

Articles	Page
Sunset and Sunrise; Mt of Olives	1
James 4a; Wars and Fightings	3
"Behold the Man"	7
God's Pleasure in the Assembly	9
The Devil's Work	10
Judgment Seat of Christ	11

Sunset and Sunrise upon the Mount of Olives

Alan Davidson, North Ireland

The ancient slopes of the Mount of Olives, on the east side of Jerusalem, are like a sacred scroll recording momentous events of Old and New Testaments. The commencement of the parchment records, the barefoot ascent of the minstrel King David, weeping as he went up, passing into the dark night of rejection (2 Samuel 15:30). Many sunsets and sunrises have rolled across the historic Mount until the prophetic prediction of the dawn of that spectacular day of the return of the Son of David. "And His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east" (Zechariah 14:4). "And the LORD shall be King over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and His Name one" (Zechariah 14:9).

Compared with the majestic Mount Hermon or the beautiful Mount Carmel, the Mount of Olives has no significant physical aspect, yet it is unique and spectacular in hallowed memories. The passing of the centuries have records of dark tearful evenings, sunsets of tragedy and departing glory on the Mount of Olives. The memories of Bethphage, Bethany and Gethsemane are tender remembrances of Immanuel.

In the shadows of the ancient olive trees, the moonlight reflects upon the solitary form of the Son of Man, His locks wet with the dew of the night, in prayer to His Father. The slopes of Olivet were hallowed by His prayers and His lamentations over Jerusalem, and His deep compassion for heart-broken sisters, Mary and Martha mourning their brother Lazarus in death. There He gave the prophecies of His return; manifested the power of His resurrection; it was the place of His personal and glorious ascent to Heaven.

"And in the day time He was teaching in the temple; and at night He went out, and abode in the mount that is called the Mount of Olives" (Luke 21:37).

Thus the inspired writer records the sacred memories of the final week before the Lord's death. From the tenth to the fourteenth day, the Passover Lamb was shown to be without blemish and without spot. By night, His earthy home was the Mount of Olives (John 8:1). Our hearts are moved as we discern a little of His perfect Humanity, in the night of His sweat and tears. The unutterable depths of sorrow are known to God alone, when He "offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears" (Hebrews 5:7). All the recorded tears of the burdened and sorrowful Saviour were shed upon Mount Olivet. The brilliant sunrise of the new day has already dawned upon the Risen Saviour, the Ascending Man from Olivet, soon to be manifest as the Returning Sovereign, whose feet shall stand upon the Mount of Olives. "For He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet" (1 Corinthians 15:25).

Tears upon the Mount of Olives

"And David went up by the ascent of Mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered, and he went barefoot: and all the people that was with him covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went up" (2 Samuel 15:30). The first specific reference to the Mount of Olives in the Bible, is to royal feet ascending barefoot. Uncovered, unsandaled, head bowed in rejection, David passed over the brook Kidron, toward the way of the wilderness, into exile. Plotted against by his own son, betrayed by his own familiar friend, he went outside Jerusalem despised and rejected. As the result of the lies, politics, deceit and conspiracy of the unscrupulous usurper, the minstrel King went up weeping by "The ascent of the Olives" (lit.). "And it came to pass, that when David was come to the top of the mount, he worshiped God" (2 Samuel 15:32). David wrote in the Messianic Psalm; "Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none" (Psalm 69:20). Again David said to the Lord, "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because Thou didst it" (Psalm 39:9). This unselfish submission to the hand of God is like the Lord Himself, "Who when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously" (1 Peter 2:23).

The name David means, "Well beloved". There is only one David in the Bible; the first human

"Truths for our Day"

is a monthly publication that is freely available on the Internet and is intended to be a help to believers who appreciate the timeless truths of God's Word and who recognize the unchanging principles of God's will for His people. It is primarily intended to strengthen those who enjoy fellowship in local assemblies of believers who are gathered to the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ alone.

Editor and Publisher: Joel Portman
1200 Forest Glen Ct. SE,
Cedar Rapids, IA, 52403
Write to: mail@truthsforourday.com

All issues of "Truths for our Day" are available by clicking on the link below. This will take you to the index:

[Truths For Our Day](#)

Please read this notice:

We permit and encourage you to reprint any issue of "Truths for our Day" that you desire, either for yourself, or to share with other believers. However, if you wish to copy an individual article, we will forward your request to the copyright owner of the article to request his permission. For this reason, the format of the publication is locked to prevent unauthorized publication of articles that the author would prefer to reserve. Please do not copy them in any other way. We want to respect the ownership of all those who have written articles.

We also hope you will let others know about "Truths for our Day" and encourage them to subscribe as well. They can do so by simply sending an e-mail to this email address:

mail@truthsforourday.com

Thank you

name in the New Testament, the last human name in the New Testament; he was the man after God's own heart, (1 Samuel 13:14). He is the man of the two comings; sent by his father from Bethlehem, despised by his own, yet anointed three times. Abraham said; "God will provide Himself a Lamb" (Genesis 22:8). God said; "I have provided Me a King" (1 Samuel 16:1). The Lord Jesus came as the Lamb to die; He is coming again, as the King to reign. David became a stranger and a sojourner, (Psalm 39:12). The Saviour said, "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head" (Matthew 8:20). "Every man went unto his own house. Jesus went unto the Mount of Olives" (John 7:53-8:1). It is on the slopes of the same mount, in the garden, being exceeding sorrowful He said "O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39).

