

Index of Articles:	Page
Mephibosheth	1
Feast of Unleavened Bread	2
He is Lord of all, pt 2	4
Cry of the Suffering Christ	5
Importance of Obedience	8
Rules for Self-examination	10
Faithful Men	10

## Mephibosheth

James Brown

When we think of Jonathan's son, Mephibosheth, I suspect many of us limit ourselves to the 2 Samuel 9 story of Mephibosheth's good fortune of being spared by David according to his oath with Jonathan (1 Samuel 20). This story has been used often to proclaim various tenets of the gospel: (1) his being lame on his feet suggesting a sinner's helplessness to save himself, (2) his being under a death sentence (as is every child of Adam's race – Romans 5:12) relative to the Gibeonite demand that seven of Saul's descendants be given over to them (2 Samuel 21:1-9), and most notably, (3) The crowning touch of this redemption story merges David's mercy to protect Mephibosheth from a certain extermination request together with his grace. This was by allowing him to sit at his table for the rest of his days and enjoy the possession of Saul's properties and Ziba's care for the land and for him personally. But Mephibosheth's story does not end there.

When David's son, Absalom, elevated himself with those words, "Oh, that I were made judge in the land..." (2 Samuel 15:4), he echoed the vile self-assessment and agenda of Lucifer noted in Isaiah 14:12-14, while also undermining the rightful rule and judgments of the king, his own father. He further dishonored David by feigning spiritual exercise in vs. 7-12 of 2 Samuel 15, but instead, sending out spies as he plotted, then executed a full-scale rebellion. As a result, David fled Jerusalem and remained there in exile even for some time after news of Absalom's death.

While David was in exile, Mephibosheth's servant, Ziba, visited him. The short exchange between them noted in 2 Samuel 16:1-4 sets the stage for a later meeting between David and Mephibosheth that is recorded in 2 Samuel 19:24-30, as David returned to Jerusalem after his son's rebellion against him was terminated. Notice in 2 Samuel 16:1-2 how Ziba softened David with gifts. Solomon would one day write of such a man in Proverbs 29:4-5, proactively pacifying the gift receiver to blind him to a

deceptive agenda. In verse 3, Ziba related a pre-conceived slander against Mephibosheth, anticipating that David would ask about him. He accused him of abandoning David altogether. He cunningly and falsely quoted Mephibosheth as saying, "Today shall the house of Israel restore me the kingdom of my father". David's reply is puzzling. Without any further inquiry, likely incensed by what he perceives to be Mephibosheth's traitorous ingratitude, he relinquished to Ziba all the land he'd previously promised to Mephibosheth in 2 Samuel 9. One can surmise with a fair degree of certainty that David's reaction was exactly what Ziba was hoping for. Two great questions arise here. Had Ziba previously proven himself so trustworthy in the past that David would take his word so readily? And was David so far from knowing the character of Mephibosheth that he was willing to nullify his oath with him without suspecting something was wrong with Ziba's slanderous report?

Moving forward in time, while David was in exile, Absalom was slain (ch. 18) and the rebellion was then put down, which allowed David to finally return to Jerusalem. Against the backdrop of Ziba's betrayal of Mephibosheth, we are now privileged to witness the exceptional man that Mephibosheth really was. 2 Samuel 19:24-30 tells a wonderful story of a redeemed man whose devotion to his "redeemer" is quite noteworthy. He approached David with a disheveled appearance, suggesting that he was miserable the entire time David was away because the truth was that, instead of Ziba's lie, he really loved David and yearned sorrowfully for his return as the rightful king. His humility and gratitude in David's presence was sincere, very closely mirroring his original acceptance of David's benevolence years before when he was given all that pertained to Saul and then later, when he was spared certain death. David seems to realize now that Ziba had terribly misrepresented Mephibosheth and that he truly was the good man he always knew him to be. David's reply, "Why speakest thou any more of thy matters?" seems to be expressing that he didn't need to hear more proof of his innocence, nor of Ziba's guilt of slander. David was convinced. As such, the proposed 50/50 property split was likely the only tenable solution he could offer since David had promised the entire sum of Saul's property to both men at different times, albeit, to one honorably and in good will, to the other, hastily, devoid of warranted further inquiry, and as the victim of his clever benefactor's deception.

