

The Nazarene Fellowship Circular Letter No. 90

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Editorial

Dear Brothers and Sisters and Reader Friends, Warm Greetings in Jesus Name.

It has been very pleasant to hear from some of you and letters and phone calls are very much appreciated.

A letter from Bro. Phil Parry with a few comments on Bro. Russell Gregory's article in the last Circular Letter, he writes "There is no evidence to support the view that Adam and Eve ate of the Tree of Life, but there is evidence that they ate of the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil, I lean to the view that they did not eat of the Tree of Life from what is stated in Genesis 2:9. It is not stated here that the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil was good for food (this was Eve's view) neither the Tree of Life, and these two trees appear to be mentioned in a separate way i.e. "The Tree of Life also." This tree in fact may not have had fruit whose seed is in itself for further regeneration as the trees that were provided for Adam and Eve to eat either for palatable pleasure or sustenance.

There is only one Tree of Life of which this tree was a figure and only one way to it - God's way - though the tree was there and they had right to it as long as they were obedient, it does not mean to say that they ate of it or had any desire to, especially if it had nothing but leaves and was not provided for their natural sustenance re verse 9. Ezekiel 47:7-12 and Revelation 22:1 and 2 could be literal or figurative but in either case the prerogative remains with God and His Son." Rev. 22:14, "Blessed are they that do His commandments that they may have right to the Tree of Life." "The Gift of God is Eternal Life through Jesus Christ our Lord", perhaps we should keep open minds on whether our first parents did eat of the Tree of Life or not and keep in mind that we believers did not eat of a literal tree but Jesus said "He that eateth me even he shall live by me", "He that believeth in me hath everlasting life and I will raise him up at the last day" (incorruptible).

In this issue we have an exhortation by Bro. Leo Dreifuss entitled the 'Body of Christ', and another instalment of 'Jesus at the Bar' by A.L.Wilson. Also an article sent in by Bro. R. Gregory on "What the Law could not do," with a short article by his late father O.E.H. Gregory written in 1972 entitled "The Twelve Legions of Angels".

We pray for the welfare of you all, with Sincere Love in the Master's Service.

Harvey and Evelyn Linggood.

The Body Of Christ.

I Corinthians 12:4-13 and 26-51.

Many illustrations are used in scripture to describe the things concerning the Kingdom of God, and His plan of salvation for the saints in Christ. One such illustration particularly to the point is what we read in the first epistle to the Corinthians chapter 12, in which Paul compares the Church with the human body. Today we want to make a few comparisons between these two bodies to see just how well this comparison was chosen by God. All actions of the organs of the human body are controlled by the brain and are subject to our will. The head of the Church is Christ who controls all activities of His different assemblies, and not only that, but every believers individual life. Everybody is subject to the head, and to His supreme will.

All muscles and organs of the human body have their own functions. No two organs are alike, look alike, or are even equipped alike. They are all quite distinguishable from one another. Every member of the Church is a different person with different features, different gifts and abilities. Every one has his own task 'within the Church according to his or her abilities. Yet, just as all the members of the healthy human body work together as a well organised team, so also the members of a healthy Church co-operate for the Master's task such as preaching the gospel, caring for the sick, and so on. The Church thus appears as one body, or should appear so, with no member unduly in the foreground to emphasise his own personality, nor unduly in the background and not using his abilities that might be of service to God. Then we are told, if one member suffers, all suffer with it. We all know from our own experience that when something is wrong with one organ, we feel generally ill, and it has an effect on all the other parts of our body. So also, when one member of the Church is sick, or comes to some other personal grief, all the others try to comfort that member and show a general concern for him and by prayer ask God to heal him, or, as the case may be, ease his burden and strengthen him. In a healthy body, all members respond quickly and instantaneously to the will of the mind. If I want to raise an arm, or to turn about my face to look at an object, the muscles act as soon as I decide what I want to do. So in a healthy Church the members will respond quickly and with readiness, if work for Christ has to be done.