David had many trying experiences in life but the reference to his tears and sorrow in Psalm chapter 39 may indicate that this was written at the time of the Absalom rebellion. "Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear unto my cry; hold not Thy peace at my tears" (Psalm 39:12). This has been described as the cry of the sufferer, a prayer of mourning; an elegy of tears as he waits upon the Lord. My prayer; my cry; my tears may be the language of the choicest saint. In a spell of unexpected sorrow, unexplained trial, unselfish submission under the hand of God, like David, we come to a personal confession of our own frailty, the brevity of life and "vanity" (twice) of temporal possessions. In old age, driven into exile to wander on alien soil, David had lost his crown, his throne and his friends. In the shifting drama of life we learn that "The fashion of this world passeth away" (1 Corinthians 7:31). Humble childlike reliance upon God; "Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing" (1 Peter 3:9), gives hope for the future. "O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more" (Psalm 39:13).

David prayed; "If I shall find favour in the eyes of the LORD, He will bring me again" (2 Samuel 15:25). In the experience of the choicest believer, God gathers the storm clouds, the strong gusts of trial, the drenching dews of trouble and the pillow of tears during the long weary night that gives way to the warm rising of the sun in the dawn of a new day. David's greater Son shed tears upon the Mount. The King is coming back again. "His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives" (Zechariah 14:4).

Weeping Olivet

King David, God's rejected man,
Crossed o'er the brook and wept.

Forsaken by his own, he climbed
Up weeping Olivet.

Another King, his greater Son,
While in the city slept,
In perfect manhood prayed to God
On weeping Olivet.

In Bethany, He groaned and cried,
While friends their vigil kept,
His voice which raised the dead was heard
At weeping Olivet.

The city of His God He viewed,
With sorrow and regret.
“I would, but they would not,” He mused,
From weeping Olivet.

Into the garden soft He went,
A little further yet.
Bowed to His God, sweat drops as blood
On weeping Olivet.

Beside each mountain that He made,
A valley He did set.
Into the valley He must go,
From weeping Olivet.

The enemy was waiting there,
The battle to be met,
Forward He went and won the day,
From weeping Olivet.

To Zion’s mountain He’ll ascend,
And many sons beget.
He’ll never be alone again
On weeping Olivet.

His feet shall stand and split the mount
In glorious triumph yet,
And living waters then shall flow
From singing Olivet.

O glorious Lord, on Whom around
Such glory is beset,
As living stones we’ll sing Thy praise
Like singing Olivet.

No sorrow then shall cross Thy brow,
No tears Thy face shall wet.
Heaven and earth shall sing Thy praise,
And singing Olivet.

Surrounded by Thy seed they’ll sing
The valley ne’er forget;
Nor toil nor tears, nor groans nor blood,
Not weeping Olivet.

James 4:1-12 Wars and Fightings

Joel Portman

The contrast between the opening of this chapter and the end of the previous one is startling. We have just read about the wisdom that is from above and the fruit that it produces. Here, without a break between, James writes about the fruits that come from a source that is not “from above”. We have noticed that James likes to trace everything to its source since where something comes from will bear heavily on its character and results. Everything that is “from above” is good, pure, and perfect, but that which comes “from below” is evil, defiled, and imperfect.

The source of the wisdom from above is absolutely pure, but the source of the actions that James describes in vs. 1-3 is a heart that is defiled by the flesh. Paul shows in Galatians 5 that the works of the flesh are diametrically opposed to the fruit (singular) of the Spirit. If the flesh controls a person, it will always produce results that are contrary to God’s will, opposite to the perfect life of our Lord Jesus, and unlike what the Spirit would produce. Again, without using the word “spirit” except for this once in this sense (v. 5), James is reiterating the theme that he is occupied with, that only faith which is motivated and empowered by the Holy Spirit can please God.

In this chapter, we learn that genuine faith will affect our desires, attitudes, and actions. Vs. 1-5 looks at our wills in relation to selfish desires and worldly behaviors. Genuine faith, James says, will make one see the world and the things in it with a different view, not seeking to get but to give. In this, Abraham is an example, as we see in Genesis 14. James describes the imitation of the world’s character that can be seen in the life of a believer if it is not controlled by the Spirit.

James’ language reveals that these “wars and fightings” (conflicts) are the result of an inward condition that is not right, isn’t displaying true wisdom, nor the control of the Holy Spirit. These are only the symptoms, the outward manifestations of an inward problem. How little do we recognize that conflicts among the saints almost always stem from an inward lack of Spirit control. These result from a mind set on self that wants to satisfy selfish desires, which is covetousness. When the heart isn’t right, the life won’t manifest itself by doing the things that please God. Sadly, church history is replete with records of constant fighting and conflicts between those of opposing viewpoints. This is a sad blot on the name of Christ and the testimony of the church and should be avoided. Psalm 133:1 tells us “How good and how

(By Ricky McCoubrey)

Used with kind permission.

From: “Beneath the Wings of Love”

Published: Crimond House Publications, 2020

pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.” The verses following seem to indicate not only how precious this condition is but also symbolically showing that it only comes down from above to below.