What is most remarkable about this story is seen in v 30, that in spite of Ziba's slander and David's solution

of compromise, Mephibosheth shines in a way that every reader of this account does well to take note of. Mephibosheth had David's promise in his "legal arsenal", entitling him to hold David to full reinstatement of Saul's property. But he chose not to, taking much higher moral ground. In today's world, sadly, demanding one's rights is the order of the day. In stark contrast, witness how wonderfully Mephibosheth represents the spirit of I Corinthians 6:7-8, by allowing himself to be defrauded rather than to insist upon vindication. What motivated him to show this kind of meekness? He was willing to give all the property over to Ziba for one reason: David had now returned to Jerusalem and reigned as king once again. To Mephibosheth, that's all that mattered; he could hardly be happier. We should pray, "Lord, make us willing, like Mephibosheth, to lightly esteem everything that the world calls 'having it all' in order to gain Christ, a far greater One than David". Mephibosheth may not have ever ex-

hibited the physical strength of Samson, the military prowess of David, the wisdom of Solomon, the faith of Elijah demonstrated in miraculous accomplishments, nor Daniel's marked tenacity of separation from Babylon's ways. However, we would be hard-pressed to find a more humble, grateful and devoted man to his king than Mephibosheth. He, like many others not listed in Hebrews 11, "the faith chapter" is an unsung hero of faith and worthy to emulate.

**Luke 12:15:** "...A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth".

**Hebrews 11:26:** Moses "esteemed the riches of Christ greater than the treasures of Egypt".

***It is a great thing to have the heart toned and tuned to take delight in the things God delights in.***

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Editors: Joel Portman & Jim Brown

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All Correspondence to: [mail@truthsforourday.com](mailto:mail@truthsforourday.com)

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## The Feast of Unleavened Bread

(Leviticus 23:6-8).

(Exodus 12:8, Exodus 13:1-10, 2Corinthians 5:7-8)

Larry Steers

The first feast, the Passover, was kept on the fourteenth day of the first month. On the fifteenth day of the same month was the feast of unleavened Bread. The children of Israel first kept the Passover in the land of Egypt the night of the mass exodus of the children of Israel from their captivity. The feast of unleavened bread was to last for seven days. However the first feast of unleavened bread had to be greatly abbreviated because of the urgency to vacate Egypt.

The Passover and the feast of unleavened bread were so closely associated that Luke in his Gospel identifies the feast of unleavened bread as the Passover. Luke writes, "Now the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh which is called the Passover" (Luke 22:1). It is important to notice as well that the first three feasts were to be observed on three successive days. The Passover was celebrated on the fourteenth, the feast of unleavened bread on the fifteenth and the feast of first fruits on the sixteenth and, all again in the first month.

We will notice that these three feasts typify truths for the believer today to take careful note of. The sacrificial lamb of the Passover reminds us so clearly of the death of Christ for sinners, and the redemption provided through the shedding of His precious blood.

The feast of unleavened bread speaks very clearly of the Holy Spirit working in the believer to live a holy life. The feast of first fruits, speaks of the saint of God enjoying the rich blessings that flow to him because a resurrected, glorified redeemer lives for them in heaven. When sin raises its ugly head in the life of the believer the joy of salvation is lost, the song of thanksgiving and worship disappears and precious time is wasted.

Leaven in the Word of God speaks of sin. In the bread dough it permeates the mass. Similarly, in the life of a child of God it works and spreads corruption. The first mention of leaven is in Genesis 19:3 where Abraham prepared unleavened bread as provision for the visitors who appeared at his tent. These guests observed the rampant sin of Sodom and Gomorrah and witnessed the seared conscience of a man who vexed his righteous soul. Lot, who sat in the gates of wickedness, was immersed in the ungodliness of the city. In like manner, this poor world has sunk into the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah. John, seeing the grave danger found in the cities of Lot's world, would exhort young men, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world" (1 John 2:15).

The Apostle Paul will repeat what he already has done. He has taken us back to the Passover, we believe to Leviticus 23:5, when he wrote, "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Corinthians 5:7). He will now go back to Leviticus again and writes, "Let us keep the feast" (1 Corinthians 5:8). Here the feast is the feast of unleavened bread from Leviticus 23:6.

In a previous article we touched on 1 Corinthians 5, but it most certainly bears repetition. Even though the believers Peter was writing to knew the truth that he was about to present, he reminded them "Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth" (2 Peter 1:12).

In 1 Corinthians 5:7-8, we read of the "old leaven" which in the context is moral sin which was insidiously revived in the life of a brother in the fellowship of the Corinthian assembly. Before conversion many of the idolatrous Corinthians lived wicked, immoral lives. Listing a number of sins (1 Corinthians 6:9), he solemnly reminds them "such were some of you" (v.11). There was a danger for a believer that those old sins would be stirred to activity. When the Holy Spirit reveals such sin the assembly is to "purge out therefore the old leaven" (1 Corinthians 5:7). Purge means "to remove, to cleanse". We need the reminder again that, "holiness becometh thine house, O Lord for ever" (Psalm 93:5). The "new lump" in 1 Corinthians 5:7 is dough with no leaven. The sinning one has been removed from the assembly by an act of assembly discipline.

"Therefore", (1 Corinthians 5:8) takes us back to

the discipline of v.7. Conditions of holiness have been restored. Paul can now write, "let us keep the feast" (v.8). Be very clear that "the feast" is not the Lord's Supper which in the Word of God is never referred to as a feast. Paul writes ten chapters in 1 Corinthians before he writes about the Lord's Supper in chapter ten.

