

A Layman's **PERSPECTIVE**

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ENTRANCE INTO THE KINGDOM

The views contained in this exposition are taken primarily from the writings of men who have expounded extensively on the subject of the kingdom of God and the millennial reign of Christ. We have tried to highlight the text where direct quotes are used. However, we have condensed much of the substance of their ideas into our own words, and have thus, in a sense, "plagiarized" their thoughts, if not their exact words. We make no pretense about, nor apology for, having done so, for we wish to acknowledge the total contribution of the writings of Robert Govett, G. H. Lang, R.E. Neighbors, Arlen Chitwood, G. H. Pember, and D.M. Panton to the thoughts expressed here. Had we the resources, we would much rather have purchased and distributed their writings, which are far more explicit in outlining the scriptural basis of their assertions. But, because we are financially unable to do so, and because we feel that this is a message which every Christian should hear, we are using this means to convey what we consider to be the most important and life changing doctrine we have heard since our redemption.

Permission is granted to reproduce this writing in full or in part without acknowledging our authorship. If what is contained herein is of any value for the edification and encouragement of the body of Christ, then to Him be the glory. We only hope that, in our brevity, we have accurately conveyed what these men have so judiciously explained in great depth.

We will be happy to supply additional copies of this writing upon request. Should you desire, we would also forward one or more of their books from our limited supply, or furnish you with the book titles and publisher from whom they may be purchased. Like A. W. Tozer, we place no value upon books, except that they serve as "signposts" in the pursuit of truth,....truth which is in Christ and in His word.

No doubt, some who read this will be provoked to anger, although that is not our intent. One must honestly adjudge whether the provocation stems from righteous indignation, or is caused by a conviction of the Holy Spirit of a truth which is difficult to hear.

As "laymen", we have been confronted with many of the conflicting doctrines which have divided the body of Christ for centuries. All too often, we have found that some of the reasoning of those on both sides of these doctrinal disputes, have been weak and unconvincing. This has placed us in a quandary as to the meaning of those "difficult passages" that seemed incompatible with either position.

Hopefully, what we write here, will bring into harmony with all of scripture, those passages which may have also troubled you, be you "layman" or "clergy"

We urge you, like the Bereans, to examine the scriptures to see if these things are so (Acts 17:11), and refute with sound doctrine, anything which is not in accordance with the teaching of Christ (Titus 1:9).

May you be edified, sobered and encouraged by what we have to share, and may it lead you to a closer relationship to our precious Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

**Grace is
unmerited favor;
rewards are always
merited.**

Will Every Christian Inherit The Kingdom?

We wish to place on record our solemn conviction that not all who are Christians or think themselves to be such, will attain to that resurrection of which St. Paul speaks in Phil. 3:12.

- Hudson Taylor

This is quite a startling statement coming from a man who is widely regarded as one of the greatest evangelists who ever trod the missionary fields. But, we believe it's truth can hardly be refuted upon careful examination of the scriptures. Ministers and ministries have for centuries perpetuated the doctrine—that all Christians will be in the kingdom—that all will rule and reign with Christ—that all will be a part of the bride of Christ—and that there are no after-death consequences to a careless Christian life.

Calvinists and Arminians have fostered their own versions of this teaching in their unresolved debate which has led to divisions and sub-divisions in the body of Christ which are an abomination to the Lord, and a source of mockery for unbelievers.

Scandals, doctrinal disputes, and political agendas in the body of Christ have shifted the attention of believers and unbelievers away from the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and have raised a near insurmountable barrier to the message of hope to a dying world. Our cry of "Repent!" to that dying world is so tainted with our own sins, that they mock the hypocrisy of the messengers and disregard the message. We are told that we are not even to try to remove the speck from our brother's eye, without first removing the log from our own (Matt. 6:5). So, how can we point the finger of accusation at the unbeliever, while wallowing in our own sins? At times, we seem to take more delight in "rescuing" an unborn baby *into* a corrupt and sinful world than we do of rescuing a hopeless sinner *out of* that world.

It is time that the message to the church should be, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!", for there are scriptural warnings to *Christians* of the dire consequences of unrepented sins in our lives, and of slothful service in the stewardship assigned to us. To deny, or subvert those warnings is to allow the church to disregard the very truth which is given to deliver it from the perils.

Salvation is a free gift

Nothing can rob us of the joy and wonder of the grace of God, through which we gained reconciliation with our heavenly Father through His Son, "*for by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast.*" (Eph 2:8-

9). There is no saving merit in works, and without the recognition of the hopelessness of depending upon *our* works for our justification, there is no salvation. But when, in that hopelessness, we acknowledged our need for a Saviour, then He who worked for our redemption, imputed His own righteousness to us, by grace through faith in Him. Our salvation, founded on God's mercy, was totally unmerited.

Everything that is written here is predicated on that unchangeable truth.

God's rewards are earned

For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and then He shall reward every man according to his work.