The Condition Described

James asks what is the source of these conflicts and immediately answers. The question isn't asked so that he can learn because he (and we should) knows already. Instinctively we realize that these actions are characteristic of the world with the self-seeking attitude that prevails among most people. “Wars” is a word that describes long-standing conflicts or the chronic condition and “fightings” (or conflicts) are the separate conflicts or outbreaks that result. These, he says, come from the “lusts”, or strong desires, that “war” in our members, that is, they carry on the activities of warfare. Interestingly, the Greek word for “lusts” in this verse is “hedone” which forms the base for our word “hedonism” or a lifestyle that emphasizes pleasure. These tendencies are constantly engaged in this activity and must be resisted in the energy of the Holy Spirit. How often we have had to confess that this condition and activity exists in any one of us!

The root of this problem is the strong desire that is within that makes us want things that we don't have and aren't ours. It seems true, also, from v. 3, that those things are not God's will for us. We remember Israel in Exodus 16:3 and at other times, when they strongly desired the food that they had in Egypt. God didn't give it to them, though they asked for it because it was only so that they might consume it on their own desires.

Verse 2 is handled differently by commentators. Some divide it as, “You desire and do not have, you kill. And you envy and cannot obtain, so you wage war, You have not because you ask not.” Regardless of how one divides it, the lesson is the same. Desiring, or lusting, that isn't satisfied results in taking or attempting to take drastic action to try to obtain the object. This can have sad results that are harmful to any fellowship between believers. Most writers comment that James uses strong language that is hyperbolic, not literal, though he could be describing what may be the ultimate result of such lusting.

Then he reveals that when they do ask (and this may describe a different group than the previous), they are asking for those things that are not God's will for them, only things that are the desire of their own lusts (v. 3). It may be that the things that they ask for may not be wrong or evil, but their object in asking is wrong. Their request is entirely centered on self and selfish desires, and not what is for God's

glory or for the benefit of others. It is when we ask according to His will that He hears us, so we often ask amiss and fail to receive what we are requesting.

Worldliness is Related

James says that those desires are characteristic of “adulterers”. Adultery is only another example of a lustful desire but he links it with desires for the things of the world. That attitude is characteristic of this world and those who are a part of it, and he boldly states that it is a form of “friendship of the world.” The world system and God are mutually antagonistic, they are enemies, so to demonstrate that kind of strong desire is to show that one is on the world's side. James' language is very strong: anyone who is determined to be (“will be”) a friend of the world is constituted an enemy of God. That may suggest that this one is not saved at all, but that's not emphasized but only strongly suggested. James may be simply meaning that this is an expression of unfaithfulness to the Lord, but those strong desires that he has described may also lead a person into moral unfaithfulness. Israel, in Exodus 32, when they turned away from their faithfulness to the Lord (which they had strongly professed), also became involved in moral sin so that the entire camp was defiled and came under God's judgment. In the prophets, God accuses Israel many times of adultery and unfaithfulness to the covenantal relationship with Jehovah that had been established and confirmed at the beginning (Isaiah 57:3, Jeremiah 9:2, Hosea 3:1, etc.). This was a grief to Him and the ruin of the nation.

John asserts plainly that a love for the world (system) is an indication that the love of the Father isn't in one because all that is in the world isn't of the Father. A believer in Christ cannot afford to be dabbling in those things that are diametrically opposed to God and not be unfaithful to Him.

V. 5 isn't a direct quotation of scripture but it gives the substance of its truths. The substance is that this condition isn't what the Lord desires for His people at any time. Different commentators have handled the verse differently, some saying that the spirit that James mentions is our spirit and some that it is the Holy Spirit. The first view would teach that the spirit that we have received by nature is the root cause of our problems, that it has a tendency and strong desires for those things that are pleasing to self rather than to the Lord. As Mr. McShane has pointed out in his excellent book on James, scripture has no mention of our spirit being made to dwell within us. So the alternative interpretation seems most favored, and that is that the Holy Spirit who God has made to dwell in a believer is not the source of these lustings. It is impossible that He would cause

a person to desire those things that are contrary to God's will and detrimental to Christian character. The result of both views is nearly the same, and James is once again tracing the evil propensities to their source and showing that this is not the kind of gift (1:17) that comes from above.

Another variation on this difficult passage teaches that the Spirit within a believer has strong desires that the life that has been redeemed by God's grace should and must be exclusively devoted to the Lord. We remember from Exodus 20:5 as well as five other passages in the Old Testament that the Lord emphasizes to Israel that He is a "jealous God" and would not share their worship with others. We shouldn't forget this aspect of truth either; He desires that those who have been purchased with precious blood might live to manifest complete fidelity to Him who died and lives for them. With any of these views on the verse, the implication is the same, and that is that the Lord strongly desires that any inward spirit that we have might not be allowed to express itself by taking our devoted response away from the Lord and causing wrong behavior in our lives.

Given these important issues, v. 6 is most important. We need grace from God and "more grace" to overcome any tendencies that would take us away from true fellowship with our Lord. The question is raised as to what James is comparing this "more grace" to. Some say that it is greater grace than the power that opposes God's work, but that comparison seems faulty. Others indicate that it is more grace than we have normally received in salvation. All may be true, but it seems that it is more grace out of His infinite supply to meet the conditions that we face in order to enable a believer to yield to the purposes of God and overcome these selfish impulses. Anyone who is overcome by these selfish desires cannot blame God since there is more than enough enabling power available by humbling or submitting ourselves unto God rather than asserting our own will.