The apostle now goes back to the feast of unleavened bread to powerfully apply it to the life of the believer. The old life (v. 8) is saturated with "malice", the opposite of love, the bitterness of an unforgiving spirit. "Wickedness" is the opposite of purity. In the context, it describes a holy life separated from moral sin which had invaded the Corinthian assembly. Paul demands that each believer be compelled to live a life illustrated by the feast of unleavened bread saturated with "sincerity and truth" (v. 8).

The unleavened wafers referred to in Leviticus 2:4 and the feast of unleavened bread would beautifully remind us of the perfect life of our Lord Jesus Christ, The Father in heaven viewed every step, every word spoken and pronounced by our Lord and declared His perfect pleasure in His Son. Mark, the imperfect servant, records heaven's declaration, "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Mark 1:11). We should sing, with a spirit of worship, the words of C. A. Wellesley,

Blessed Lord, our hearts would treasure  
 All the Father's thoughts of Thee.  
 All His joy, His rest, His pleasure,  
 All His deep delight in Thee;  
 Lord, Thy heart alone can measure  
 What the Father found in Thee:

How we should feast upon our blessed Lord! He alone is the perfect manifestation of the feast of unleavened bread.

The Galatians are reminded, "Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?" (Galatians 5:7). In that context they are reminded, "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (Galatians 5:9). The purpose of assembly discipline demanded in 1 Corinthians 5 was restoration. It seems however when a believer has imbibed doctrinal error, restoration is more difficult. How discerning and careful a believer must be regarding the books and material they read and what they see and listen to. One councils young believers to surround themselves with good assembly material.

Our God sees all and hears all. The God who inhabits eternity is omniscient. The Hebrew writer reminds us "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Hebrews 4:13). In preparation for the feast of unleavened bread search was to be made to remove leaven. In Exodus

13:19 “there shall be no leaven found in your houses”. That would encompass cupboards and pockets. Peter and John when preparing for the Passover would search every corner of the upper room for leaven.

Leaven was not to be seen in any of their quarters (Exodus 13:7). Any soul in Israel who ate leaven during the seven days of the feast would be cut off (Exodus 12:15). This would surely remind us of our holy God and His hatred of sin. Peter solemnly exhorts us “Be ye holy: for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:16). Holiness is demanded by God in the following areas of a believer's life;

Heart – Personal Life

Samuel, while searching for a future King of Israel, was impressed by physical appearance and stature. God disqualified seven of the sons of Jesse and reminded Samuel, “man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart” (1 Samuel 16:6). Solomon expresses the same truth: “The fining pot is for silver; and the furnace for gold: but Lord trieth the hearts” (Proverbs 17:3).

Holiness – Spiritual Life

This is a morally, evil corrupt world sinking ever deeper into the deep pit of wickedness. Truths once respected by our forefathers have evaporated, Brother, your worship at the Breaking of Bread is not the character of what it use to be. Listening believers detect that. An exercised brother or sister will honestly cry “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Psalm 139:23-24).

Habits – Moral Life

Likely you have heard Romans 12:2 read and spoken on many times. Have you really deeply considered “Be not conformed to this world”. Do we not engage in many activities of life and become immersed in worldly practices because that is what the world does. Ministry exhorting separation from this perishing evil world has vanished. Love for the sports stadiums and music halls consumes us. Have we forgotten that this world nailed our rejected Lord to a cross.

Harmony – Assembly Life

Race and religion violently divide the world. The assembly where the writer is in fellowship has black and white believers, thankfully young and older, and those whose background embraced different cultures. But the grace of God has united them. They are new creations in Christ Jesus. How beautiful to watch them work together in harmony.

Psalm 133:1: “Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.”

The feast of unleavened bread is fulfilled perfectly in the sojourn of our Lord during the short time He sojourned on the earth He created. The feast also calls upon the believer to live a holy, consecrated, and separated life here in anticipation of coming glory.

**Not they who court the public applause get their names joined in stable wedlock with fame, but they who scorn that applause, and ask only for their own soul's approbation and the praise of God.**

**He is Lord of All, pt.2**

*H. A. Cameron*

**D**oes death then end His Lordship over the believer? No, He is Lord of the dead. Not the Lord merely of their inanimate bodies. These return to dust, and that dust is precious to Him and He will watch over it. This, however, is not the meaning of His being Lord of the dead. It does not mean that He is the Lord of “insensate matter,” but that in His presence are the spirits of just men made perfect.