Matthew 16:27

Most assuredly, God gives salvation as a free gift, totally unmerited, but, His praise, blessings, and rewards are *never unmerited*.

The grace of God and the enabling power of the Holy Spirit, far from making us immune from responsibility, instead, deepen our responsibility to live a life of obedience and righteousness in Christ. "*For we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body according to what he has done, whether good or bad.*" (2 Cor. 5:10). Eternal life is by grace through faith. Rewards are the recompense for deeds, good or bad, done *after* saving faith. "*And behold I come quickly, and my reward is with Me to give to every man according to his work.*" (Rev 22:12).

Some will protest, "It is wrong to be motivated by rewards; our motivation should only be our love for Him". And we know that Jesus said, "*If you love me you will keep my commandments*" (John 14:15). There can be no greater or purer stimulus. But so long as we have the flesh to contend with, fear of punishment, and hope for reward can be an effective provocation to good deeds. Indeed, these stimuli—hope and fear—are totally consistent with God's nature.

Most assuredly, there is no profit in good deeds emanating from wrong motivation, for they are no more than wood, hay, and straw, and shall be burned up (1 Cor. 3:12, 15). Compliance with religious rules which are imposed upon us, may well produce only an appearance of spirituality without substance—the Pharisaism and the hypocrisy which Jesus abhorred. But self discipline can be profitable for godliness (1 Tim. 4:7-8) when our purpose is to better know and please the Lord.

To disdain the seeking of rewards as an incentive for service, rather than being motivated *only* by our love for Christ, is to reject the very incentive that He has placed before us at His own pleasure. If our loving Father chooses to offer us rewards, dare we to reckon them with anything but the highest regard?

For reward is merely the tangible expression of the approval of God, and we may no more deny Him the pleasure of expressing that approval than we need abjure it for ourselves. He who despises a throne despises Him who confers the throne. It was one of our Lord's rebukes of the Pharisees, -"The glory that cometh from the only God ye seek not" (John 5:44). [Panton]

God is a rewarder of those who seek Him (Heb 11:6) and no contradiction exists in the acknowledgement that He rewards good works—provided we understand that only those who have obtained eternal life gratuitously, qualify for those rewards.

**Grace is unmerited favor;
Rewards are always merited.
Grace is a free gift; Rewards are wages.
Grace is without money and without price;
Rewards cost labor and sacrifice.
Grace looks to God's faithfulness;
Rewards look to the believer's faithfulness.
Grace places us on the race course;
Rewards lure us to "so run."
Grace introduces us into the games;
Rewards urge us to "so fight."
Grace says, "Not by deeds of righteousness which we have done"; Reward says,
"Well done thou good and faithful servant..."**

- R.E. Neighbour

God Is a Punisher

Perhaps, it would sound less abrasive to say that God is a "chastener", but it may well be that the word "punisher" has a shock value that is needed today to awaken us from our lethargy.

Who among us has not read Leviticus 26:14-39 without being awed by the severity of the punishment God promised to bring upon the nation of Israel if they disobeyed Him. And who has not been sobered by the biblical accounts of God's fulfilment of that promise? What would cause us to believe that our disobedience would be overlooked or tolerated?

If God rewards good works, then what is there of His nature and attributes which would cause

us to view it as inconsistent or unfair for Him to recompense His children by punishment for our unrepented bad deeds, or our slothful service?

"For he who does wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done, and that without partiality" (Col. 3:24-25). The attempts to mollify the text of some of its weight by suggesting that the consequences are accounted in this life only, satisfies neither the substance, nor the intent of it, **"for there is nothing in the text or context to lead the reader to think other than that while the sowing is here, the reaping is hereafter"** [Panton]. That this is evident is substantiated by the verses which immediately precede it, *"Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than men; knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve"* (Col. 3:23-24). Notwithstanding the fact that there is, in this life, a discipline to which the Lord subjects His children (Heb. 12:7), it does not negate the future consequences, good or bad, which shall accrue to us, contingent upon our response to that discipline. There is a future reward to be attained; there is a future punishment to be avoided.

Consider the warning in the parable of the two debtors in Matthew 18:21-35. Of the one who had been forgiven his debt by his master, but who refused to forgive the debt of his fellow slave, Jesus said, *"And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him."* Then He follows with these shocking and solemn words. *"So shall My heavenly Father also do to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from his heart."* (Matt. 18:34-35).

It is obvious that the Lord severely punishes the unforgiving saint—but when and where? In this life? Most certainly, for He tells us, that He disciplines those whom He loves (Hebrews 12:5-8). But suppose the Lord's child does not profit from His Father's discipline? Suppose he continues in His evil way? Then he shall be chastened in the life beyond, *"For we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body according to what he has done, whether good or bad."* (2 Cor. 5:10), and thus speaking to the saints in Corinth, the apostle Paul adds, *"Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men..."* (2 Cor. 5:11).

