Mark - Commentaries by Charles Henry Mackintosh

Answers to Correspondents: From Things New and Old 1858-1863, 105. Salt With All the Offerings

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“W. S.,” Rutland. Mark 9:49-50, is deeply practical. “Salt” is pungent and preservative. “With all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt.” It is sweetly expressive of that energy of holiness by which the Christian is to be preserved from the corrupting influences around him, whether they be of a doctrinal or practical nature. The connection of “salt” and “peace,” and the order in which they stand, are full of instruction. It reminds us of James’ words, “pure and peaceable.” Holiness, purity and truth must first be jealously maintained; and then as much “peace” as possible. At the present day, alas! we see the order reversed. “Peace” is put first, and the sad consequence is, that much of the “salt” has lost its savor. Professing Christianity will, ere long, become a loathsome mass, fit only for the winepress of the wrath of God. Oh! that Christians may be separated, in spirit and practice, from this corrupt and corrupting world, and stand as devoted witnesses to a rejected, absent, coming Lord! We have not read the sermon you so kindly sent; but from the cursory glance we have given at it, we are much disposed to agree with your view of it.

Christian Truth: Volume 15, Be Not Afraid

"And He said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague. While He yet spake, there came from the ruler of the synagogue's house certain which said, Thy daughter is dead; why troublest thou the Master any further? As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe." Mark 5:34-36.

It is at once interesting and instructive to mark that, at the very moment in which the Lord was dismissing the poor woman with words of peace and consolation, a messenger arrived from the ruler's house, saying, "Thy daughter is dead; why troublest thou the Master any further?" This was in reality a fiery dart from the wicked one to shake the ruler's confidence. He had come to Jesus in the confidence of His ability and readiness to heal the sick, but could he trust Him to raise the dead? Could his faith carry him into the dreary domain of death and there enable him to gaze upon the Son of God acting in His glorious capacity as the quickener of the dead?

We are not told what passed through the ruler's mind at the moment in which the depressing tidings of death fell upon his ear; but we can easily imagine a dark cloud passing over his spirit. But, ah! the tender, loving heart of Jesus was thinking of the poor, tried, and tempted one. His eye was upon him. He caught the earliest symptom of the gathering cloud: "As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe." The Lord took no notice of the messenger. He thought only of the effect of the message upon the ruler's heart; and in His infinite grace He immediately covered him with the shield of faith. "Be not afraid, only believe." Precious words! Words which can carry the soul through every difficulty and every danger—words for a sickbed or a chamber of death—words for all circumstances, all places, and all conditions—words of comfort and consolation for the poor, sinking, fainting, tottering heart. "Be not afraid, only believe."

Dear Christian reader, are you assaulted by dark thoughts of unbelief? Have you arrived at a point in your earthly path at which you see graver difficulties before you than you ever anticipated? Do you feel the dark waters of sorrow, trial, and temptation deepening around you, and the heavy clouds of unbelief and despondency gathering more thickly above you? Then, remember, the loving heart of Jesus is occupied about you. His eye is resting solicitously upon you. He knows what you are feeling. He sees every fiery dart that the tempter is leveling at you; and He says to you, as He said to the ruler, "Be not afraid, only believe"—"Hold the beginning of" your "confidence steadfast unto the end" (Heb. 3:14)—"Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward" (Heb. 10:35)—"Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked" (Eph. 6:16). What we want is confidence in God, come what may. Simple faith can lift the head above the deepest waters, and pierce through the thickest gloom that ever enwrapped the soul. "Be not afraid, only believe." May these words fall with power on every doubting, trembling heart!

The closing lines of our chapter display to us the moral glories of Christ as the quickener of the dead. Death, disease, and Satan all flee before the majesty of His presence. We can track His marvelous path from scene to scene of this sin-stricken world; and, in every act, in every word, in every look, we see divine perfection. "He hath done all things well" must ever be the adoring language of our hearts. Nothing is beyond His power. Nothing escapes His tender care. "Talitha cumi" is the display of His majesty; Give her to eat, exhibits His tender, thoughtful care. The former bows the soul in worship; the latter melts the heart in grateful love.