It's interesting to notice that in v 4, that anyone who desires friendship with the world becomes an opposer of God but here it is God who opposes the proud. It indicates that the proud man is actively against God and God is against him! This is most serious and should produce the result of a believer humbling himself rather than exerting himself against God. But this requires us to utilize the grace that is provided so lavishly by a giving God to meet the need. Humility is always a prerequisite for God's blessing (Psalm 34:18, Isaiah 57:15, 66:2). A proud man doesn't sense his need for divine help, so he isn't willing to submit to God's hand.

Seven Exhortations

Based on what he has been teaching, James now gives us seven cogent exhortations that are actually in the form of commands. His teaching doesn't allow a lethargically indifferent response, but rather, it demands active obedience. Those commands are

1. Submit yourselves to God
2. Resist the devil and he will flee from you
3. Draw nigh to God and He will draw nigh to you
4. Cleanse your hands
5. Be afflicted and mourn and weep
6. Humble yourselves and He will lift you up
7. Speak not evil of another

These commands seem to be linked together and form a description of what is necessary in order to exhibit genuine faith that James is emphasizing. Four are actions toward God (submit, draw nigh, be afflicted, humble yourselves). One is against the devil (resist). The remaining two are toward ourselves and other believers (cleanse your hands, speak not evil). Again, three of them are followed by a promised result that should motivate our response. These are relationships that every believer has and spiritual exercise is needed in every one. Submission to God is the opposite of resisting the devil and is necessary to do so. Drawing nigh to God will make one realize the need to cleanse our hands. Having a proper attitude toward ourselves in God's presence will affect our attitudes and speech toward other believers.

1. "Submit to God". This verb is passive, so it implies that our attitude toward God must be to allow His will to prevail in our lives. It means to align ourselves under His authority and practically recognize His sovereignty in our lives. Eve failed to submit to God's authority (and possibly Adam's) so she failed to resist the devil. As we submit to God, He will enable us to resist the devil, for we will be aligning ourselves under His authority and trusting in His protection.

2. "Resist the devil and he will flee from you". This tells us that it is possible to overcome Satan's power, though we are told to "flee temptation", whether in the form of fornication (1 Corinthians 6:18), idolatry (1 Corinthians 10:14), or youthful lusts (2 Timothy 2:22) or conditions described in 1 Timothy 6:1-11). We read of those who come out of the Great Tribulation in Revelation 12:11 who overcame the devil's power by the blood of the Lamb. John says that "greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

3. "Draw nigh to God and He will draw nigh to you." This suggests a reciprocal reaction as if to say that God is always ready to draw near to anyone who

draws near to Him. Many times the call for God's people to draw near to God goes out in the Old Testament; we think of how many times we read of Moses drawing near to God to commune with Him and to receive direction in crisis. The priests were those who were privileged to draw near to God, but there were requirements placed on that action (Leviticus 10:3, 21:21). It also described those in general who drew near to God in worship (Isaiah 29:13, Hosea 12:6). Hebrews 7:19 speaks of those who draw near to God on the ground of a better hope that is ours in Christ. Similar language is found in Hebrews 10:1 we read that the old economy couldn't make the "comers unto perfect" so they failed to enjoy the closeness of the privilege that we have in Christ to "draw near to God." But perhaps the main objective is to emphasize the need to maintain a close attitude of dependent fellowship with God, to rely on Him to grant the grace needed.

4. "Cleanse your hands" is a condition that we realize is essential to be able to draw near to God. But it also will result from that action. It is essential, even as it was a continual requirement for the priests to wash repeatedly in their functions toward God on behalf of the worshipers (Exodus 30:19-21). Washing the hands indicates conditions necessary to maintain in one's life, but "purify your hearts" tells us, as always, that God is looking at more than outward conditions, but desires a right interior condition. If our hearts are pure and free from defilement, then our deeds will inevitably result. We need to purify our hearts from all that would rob us and God of the full reality of communion that can exist and be enjoyed. This calls for self-examination and confession. We remember the teaching of the Lord Jesus in Matthew 5-7 where He was going beyond the outward deeds that were required under the law and stressing those conditions that were of the heart and mind (Matthew 5:20 forward). Jehovah's condemnation of Israel is that "this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men". The Lord echoed that verdict in Matthew 15:8. The Pharisees were scrupulous to maintain an outwardly clean life according to the law, but their hearts were wicked and evil.

James says that the heart needed to be purified because it was seeking to hold two objects. This goes back to 1:8 where he says that such a man is unstable in what he does. Anyone like this is trying to serve two masters (Matthew 6:24). Hearts that are purified are settled on one object that enables the believer to live a life that is according to God's will. How much better to be like the psalmist in Psalms

57:7, 108:1, who could say, "My heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise..."

5. "Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep". This would describe the response of anyone who has drawn near to God, because, like Isaiah in ch. 6 of his prophecy, one glimpse of the blazing glory of His holy presence makes one deeply conscious of his own sinfulness. This would be the response of a convicted heart, confessing personal unfitness for His presence. The joys of this world may be exhilarating but they are short-lived and empty. There is great value in afflicting one's soul. We think of Israel on the Day of Atonement; they were to "afflict their souls" (Leviticus 16:31, 23:32). It was a day when sins had to be addressed and dealt with according to God's standard. Such an action may be difficult and sorrowful, but it is beneficial and has blessed results in one's life.

The laughter of this world is empty and short-lived, but the joy that a believer can have when in a right relationship with His Lord is deep and lasting. Remarkably, our Lord is never recorded to have laughed; we read that He rejoiced (Luke 10:21) because of what God was doing to reveal truth to babes. His joy was in the will of God (Hebrews 12:2) as ours should also be. But being conscious of sin in our hearts and lives makes us mourn (Matthew 5:4) and feel heaviness of spirit. It is far better to mourn over sin now, as Peter did when he was convicted of his sin in the palace of the high priest (Luke 22:62), than to weep eternally (Luke 6:25).