What "fear of the Lord" has the average Christian who has been taught that every believer shall inherit a crown and rule with Him in His kingdom? Pastors who are perplexed and frustrated by the apathy and complacency of their congregation, need to examine their own teaching.

What dangerous folly, to assign to Israel all of the warnings and punishments of scripture, while allotting to believers, rewards, blessings, and promises only.

Caanan and the kingdom

A striking analogy may be seen in the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt into the promised land; to the Christian's deliverance and the promise of the inheritance of the kingdom.

Were not all of Israel, God's "firstborn"? (Ex. 4:22) And was not the final plague in Egypt, the sentence of death to all of the "firstborn" in Egypt? (Ex. 11:4-5) But, to those who put the blood of an unblemished lamb on their doorposts, the Lord promised to pass over their house and that no plague would befall them (Ex 12).

In like manner, we are all condemned to death until we have been covered by the blood of the unblemished Lamb of God. And **"In that moment,... when Christ's blood rises up between my soul and Jehovah,...it is regeneration, the beginning of a new and divine life,...In that moment, when I have consciously appropriated Calvary, I leave the world in spirit, and start travelling home to God".** [Panton] Our life in Christ begins with the putting on of the blood.

The analogy does not end there. They were told to eat of the flesh of the lamb (Ex 12:8) just as we are told to eat the flesh of the Son of Man (John 6:53). Then the Lord commanded them to remove the leaven from their houses (Ex 12:15) *after* the blood was applied, *after* they had partaken of the lamb. In like manner, *after* we have put on the blood, *after* we have partaken of Christ, we are commanded to *"Clean out the old leaven,.....For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed"* (1 Cor.5:7). For who, but the one who has been regenerated, partaken of Christ, and received the Spirit of God, has the power to overcome sin in his life?

However, God's promise to the Israelites did not terminate with their deliverance from Egypt. They were to enter Caanan and inherit, and possess, and rule the land which God had promised to Abraham and his descendants. But, because of their unwillingness to trust God to deliver the enemy into their hands and bring them into the land, they lost their promised inheritance. Of all of the men who had seen His glory and His signs, only Joshua and Caleb were allowed to enter the land. *But, God never sent them back to Egypt.* They forfeited their inheritance, but not their deliverance from Egypt.

Can Christians, in like manner, forfeit God's intended inheritance and rewards? Govett believed so, writing, **"The disobedient saint will lose the future reality as surely as Israel lost the past type. For we have to do with the same God, who after having made them His people, and sustained them by mercies, justly demanded of them, a life of obedience"**. And, if God saw fit to punish their disobedience by denying them entrance

into the promised land, and causing their corpses to fall in the wilderness (Num. 14:32-33), why would it be unjust, or inconsistent with His nature, for Him to punish our disobedience by denying us entrance into His millennial kingdom?

That the analogy does exist is clearly shown by the the apostle Paul in his second epistle to the Corinthians:

Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.

Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.

Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.

Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.

Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.

Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

-1 Corinthians 10:1-11

Let us pay careful attention to the point that Paul is making to believers. *"all were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses; and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink"....."but with many of them, God was not well pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness."*

Are we to believe that "all of the numbered men from twenty years old and upward" (Num.14:29) who died in the wilderness were all unsaved? Had they not died on the right side of the blood? We see from Psalm 106 that — He saved them (vs 8)—He led them (vs 9)—He redeemed them (vs 10)—they believed Him (vs 12). Yet, they were denied entrance into the land because they forgot Him (vs

21)—they did not listen (vs 25)—they provoked Him to anger with their deeds (vs 29)—they became unclean in their practices (vs 39).

They lost their privilege of ruling and reigning in the land, under God, because of their deeds and practices. We believe that Christians are also in danger of losing their privilege of ruling and reigning with Christ in His millennial kingdom, because of their deeds and practices.

Punishment for slothfulness

"And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more."

Luke 12:47-48

Those who would propose that believers shall not incur any punishment—rather, only affectionate discipline for their training and correction, should take careful heed to the gravity of our Lord's declarations in Luke 12. It is not the *possession* of the talents that determined the reward or punishment of the servants, it was their *use* of them. A believer who stands before the judgement seat of Christ with no more than what he had at conversion can expect to receive a like recompense.

Some will argue, "Surely, *that servant* who beat the slaves, was an unbeliever", though no such suggestion is implied by the parable. Far from being a comparison of two *different* servants, what is portrayed, is a change of mind in the *same* servant, showing the recompense of either good or bad stewardship. If the third servant were an unsaved individual, his works could in no way, and on no ground, be even considered for acceptance.

When Jesus said, "*You too, be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect*", Peter asked, "*Lord, are you addressing this parable to us, or to everyone else as well?*" That Jesus statement implied both a general warning to all believers, and a specific warning to the apostles, is confirmed in His answer in verses 47 and 48. The apostles, having received much, would have greater responsibility and accountability, while he who did not know the master's will and committed deeds worthy of a few stripes, will receive a few. It is not uncommon that many who teach on these parables, do so with the presupposition that the references to punishment are references to eternal damnation. They then conclude that the unfaithful servant must, therefore, have been an unbeliever. However, even

a cursory study of God's dealings with His people, will prove this to be an unwarranted assumption. God does punish His people.