The Mackintosh Treasury: Vol. 6, Christ in the Vessel: Mark 4:35-41

Mark 4:35-41

"Man's extremity is God's opportunity." This is a very familiar saying. It often passes among us; and, no doubt we fully believe it; but yet when we find ourselves brought to our extremity, we are often very little prepared to count on God's opportunity. It is one thing to utter or hearken to a truth, and another thing to realize the power, of that truth. It is one thing, when sailing over a calm sea, to speak of God's ability to keep us in the storm, and it is another thing altogether to prove that ability when the storm is actually raging around us. And yet God is ever the same. In the storm and in the calm, in sickness and in health, in pressure and in ease, in poverty and in abundance-"The same yesterday, and

to-day, and forever"-the same grand reality for faith to lean upon, cling to, and draw upon at all times and under all circumstances.

But alas! alas! we are unbelieving. Here lies the source of the weakness and failure. We are perplexed and agitated when we ought to be calm and confiding; we are casting about when we ought to be counting on God; we are beckoning to our partners when we ought to be "looking unto Jesus." Thus it is we lose immensely, and dishonor the Lord in our ways. Doubtless, there are few things for which we have to be more deeply humbled than our tendency to distrust the Lord when difficulties and trials present themselves; and assuredly we grieve the heart of Jesus by thus distrusting Him, for distrust must always wound a loving heart. Look, for example, at the scene between. Joseph and his brethren in Genesis 50: "And when Joseph's brethren saw that their father was dead, they said, Joseph will peradventure hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him. And they sent a messenger unto Joseph, saying, Thy father did command before he died, saying, So shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin; for they did unto thee evil: and now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father. And Joseph wept when they spake unto him." It was a sad return to make for all the grace and love and tender care which the injured Joseph had exercised toward them. How could they suppose that one who had so freely and fully forgiven them, and spared their lives when they were entirely in his power, would, after so many years of kindness, turn upon them in anger and revenge? It was indeed a grievous wrong, and it was no marvel that "Joseph wept when they spake unto him." What an answer to all their unworthy fear and dark suspicion! A flood of tears! Such is love! "And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. Now, therefore, fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them."

Thus it was with the disciples on the occasion to which our paper refers. Let us meditate a little on the passage.

"And the same day, when the even was come, He saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side. And when they had sent away the multitude, they took Him even as He was in the ship. And there were also with Him other little ships. And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. And He was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow."

Here then we have an interesting and instructive scene. The poor disciples are brought to their extremity. They are at their wits' end. A violent storm-the ship full of water- the Master asleep. This was a trying moment indeed, and assuredly we, if we look at ourselves, need not marvel at the fear and agitation of the disciples. It is not likely that we should have done better, had we been there. Still, we cannot but see wherein they failed. The narrative has been penned for our learning, and we are bound to study it and seek to learn the lesson which it reads out to us.

There is nothing more absurd and irrational than unbelief, when we come to look at it calmly. In the scene before us, this absurdity is very apparent; for what could be more absurd than to suppose that the vessel could possibly sink with the Son of God on board? And yet this was what they feared.

It may be said, They did not just think of the Son of God at that moment. True, they thought of the storm, the waves, the filling vessel; and, judging after the manner of men, it seemed a hopeless case. Thus it is the unbelieving heart ever reasons. It looks only at the circumstances, and leaves God out. Faith, on the contrary, looks only at God, and leaves circumstances out.

What a difference! Faith delights in man's extremity, simply because it is God's opportunity. It delights in being "shut up" to God-in having the platform thoroughly cleared of the creature, in order that God may display His glory- in the multiplying of empty vessels, in order that God may fill them. Such is faith. It would, we may surely say, have enabled the disciples to lie down and sleep beside their Master, in the midst of the storm. Unbelief, on the other hand, rendered them uneasy; they could not rest themselves, and they actually aroused the blessed Lord out of His sleep by their unbelieving apprehensions. He, weary with incessant toil, was snatching a few moments repose while the vessel was crossing the sea. He knew what fatigue was; He had come down into all our circumstances. He made Himself acquainted with all our feelings and all our infirmities, being in all points tempted like as we are, sin excepted.

He was found as a man in every respect, and as such, He slept on a pillow, and was rocked by the ocean's wave. The storm beat upon the vessel, and the billows rolled over it, although the Creator was on board in the Person of that weary, sleeping Workman.