All muscles and organs are equipped with some special gift of strength or some ability that distinguishes them from the others. And they make use of their gifts for the general wellbeing of the body. Furthermore, by contributing of their strength for the common good of the body, they derive more strength themselves. So all of us are blessed with some special gift, maybe something we possess, or some ability we have. Let us be sure that we don't use any such blessing just for our own selfish ends, but if possible for the good of our service for the Master. And if we use our talents according to His will, He will bless us and we shall receive more gifts. For we have the Master's assurance that "whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance." And also the warning that "whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath." If we want to move a muscle, it has to get some extra energy to do its task. This energy comes from the food we take in, but it is by the action of the brain, the head, that this energy is fed to the right muscle at the right time. Our spiritual food is the word of God which by regular study of the Bible we take in. And Christ, the Head of the Church, gives us the necessary strength for what He knows is the right moment, even if we don't understand it at the time. If we have to face some special ordeal in the course of the Masters work, we can rely on Him to be with us and to strengthen us at the time. And don't let us forget that we need His strength for the ordinary daily tasks as well as the special trials, just as the organs of the human body require some strength to live all the time, not merely when we require them for some special effort. In a healthy body, the movements and actions of its parts are perfectly timed and perfectly organised. The activities of the parts of the human body are thus like those of a well-disciplined organisation. There is also discipline in the Church, though not the sort of discipline which we know in a worldly organisation. In the world, the governments, the fighting forces, and even teachers at school maintain discipline by instilling the fear of punishment. But in the Church it is rather the discipline brought about by the willing response of people of one mind and a common purpose in view,

There is a unity of purpose and of mind between Christ and the Church. But there is an even greater, a more perfect unity between Christ and His Father. This really is a model of co-operation and

like mindedness. As all the members of the human body fulfil their task with a keen response and readiness, and as the members of the Church fulfil theirs, so Christ fulfilled His mission with an even greater readiness. Like in a disciplined body of believers. His actions were not determined by fear of punishment, nor yet in order to get a reward, like a young child doing the will of his parents, although He knew .that He would rise to the glory of the Father after three days. But His actions were determined out of pure love to do the will of His Father, He resisted the temptation to call to His aid twelve legions of angels. He gave His life out of love for you and for me, for all believers of all generations, past, present and future. And He did that “while we were yet sinners,” before our conversion, while we were of this world, completely astray from God and His will. It is because of this love that we are meeting together to remember our absent Lord.

Let us then take our example from this ready response to do the Father’s will at all times for the sake of doing it and out of love for it, and not merely with the reward at Christ’s return in view, nor yet out of fear of punishment. One of the first things where we can show our readiness to do His will is in the love for our fellow men and other brethren and sisters. For God is Love. The apostle John tells us more than any other how important it is to love our neighbour. He goes as far as to tell us that unless we show such love, we are not of God, though we may profess to be. He says (I John 5:14) “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren”. Only when we practice that love can the Church fulfil its task like a healthy body. Each member being concerned in the welfare of another, not a “busybody like curiosity, not probing into the affairs of other people, but a discreet and yet sincere and warm hearted concern for one’ another, and a readiness to help. Let us close with a message from John. I John 4:21. “And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also.”

G.L. Dreifuss.

TRUTH NEVER DIES.

Though unreceived and scoffed at through the years,
Though made the butt of ridicule and jest,
Though held aloft for mockery and jeers,
Denied by those of transient power possessed,
Insulted by the insolence of lies.
TRUTH NEVER DIES.

It answers not, it does not take offence,
But with a mighty silence bides its time,
As some great cliff that braves the elements,
And lifts through all the storms its head sublime,
It ever stands uplifted by the wise.
TRUTH NEVER DIES.

As rests the Sphinx amid Egyptian sands,
As looms on high the snowy peak and crest,
As firm and patient as Gibraltar stands,
So truth, unwearied, waits the Era blest
When men shall turn to it with great surprise.
TRUTH NEVER DIES.

* * * * *

Jesus At The Bar

...continued from April.