6. "Humble yourselves in the sight of God and He shall lift you up". It seems obvious that if we are conscious of the presence of the Lord and see ourselves in that light, we will inevitably humble ourselves. Pride is the opposite and is the evidence that we are away from God. We remember Job's repeated assertion that he desired to come before God to defend himself and to declare his innocence, but when that moment came, he could only say, "I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:6). Isaiah's confession Isaiah 6:5 when in God's presence was "Woe is me..." James' words express the experience of the publican in Luke 18:14. He humbled himself in God's presence and went home lifted up, being justified by God through the sacrifice. 1 Peter 5:6 tells us similarly, "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time." This is an action that is required on our part and is essential for the raising up that God desires to give. Man tends to lift himself up in pride, but God lifts the lowly and sets them among princes (1 Samuel 2:8).

“Behold the Man”

Matthew 26:5

“that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled”

Larry Steers, Ontario, Canada

After His apprehension in the garden, the Lord was eventually delivered to Pontus Pilate. Pilate experienced a tenuous relationship with the Jews. Making his responsibility more difficult authorities in Rome expected a degree of peace and order in Judea. With the Lord in his court, and certainly no stranger to Roman jurisprudence, three times the judge pronounced “I find no fault in this man” (John 18:38, 19:4, 6). Roman law demanded a prisoner declared innocent be liberated.

But the howling mob was at the gate. Pilate was answerable to Rome, but had to find a way to appease the Jews. In an attempt to placate Jewish demands Pilate responded “Take ye Him and crucify Him” (John 19:6). The Jews reminded Pilate “it is not lawful for us to put any man to death”, (John 18:31). But later they stoned Stephen with no authority from Rome.

The judge and the demanding Jews were void of understanding that the scriptures had to be fulfilled. The Lord had declared, “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness even so must the Son of man be lifted up” (John 3:14).

But the dye was not yet cast. Pilate would make one last attempt to evade responsibility and satisfy Jewish hatred. Our Lord would be ruthlessly scourged. The scripture must be fulfilled “I gave my back to the smiters” (Isaiah 50:6). To paraphrase a little, the omnipotent Lord said, “Here is my back, I give it to you”. “The plowers plowed upon my back: they made long their furrows” (Psalm 129:3). “Plovers” and “smiters” are plural nouns indicating two men alternating stroke after stroke on the Saviour’s back. The scriptures again were being fulfilled.

The flagrum, the scourge, one of the most violent instruments that could be administered by men. Leather strips were embedded with fragments of bone and other objects. Bound to the scourging post, the scourge would tear the flesh on the back and snap around the breast and head. The plowers and scourgers knew nothing about forty stripes save one. The scourge was an instrument of capitol punishment. Men often died under this evil weapon. When the Lord opened not His mouth they would become more violent with the scourge.

The scourge would remove all appearance of humanity from a man.

Pilate would make this one last futile attempt to extricate himself of any responsibility for the pro-

ceedings he found himself embedded in. He would present the brutally scourged man to the rabble throng seething with hatred. The judge found no compassion in that mob.

Notice Pilate’s introduction, “Behold the man” (John 19:5). The word “behold” is found 27 times in the New Testament. Fourteen of these references are used by John. He often quotes others who used the word. When John is exercised to draw the special attention of his readers to a remarkably significant sight, he uses “behold”. John quotes Pilate three times using the word (John 19:4,5,14).

“Behold the man” (John 19:5). “The man” was “the image of the invisible God” (Colossians 1:15). He was the creator, “for by Him were all things created” (Colossians 1:16). Yes, He stood that day about to become the bearer of sin in the hours of darkness on the cross. But also of vital, important significance to Him was that the scripture should be perfectly fulfilled.

“I gave my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair” (Isaiah 50:6). In wondrous grace He placed His face within the reach of the hands of men to fulfill the scriptures. In the same reference Isaiah also records “I hid not my face from shame and spitting”. On the cross His face was covered with the congealed spit of both Jew and Gentile, fulfilling the scripture.

They led Him away as a lamb to the slaughter. Arriving at calvary, before the act of crucifixion He was offered vinegar. This was not to deaden the pain, for the whole purpose of crucifixion was to inflict pain and suffering. Vinegar (oxos = sour wine) mingled with gall was a potion to momentarily make it easier for soldiers to drive nails through hands and feet. The thieves would struggle and curse. But to the amazement of the crucifiers the Lord laid His hands on the cross. It must have impressed them; this man wants to die.

Our Lord refused the vinegar before being crucified. But it was offered by the soldiers as they mocked him (Luke 23:36). The writer visited an elderly brother confined to a hospital bed. He asked for a glass of water. I lifted his head and put the glass to his lips. Had I withdrawn it the act would have been cruel. That is what the soldiers did as they mocked Him.

But there was a third occasion the vinegar was offered. The scripture must be fulfilled which reads “in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink” (Psalm 69:21) which He received. The possible effects would have no bearing on His great work that was complete.

