



A bi-monthly periodical for young men

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EDITORIAL

Greetings once again in the Name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. I do apologise for this issue being so late. Yes, I have been busy, but that is no excuse. We should never be too busy for the things of our Lord Jesus Christ. Are we being successful in our goal this year of making Christ known, of giving Him the glory for what He has done, and encouraging others to do the same?

I include these selections trusting that they will be a blessing to you. I would like to thank those who have passed on quotes or articles. I continue to encourage each of you to either write an article, or just pass on something you have enjoyed reading – I am sure it will be a blessing to others also.

"I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." Genesis 32:26

A DIVINE CORDIAL

"We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." Rom 8:28

If the whole Scripture be the feast of the soul, as Ambrose said, then Romans 8 may be a dish at that feast, and with its sweet variety may very much refresh and animate the hearts of God's people.

In the preceding verses the apostle had been wading through the great doctrines of justifi-

ication and adoption, mysteries so arduous and profound, that without the help and conduct of the Spirit, he might soon have waded beyond his depth.

In this verse the apostle touches upon that pleasant string of consolation, 'WE KNOW THAT ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD TO THEM THAT LOVE GOD.' Not a word but is weighty; therefore I shall gather up every filing of this gold, that nothing be lost.

In the text there are three general branches: First, a glorious privilege. All things work for good. Second, the persons interested in this privilege. They are doubly specified. They are lovers of God, they are the called. Third, the origin and spring of this effectual calling, set down in these words, 'according to his purpose.'

First, the glorious privilege. Here are two things to be considered, 1. The certainty of the privilege — 'We know.' 2. The excellency of the privilege — 'All things work together for good.'

1. The certainty of the privilege:

'We know.' It is not a matter wavering or doubtful. The apostle does not say, We hope, or conjecture, but it is like an article in our creed, We know that all things work for good. Hence observe that the truths of the gospel are evident and infallible.

A Christian may come not merely to a vague opinion, but to a certainty of what he holds. As axioms and aphorisms are evident to reason, so the truths of religion are evident to faith. 'We know,' says the apostle.

Though a Christian has not a perfect knowledge of the mysteries of the gospel, yet he has a certain knowledge. 'We see through a glass darkly' (1 Cor. 13.12), therefore we have not

perfection of knowledge; but 'we behold with open face' (2 Cor. 3.18), therefore we have certainty.

The Spirit of God imprints heavenly truths upon the heart as with the point of a diamond. A Christian may know infallibly that there is an evil in sin, and a beauty in holiness. He may know that he is in the state of grace. 'We know that we have passed from death to life' (1 John 3.14).

He may know that he shall go to heaven. 'We know that if our earthly tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens' (2 Cor. 5.1).

The Lord does not leave His people at uncertainties in matters of salvation. The apostle says, 'We know'. We have arrived at a holy confidence. We have both the Spirit of God, and our own experience, setting seal to it.

Let us then not rest in scepticism or doubts, but labour to come to a certainty in the things of religion. As that martyr-woman said, 'I cannot dispute for Christ, but I can burn for Christ.' God knows whether we may be called forth to be witnesses to His truth; therefore it concerns us to be well grounded and confirmed in it.

If we are doubting Christians, we shall be wavering Christians. Whence is apostasy, but from incredulity? Men first question the truth, and then fall from the truth. Oh, beg the Spirit of God, not only to anoint you, but to seal you (2 Cor. 1.22).

2. The excellency of the privilege,

'All things work together for good.' This is as Jacob's staff in the hand of faith, with which we may walk cheerfully to the mount of God. What will satisfy or make us content, if this will not? All things work together for

good. This expression 'work together' refers to medicine.

Several poisonous ingredients put together, being tempered by the skill of the apothecary, make a sovereign medicine, and work together for the good of the patient. So all God's providences, being divinely tempered and sanctified, work together for the best to the saints.

He who loves God and is called according to His purpose, may rest assured that every thing in the world shall be for his good. This is a Christian's cordial, which may warm him — make him like Jonathan who, when he had tasted the honey at the end of the rod, 'his eyes were enlightened' (1 Sam. 14.27). Why should a Christian destroy himself? Why should he kill himself with care, when all things shall sweetly concur, yea, conspire for his good?

The result of the text is this — ALL THE VARIOUS DEALINGS OF GOD WITH HIS CHILDREN DO BY A SPECIAL PROVIDENCE TURN TO THEIR GOOD. 'All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant' (Psalm 25.10). If every path has mercy in it, then it works for good.