“Now the God of peace in the “blood of the everlasting covenant make you perfect”, Hebrews 13:20 and 21,

As the Mosaic altar required ceremonial cleansing before it could be used in the service of Jehovah, it is argued that Jesus required the same on account of His “sinful” flesh. This is immediate inference, forced by a subtle influence as the needle is by the magnet: the “wish” is father to the thought. Were the witnesses to glance out at the court window and observe the street wet, they might infer that it had rained; but if, on placing their heads a little out of the window, they observe the street beyond the legal buildings “dry”, then they must forego their former conclusion for the fact that the water-cart had only passed. Were we then, to infer that the Mosaic altar required cleansing “before” it could typify the Christian altar, our inference for the moment would be as good as theirs. For an eternal settlement of this question, then, let us place our heads a little out at the “Divine window,” and observe minutely the “Divine facts.” Lo, and behold, the Mosaic altar was made out of the earth which was “cursed” (Genesis 4:v.2), hence the necessity for cleansing; but regarding the Christian altar Paul declares:

“No man speaking by the spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed.” I Corinthians 12:3. We must, therefore, abandon this idea of “cleansing Christ.” Besides if a tool were raised on the Mosaic altar, God’s design was thwarted (Exodus 20:25). Now what was written “before was for our learning, what then, is the lesson here? That the Christian altar was cut out of the mountain “without hands” (Daniel 2:45). “How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, serve Him, but if Baal, then serve him.” (1 Kings. 18:20) Then we are asked to believe that, as the Levitical priests, before they could offer for the people, must first offer for themselves, that Jesus, on account of His condemned nature, must do likewise, and Hebrews 7:27 is sited as proof. Language is incapable of expressing a stronger opposition to Scripture. Paul says:” If He were on earth (here Greek words) He could not even be a priest.” What then, becomes of the theory of His requiring to offer for His supposed ‘condemned nature’? If He, like the Levitical priests, must do this first for Himself, then the sacrifice for the people has not yet taken place, for the records declare that He died “only once”. What have we then? Simply this, that both the Levitical priest and altar required cleansing “before” they could typify Christ. But if they still insist that Jesus must shed His blood to cleanse Himself, let us see how the idea would adorn the doctrine of Christ. Imagine the Master at the memorial supper taking the bread and breaking it, saying: “This is my condemned body which is “broken for Myself. This do in remembrance of Me”! Likewise also the cup, saying: “This is the new testament in My sinful blood, which is shed for My own condemnation,” Is not this revolting in the extreme? We ask the advocates of this theory to clear themselves. Besides, where, in God’s arrangement can we find where the Priest was ever offered in sacrifice for the people? The delusion deepens as we proceed. Shall we make Christ an unclean priest, offering to cleanse Himself? Miserable alternative! Either that the denounced displeasure of Jehovah in a defiled sacrifice is a mere trifle, or that the denunciations themselves are swelling words of vanity. Are the denunciations of the prophet to “be ignored? - viz: “But ye have profaned it, in that ye say, the table of the Lord is polluted.” Is it possible to conceive of a more contemptible and polluted idea at the Lord’s table than to be partaking of the emblems of a “condemned priest”? “Will the Lord accept at your hands the torn, the lame, and the sick? But cursed be the deceiver who hath in his flock a male, and voweth and sacrificeth to the Lord a corrupt thing” (Malachi 1:12-14). “Consider the vengeance for those who count the blood of the covenant, wherewith we are sanctified, an ‘unholy thing,’ and do despite to the spirit of grace. For we know Him who hath said: Vengeance belongeth unto Me.” (Hebrews 10:29-30). A more heart-touching testimony could not be given that Jesus was “Clear at the Bar.” “Purge out therefore, the old leaven that ye may be a new mass, for Christ, our Passover, is slain for us. Let us keep the feast, not with the old leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth”. There is a thought in this Scripture to which we would draw the reader’s attention. Paul says: “Christ our Passover was slain for us.” Observe this verb is in the passive voice, indicating that Jesus did not slay Himself, neither did He offer Himself ‘on the cross.’ Paul says He was not at this time a priest (Hebrews 8:4), and therefore, the idea of His offering for His own condemnation is the strongest of all delusions. It will not do to Confound the high offices of Messiah after this fashion; we shall furnish abundant

testimony regarding Messiah's Priesthood; but we must follow the Divine order, and speak of Him first as "The Victim." John invites us to "Behold the Lamb of God" (John 1:29-36). Peter says this Lamb was without spot. Isaiah says: "He was led as a Lamb to the slaughter." John says this Lamb was slain (typically) from the foundation of the world. Abraham declared that God would provide Himself with a Lamb for a burnt offering, and he slew the type "in the stead of his son" (Genesis 22:7 and 8). Enough has been given to prove that at this time Jesus was the 'Victim.' We therefore, defy the witnesses to prove that He was at this same time a Priest. And before they pervert the mind of another soul, we would advise them to re-examine the record God has given of His Son; "because, for the time they ought to have been teachers, they have need that one teach them the first principles of the doctrine of Christ (Hebrews 5:12).