Profound mystery! The One who made the sea, and could hold the winds in His almighty grasp, lay sleeping in the hinder part of the ship, and allowed the sea and the wind to treat Him as unceremoniously as though He were an ordinary man. Such was the reality of the human nature of our blessed Lord. He was weary-He slept, and He was tossed on the bosom of that sea which His hands had made. Oh! reader, pause and meditate on this wondrous sight. Look closely, think deeply. No tongue, no pen, can do justice to such a scene. We cannot expatiate; we can only muse and worship.

But, as we have said, unbelief roused the blessed Lord out of His sleep. "They awake Him, and say unto Him, Master, carest Thou not that we perish?" What a question! "Carest Thou not?" How it must have wounded the sensitive heart of the Lord Jesus! How could they ever think that He was indifferent to their trouble and danger? How completely must they have lost sight of His love, to say nothing of His power, when they could bring themselves to say, "Carest Thou not?"

And yet, dear Christian reader, have we not in all this a mirror in which to see ourselves reflected? Assuredly we have. How often in moments of pressure and trial, do our hearts conceive, if our lips do not utter the question, "Carest Thou not?" It may be we are laid on a bed of sickness and pain, and we know that one word from the God of all power and might could chase away the malady and raise us up; and yet the word is withheld. Or, perhaps we are in need of temporal supplies, and we know that the silver and gold, and the cattle upon a thousand hills, belong to God, yea, that the treasures of the universe are under His hand; and yet, day after day rolls on, and our need is not supplied. In a word, we are passing through deep waters; in some way or another, the storm rages; wave after wave rolls over our tiny vessel; we are brought to our extremity; we are at our wits' end, and our hearts often feel ready to send up the terrible question, "Carest Thou not?" The thought of this is deeply humbling. To think of our grieving the loving heart of Jesus by our unbelief and suspicion, should fill us with the deepest contrition.

And then the absurdity of unbelief! How can that One who gave His life for us-who left His glory and came down into this world of toil and misery, and died a shameful death to deliver us from eternal wrath-how can such a One ever fail to care for us? But yet we are ready to doubt, or we grow impatient under the trial of our faith, forgetting that the very trial from which we so shrink, and under which we so wince, is far more precious than gold; for the former is an imperishable reality, whereas the latter must perish in the using. The more genuine faith is

tried, the brighter it shines; and hence the trial, however severe, is sure to }sue in praise and honor and glory to Him who not only implants the faith, but also passes it through the furnace and sedulously watches it therein.

But the poor disciples failed in the moment of trial. Their confidence gave way; they roused their Master from His slumber with that most unworthy question, "Carest Thou not that we perish?" Alas! what creatures we are! We are ready to forget ten thousand mercies in the presence of a single difficulty. David could say, "I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul"; and how did it turn out? Saul fell on Mount Gilboa, and David was established on the throne of Israel. Elijah fled for his life at the threat of Jezebel; and what was the issue? Jezebel was dashed to pieces on the pavement, and Elijah was taken to heaven in a chariot of fire. So here, the disciples thought they were going to be lost, with the Son of God on board; and what was the result? The storm was hushed into silence, and the sea became as glass by that voice which of old had called worlds into existence. "And He arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm."

What a combination of grace and majesty is here! Instead of rebuking them for having disturbed His repose, He rebukes those elements which had terrified them. It was thus He replied to their question, "Carest Thou not?" Blessed Master! Who would not trust Thee? Who would not adore Thee for Thy patient grace and unupbraiding love?

There is something perfectly beautiful in the way in which our blessed Lord rises, without an effort, from the repose of perfect humanity into the activity of essential deity. As man, wearied with His work, He slept on a pillow; as God, He rises and, with His almighty voice, hushes the storm and calms the sea.