By Thomas Watson — introduction to the book "All things for Good"

SEPARATION?

This is an interesting article written a number of years ago. I thought I would include it for your interest.

"If our youth conferences are to compete with Vanity Fair, it soon will be a race to see which can put on the bigger ballyhoo to lure customers. When young people are entertained instead of challenged, their theme song will become 'Tell Us A Story' instead of 'Oh, Sweet Wonder!'

If they are to respond when the evening altar call is given, they seem to require a guarantee that this will not interfere with the snack-time and the boy-meet-girl social hour following."

"There was a time when separation meant giving up even good things as well as questionable. Our Isaacs were laid on the altar. Our self-assertive, mocking Ishmaels were

ejected. Our worldly-minded Lots were banished. But now Lot is made chairman of the banquet committee. Ishmael is dressed up and brought in as the jovial clown to entertain the feasters, and Isaac is given the seat of honour and toasted and told what a good fellow he is."

By Rev. Harold M. Frelich — from "Between the Porch and the Altar"

I WILL NOT LET THEE GO

I would like to briefly draw your attention to the passage in Genesis 32:9-12, where Jacob prays to God at the ford Jabbok. The result of this prayer was a whole night of wrestling with God — and a blessing.

Jacob begins his prayer by recognizing Who he was speaking to. '*O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac,...*'

He then recalls God's call on his life, and the promises of God. We see here God's guidance in his life, and his obedience to God's call. '*the Lord which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee:*'

Verse ten reveals God's goodness and mercy towards Jacob, which he sees with great humility. When we look at our life and honestly admit just how good God has been to us, it causes us to say with Jacob '*I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant;*'

We then become aware of the response Jacob has to his fear of his brother Esau (see v7). He is earnest in his supplication for God's protection. He knows God has protected him previously, and he begs God to cover him with his protection yet again. '*deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children.*'

Finally, in this prayer, we see his faith. He looks at God's promise through the eye of faith, and is strengthened. Have we not experienced God's mercy and goodness in our life? Has he not given us some promise that we can hold onto and claim by faith?

'and thou sadist, I will surely do thee good and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.'

It is no wonder after such a prayer that Jacob was able to face the testing of God! Here is a man wrestling with him *all night*, and who resorts to supernatural power when he sees that '*he prevailed not against him*' (v25). What strength Jacob shows in this great trial! We may be the same, if we will but learn to communicate with our God in the same way Jacob did here.

We find finally that Jacob expected God to work on his behalf — because he had spent time with Him in prayer. '*I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.*' Not only this, but we see that God delighted to bless such earnest expectation, and in verse 29 we find the fruition of this prayer and expectation — '*And he blessed him there*'.

Will we, like Jacob, learn to pray, and thus have strength in the trials and testings God sends our way? Do we expect and wait for God to bless us?

J. McPherson

CONTENTMENT

In reading the 4th chapter of Paul's letter to the Philippians, it is interesting to observe his character and attitudes. He was a joyful man — "I rejoiced in the Lord greatly" (v10). He was a man at peace — he said with assurance: "the peace of God ... shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (v7). He exuded confidence — "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (v13).

A person could be forgiven for thinking that he must have life pretty easy to seem so satisfied. But we know that is not the case. Paul had suffered much for the sake of the gospel, and at the time of this letter, his life was in the balance, awaiting the verdict of the Imperial Court. It is evident that Paul's lifestyle and attitudes were not dependent on his circumstances or degree of comfort. As I consider my own life, I see just how easy it is to let circumstances dictate my

reactions. So how did Paul live like this?

I believe one of the keys is found in verse 11 of this chapter: "I have learned in whatever state I am, therewith to be content."

Contentment results in us experiencing the peace and fulfillment that God has made available to us through Christ. It is not something which happens overnight; Paul tells us that contentment is something we must learn.

How can we learn contentment? I'm sure there are many ways, but there are several elements that I believe are important:

- Acknowledge God's sovereignty, particularly in times of trouble or difficulty when it is hardest to understand (or believe!) this truth, knowing that He is in control (Rom 8:28).
- Find things to be thankful for in other people (especially those who have annoyed me or are difficult to like!) and in the present circumstances. How can we possibly be discontent if we are praying like Paul "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you"?! (Phil 1:3)
- Seek to praise God and enjoy to the fullest every moment He has given to us, whether it is doing a menial task, or doing something I love, because time itself is a gift from God, and we cannot know how much He has given us.