Who then was the officiating Priest in this greatest of all sacrifices? John says: "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, Behold the Lamb of God." Isaiah says: "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." What did the Levitical priest do? Paul says: "God made Him a sin-offering for us." That "God did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all." "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him." "I will smite the shepherd." Thus the Great Jehovah arranged His scheme of redemption on His foreknowledge that the Jews would "Murder" His Son (Acts 2:23, 3:18). Thus the Murderers of Gods Lamb, little knew that they were gathered together to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done (Acts iv. 27 and 28). If on the strength of all the foregoing, God is not the Sacrificer of His own Lamb, the writer must close the book in hopeless scepticism; but he rests implicit faith on "The Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world": and that the Lamb shall yet stand upon His own Mount Zion, encircled by His blood-washed myriads! Let us hear then, what the records declare regarding Messiah's Priesthood. "Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchisedek" (Psalm 60:4). Let us now hear the Apostle Paul's exposition of this: "For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath which was since the law, maketh the Son who is consecrated for evermore." Is it possible for language to present a stronger contrast? Does this favour the idea of the Lord Jesus requiring to sacrifice first to cleanse Himself? Pitiably delusion! But Dr. Thomas, J.J. Andrews, and R. Roberts declared so and though an angel from heaven preach any other doctrine, Christadelphians will render to him the civility of a bull-dog. But let us hear Paul regarding the Levitical order. He says: "And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death; but this man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood." This explicit testimony establishes the fact beyond criticism that Jesus was consecrated an "Immortal Priest." Cannot our friends now see why the Levitical priests required to offer "first for themselves"? There was no more than one divinely recognised priest-hood in the days of Jesus, and Jesus was not of that line. "For He," says Paul, "of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which, no man gave attendance at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah, of which tribe Hoses spake nothing concerning priesthood." "And," continues Paul, "it is yet far more evident; for that after the similitude of Melchizedek there ariseth another Priest who is consecrated, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life." What further testimony is necessary to prove that the idea of the Lord Jesus offering for the remission of His own "Condemnation" is the most pitiable doctrine ever propounded? But does "Sinful flesh" end here? Our friends rob Jesus of all merit, inasmuch as they declare that: "Poor Adamic flesh in which dwelleth no good thing; never could have yielded such a perfect character as that of Jesus, unless the Father had taken hold of it and wrought it for us into such a pattern." We shall transcribe the comment of Bro. Hawkins: "Here was utter helplessness, no power, no individuality, a flaccid, listless human shell, a mere automaton, moved by the Deity as an engine is by steam; the Deity Himself doing the work which passes for the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. If this was the true Christ, why did He come at all? Well might he ask; because this "Mock trial", this "Sham fight", would destroy all parallel betwixt Him and us in the matter. Does "Sinful flesh" end here? By no means. This theory says: "No mere man is able to keep the commandments of God." We have found that God imposes no law impossible to obey, and requires no obedience impossible to yield. Paul says: "God trieth no man above what he is able to bear, and will, with the trial, make a way of escape that ye may be able to bear it." But the theory says: "No mere man is able." The last words of the Blessed Master were: "Teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Do we not sin? Yea, verily; and, therefore, are 'to blame'; but if no mere man is able, blame is a mockery, and a libel on the justice of Almighty God. To confess sins beyond our power to avoid is a corruption of the Divine word. What are the facts? If the reader will take his concordance, and underline all the exhortations to