Others will contend that the parable shows that the unfaithful servant was a believer who lost his salvation. But, that would make our salvation contingent upon service, and deny the completed work of Christ on the cross.

Perhaps, an even more graphic analogy is drawn by the Lord in the parable of Luke 19. For here, He says "*A certain nobleman went to a distant country to receive a kingdom for himself and then return*". Then, after relating the tasks which the nobleman assigned to his slaves, He continues, "*But his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him saying, 'We do not want this man to reign over us.'*" The distinction between the "slaves" [believers] and the "citizens" [unbelievers], in this parable, is clear. The slaves were rewarded or punished for their degree of service. The citizens who rejected the nobleman were brought to him, and slain in his presence.

The difficulties which the parable presents to both the Calvinist and the Arminian theologies are resolved only by trying to force the scriptures to say something that they do not.

To assume that the absence of works is evidence of an unregenerate spirit, is to negate the warnings to *Christians* concerning the consequences of our disobedience to the commands of the Lord Jesus Christ.

To assume that it is our eternal life which is at risk, for failing to attain to the holiness which Christ desires of every believer, is to add to the gospel of grace, the necessity of our works. "**If the security of the saved depends on service, what limit of toll is necessary to preserve it? If a serving believer must serve to be saved, how much must he serve? Can service save one who is already saved? God places salvation before, and not after "good works".** [R.E. Neighbour]

The misconception that works, or a holy life, are the necessary or inevitable result of justification, gives rise to the probability of making judgements or comparisons. The danger of making such judgements or comparisons is that it tends to elevate God's standard for others, while lowering it for ourselves.

For example, we are offended by the immoral conduct of Christians, particularly when such conduct is exposed by unbelievers and flaunted as an indictment against Christianity. And so, we "defend the faith" by saying to non-Christians, and even to ourselves, "Surely, he is no Christian." "No Christian", we adamantly protest, "could do such a thing."

But, how often have the accusers looked at a woman (man) to lust after her (him) in their heart,

and thus, according to Jesus, committed adultery with her in his heart (Matt. 5:27)?

Do they, therefore, ponder in their heart, "Surely, I am no Christian, for no Christian would do such a thing"? No, instead we compare ourself with the immoral person and not with the standard of Christ.

And what guarantee has the Christian that he too will not fall into such conduct tomorrow, or next week, or next month, or next year?

Our justification is not preceded by, nor dependent upon, works as a determinant of justification. **This is the Scriptural denial of the doctrine that eternal salvation depends in part upon outward sanctification, so that no one can be assured of salvation until he has persevered in holiness to the end of life. [Lang]**

We are, most assuredly, told to judge those in the church, but it is not their salvation that we are judging; it is their conduct. And Jesus said that the church's decision to expel one from fellowship is bound in heaven as well as upon earth (Matt. 18:17-18). And so, the sinner who is justifiably cast out of the church, and remains unrepentant, will also be excluded from the fellowship of overcomers in the millennial kingdom—not from eternal life. God, alone, may exclude from eternal life, the one who rejects His only begotten Son.

The Kingdom - present or future?

The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed: nor will people say, "Here it is!" or, "There it is!" because the kingdom of God is within you.

- Luke 17:21

Some will use this verse to confirm their assertion that "salvation", "eternal life", and "the kingdom" are synonymous—that we appropriate the kingdom when we receive Christ—therefore, the kingdom is present. And we would agree that when we receive Christ, we receive the King, therefore, *in a spiritual sense*, we do have the kingdom "within us". However, it must be observed that Jesus' statement was made in response to a question put to Him by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom was coming. Like every Jew they were awaiting the fulfillment of the prophecies of Daniel, Isaiah, and Ezekiel concerning that kingdom. But, certainly, Jesus was not telling these Pharisees that the kingdom of God was within them. Some translators, recognizing such a contradiction, have rendered the word "entos" (Gr.) "in the midst of you", rather than "within you".

But, perhaps, the passage is better understood in the context of Robert Govett's explanation.

"In the above words, our Lord refers to the necessary Internal preparation of the soul, without which, Inquiry into the outward and future kingdom was but curious folly. But this was a reply only to the cavalier and ungodly, not to His believing people. To them, in the next verses, He proceeds to speak of it as future and visible, declaring that at His return he would blaze forth in majesty filling from end to end the sky, like the lightning."

Another writer states:

For the kingdom of God, "in a spiritual sense," was not in the hearts of the Pharisees; on the contrary, they were foes of Christ, and had neither part nor lot in the matter.

We must, therefore, adopt the marginal rendering, "among you," or, "in the midst of you," which will be an expression analogous to "There standeth One among you" (John 1:26).