The scriptures prophetically declared that, “he was numbered with the transgressors (Isaiah 53:12) and “the scripture was fulfilled” (Mark 15:28). The

beautiful accuracy of scripture can be noted in Luke 23:33 “the one on the right hand and the other on the left”. The thief judged the Roman Empire saying “this man hath done nothing amiss” (Luke 23:41). Note John 19:18, “two other with him”. The word “other is “allos” meaning “other of the same kind” or, which is of the same character as the thieves, because this was how He appeared in the sight of men.

David wrote: “He keeps all his bones: not one of them is broken” (Psalm 34:20) and again “they pierced my hands and my feet” (Psalm 22:6). Such descriptive language was foreign to David’s experience. John 19:36 records one of the great wonders of crucifixion. Cruel, heartless crucifiers would place the nail roughly and drive it with vengeance. The human foot has 26 bones and the hand 27. There are 106 bones in two hands and two feet. Marvelous that the hand of God directed those nails—no bone broken!

Surrounded by dogs and mockers, enclosed by the assembly of the wicked, (Psalm 22:16), taunted by men, the Son of God suffers.

Looking down from the cross the Lord witnessed Roman soldiers gambling for his garments. The scriptures were being fulfilled, “They part my garments among them and cast lots upon my vesture” (Psalm 22:18). It is significant that all four Gospel writers record these moments. Four men departed from the scene carrying part of the Lord’s clothing. In the same verse where Luke refers to the casting of lots, he also records the prayer of the Lord, “Father, forgive them: for they know not what they do”, (Luke 23:34). John 19:23 writes about the garments (likely the inner garments of which every soldier received a part). But there was a coat “without seam woven from the top throughout” (John 19:13). That must have been a beautiful coat woven by a hand devoted to the Lord. As the soldiers examined it they concluded “Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it whose it shall be that the scripture might be fulfilled which saith, “They parted his raiment, and cast lots””. (Luke 19:34),

There was an awful darkness which settled upon not only the immediate scene of the crucifixion of Christ but the whole of His creation was plunged into the darkness. An indescribable three hours ensued. No human eye pierced that darkness. God was a witness to all the indignities that sinful men vented upon His Son. In the darkness a holy God would pour His wrath upon the Saviour. The cry from the cross would pierce the universe “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Psalm 22:1). The answer is given in Psalm 22:3, “Thou art holy”. One once made the comment after the Lord’s supper, “We never got to the darkness this morning”. The scripture that was fulfilled in the darkness is recorded by the prophet Zechariah, “Awake, O sword against my shepherd, and

against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered” (Zechariah 13:7). The full, indescribable intensity of the fire from heaven fell in the darkness (Lamentations 1:13).

Satan and all of the powers of darkness were arrayed against the lonely sufferer hanging on a Roman cross. The greatest battle of the eternal ages has been fought and the victory won. That triumphant cry pierced the universe, “It is finished”, (John 19:30).

But another scripture must yet be fulfilled. “they shall look upon me whom they have pierced” (Zechariah 12:10). The restraining power of God prohibited the breaking of the legs of the Lord Jesus Christ. The order seems significant. They broke the legs of the one thief, looked at but bypassed the center cross and broke the legs of the other thief. Returning to the center cross the soldiers were convinced that he was dead already. One is caused momentarily to wonder what would possess the mind of a man to further mutilate the body of a dead man. We know what he did not know or understand. Blood must be shed. You will find no record of blood from the scourging, the crown of thorns or the pierced hands and feet. Read carefully because I did not write there was no blood but there is no record of blood.

Contemplate the words we love written by Isaac Watts:

“See from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down”

These words were carefully written - love and not blood.

The cry “finished” has reached the soul of many a sinner who has rested their soul for salvation on that great finished work. But the blood was for the eyes of God. The destroyer had to see the blood on that Passover night in Egypt. God dwelling above the mercy seat and between the cherubim had to see the blood which the high priest sprinkled on the mercy seat. The spear pierced the side of the victor of Calvary and precious blood flowed.

On the cross the Lord was providing a ground upon which the eternal God could maintain His holy being and could righteously forgive a sinner.

But the Lord was also fulfilling every scripture concerning his suffering and death.

We should reverently sing the words of Edward Denny:

‘Tis in Thy cross, Lord, that we learn
What Thou in all Thy fulness art;
There, through the darkening cloud discern
The love of Thy devoted heart.

Tw'as mighty love's constraining power
That made Thee, blessed Saviour, die;
Tw'as love, in that tremendous hour,
That triumphed in Thy mighty cry.

It is human to stand with the crowd,
it is divine to stand alone.
It is man-like to follow the people, to drift
with the tide; it is God-like to follow
a principle, to stem the tide.

God's Pleasure in the Assembly

William Bunting

Speaking of "the decencies of civilization and the discoveries of secular knowledge," Dean Alford once wrote, "He must read prophecy but ill who does not see under all these seeming improvements the preparation for the final development of the Man of Sin, the great re-possession, when idolatry and the seven worse spirits shall bring the outward frame of so-called Christendom to a fearful end." In view of this statement, which no spiritually instructed mind can question, it will be appreciated that the achievements of man, grand though they may appear, and notwithstanding that they minister to him so much pleasure and are applauded so loudly by his contemporaries, afford no joy to the heart of God. Indeed, to Him they can be but a grief, since they are the means which Satan employs to make the creature feel independent of his Creator.