“obey, observe, do, and be obedient”, and insert his theory “No mere man is able”, we say he is a stout-hearted soul, who will not feel ashamed of himself. “Awake to righteousness and sin not.” Asa’s heart was “perfect with the Lord all his days” (1 Kings 15:14). Enoch, Genesis 5:22-24. Noah, Genesis 7:1. Caleb, Numbers 14:24. Levi, Malachi 2:6. What then, does Peter mean: “A yoke which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear”? The interpretation of the Pharisees had this effect (Matthew 23:4); but there is a more rational explanation. The law was added “that the offence might abound” (Romans 5:20). It was the ministration of death; a remembering of sins every year, the ministration of condemnation. Could they “bear” it then? I trow not. Another had to bear it for them (Galatians 3:15). This supposed “Sinful flesh” germinating in all the actions of man is the most convenient excuse for his shortcomings. But though the tongue may charge them all to that account, the conscience smites and stings with the conviction that they might, if we would, have been avoided. Pious, canting hypocrisy finds in ‘Sinful flesh’ a grateful refuge;

to be continued...

What the Law Could Not Do

Dear Brethren and Sisters,

Jesus said “A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another,” (John 15:54). What was new about this commandment far the law stated “Love thy neighbour as thyself”, and here Jesus is saying “Just as I have loved you, so ye must love one another”? Is this a new and greater commandment?

There is an exhortation in Matthew 5:59 to 42 “Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.

The exhortation is to do more than necessary. The commandments of the law do not require that we turn the other cheek, or give our cloak also, or walk the second mile. But Jesus did all these. Not only did Jesus keep the law perfectly He also did more than the law required of Him, He did more than was necessary for Himself and what He did extra was entirely for us. After keeping the law perfectly He gave Himself for us. Such was His great love for the faithful. “Having loved His own He loved them unto the end.” (John 15:1)

About 40 years ago I was given four Bible Glass essays entitled “What the Law Could Not Do”. These essays are typed on poor quality ‘war time’ paper torn from a school exercise book and the staples which held them together have long since rusted away leaving brown stains down the side of the pages.

There is no name attached to these essays, and I cannot recall who the writer was, which is a pity, for having read these articles again after so long a time I found them very helpful and I would like to have given credit where it is due.

These essays contain a large amount of repetition, which indicates they were given at weekly intervals, so I have endeavoured to condense these four into one without losing any of the points the writer makes. I hope you too, find the result helpful and of interest.

Your comments will be most welcome.

Sincerely your Brother in Jesus,

What The Law Could Not Do

The Giving of the Law

For 2500 years from Adam to Moses we know of no written law of God to reveal to man the perfect righteousness and holiness of God and then the law was given to Moses, after the first born of Israel had “been redeemed by the “blood of the Passover Lamb, upon Mount Sinai. (Exodus 15:15 and 16).

There was a threefold giving of this law. The first time it was spoken orally to Moses on the Mount and communicated to the children of Israel, who accepted it and promised to keep it, “All that the Lord has spoken we will do.” (Exodus 19:8). How little the children of Israel realised it was a very hard thing to keep God’s law perfectly, and failure meant judgement and death. Israel, in their blindness, having confidently proclaimed their desire and ability to keep God’s law, the Lord now calls Moses back up the mountain to give him the written copy of that law inscribed on tables of stone. This was the second giving of the law “and the Lord said unto Moses, ‘Come up to me into the mount, and be there: and I will give thee tables of stone and a law and commandments which I have written: that thou mayest teach them.’ And Moses went up into the mount and a cloud covered the mount... and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights.” (Exodus 24:12 and 16). “And He gave unto Moses, when He had made an end of communing with him upon Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God.” (Exodus 31:18).

Forty Days and Forty Nights

Why was the Lord communing with Moses for forty days and forty nights on the mount when He could have given Moses the two tables of the law and immediately sent him back to deliver them to the children of Israel?

There seems to be two reasons for the span of forty days; the one being to test Israel and show them that they could not, by their own efforts, keep God’s law even for forty days. They had, confidently boasted their ability “All that the Lord hath commanded we will do” and had to be convinced of their utter failure to please God by their own efforts. How they failed. “When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron and said unto him “Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.” (Exodus 32:1). The rest of the story of the Golden Calf is well known. This people who had heard the word “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” are now dancing, carousing and offering sacrifices to just such a lifeless idol!