The Sadducees on one occasion thought they had presented an unanswerable argument to the Lord in proof of their teaching that there is no such thing as spirit or resurrection. They believed and taught that the dead were non-existent and lay unconscious in the grave from which they would never again emerge. But from a scripture, (most unlikely to serve the purpose according to men's thoughts), He proved to them the truth of conscious existence after death. In the words “I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, “the use of the present tense “I am” in relation to men who had been for centuries dead, proved that they are at that very moment alive in His presence. He did not say “I was the God of Abraham,” as if they were now non-entities, neither would He say or teach that He was the God of insensate matter as the Sadducees taught was then the state of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; for the Sadducees did not believe in “spirit,” but like their modern successors the annihilationists (whether Adventists, Millennial Dawnists, Christadelphians, Conditional Immortalists, or Soul-sleepers of any sect whatever) they taught that the body was all. The Lord Jesus quotes one verse and at once proves that God is not the God of the dead in the Sadducean sense—the

non-existent—but the God of the living, for all live unto Him. In other words there is no such thing as cessation of being or existence to man, whether righteous or unrighteous; all exist just as truly as the so-called “living,” in the sight of God. “All live unto Him,” because He is God.

And now the Holy Spirit ascribes this same attribute of deity to the Lord Jesus. “Whether we live or die we are the Lord’s. He is the Lord both of the dead and living.” Stephen, the proto-martyr of the faith, dies saying, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” When he had said this he fell asleep, and **devout** men carried him to his burial. The sleeping body is laid in the tomb, but Stephen’s spirit is with the spirits of just men in the presence of God. Certain Thessalonians fall asleep. Their bodies are entombed, but they are “with Jesus.” Paul reminds their sorrowing relatives that Jesus died and rose again. His body had been in the grave, His soul in Hades, the abode of departed spirits, but His soul was not left in Hades neither did His body see corruption. They both (body and soul) were reunited in resurrection. In like manner, says Paul, those that sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. They are now with Jesus. At His return He will bring them with Him to be invested in their resurrected bodies, and we who are alive shall be caught up with them to be with Christ; but in the interval they are with the Lord. He is their Lord, and they are in His presence in conscious bliss, though we call them dead. Paul himself departs; he is absent from the body, but present with the Lord. David, as to his body, falls asleep and sees corruption, but he himself is “in the house of the Lord.” Asaph, who saw the wicked after death “in slippery places, cast down to destruction,” says “Thou wilt guide me with Thy counsel and afterward receive me to glory.”

That He is Lord of the righteous who have died is evident. What of the unrighteous? “All live unto Him,” that is, unto God, the Lord Jesus tells us. The spirits of the antediluvians, to whom Noah preached, are now in prison. The men of Sodom are even now suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. Korah and all the men that appertain to him went down alive into hell. The rich man closes his eyes on earth and opens them in hell.

But, it is written, “As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God.” And again this divine attribute is also Christ’s, for in this respect also all men shall honor the Son even as they honor the Father. Because it is written “God hath given Him a name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of beings in heaven, and beings in earth, and beings under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.”

When Solomon was king there were in his king-

dom besides his loyal subjects, many that rendered only feigned obedience. He was their sovereign Lord, of course, and bow they must to His authority, but they were rebels in heart. Such were for instance, Adonijah, Abiathar, Joab and Shimei, in the very domain of Solomon. They feared but did not love him, and they continued to be his enemies.

Jesus is Lord of all. To His loyal ones, the saints, “He is thy Lord and worship thou Him,” (Psalm 45:11) is no hard command. They gladly honor Him as they honor the Father. “Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.” (Psalm 110:3). And if He is King of saints, what of the rebels? Demons believe and tremble. And among the lost of Adam’s race, though they love Him not, at the proclamation of His Name even in their prison house, every knee shall bow. In every part of that vast domain called heaven, and earth, and under the earth, at the Name of Jesus, His earthly name as the despised and rejected One, at that very Name every knee shall bow and confess that He is LORD.

He is Lord of all: of Jew and Gentile; of living and dead; of the saved and of the lost. In all things He must have the pre-eminence. By creation, by providence, by power, and by purchase, by divine right and title, inherent and acquired, He is Lord of all.

***The Bible is a window in this prison-world through which we may look into eternity.***

## **The Cry of the Suffering Christ**

*W. J. Hocking*

“My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? why art Thou far from My salvation, from the words of My groaning? My God I cry by day, and Thou answerest not; and by night, and there is no rest for Me: and Thou art holy, Thou that dwellest amid the praises of Israel”  
(Psalm 22:1-3)

In Psalm 22 we have one of the many Old Testament prophecies which refer directly to our Lord Jesus Christ. This one, however, is distinguished from the rest because it foretells facts concerning His unique and unfathomable sufferings which are not to be found in other predictions. Here we have them in all their simple, solemn, and pathetic sweetness from the lips of the Holy Sufferer Himself.

### Three Outstanding Messianic Psalms

Many Psalms give glimpses of Jehovah's Anointed One Who was to come, but three of them are conspicuous among the rest by the vivid details of His sufferings which they make known beforehand. Besides Psalm 22, there are Psalm 69 and Psalm 102. All three foretell in words of song the amazing pathway of the Hope of Israel laughed to scorn by all who saw Him and the Savior of men without a place to lay His head. Each of the three Psalms presents its own particular phase of the sufferings of Christ followed by its appropriate sequel, but the one which touches our affection and devotion most deeply is Psalm 22.