Such was Jesus, very God, and very man; and such is He now, ever ready to meet His people's need, to hush their anxieties, and remove their fears. Would that we could only trust Him more simply. We have little idea of how much we lose by not leaning more on the arm of Jesus, day by day. We are so easily terrified. Every breath of wind, every wave, every cloud, agitates and depresses us. Instead of calmly lying down and reposing beside our Lord, we are full of terror and perplexity. Instead of using the storm as an occasion for trusting Him, we make it an occasion of doubting Him. No sooner does some trifling trouble arise than we think we are going to perish, although He assures us that not a hair of our head can ever be touched. Well may He say to us, as He said to His disciples, "Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?" It would indeed seem, at times, as though we had no faith. But oh! His tender love! He is ever near to shield and succor us, even though our unbelieving hearts are so ready to doubt and suspect. He does not deal with us according to our poor thoughts of Him, but according to His own perfect love toward us. This is the solace and stay of our souls in passing across life's stormy ocean homeward to our eternal rest. Christ is in the vessel. Let this ever suffice. Let us calmly rely on Him. May there ever be, at the very center of our hearts, that deep repose which springs from real trust in Jesus; and then, though the storm rage and the sea run mountains high, we shall not be led to say, "Carest Thou not that we perish?" It is impossible for us to perish with the Master on board; nor can we ever think so, with Christ in our hearts. May the Holy Spirit teach us to make a fuller, freer, bolder use of Christ. We really need this just now, and shall need it more and more. It must be Christ Himself laid hold of and enjoyed in the heart by faith. Thus may it be to His praise and our abiding peace and joy!

We may just notice in conclusion the way in which the disciples were affected by the scene on which we have been dwelling. Instead of the calm worship of those whose faith had been answered, they manifest the amazement of those whose fears had been rebuked. "They feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?" Surely they ought to have known Him better. Yes, Christian reader, and so should we.

Short Papers, Two Mites, The

“And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury; and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing.”

How little did these people know whose eye was watching them as they cast in their offerings! How little did they think of being scanned by One whose eye could penetrate the deepest depths of their hearts and read the motives that actuated them in what they were doing. It may be the ostentatious Pharisee was there, displaying his wealth and making a pompous exhibition of his religiousness. Perhaps, too, the cold formalist was there, dropping, in heartless routine, his stereotyped coin into the treasury. Jesus saw it all—weighed it all—judged it all.

It is well to think on this, on every occasion in the which we are called to contribute to the Lord’s cause. Well to remember, as the box or the basket is placed in my hand, that “ Jesus is sitting over against the treasury.” His holy eye rests, not upon the purse, but upon the heart. He weighs, not the amount, but the motive. If the heart be right, the amount will be right, according to His judgment. Where the heart beats true to His Person, the hand will be open to His cause; of this we may rest assured. All who really love Christ will count it their high and happy privilege to deny themselves in order to contribute to His cause. No doubt, it is most marvelous that He should condescend to ask us so to do. Yet He does so, and it should be our deep and ineffable joy to respond, “ according as God has prospered us,” ever remembering that He loveth a cheerful giver, because that is precisely what He is Himself, blessed be His holy Name!

However, the point on which we specially meant to dwell, in opening Mark 12 was the act of the poor widow. Amid the crowd of contributors who pressed. forward to cast their offerings into the treasury, there was one who particularly engaged the attention of our blessed Lord. “ There came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing.”

Now, that was a very small amount indeed, if looked at in a pecuniary point of view. But think of the offerer. She was a “ widow “—and a “ poor widow “—the very impersonation of all that is desolate, helpless, and lonely, in this world. A widow always gives us the idea of one bereft of every earthly stay and natural prop. “ She that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers, night and day.”

True, there are many so-called widows who are not of this stamp at all—many who look aught but lonely and desolate. But these are quite abnormal. They are entirely outside the sphere of true widowhood. The Holy Ghost has furnished us with a striking photograph of this class in 1 Tim. 5:11-13.

But the poor widow at the treasury belonged to the class of true widows. She was one according to the mind of Christ. “ And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow path cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury. For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.”

Doubtless had these been the days of the public press, the princely offerings of the wealthy would have been paraded in the columns of some newspaper, with flattering allusion to their large amount, while the poor widow and her offering would have been passed over in contemptuous silence.

But our adorable Lord thought differently. The poor widow’s two mites outweighed, in His balance, all the offerings put together. It is a comparatively easy thing to give tens, hundreds, and thousands from our accumulated treasures; but it is not easy to deny self of a single luxury or comfort, to say nothing of a positive necessary. But she gave all her living to the house of her God. It was this which threw her into such moral kindredness of spirit with the blessed Lord Himself. He could say, “ The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up.” And she could say, “ The zeal of thy house hath eaten up my living.” Thus she was very near to Him. What a privilege!