Aided by this correction, we shall quickly perceive the meaning which the Lord's answer is intended to convey. Do you, He says, inquire concerning the Kingdom of God? It will never come as you expect it: and when its first manifestation does take place, the circumstances will altogether preclude men from saying, Lo, here! or, Lo, there! You are looking for an outbreak of rebellion against the Romans, in this locality, or in that, and for the appearance of some great military chieftain to be your Messiah. You imagine that he will lead you on from victory to victory, and that, although your sins are still upon you, the prophecy will nevertheless be fulfilled; "Five of you shall chase an hundred, and an hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight: and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword." And so you think that you will continue to rejoice as you behold the irresistible progress of the Kingdom, until at last, though drunken with that pride which ever goes before destruction, you become masters of the world. You are altogether mistaken: you will never see anything approaching to such an ideal. Nor is it possible that the Kingdom should be discovered by such watching as yours: for even now it is in the midst of you, and yet with all your observations you have failed to perceive it. [Pember]

Only those whose hearts are fixed on Christ have the ability to understand, for Jesus said, *"The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them"* (Matt. 13:11). It behooves us to seek to understand these mysteries and, not lapse into the Pharisaical attitude that every Christian is going to inherit that kingdom. Scripture is replete with the announcements of a coming kingdom.

Daniel foretold of it —*"until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgement in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom"....."Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the most high. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey Him."* Dan. 7:22, 27)

Isaiah—*"Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this."* Isa. 9:7

John—*"And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years."* Rev. 20:4

The apostles asked of Jesus. *"Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?"* (Acts 1:6). That there is a future kingdom, is beyond any doubt.

"The kingdom asserts itself on earth in two chief stages; the present, a spiritual, in Christ obtaining His lordship in the hearts of men by their free and saving consent; the other future, when He shall come in power and great glory; but it is one kingdom." [Lang]

Disqualification

Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.

1 Corinthians 9:26-27

What was it that the apostle Paul was so intent upon keeping, while acknowledging that it could be lost? His salvation? No, not his eternal life, but rather those *"things that accompany salvation"* (Heb. 6:9); his rewards, his crown. Only at the end of his life did Paul express his assurance by stating, *"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord will award me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing"* (2 Tim 4:7-8).

A crown is a symbol of rulership, and as a faithful servant of the gospel, Paul *earned* his crown and the privilege of ruling and reigning with Christ. *"If we endure, we shall also reign with Him"* (2 Tim. 2:12). A crown, not imputed, but "earned". It is an "award". *"Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt"* (Rom. 4:4). Yet, not the award to every Christian but only those who run the race, keep the faith, finish the course. For, *"if we deny Him, He will also deny us"* (2 Tim. 2:12).

Just as man is not coerced into redemption by grace, neither is he compelled to obedience and faithfulness by it. The believer's justification by faith places him in the family of God. Yet, this conversion is by no means a guarantee of future faithfulness, although it is indicative of his ability to now be faithful. He can run the race. And, if he runs according to the rules, he can win. He can win the prize, the crown, the rewards. The believer's conversion experience simply enters him into the race; a race in which losing is not only a possibility, but is, without a concerted effort on his part, a tragic possibility. We must run the race in such a way as to win. We must, like Paul, *"press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus"* (Phil. 3:14).

The Out-Resurrection

That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His suffering, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained it, or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which I was also laid hold of by Christ Jesus. - Philippians 3:10-12

That there is a resurrection from the dead, is a basic tenet of Christian theology. *"I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies, and every one who lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"* (John 11:25-26). But this resurrection, of which Jesus here speaks, is not one to be "attained to", for

this is a resurrection already laid hold of by every one who has believed on the Lord Jesus Christ for his salvation. For Paul, and for every believer, that is a certainty. That Paul would have had any doubts of this resurrection is absurd.

But what is the resurrection to which Paul "pressed on" to attain? It is a repetition of the words of the Lord in Luke 20:35, "*they are accounted worthy to attain to that age, and the resurrection from among the dead.*" Is it possible for a Christian not to attain it? Evidently Paul believed so, and it was this resurrection of which Hudson Taylor wrote, "**We wish to place on record our solemn conviction that not all who are Christians or think themselves to be such, will attain to that resurrection of which St. Paul speaks in Phil. 3:12**"

Resurrection [anastasis] from out of the dead [ek-nekron] was the assurance of every believer (1 Cor. 15:20-23). But, here, Paul is talking about an "out resurrection" [ek-anastasis] from out of the dead [ek-nekron], a resurrection he sought after with a zealous fervor expressed in his words:

But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.

Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;

if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.

Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus

Phil. 3:7-14

Nowhere else in scripture is our resurrection from the dead viewed as a reward to be achieved. And nowhere else in scripture is the word "anastasis" [resurrection] used with the prefix "ek" [out of]. The apostle Paul definitely speaks of the "out" resurrection as a prize, and not as a gift.