The theme of Psalm 69 is the sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ as He unflinchingly bore the reproach of Jehovah in the face of those who hated Him without a cause.

High and low were His enemies. Those that sat in the gate spoke against Him, and He was the song of the drunkards. "Save Me, O God," He cried, "for the waters are come into My soul." Jehovah heard and answered, as the latter part of the Psalm shows. God will bring righteous and overwhelming retribution upon the ungodly generation that rejected and crucified their Messiah. The sufferings caused by the enmity of man are followed by the righteous judgment of those who caused those sufferings.

Psalm 22 is differently framed, and its theme is unique. Here, though the sufferings depicted are far deeper and more poignant, the result for man is not judicial but merciful. Not a word is suggested about wrath and judgment for man. Indeed, one might almost call Psalm 22 the nearest approach in the Old Testament to the revelation of the super-abounding grace of God in the New. Instead of thunderbolts of wrath from God falling upon those who maltreated the Messiah, the Psalm ends with praise arising to God from all mankind. The sufferings of Christ will yield what the whole world has never yet rendered to God—united and universal praise. Now, there is praise from a few here and a few there; but, the Psalm views a time when all the world will be rejoicing in God and giving Him what is due to His name, giving Him, in fact, what man's tongue was designed to render—intelligent and heartfelt praise. And "in that day" all the "kindreds of the nations" will worship before Jehovah of Israel in consequence of the sufferings of Christ which are set forth in the prophetic monologue of this Psalm.

Psalm 102 also celebrates the sufferings of Christ. There Messiah is presented in His humiliation among and by men and in His invariable attitude of meek and lowly submission to whatever was the will of God. The Psalm is called "the prayer of the afflicted when He is overwhelmed." In His infinite greatness, Christ "emp-

tyed Himself," and obediently took the poor man's place in a world of self-sufficiency and self-exaltation. He was forsaken of men, and left to mourn "as a sparrow alone upon the housetop." In His distress, Messiah cried, "O My God," desiring that He might not be taken away in the midst of His days. Thereupon Jehovah vindicates His suffering and outcast Son (vers. 24-27). Though the days of His humiliation, might be shortened, was He not the Creator of the earth and the heavens? All creation perishes, but Messiah abides unchanged continually, the Same "yesterday and today and for ever." Thus, the prayer of the afflicted One is answered by a divine witness to the Intrinsic glory of His person; and the passage is quoted in Hebrews 1:10-12 as a crowning testimony to the glory of the eternal Son, by Whom God spoke to men in New Testament days.

### Sufferings and Praises

In Psalm 22, however, the sufferings of Christ are from God. Forsaking by God is expressed in its opening stanzas, and affords the key to the whole Psalm. The ferocity of men appears as in other Psalms, but the abandonment of the Messiah of Israel by the Holy One of Israel is, as it must necessarily be, the predominating features of the prophecy. Moreover, it is the Holy Sufferer Himself Who confesses that He is forsaken by His God. He Who endured it describes it. He is, indeed, the Speaker throughout this Psalm. And as He records His own sufferings, so He declares the praises to God that follow as their effect. We learn that propitiation or atonement being accomplished, the earth, in due course, will become full of praises to God.

You will recollect how beautifully this combination of propitiation and praise is portrayed in Leviticus 16 by the blood and incense. There the great work of Christ's atonement is foreshown in type. The blood of both the bullock and the goat is taken from the court of the tabernacle into the most holy place and sprinkled there upon and before the mercy-seat. Aaron enters that most holy place where Jehovah's presence rests enthroned upon the mercy-seat with blood and incense. The sprinkling of the blood of sacrifice in the required manner is accompanied by the fragrant fumes rising from the burning incense and affording a sweet odor to Him Who sits between the cherubim. Thus the type illustrates how the incense of praise is intimately associated with the propitiation Christ made in respect of our sins. His atoning work is the abiding basis for the believer's worship now, and for the homage of all men in the millennial day and kingdom.

As we are reminded, the Father "seeketh" worshippers; and if we are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, we have been constituted worshippers on the basis of the propitiatory work of the Lord Jesus, and the Father seeks

that we worship Him as we are thereby entitled to do. What then can we offer to God the Father that will be acceptable? Shall we bring any material offering in our hands? Shall we bring anything in our hearts springing from our own natural affections and efforts? You surely know that we can find nothing in ourselves worthy of His acceptance.