Nevertheless God has a joy, for "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him" (Psalm 147:11). It is recorded that Enoch "walked with God" (Genesis 5:22) and "had this testimony that he pleased God" (Hebrews 11:5). The link of communion with the Lord, which sin had severed in Genesis 3:8-10 is here seen to be restored, and for 300 years Enoch's life was "one long, close, lonely walk with God." How precious it must have been to the Lord to behold His child, as with chaste spirit, and garments unspotted by a corrupt age, he moved along his pilgrim path! Visions of his rapture and of coming bliss must have been vouchsafed to him, for it was "BY FAITH, Enoch was translated that he should not see death" (Hebrews 11:5). Now, if the life of an individual believer can be so refreshing to the Lord, what pleasure He must find in a godly Assembly of His people! Where saints in collective testimony bow to the authority of His Word, and "With all lowliness meekness, longsuf-

fering, and forbearance in love, endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:2-3) what an odour of a sweet smell ascends to God! Christians have formed "Missions," "Fellowships," and "Unions," in which are found many admirable qualities. Such companies we do not wish to disparage. In many cases they are comprised of earnest souls, and we thank God for all of Christ that is seen in them. But they fall far short of a Scripturally constituted Assembly (1 Corinthians 11:2), in which Christ is owned as Lord, and in which the only creed is the Word of God. There can be no sight upon earth so delightful to our blessed Lord as this corporate testimony to His Name.

Such an Assembly existed at Thessalonica. The saints there "had become followers of the churches of God in Judaea" (1 Thessalonians 2:14) and were in turn "ensamples to all that believed in Macedonia and Achaia" (1 Thessalonians 1:7), both in zeal for the spread of the gospel, and in expectation of their Lord's return (vv. 8, 9). No fewer than five times did Paul feel constrained to express thanks to God for the grace seen in his Thessalonian converts (1 Thessalonians 1:3; 2:13; 3:9; 2 Thessalonians 1:3; 2:13). What a satisfaction they were to Him!—his "hope, joy, and crown of rejoicing" (1 Thessalonians 2:19). But above all, what a delight they must have been to God! for they had learned how they "ought to WALK, and to PLEASE God," in which Enoch-like course of life Paul wished them to "abound more and more" (1 Thessalonians 4:1). Thank God for every Assembly to-day which, in separation from the evils of clerisy and sectarianism, is seeking to "stand fast, and hold the traditions, which they have been taught, whether by word, or epistle" (2 Thessalonians 2:15). In many cases it is in conscious weakness that it is being done. But where there is humility, devotion to Christ, and singleness of eye for His glory, what pleasure the Lord finds in the obedience of His children! "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (1 Samuel 15:22).

In view of this, is not the Assembly worthy of our very best? Should not our time and talent be devoted gladly and without reserve to its holy service? Should not our interest in it be loyal and undivided? If in a day of shadows and carnal ordinances, the Psalmist said, "I had rather stand at the threshold, in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of lawlessness" (Psalm 84:10, Newberry), what unwavering fidelity we who live in the full blaze of the Christian revelation ought to evince towards the local testimony which is "the house of God, the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15). Further, since God

and Christ and the Holy Spirit dwell in it (2 Corinthians 6:16; Matthew 18:20; 1 Corinthians 3:16); since the Angels behold its order and learn lessons from its subjection to Christ (1 Corinthians 11:10), and since it is a representative of the glorious aggregate of "the Church which is His Body," through which, "in the ages to come, he will shew the exceeding riches of his grace" (Ephesians 2:7), surely we should regard it as an honor, higher than the favor of princes, to be associated with a Scriptural Assembly, to share its responsibilities, and to contribute to its strength and prosperity.

On the other hand, what a shame it is if in any way we countenance or support that which is a denial of New Testament Church principles! Alas! it has become a popular thing in certain quarters to do so today. For, not only are sectarian methods, etc., being copied and introduced in some Assemblies, but there are brethren, yes even some of the "chief men among the brethren," who speak at our Conferences and contribute to our magazines, who seem quite at home in interdenominational circles, where the truth of the local Church would be taboo, indeed, in isolated cases we have known them to pass the Assembly on the Lord's Day morning to attend the "service" in one of the kirks. "My brethren, these things ought not to be." It is difficult to believe in the sincerity of teachers whose practice is a contradiction of the principles they profess to hold. If the sheep were to follow such shepherds (?) what kind of Assemblies would there be? Beloved fellow-saints, if the religious systems are wrong, why lend them support, especially since our so doing weakens God's Assemblies? If we have learned that sectarianism is sin (Galatians 5:20), and that the whole trend of New Testament teaching is opposed to clerisy, both in its modified Protestant and extreme Papal forms, but that the Lord delights in the simplicity and obedience of those who without any pretensions gather in His Name, let us give to the up building and maintenance of Scriptural Assemblies our best—OUR ALL—in loving, devoted service, and we shall find that in them there is room enough for the discharge of our entire stewardship.

Wanted! Today!

Men and women, young and old, who will obey their convictions of truth and duty at the cost of fortune and friends and life itself.

Recognizing the Devil's Work Among Men

F. C. Jennings

I would like to put before you a picture of two men, and ask you to tell me which, in your judgment, is the best exhibition of the work of the Devil.

The first is by no means a choice character. You will find him in the saloon; very probably he will be the proprietor of the saloon. His name is not on any church roll. He is loose in life, profane in lip, careless of decencies. He is indeed "hail-fellow-well met" with every one, but yet truly esteemed by none. He is what is usually called "disreputable" by the refined, educated or religious classes, an "honest fellow" by his associates, who find it difficult to conceive of honesty in such a world as this apart from defiant ungodliness.