For Paul, there were some things to be accomplished in his life in order to attain to that resurrection. It was not just "receiving" Christ that consumed Paul. It was "gaining Christ", it was "being found in Him", it was "knowing Him and the power of His resurrection"; it was "knowing the fellowship of His sufferings"; it was "being conformed to His death". These are the things which Paul counted as his only gain. These things he did in order to attain to that "out resurrection".

Overcomers

In chapters 2 and 3 of the book of Revelation, there are seven promises "*to him that overcometh*".

1. *To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.* - Rev. 2:7
2. *He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.* - Rev. 2:11
3. *To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.* - Rev. 2:17
4. *He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.* - Rev. 2:26-27
5. *He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.* - Rev. 3:5
6. *Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.* - Rev. 3:12
7. *To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.* - Rev. 3:21

That such glorious promises have been made to Christians, should stir the heart of every believer and cause us to diligently strive to appropri-

ate those promises. Some will contend that all Christians are overcomers, "For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith" (1 John 5:4) and that no conditions are indicated, except our faith.

It is, indeed, reprehensible for us to place conditions on God's promises, when He Himself places none. But it is equally blameworthy and untenable to ignore those conditions where they do exist. A careful examination of the passages will confirm that there are prerequisites to receiving the blessings proffered "to him that overcometh".

1. *Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.* - Rev. 2:5
2. *Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.* - Rev. 2:10
3. *Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.* - Rev. 2:16
4. *But that which ye have already hold fast till I come.* - Rev. 2:25
5. *Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.* - Rev. 3:2
6. *Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.* - Rev. 3:11
7. *As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.* - Rev. 3:19

The Lord Jesus Christ has offered to us, an incredible opportunity to sit with Him on His throne, to have authority over the nations, and to rule them with an iron scepter. But, in order to do so, we must respond to the warning "to repent", "to be watchful", "to hold fast"....."that no man take thy crown."

The church today is basking in the illusion that "being born again" is the ultimate goal of the preaching of the gospel. But a thorough investigation of the ministry of Jesus, and of the apostles, clearly shows that regeneration is simply the prelude to the intimate relationship He desires to have with us. But, it is a relationship we must seek.

Faith in Christ imputes righteousness and sonship. However, such a position does not foreordain an overcoming earthly pilgrimage. "Peter,

concluding his ministry, addressed those who had obtained a like precious faith with himself in the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:1-11); to whom had been granted the precious and exceeding great promises of God, with the view that they might not only have the *life* of God (which every believer has immediately upon faith in Christ), but also might become partakers of the divine nature." [Lang]

But in order for this to become fact, we are told to apply diligence to our faith and supply moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness and love (2 Peter 1:5-7) in order that we may not stumble and forfeit our entrance into that kingdom. And by availing ourselves of His grace, we can attain and increase in these qualities, making certain about His calling and choosing us (2 Peter 1:10) for the crown of righteousness (2 Tim. 4:8).

Some have contended that by Peter's exhortation to gain "abundant entrance into the kingdom", he is admonishing unbelievers to obtain eternal life. But this is easily disproved.

"No true preacher of the gospel would say to unregenerate men, "If ye do these things, you will secure eternal life," for that is the "free gift of God" (Rom.6:23), "a righteousness of God apart from the law" (Rom 3:21). But addressing *believers*, as above noted, and referring to the matter of their calling to glory, Peter distinctly puts the issue upon the ground of works, saying, "If ye do these things, ye shall never stumble : for *thus* will entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ be abundantly supplied to you." [Lang]

Believers must apply all diligence to their faith in order to enter the kingdom.

The reformation brought to light the dogma of salvation by grace through faith, not as a result of works (Eph 2:8-9) and as a consequence, the encouragement of "works" in the life of a believer has been almost held in disdain by some proponents of that basic tenet of Christianity. And faith takes on a sort of sacred aura which demands nothing of us except to simply "rest" in it.

This erroneous attitude toward works is aptly expressed by Robert Govett who stated:

The fear of being led into Romish error has too much kept Christ's ministers from proclaiming the duty of good works; and from enforcing them with the motives which God has attached to the duty. Put good works as the way to justification, and the means of earning eternal life, and 'tis deadly doctrine. But speak of them as God's demand from those

already justified, and possessors of eternal life; and there is no danger. Nay, it is necessary that they should be enforced. [Govett]

The Responsibility of Church Leaders

According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.

For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;

Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.

If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

1 Corinthians 3:10-15

Those who preach and teach will be held accountable for how they build on the foundation. That foundation, which is Christ, is laid in the great fundamental tenet of justification. But the apostle Paul's caution, "take heed", is directed, not to that foundational truth, about which, all Christians agree, but rather, to the subordinate doctrines of the faith. James reiterates that warning, "*Let not many of you become teachers, knowing that as such we shall incur a stricter judgement*" (James 3:1), for if ministers teach others to think wrongly and act wrongly, what will be the magnitude of the consequences of such teaching?