Where then as worshipers shall we find what is sure to be acceptable to God the Father? Everything that concerns the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, is well-pleasing to the Father. And if one subject concerning Him is more acceptable than another, it is that which relates to His sufferings and death, whereby "God was glorified in Him." As worshipers, therefore, we need to have in our hearts a clear sense of the vast work of atonement accomplished upon the cross when He, the blessed Son of God, Who knew no sin, was "made sin for us" by God (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Scripture often refers to Christ's atonement in easy words that even an infant may recite, but how profound and unfathomable is their full significance! They are, however, for us to meditate upon continually, allowing the Holy Spirit to develop and enlarge their meaning and implication before our eyes so that our hearts may break forth in worthier songs of praise as we remember that the holy, perfect, sinless Son Of God was upon the cross "made sin for us" by God. We cannot fully understand the profound doctrine, nor need we do so in order to worship God. But when we are before God in "the holiest of all" and recall that the death of Christ is the most notable Occurrence in the world's history and that something was done there and then of immeasurable value and requiring no repetition, then songs of irrepressible praise will swell within us. The incense of acceptable praise will ascend to the eternal throne.

Let us bear clearly in mind that in this Psalm we hear the words of Christ Himself addressed to God. Most of us are familiar with the bitter cry which forms the forefront of the Psalm and provides the keynote to its pervading theme. We read, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Here the pathetic words occur prophetically. In the Gospels they are found historically. Matthew and Mark record that the Lord uttered them upon the cross. In the depths of His anguish, the Lord used the words, having the fullest sense of their profound significance and also the knowledge that the prophecies of Psalm 22 were being fulfilled in Himself. At the due moment He had appeared in the world for the putting away of sin by the sacrifice of Himself. In this work, the Blessed One stood alone—the God-forsaken One. This awful experience He Himself proclaimed aloud that whosoever would might hear—"Eli, Eli, lama sabacthani?" As so often, those who heard did not understand His speech. They said, "Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to

save Him." That this crucified One should thus address God in heaven was beyond their comprehension. The fact is that therein lies the central truth of the propitiation which Christ made for our sins and for the whole world.

This occasion is, I believe, the first time that we read in the Gospels of our Lord using the words, "My God," when addressing Him. The Son was constantly in communion with the Father, hearing His word and doing His commandments. In converse with His Father, we read of Him answering and saying, "I praise Thee, Father, Lord of the heaven and of the earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them unto babes. Yea, Father, for thus has it been well-pleasing in Thy sight" (Matthew 11:25, 26).

This communion of the Son with the Father was unbroken, not only during His public ministry when He was preaching the gospel to the poor, healing the sick, and doing His multitudinous deeds of mercy among men, but also, as you will remember, during that solemn midnight hour in Gethsemane. There the Lord was alone, apart from His disciples, prostrate upon the ground, and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. Yet in this agony of anticipation, the Blessed One was not altogether alone. As He said to His disciples earlier that night, Ye "shall leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone, for the Father is with Me" (John 16:32). Throughout His "strong crying and tears," communion with the Father was unbroken. "Abba, Father," He cried. "O My Father, if it be possible . . ." "O My Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me: nevertheless not My will, but Thine, be done." Knowing fully what the Father's will had decreed for the morrow, the obedient Son acquiesced in Gethsemane as He had always done. "The cup which My Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?"

But here the Lord is speaking from the cross. It is now not "My Father" as in the garden, but "My God." The question of sin has arisen, and God, Who is Judge of all, is the appropriate name of address. God is the righteous governor of the world. His nature is opposed to sin, and His essence demands the punishment of sin. There can be no communion between holiness and unholiness, between light and darkness. And there, Him Who knew no sin God had made sin for us. In the consciousness of sin-bearing, and of being "made a curse for us," He exclaimed, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

So our Lord in the midst of His suffering for sin confessed Himself forsaken by His God, but still addressed Him as "My God." This relationship of Jesus subsisted from His earliest infancy. In this very Psalm, He declares, "Thou art My God from My mother's belly" (ver. 10) From the manger in Bethlehem right onwards He the perfect and blessed Man, recognized God as the One

Whom He obeyed and on Whom He depended. But here it was a time of noontide darkness, and there was an immeasurable difference. His God in Whom He trusted had forsaken Him! and Why?

Christ had come into the world to take the place of the unholy and unrighteous under the judgment of the Righteous and Holy God. He Himself was the Holy One. "That Holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God," the angel said to Mary (Luke 1:35). The very demons in Capernaum said to Him, "I know Thee Who Thou art: the Holy One of God." And what charge did Peter lay against the Jews after Pentecost? "Ye denied the Holy One and the Just" (Acts 3:14). It was the fact that the Lord Jesus had been presented to His people as the Holy One. And when the apostle referred to the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 2:27), quoting from Psalm 16:10, he said, "Neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption."

But here Christ, the Holy One, acknowledges His God as the Holy One: "O My God, I cry in the daytime, but Thou hearest not . . . but Thou art holy, O Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel." What is the explanation? The Holy One was the sin-bearer. The Just One stood in the place of the unjust. "He bare our sins in His own body on the tree." Oh, deepest of all deepest depths! Oh, profoundest of all unraveled mysteries that this should be! The human heart stands still in silent awe before the impenetrable veil for ever screening from mortal gaze the Saviour in that dread hour. One only was there in the darkness and in the shadow of death. He alone can speak of it. He has spoken. His words are before us. "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken ME?"