We can see from Paul's life that contentment is not in any way related to apathy, nor does it prevent one from being competitive and striving to do their best for the Lord. It is an attitude towards life, people, and circumstances that appreciates and enjoys all that God has given to us, and doesn't focus on the negatives and what we don't have.

As Bible teacher and pastor Chuck Swindoll summarized: "The good life – the one that truly satisfies – exists only when we stop wanting a better one. It is the condition of savouring what

is, rather than longing for what might be."

A. Budimir

SIN ... EXCEEDING SINFUL

Sin ... exceeding sinful Rom 7:13

Beware of light thoughts of sin. At the time of conversion, the conscience is so tender, that we are afraid of the slightest sin. Young converts have a holy timidity, a godly fear lest they should offend against God. But alas! Very soon the fine bloom upon these first ripe fruits is removed by the rough handling of the surrounding world: the sensitive plant of young piety turns into a willow in after life, too pliant, too easily yielding.

It is sadly true, that even a Christian may grow by degrees so callous, that the sin which once startled him does not alarm him in the least. By degrees men get familiar with sin. The ear in which the cannon has been booming will not notice slight sounds.

At first a little sin startles us; but soon we say, "Is it not a little one?" Then there comes another, larger, and then another, until by degrees we begin to regard sin as but a little ill; and then follows an unholy presumption:

"We have not fallen into open sin. True, we tripped a little, but we stood upright in the main. We may have uttered one unholy word, but as for the most of our conversation, it has been consistent." So we palliate sin; we throw a cloak over it; we call it by dainty names.

Christian, beware how thou thinkest lightly of sin. Take heed lest thou fall by little and little. Sin, a *little* thing? Is it not a poison? Who knows its deadliness? Sin, a little thing? Do not the little foxes spoil the grapes? Doth not the tiny coral insect build a rock which wrecks a navy? Do not little strokes fell lofty oaks? Will not continual droppings wear away stones? Sin, a little thing?

It girded the Redeemer's head with thorns, and pierced His heart! It made *Him* suffer anguish, bitterness, and woe. Could you weigh the least sin in the scales of eternity, you would

fly from it as from a serpent, and abhor *the least appearance of evil*. Look upon all sin as that which crucified the Saviour, and you will see it to be "exceeding sinful."

C. H. Spurgeon

COMMIT

Commit Thy works unto the Lord and thy thoughts shall be established Prov. 16:3

How simple in theory; how difficult in practice! The word 'commit' means to give over completely to the keeping of someone. It is like taking the car to a mechanic for a repair or service. We leave the car there with never any thought of going into the workshop to check that the mechanic takes proper care of the car, that he doesn't dirty the seat decor or paint work, or any such thing. No sir!

Why then, when we say to the Lord, 'I commit this thing to you, and ask you to direct my every step' do we then go ahead and try to work things out ourselves?

Is it that we do not trust God to do what is best for us? Do we really believe that He can do what is right in each situation? Why then do we so often fail to leave everything in his hands?

Do not think that when we say 'Lord, take this situation and work it out' that we can sit back, relax, and do nothing. Notice that the scriptures tell us that when we commit our works unto the Lord, '*our thoughts shall be established*'. God gives us wisdom in how to act, often what we should do. He does his part, and expects us to do ours! The problem comes when we run ahead of God, and try to work things out *before* God has really given any direction.

It is very easy to consider the circumstances in our situation, and think that such and such is right, *because everything worked out alright*. That does not make it right! Everything worked out for Lot to move to Sodom. Everything worked out for David to bring the Ark of God towards Jerusalem on a new cart – until God stopped it. Why? Because it was not right, even though it seemed to be so.

J. McPherson

WHAT SHOULD I READ

This question is one of real weight and practical importance. There is much more involved in it than we might want to admit. It is a common saying, "Show me your company and I will tell you what you are." It may, with equal truth, be said, "Show me your library and I will tell where you are." Our reading may be taken as the great indicator of our moral, intellectual and spiritual condition.

Our books are our mental and spiritual food, the material on which the inner man feeds. Hence the seriousness of the entire question of Christian reading.

We observe with deep concern a growing distaste for solid reading, especially among young Christians, although it is not confined to them. Newspapers, religious novels, sensational tales, all sorts of poisonous and trashy literature are eagerly devoured, while volumes of most weighty and precious truth lie neglected on the bookshelf.