That such a danger exists, is evidenced by the fact that godly, sincere men have arrived at diverse and directly opposing viewpoints, accompanied by their assurance that, "the scriptures are my only source of truth", and that "I have prayerfully labored long and hard in arriving at my doctrinal beliefs". But assertions of diligence and sincerity are no guarantee of truth, for not all doctrines preached by converted and conscientious men are true. And the judgement incurred by those who teach will be based on the inexorable test of the One who searches the heart and mind without prejudice. Then, "**the vain arguments by which he sought to justify his doctrine in his own mind and to others, will be dissipated in a moment. Nothing but the Lord's truth will stand the day of the Lord.**" [Govett]

Hear and consider the words of one minister of the gospel, who recognized and acknowledged the danger of erroneous teaching.

Some do not "rightly divide" the word of truth and have taken for granted, that whatever professors of divinity taught, and your denomination holds, must needs be true. Have we tested, by scripture, the doctrine of which our structure is composed? Or have we received them in the lump, by tradition? Such being the responsibility of those who minister the gospel, how diligently, my fellow ministers, should we scrutinize our doctrine?"

The real causes of most, or of all false doctrine, are sinful. The eye of the teacher is not single. He will rather teach what is for his present interests, than that which is well pleasing to God. Some are deterred from examining the Word of God by sloth; some, by fear of censure, are kept back from proclaiming what they see on its pages; some by the perception, that to preach the doctrines there set forth would lead to loss of worldly standing, or of money; some are guided wholly by human authority; neglecting the divine. But are not these, and similar reasons, worthy of rebuke. [Govett]

A well known radio evangelist recently said, "One of the greatest marks of maturity in the Christian life is the ability to agree to disagree." Such a noble sounding statement is consistent with the instruction of Romans 14, if stated with respect to our diverse preferences concerning issues such as—how often we break bread—whether to use wine or juice at communion—whether or not we use musical instruments. But, apply it to church doctrine, and it is blatantly unscriptural, for it justifies the disunity which the apostle Paul so strongly forbids.

Paul said, "*Now I exhort you brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree, and there be no divisions among you, but you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgement*" (1 Cor. 1:10).

No such command of scripture is ever given arbitrarily. In the same letter, Paul wrote, "*If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment*" (1 Cor. 14:37).

Truth, not tolerance, is the bond of unity. Denominational and non-denominational divisions are expressly forbidden by the word of God and those who perpetuate them should take heed of the Saviour's warning, "*Not every one who says to Me,*

'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21).

If it is the Father's will that there be no divisions among us, dare we even suggest, "Let there be divisions among us"?

"Take heed what you build!"

Hindrances to truth

To deny the possibility of all Christians being of the same mind and same judgement on doctrinal issues, is to deny the power of enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, and the grace of God, to accomplish in us, what we cannot accomplish in ourselves. All of the exhortations of ministers for us to "love one another", to "trust in God", to "increase in faith"—are but meaningless rhetoric in light of their own refusal to resolve their disagreements and tenaciously cling to their divisive attitudes. Few are willing to admit the possibility of error in their own position. Few are willing to give up a doctrine they have once asserted. Such a confession of previous error, and the profession of an opposite doctrine, requires a rare humility and a willingness to submit to the possibility of loss of repute, and for some, the loss of ministry. But all such things are better than loss before Christ.

I suppose that no truth is more meaningful to us, than that which is sought after, and received in the confines of our private time with the Lord, — whether in prayer or in the study of His word. What special meaning we derive when, in response to our prayer for wisdom and understanding, we hear His voice, "*This is the way; walk ye in it*" (Isa. 30:21). No, not an audible voice, but that undeniable knowledge, emanating from the Holy Spirit, and penetrating to the very depths of our heart and mind and spirit; so that we know that we know. "*But you have an anointing from the Holy one, and all of you know the truth. As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit — just as it has taught you, remain in him*" (1John 2:20-27). God is capable of privately revealing His truth to us.

But, we also recognize that He "*gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ*" (Eph. 4:11) and most of our convictions are going to be based upon the teaching we receive, and our attitude toward the teacher. However, not all who are pastors and teachers in the church today have been given to us by God and, unfortunately, the doctrinal beliefs of most Christians are often founded upon their unquestioning acceptance of the opinions of their

pastors and teachers, rather than the objective study of the word of God.

In the early church years, when disputes arose, they would "*go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning the issue*" (Acts 15:2). But, since we have no such council in Jerusalem today, what are *we* to do when disputes arise? Which of the countless number of theological boards and councils that exist in the church today will be able to settle the dispute to the satisfaction of all? Do not the debaters seem more intent upon dogmatically defending their own position, rather than seeking the oneness of mind and judgement which Christ commanded. And though none would claim infallibility, do not all express an attitude of inerrancy in their particular theological positions—again, with their assurance that the bible is their only source of truth—and that they have arrived at that position, only after having prayerfully and diligently studied the subject in question.