We cannot understand this cry of anguish wrung from the heart of Christ, nor fathom its import. Apart from its interpretation, however, we possess the truth and blessedness of the fact through the ministrations of the Holy Spirit. Our faith lays hold of this poignant utterance of the suffering Christ. It tells us of the price paid for our redemption. It measures for us the value of the sacrifice made upon the cross for our sins and for the glory of God in respect of them. The Holy Christ was forsaken by the Holy God!

Hence, the more we meditate upon this great cry in the presence of the Lord from Whose lips it came, the more we learn of His atoning work. Then He was standing where He had never stood before—beneath the weight of our guilt and of God's wrath against it. During His life of ministry, He was not bearing our sins, as some wrongly imagine. It was upon the tree that He bore our sins in His own body, as Peter tells us. There He suffered for us, for our forgiveness, for our redemption, that we might be brought to God, that the blessings of God in all their fullness might flow unhinderedly into our souls.

But there is another aspect of the work of atonement that we must never forget. Because of man's sin God's glory was at stake. God's eternal attribute of justice was in question. Was God the Holy One Who abhorred sin? or was He One Who would favor sin and overlook its due penalty? The Lord Jesus supplies the answer in His Person, and upon the cross He upheld the immutable holiness of God. There He declared in the ears of the universe, "Thou art holy, O Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel," witnessing to that holiness by the confession of His own abandonment.

The Holy Sufferer had been made sin and was deserted, left alone because of it. In His agony Christ called aloud to His God. "My God, My God," He said. The repetition means much—deep emotion, pressing need. When Abraham stood at the altar on which Isaac lay bound, holding aloft the knife to slay his only son, the angel of Jehovah called, Abraham, Abraham. Twice the father's name was called from heaven. There was urgent need for the patriarch to hearken. Not a moment must be lost. More urgent still was the cry of the blessed Lord. He was in the depths of His anguish, submerged beneath the waves of divine wrath against sin; and the cry rang out in the desolate waste, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

These are the words of the beloved Son of God, the Only-begotten of the Father, God manifest in flesh. Let us ponder over them and brood upon them, again and again. Let them penetrate our inmost souls. To do so purifies the spirit and enlightens the heart. We behold fresh visions of the grandeur of God's grace, and we glory more and more in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. We see more and more of the light and love of God in Him Who stood alone in that dread place of darkness and curse. And we adore more fervently Him Who loved and endured to the end, never even when abandoned by Him losing touch with His God, calling Him "MY God" in the confidence that He would be heard for His piety (Hebrews 5:7).

**Full vessels will bear many a knock, many a stroke, and yet make no noise. So Christians that are full of Christ and the Spirit will bear many a knock, many a stroke, and yet make no noise.**



## Importance of Obedience

Lawlessness is one of the outstanding signs of the last days of this dispensation. It is also one of the most grievous evidences that the world is preparing for the advent of the Lawless One. Is there not, even among the Lord's people today, a need for a clarion call for obedience to Christ, and submission to the Word of the Living God? Obedience is not a popular subject at our conferences, nor can I remember many articles on it in our magazines; but the Scriptures, God's mouthpiece, from first to last stress its importance and its imperative character. Perhaps Samuel's words to Saul portray God's estimation of obedience more fully than anything given elsewhere: "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." When we recall the position sacrifices and offerings occupied in the Jewish economy, we are helped to visualize something of the value God sets on obedience. Before entering the promised land, Moses said to Israel, "Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; a blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the Lord your God. . . and a curse if you will not obey" (Deuteronomy 11:26, 27). The lesson is emphasized from Genesis to Revelation; let us glance at a few significant illustrations of this truth.

When God created the man and the woman, and placed them in the Garden of Eden, as a test of their subjection and obedience they were permitted to eat of the fruit of all the trees in the Garden except for one! They lamentably failed (though Adam was not deceived), and as a consequence they lost their dominion over the earth, beasts, birds and fishes, and were turned out of Paradise. Their disobedience occasioned the curse.

When God chose a man, according to the flesh, to be the father of the promised Seed, He did so because He knew Abraham would "command his children" and they would "keep the way of the Lord." Two major tests were given Abraham. He was commanded to leave his country, kindred and father's house, to go to a land unknown; and later to offer up Isaac, his son, his only son, whom he loved, on Mount Moriah. Abraham chose the way of blessing, and in his Seed all the nations of the earth have been blessed. And why? "Because," said God, "thou hast obeyed My voice."

When Israel was redeemed from Egypt, God met them in the wilderness at Sinai where the ten commandments were uttered. They rashly declared: "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do." Nevertheless, within a few days, they had broken the first four commandments in shameless idolatry! Through this disobedience they lost their Priesthood (Exodus 32), and Levi was chosen in lieu of the nation. When Israel

demanded a king, God gave them Saul, "a choice young man, and a goodly," but God tested him. Saul was commanded to smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all they had, and to spare not. He, too, failed, and lost his kingdom; Samuel said, "for rebellion (God's word for disobedience) is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry."