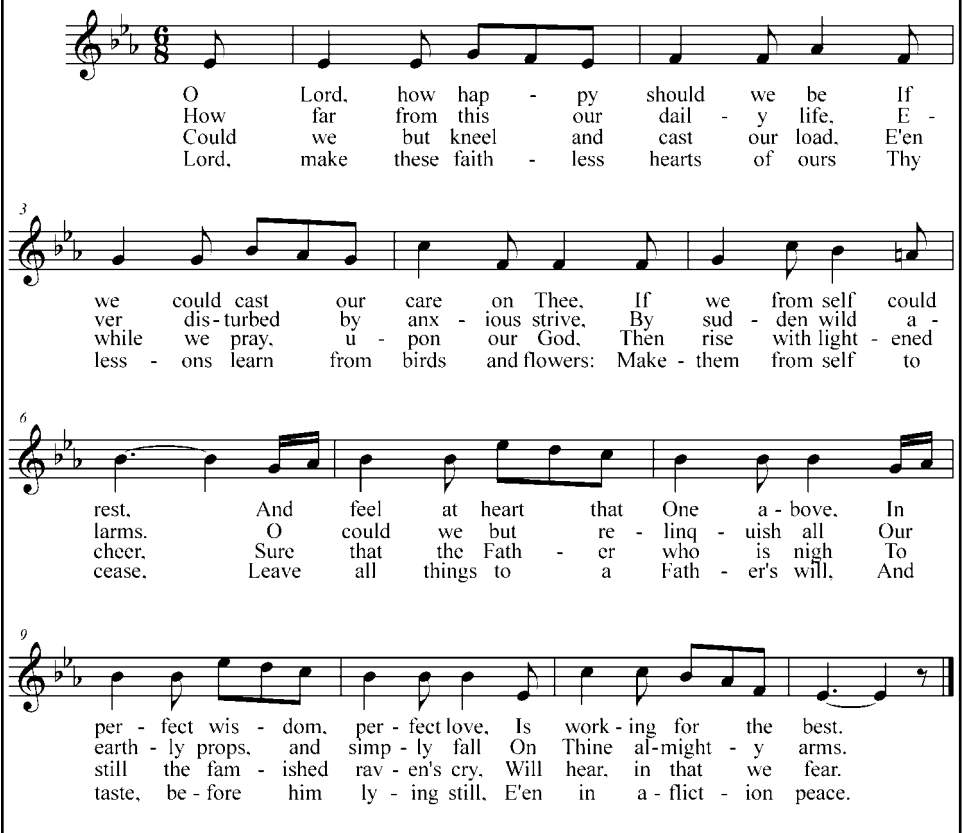
All this we consider most deplorable. We look upon it as a most alarming indication of a low spiritual condition. Indeed it is difficult to conceive how anyone possessing a single spark of divine life can find pleasure in such defiling rubbish as one sees now-a-days in the hands of many who occupy the high ground of Christian profession.

The inspired apostle exhorts all Christians, "As newborn babes, to desire the sincere milk of the Word that ye may grow thereby." How can we grow if we neglect the Word of God and yet devour newspapers and light, worthless books? How is it possible for any Christian to be in a healthy condition of soul who can barely find a few hasty moments to run his eye over a verse or two of Scripture, but can give hours to light and useless reading?

We may depend upon it: our reading proves beyond question what we are and where we are. If our reading is light and frivolous, our state is the same. If our Christianity is of a solid and

How Happy

Joseph Anstice T. Hastings



earnest type, it will be distinctly evidenced by our habitual and voluntary reading – the reading to which we turn for our recreation and refreshment...

We bless the Lord each day more and more for all the gracious helps given us by means of the writings of His beloved servants. We look upon them as a most precious stream of refreshment and spiritual blessing flowing down from our glorified Head in the heavens, for which we can never praise Him enough... [however] Human writings, if not clothed with the power of the Holy Spirit, are just so much waste paper...

By C.H. Mackintosh, from *What Should I Read? – A Question for the Times*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The author of *Higher Ground* is Joshua McPherson. He is a young man who desires to walk closer to the Lord each day, and wishes to encourage other young men in the same pursuit.

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Please be aware that while articles by many authors are included in this paper, this does not mean that we necessarily agree with everything that author may believe or teach.

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