But, reader, did you ever notice the shape in which she had her living? Why does the Spirit take such care to say “ Two mites, which make a farthing?” Why not be content to say, “ She threw in a farthing?” Ah! this would never do. It would not have brought out the real point of exquisite beauty—the true touch of whole-hearted devotedness. If she had had it all in one piece, she must have either given all or nothing. Having it in two, she had the option of keeping half for her own living. And truly most of us would judge it extraordinary devotedness to give to the Lord’s cause half of all we possessed in the world. But this poor widow had a whole heart for God. This was the point. There was no reserve whatever. Self and its interests were wholly lost sight of, and she flung her whole living into that which to her heart represented the cause of her God. May God grant us something of this spirit!

Answers to Correspondents: From Things New and Old 1858-1863, 70. The Fig Tree

“S. L.” We look upon the fig tree, in Mark 11:13, as a striking figure of Israel’s condition. Christ came seeking fruit and found none. Israel disappointed Him. There were the leaves of outward profession, but no fruit; and the consequence is, the whole stock is entirely set aside; but a repentant remnant will, by and by, become the nucleus of the restored nation, and then shall Jehovah gather mellow clusters from His fig tree. As to Luke 16:9, it is fully explained by 1 Timothy 6:17-18. Worldly riches are not what properly belong to the Christian; but should they fall into his hand, he should so use them for Christ as that they may yield him a reward in the coming kingdom. We should use the present, with our eye on the future—pass through time in the light of eternity. With regard to Balaam, in Numbers 22, God allowed him to go, because his heart was set upon going. This is a very common case. When persons set themselves to act against God, they are allowed to follow their own bent, in order that they may learn, by the fruits of their folly, what they would not learn in communion with God. The Lord told Samuel to anoint a king, and He told Moses to send spies; but had Israel been in a right condition, there would have been no need for either the one or the other.

Christian Truth: Volume 6, On the Way Up to Jerusalem: Rich Man, Disciples, and Blind Bartimeus

Read Mark 10:17-52

In the above scripture we have three distinct types of character presented to us in the rich man, the disciples, and blind Bartimaeus.

In the person of the rich man, we may see a very numerous class set forth. He was not by any means without real anxiety respecting his soul's interests. He was seeking "eternal life," and had evidently struggled to obtain it by works of law. Yet, with all his legal efforts, he was ill at ease. He felt there was something lacking, and therefore he came to Christ.

But in his very first question we detect the wrong ground on which this singularly interesting man was standing. He said, "What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" His mind, still darkened by the mists of legalism, had never admitted the wondrous truth that "eternal life" is "the gift of God," and not the reward of human doings. His question proved him to be very far be hind in his apprehension, not only of God's dealings with man, but also of his own real state in God's sight. Hence, the Lord sent him back to Moses; He sent him back, as it were, to the foot of Mount Sinai to learn the solemn and impressive lessons taught there amid thunders and lightnings, blackness, darkness, and tempest. Such was the real bent and object of the Lord's reply, "Thou knowest the commandments." It is as though He had said to him, "You are hundreds of years too late in your inquiry. The doing principle has been tried long since, at Mount Sinai, where it ended in failure. I am here on the ground that man's doings are set aside. Eternal life is God's gift, not man's earning."

However, the rich man did not know where the law really put him. He was ignorant of the holiness of the law and of his own ruined condition. He said, "All these have I observed from my youth." No one who knew the height of God's law and the depth of man's ruin, could make such a statement. Persons who speak of keeping the law know "neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm." If man could keep the law, then either he is perfect, or the law is imperfect. But the "law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." Rom. 7:12. Hence, it is not possible that a sinful being could so keep the law as to get life by it, and therefore this rich man was quite astray in saying he had kept all the commandments; for had he done so, he would not have lacked anything; whereas, Christ said to him, "One thing thou lackest." "Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them." Rom. 10:5. If therefore a man could say he had kept the commandments, he should have a right to life as a matter of positive earning. But who would dare to put forth such a claim? Who has so kept the law as to be able to claim life from God? Not one. "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight." Rom. 3:20. "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse." Gal. 3:10. "If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law." Gal. 3:21.