"But," some will argue, "are these not sufficient criteria to determine whether or not we have arrived at truth?" To which we would answer, "No, they are not." For one need only to observe that men reach diametrically *opposing* viewpoints, while making identical declarations of sincerity and diligence.

It is not this outward expression of sincerity and diligence which is evidence of truth, "*For the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart*" (1 Sam 16:7). It is with the inner desire of a heart yielded to the Lord that a man must seek God's truth "*And ye shall seek Me, and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart*" (Jer. 29:13). Who, but one with a heart for that truth, can say, "It matters not that I should find my convictions to be in error and have to change them. It matters only that I may know God's truth and resolve to seek to follow Him with all of my heart and with all of my soul".

But all too often, the quest is not to seek the Lord and His truth, but rather, to seek the interests of "my ministry", "my church", "my denomination"; even to the denial of the witness of the Holy Spirit to that truth.

Augustine said:

For I suppose no man who understands what is written, and believes it to be communicated by the supreme and true God through holy men, refuses to yield and consent to these declarations, whether he orally confesses his consent, or is from some evil influence ashamed or afraid to do so; or even, with an opinionativeness closely resembling madness, makes strenuous efforts to defend what he knows and believes to be

false against what he knows and believes to be true.

Strong words, to be sure. But is it anything less than madness which would compel a minister of the word of God to willfully deny the indisputable conviction of the Holy Spirit, and knowingly continue in error or doubt. The cost of change can be high to one who raises questions about the validity of his denomination's doctrine. And those who secretly and anxiously weigh that cost before they would objectively consider and investigate the validity of opposing viewpoints, have no problem conjuring up scriptural "proof" with which to refute them. But no faulty "proof" will sustain them in the Lord's presence. And, how much greater loss—that of losing their crown and the privilege of ruling and reigning with Christ. Instead of receiving that blessed benediction, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant", they shall shrink back in shame".

Let us pay careful attention to the exhortation, "*Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown*" (Rev. 3:11). Do we need some lengthy theological discourse to explain what the Lord has said so clearly? He is coming again to rule and reign on this earth for 1000 years. For those who would rule and reign with Him, there is a crown to be won. But, that crown can be lost! There is something to which we must hold fast, in order that it may not be lost.

"It was Phillip Mauro who many years ago said, 'We greatly fear the consequences of the tendency observable in certain quarters to treat the millennial kingdom of the Son as a thing of little interest to the saints of God.'" The coming reign of Christ is the climactic event of the ages pertaining to man in relation to this present earth. All scripture, after some fashion, moves toward this event; and to ignore this fact can only prove detrimental to any sound method of Biblical study." [Chitwood]

There remains, an obvious and legitimate question to be addressed. Do we consider ourselves, or the men we quote, any less susceptible to error? By no means. And what we present here is offered for your consideration with the acknowledgment of such a possibility, and with a resolve to earnestly consider any scriptural rebuttal. But, we too wish to go on record as being in agreement with the statement of Hudson Taylor, with which we began this writing. **"that not all who are Christians or think themselves to be such, will attain to that resurrection of which St. Paul speaks in Phil. 3:12"**.

It is little wonder that this doctrine hasn't gained popular acceptance in the church. We don't like to hear that we are expected to "run a race"—that we are "to buffet our body and make it our slave"—that we may be "weeping and gnashing our teeth" outside of the wedding feast—that we could miss out on the first resurrection—that we could miss out on the millennial kingdom—that only "through much tribulation" shall we enter it.

We would much rather hear—that we shall all be in the kingdom—all will have part in the first resurrection—all will have a crown—all will rule and reign with Christ—and that there are no after-death consequences to a careless Christian life. The apostle Paul warned, "*For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves, teachers in accordance to their own desires; and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.*" (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

Unfortunately, we have become the lethargic "Laodicean" church which says "*I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing*", but God says, "*You do not know that you are poor and blind and naked*" (Rev. 3:17). Let us be warned, and heed what the Lord is saying to us, "*I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire, that you may become rich, and white garments, that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and eyesalve to anoint your eyes, that you may see.*" (Rev. 3:18)

It is our sincere hope and prayer, that having read and considered what we have expressed here, your heart will be stirred to greater obedience and service to our Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall one day attain the crown of righteousness reserved for those who have loved His appearing.

And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.

I Corinthians 9:25

The Layman's Perspective is a publication of the *a.m.* Group. For additional information write Charles Miller or Charles Vanasse, P.O. Box 3554, Lawrence, KS. 66047.

The purpose of the publication is to express our concern for doctrinal issues confronting Christians today. We consider any hierarchical system which separates the body of Christ into classes, to be unscriptural, and we use the term "layman" only in reference to what has become the generally accepted usage to differentiate between the "clergy" and "layman" in the church. Although we are firm in our convictions, we are not "locked-in" to any doctrinal belief about which Christians disagree. We exhort any Christian who disagrees with any of our views, to refute with sound doctrine anything which they believe to be in contradiction to the teachings of the word of God. We will gladly answer or print your comments and scriptural refutation.