We will put him on one side, and now let me bring before you a man of the highest respectability and self-complacency. He is a "church member," and prides himself, not a little, on the fact.

Indeed we may safely go still further in these days, and see in him a very pillar of the church; an elder, whose wealth alone, with its consequent standing in the business, and influence in the social world, have given him this office; perhaps we may go still higher; he may even be called "The Rev." or "The Very Rev.," or what-not; it is not the position but the character, we seek to look at. Wherever he is, every breath of flattery that blows his way he appropriates to himself as his undoubted due. He is, if a man of affairs, exceedingly fond of that utterly misquoted and misused text, that perhaps more than any other has been bedraggled in the mire of man's covetousness, "be diligent in business." Nor does he shrink from any little sacrifice that shall secure the greater esteem of his fellow-men; like all else his benefactions are "respectable;" and, if he be very wealthy, they may appear princely.

Now which of these two is the truest example of the Devil's work? It will probably be admitted that the first may be accepted as an exact representation of what the Devil can do with a man, but it is difficult to see in the second any exhibition of the Devil's work at all. Quite the contrary; he is a respectable religious member of society; perhaps with some of the lesser defects inherent amongst men; but not to be associated with the Devil at all. Let us see.

It is a most striking fact that when our Lord Jesus was on earth, He never, in one single instance, witnessed to the publican and harlot that their deeds were evil. We may wonder why He did not, but it is quite sure He did not. And why? Surely because it

was unnecessary. That kind of people knew it well then, and know it well now of themselves, without any one else telling them. But to whom does He witness that their deeds are evil and they hate Him on account of that witness (John 7:7)? In the 23rd chapter of Matthew we read the sternest words that ever fell from those blessed lips. He calls those to whom He speaks – the men of the most rigid religious correctness, men of the highest social respectability, of the greatest formal piety and religious pretension; not merely "church-members" as we should now call them but church leaders – "fools and blind, blind guides, hypocrites," until in the climax of His holy indignation, He says, "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" (Matthew 23:33).

It is, then, the testimony of God's Word, whether we are prepared to accept it or not, that it is the proud, religious, self-complacent character that is a truer expression of the Devil's work amongst men than the openly profane and morally debased.

This is so utterly contrary, not merely to what is recognized in business circles, but to what is taught from the bulk of Christian pulpits, that it is difficult to sufficiently press the importance of giving it careful and candid consideration.

"I record with deep sorrow the fact that, in our days, in the case of newly converted souls, the necessity of advance and pressing forward in holiness of life is not sufficiently insisted upon, whereas the Scripture is so clear and full upon this subject. In the Scripture we find that holiness includes a real and actual cleansing from sin and pollution, in the renewing of the inner man, in a changing from glory to glory after the image of Him who created us, in conformity to Jesus Christ. Let us seek after all these things, praying earnestly, and withdrawing ourselves into the seclusion of the inner sanctuary of communion with God, Who is so inexpressibly near to us, Who desires, by the power of the resurrection of Christ, by the Spirit of holiness, to sanctify us wholly, to work by us, to live, and move in us."

Gerhard Tersteegen

Judgment Seat of Christ

Franklin Ferguson

It is well ever to keep in mind the "day of account" that is coming for us all. We are "stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Peter 4:10), and as such shall have to render to our Lord an account of our stewardship. All that we are accountable for must

needs be brought before the appointed Auditor, our Lord Jesus Christ. The Word of God has announced, "we shall all stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ" "and "every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Romans 14:10-12); moreover, "God shall bring every work into judgment" (Ecclesiastes 12:14). There can be no exemptions.

The idea held by some is that the Judgment Seat will be simply the joyous occasion of the distribution of rewards, and the conferring of honors, and the giving of praise and glory to all who deserve it; which is far from being the full truth of the matter. It will certainly be all this, but more. There will also be "hidden things of darkness" come to light; "counsels of the hearts" made manifest (1 Corinthians 4:5); the wrong materials used in our building operations will be revealed and burned; great losses suffered; rewards arid honors forfeited for ever (1 Corinthians 3:10-15). Oh, think of it! How sobering to our minds should be this serious aspect!

All the redeemed family will share equally the Father's love and the many glorious privileges of His Home on high, the eternal abode of His myriad hosts of sons and daughters. But in the Kingdom to come, the places of honor and the rewards are apportioned to those who have merited them, according to their degrees of faithfulness on earth (Matthew 25:23, Luke 19:12-19).

The question of our eternal salvation will not be raised at the Judgment Seat; that was long since settled at the Cross for every believer. The fact of our standing before Christ in our bodies of immortality disposes completely of such an idea. It is the Lord judging His people as to their testimony, works and service down here; approving and disapproving; rewarding and withholding rewards; adjusting all things by His perfect standard, once for all.

With everything finally settled and all the Lord's people having received their due, tears wiped from weeping eyes, then will the eternal glory be ushered in. No more will a cloud cross our sky, sorrow and pain will be felt no more at all, and the Church will appear "as a Bride adorned for her husband" (Revelation 21:2). Happy day that will never have a night!

Though solemn and searching as this subject is in certain respects, yet we can thank God for the Judgment Seat of Christ. It will mean much to have had the mind of Christ upon everything; with His correct estimate of all; so that never a question shall ever be raised again; but there will be the feeling of full acquiescence with all His judgment, without a tinge of jealousy at others receiving more honors than ourselves; all saints perfectly happy together, for ever, in the eternal glory of God!