Why, then, it may be asked, did the Lord refer this man to the commandments? Simply that he might see by them how far short he was of what he ought to be, and so learn his need of something outside of himself. He sent him back to the schoolmaster, and when he professed to

have learned all that the schoolmaster had to teach him, the Lord applied another and a more searching test by calling on him to let go the world, and take up the cross. This was far more than he was prepared for. The world shone too brightly, and the cross seemed too gloomy, in his eyes, to admit of any response to such a call. The world was heavier, in the balance of his heart's affections, than Christ. It would be all well enough if he could get eternal life and hold the world as well. The heart likes right well to make the best of both worlds. But it will not do. If a man comes to Christ to bargain about eternal life, he will, assuredly, find the price far beyond his means; whereas, as we shall see presently, if a man comes as a beggar, he gets all he wants for nothing. If a man comes as a doer, he must be told what to do; if a man comes as a sinner, he is told what to believe.

However, it will always be found that the cross is too heavy for anyone to take up who has not first seen Christ nailed to that cross for him and for his salvation. Further, "the way going up to Jerusalem"-that is, the way which Christ trod, and which all must tread who follow Him- will be found too rough for all save those whose feet are "shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." I must by faith lean on the cross ere I can carry it; and I must possess eternal life ere I can follow Jesus. To attempt to carry the cross until I enjoy a crucified Savior is more difficult than even to stand before the fiery mount. This rich man who thought he had kept all the commandments was repulsed by the dark shadow of the cross, and "went away grieved."

But did the Lord Jesus mean to teach this man that he could "inherit eternal life" by doing, selling, or giving? By no means. What then? He was answering him on his own ground. He had come as a doer, and he went away because he could not do. Like Israel in Exodus 19: they said, "All that the LORD hath spoken we will do"; and when Jehovah did speak, "they could not endure that which was commanded" (Heb. 12:20). Man speaks about doing, and when he is told what to do, he is neither willing nor able to do it. God's word to all who "desire to be under the law" is "Do ye not hear the law?" (Gal. 4:21). "The man which doeth those things shall live by them." Rom. 10:5. "What is written in the law? how readest thou?" Luke 10:26.

Hence then this amiable and interesting person was not disposed even to set his foot upon "the way up to Jerusalem." The thought of relinquishing the world, its riches and its pleasures, was far beyond him He wanted "eternal life," but if it was to be purchased by giving up his riches, he would not pay the price, and so he "went away grieved."

The disciples furnish us with another t y p e of character. They were able through grace to say, "Lo, we have left all, and have followed Thee." They were a stage beyond the rich man. They had seen sufficient attraction in Christ to lead them to give up their earthly all, and attach themselves to His blessed Person. This was all well. They should be no losers, for Christ will be no man's debtor. Whatever is devoted to Him, He will pay back "a hundredfold now in this time,... and in the world to come eternal life." But then "many that are first shall be last; and the last first." It is one thing to begin; it is another thing to continue. It is one thing to enter upon the path; it is another thing to pursue it. This is a most solemn truth.

"And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them: and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid." v. 32. Why was this? Why this fear and amazement? Had they not voluntarily given up all to follow Christ? Yes; but they had not just anticipated that the cross would be so heavy or the way so rough. They had given up this world's brilliant offers, but they did not reckon upon the dark clouds which hung over the path leading to Jerusalem; therefore, when called on to encounter these things, they were "amazed" and "afraid." They had not, like the rich man, to go away "grieved" because unable to shake off the influence of this world's wealth; but they followed Christ in amazement and fear because of the roughness and darkness of that path along which He was conducting them. Theirs was obviously a different case. They had life, and did not need to "inherit" it by works of law or works of self-denial. But then if they wanted to follow Christ, they had to count the cost, for He was on His way up to Jerusalem. He had "steadfastly set His face" to meet the terrific array of all the powers of darkness, together with the scorn, the reproach, the enmity, and derision of those whom He had come to save.

And mark the grace of those words, "Jesus went before them." He put Himself in the forefront of the battle. He exposed Himself to the marshaled hosts of earth and hell. "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn Him to death, and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles: and they shall mock Him, and shall scourge Him, and shall spit upon Him, and shall kill Him; and the third day He shall rise again." vv. 33, 34. With a steady gaze He contemplates the whole scene, but most graciously omits one ingredient in His approaching cup of unutterable sorrow; namely, His desertion and denial by those who had left all to follow Him.