And so test after test was given to God's ancient people, and except for a few outstanding exceptions, they failed again and again. In Psalm 81:8-16 we have God's lament over Israel: "Oh that My people had hearkened unto Me, and Israel had walked in My ways! I should soon have subdued their enemies. . . have fed them with the finest of the wheat." Through disobedience they lost assured victory and the choicest of food.

And now we come to Christ, Jehovah's perfect Servant. He too must be tested. He chose the way of obedience, even though it meant suffering. Of Him it is written, "When He cometh into the world, He saith, Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, . . . lo, I come . . . to do Thy will, O God." And He, and He alone, could say, "I do nothing of Myself, for as My Father has taught Me, I speak these things . . . for I do always those things that please Him." And then, at last, the paramount test is applied, and we read, "He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Through the obedience of One many have been made righteous, and the dominion lost by Adam has been regained (Romans 5:19; Revelation 5:5). The way of blessing is the same under Grace as it was under Law, it is the Way of Obedience. "And being made perfect, He (Christ) became the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him"; "God . . . now commandeth all men everywhere to repent"; "And this is His commandment, That we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ"; "But they have not all obeyed the Gospel," and hence are in the way of the curse today as formerly; "And what shall be the end of them that obey not the Gospel of God"; "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Hebrews 5:9; Acts 17:30; 1 John 3:23; Romans 10:16; 1 Peter 4:7 and 2 Thessalonians 1:8, 9). Disobedience today as ever is indeed the Way of the Curse.

Is it surprising that Christ applies the same test to His disciples? "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." Must Christ lament over us as God did over Israel? Are we choosing the way of blessing or the way of chastisement? Does our love for our Lord stand the test? Are we, not to mention other commands of Christ, loving our brethren, forgiving the erring on confession, witnessing to those around us, taking or sending the good news to the uttermost parts of the

earth? The Spirit of God was given to those that obeyed Him (Acts 5:32), and only to those who continue in the path of obedience does He give Himself; hence the exhortation, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God." Of the last thousand years of this world's history we read: "And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him." Obedience is indeed the way of blessing. The last blessing spoken of in God's Book is found in its last chapter, and reads: "Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to (RV. 'right to come to'; Marathi version 'authority over') the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (Revelation 22:14). And so we see that by obedience everything lost through disobedience has been regained—Paradise, the Kingdom, the Priesthood, Righteousness and Dominion. Well may we unitedly cry: "Unto Him that loved (loveth) us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

### Rules for Self-examination

*The following twelve rules are recorded as having been used John Fletcher of more than a century ago. They were used by him at the close of each day for self-examination.*

1. Did I awake spiritual, and was I watchful in keeping my mind from wandering this morning?
2. Have I this day got nearer to God in prayer, or have I given way to a lazy, idle spirit?
3. Has my faith been weakened by watchfulness, or quickened by diligence?
4. Have I walked by faith, and seen God in all things?
5. Have I denied myself in all unkind words and thoughts? Have I been delighted at seeing others preferred?
6. Have I made the most of my time, as far as I had light, strength and opportunity?
7. Have I kept the issues of my heart in the means of grace as to profit by them?
8. What have I done this day for the souls and bodies of God's dear saints?
9. Have I laid out anything to please myself, when I might have saved the money for the cause of God?
10. Have I governed well my tongue this day, remembering that in a multitude of words

- there wanteth not sin?  
 11. In how many instances have I denied myself this day?  
 12. Do my life and conversation adorn the gospel of Jesus Christ?

### Faithful Men

Thank God for faithful men, whose minds  
 Are fully set to do His will,  
 It matters not what others say,  
 His purposes they will fulfill.  
 It may cost even groans and tears,  
 And loss of friends and things most dear  
 For God they stand, and falter not,  
 His Word they honor and revere.

Faithful men, with a purpose firm,  
 God's interest here they have at heart,  
 No bribe can ever turn aside,  
 They hate deceit, with liars part.  
 God's Word has power within their souls,  
 Its purity they own and love,  
 Their thoughts and actions it controls,  
 More precious far than gold above.

Bless God for faithful men, whose lives  
 Are far above reproach; while those  
 Whose minds are evil and who hate  
 Them, for their sins they must expose,  
 May persecute and vilify;  
 But firm they stand for God,  
 They're pattern men, God loves and keeps;  
 Integrity their feet has shod.

Their vision goes beyond earth's scenes  
 Faith knows the eternal world as real—  
 With God they've plighted troth—for Him  
 They live—for Him they're true as steel.  
 Let men around by evil swayed,  
 Practice and carry out their sin;  
 They evil hate, in righteousness  
 They walk, are clothed without, within:  
 Thomas Somerville.