm constantly, **in order that they which believe in God, may take the lead in good works.** The production of Divine Good by the Spirit-filled life of the believer in Jesus Christ leads the way when it comes to good works.

And there is another point being made here, and that is the apostle's warning that although the belief in Christ, and the faith which springs from the belief are the spring of good works, yet those will not become ours unless we are careful to stand in front.

What does "careful" mean? The word implies two things, and the first of them may be put in the shape of an exhortation, bring your brains to bear on these truths that are being thus constantly affirmed. Bring them into your souls through your minds, that they may filter into and shape the life.

I believe that one main reason why the morality of the Christian Church is not much further in advance of the morality of the world than it is, is because the individual members of the Church do not bring their minds into contact with the great Truths of the Gospel in such a fashion as they should. Christian practice is thin and poor and inconsistent, because Christian mediation on the Gospel and on the Lord of the Gospel, is shallow and infrequent. The Truths that are to be affirmed, are the fuel that feeds the fire, and if there are no coals put on, the fire will very soon die down.

And so there must be a "carefulness" which means the "occupation of the mind" with the Truths that produce holiness of life. And then there is another thing: **there must be a definite and direct and continuous effort to increase our faith.** We have been saying that faith is the underside of all noble conduct, and in the measure in which it is strengthened, in that measure accurately will our good works increase. **There is plenty of power in our Gospel and in our God to make us rich in good works.** What is lacking is that we have not the connection, which is made by faith, through which the fullness of God will flow into our lives.

If they want to grow crops in eastern lands, they have little to do but to sow the seed and irrigate. Christ has sown the seed in His Gospel. We have to look after the irrigation, and the crops will come of themselves.

So our main effort should be to keep ourselves in touch with that great Lord. And to increase the faith by which we make all His power our very own. The Spirit-filled life, resulting from the confession of our sins, places us in fellowship with Christ in time. And we produce the character of Jesus Christ and the good works of Jesus Christ, which is gold, silver and precious stones, which will never be burned up when our works are tried so as by fire, as opposed to the human good, we produce when we are out of fellowship with God, which will burn up: hay, wood and stubble.

"Maintain good works," is a challenge to maintain fellowship with Christ and you will produce good works, Divine Good. And we learn all of this at the School of GRACE.

Buddy Dano, Pastor

Divine Viewpoint

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