How little they entered into all these things is evident from the fact that while on the way up to Jerusalem they were occupied about the question of their respective places in the kingdom. A heart that is filled with love to Christ will find full satisfaction in the assurance of being near to Him. It is not so much the place I am to get, as the Person who will be the center and spring of all my joy forever. Paul, in Philippians 3, is not occupied with the place which he is to have in the coming kingdom. No; to "win Christ" was the fondly cherished object of that devoted heart. From the moment he beheld the beauty and excellency of that blessed One near the city of Damascus, until he was "offered up" in the city of Rome, he was carried forward by the intensity of love to His Person and His cause. And, assuredly, no one ever drank more deeply of His "cup," or entered more thoroughly into His "baptism" than Paul.

It only remains for us to look for a moment at the case of "blind Bartimaeus." In this poor blind beggar we see one who virtually rebuked both the rich man and the disciples, for the moment he laid his open eyes on the Son of David, without casting back a lingering look at his garment which he had cast away in order to come to Jesus, and without a single thought about the roughness and darkness of the path, he "followed Jesus in the way." What "way"? The way going up to Jerusalem. It may be said that he had no possessions to give up, and he knew nothing of the direction or end of that way; very likely, but that does not alter the matter. The valuable point for us to get hold of is that when the eye is filled and the heart is occupied with Christ, we never stop to think of what we have to give up in order to get Him, or what we have to endure in order to follow Him. HE HIMSELF EN GROSSES THE WHOLE SOUL; and naught but this will enable us to bound along the path after Him. What was all the world to Bartimaeus? Or what the roughness of the way? His eyes had been opened, and not only opened but filled with the fairest vision that ever fixed the gaze of men or angels, even the Person of the Son of God-God manifest in the flesh—and therefore leaving far behind his blindness and his beggary, he pressed forward after that wondrous Person who had met all his need.

Why did not Christ tell him about t h e commandments? Why did He not call upon him to take up his cross and follow Him? Why did He not hold up before his view the "cup" and the "baptism"? Because he was not a bargainer, but a beggar. Because he was not talking about his doings, but confessing his need. And, finally, because he was not thinking about what place he should get in the kingdom, or about the

roughness of the way thither, but seeking to get to Jesus and to follow Him when found. This is simple enough. Christ never proposed conditions to a poor, blind, brokenhearted sinner. He came down from heaven, "not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." Matt. 20:28.

It is beginning at the wrong end to call upon a ruined and helpless sinner to give up the world in order to find Christ. He is "without strength"; what can he do? If I tell a miser that he must give up his gold, or a drunkard that he must give up his drink, before he can come to Christ, he will tell me I might as well ask him to cut off his right hand. But let such a one have his eyes opened to behold the bleeding Lamb of God—let him see God's salvation—let him hear the glad news of sins forgiven, and eternal life and righteousness bestowed through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ—and then mark the difference. Instead of going "away grieved" at the hardness of the conditions proposed, he goes "on his way rejoicing" in the fullness of the salvation revealed; and instead of moving along "amazed" a n d "afraid" because of the roughness and gloom of the path, he presses forward toward the mark with a cheerful alacrity which naught but companionship of Christ can impart.

Reader, can you see your own character in any of the foregoing types? What is the present condition of your soul? Are you anxious to get eternal life, but still shrinking from the immense sacrifice which you think is involved? Let me entreat you to "behold the Lamb of God" bleeding on the cursed tree to put away sin. Think not of any sacrifice which you must make, but of that sacrifice which He has made. This will give you peace. Look away from self straight to Jesus; let not the weight of a feather come between. He has done ALL, and the soul that believes in a dead and risen Christ, is quickened, pardoned, justified.

However, it may be you have found pardon and peace in Jesus; moreover, you have let go your hold of this world, and pushed out from the shore to go to Jesus. But you find the way very rough, and the cross very heavy. The contemptuous sneers of old associates-the bitter reproach and opposition of many around you -the narrowness of your sphere, and the loneliness of your path—all these things are against you; and you find amazement and terror creeping, at times, over your spirit. Well, be not afraid. Remember that the Master is before you; you can distinctly trace His blessed footprints all along that rough and cloudy, path. Persevere! You must "through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). Keep your eye steadily fixed on Jesus. The time is very short. "Yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry" (Heb. 10:37); and then your ears will hear the gladsome words, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" (Matt. 25:21).

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