The other reason for the delay of forty days and nights before Moses returned to the people was to make a provision for escaping the judgement that the breaking of the law would bring. According to the law which Moses delivered, the death sentence was pronounced upon the sinner, and so, at the same time God gave the law which cursed the transgressor He also made provision for the redemption from that curse of death.

The Tabernacle

When Moses went up Mount Sinai to receive the tables of the law, he also received the plan of redemption in the symbol of the pattern of the Tabernacle, God’s answer to the broken law, for during the forty days God was giving him His provision for salvation for those who were even then transgressing those very commandments. Had Moses come down from the mountain with only the tables of the law, it would have been the end of the nation of Israel, but together with the tables of the law came also the message of salvation, the redemption by blood. The writer to the Hebrews tells us Moses received the pattern of the Tabernacle at the same time he was given the tables of stone. “Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the Tabernacle: for See, saith He, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed thee in the mount.” (Hebrews 8:5).

The Tabernacle was called the Tent of Meeting, for here, on the basis of the shed blood, the sinner could come to God. So when Moses came down from the mount after forty days and nights he brought the two things: 1) The law which condemned sinners, and 2) The pattern of the Tabernacle pointing to Jesus through whom we have redemption and forgiveness.

The law condemned the sinner, and Moses on coming down from the mount and seeing the people carousing, in his righteous anger, cast the tables of stone upon the ground and broke them to pieces, showing what Israel had already done by their worship of the Golden Calf. Before Moses could present them with the tables of the law, they had already broken them. But God anticipated Israel's failure, and so, in His mercy, He provided again a temporary covering, pointing to the Lord Jesus Christ, who was to take away the sin of the world, so that the transgressor might be spared. and not perish.

The provision in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ was symbolised and taught by the pattern and the instructions for the Tabernacle which was God's answer to the judgement of the law. Every part of this Tabernacle pointed to God's substitutionary atoning Lamb and was climaxed in the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies.

The Third Giving of the Law

The tables of stone which God had made were broken at the foot of the mount and must needs be replaced and this is the third giving of the law. "And the Lord said to Moses, 'Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first: and I will write upon these tables the words that were in the first tables, which thou brakest, and be ready in the morning, and. come up in the morning unto mount Sinai... and he hewed two tables of stone like unto the first; and Moses rose early in the morning and went up unto mount Sinai, as the Lord had commanded him, and he took in his hand the two tables of stone.'" (Exodus 34:1-4).

Now this copy of the law was to be hidden in the Ark of the Covenant in the Tabernacle, The Ark of the Covenant was the central object, the very heart of the Tabernacle teaching. It was a wooden box overlaid with gold and covered by a lid of solid gold with two cherubim overshadowing it. In this box, or Ark was placed these second tables of the law - this law which demanded and cried out for justice. So God placed over this law a lid called the "Mercy-seat". Within the Ark, the law pronounced the sentence of death upon the sinner, but God provided a covering. The Mercy-seat, or cover of the Ark was a type of the Lord Jesus, He is called our Mercy-seat in Romans 3:25. Here we read concerning Jesus "whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood," The word translated 'propitiation' is '*hilasterion*' in the original and means literally "Mercy-seat." Upon this Mercy-seat covering the law which called for the death of the sinful nation, the High Priest, once a year, on the day of Atonement, took blood from the alter in the Court of the Tabernacle and sprinkled it upon the Mercy-seat over the (broken) law, and then when God descended in the cloud of shekinah glory into the Holy of Holies He did not look upon the broken law but the blood instead. God had said before, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you..." (Exodus 12:13).

All this was fulfilled by Jesus. He proved the same two things that Moses proved by his sojourn on the mount for forty days and nights: 1). The awful sinfulness of the human heart, in contrast to God's perfect law of righteousness, and 2). To demonstrate God's love and mercy in providing salvation, which the law could not. "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh" God did by sending His Son to redeem us and then to provide us with continual forgiveness throughout our present life.

The first thing the coming of Jesus proved was that the law could be kept and that sin was our fault, for Jesus was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin. The crucifixion of Jesus was the crime of all time, by condemning to death the only One whom the law could not condemn. But Jesus coming not only showed the weakness of the human race and the failure of the law to make men better, but by dying on the cross and shedding His blood He opened the way whereby we sinners could be declared righteous; for His blood now stands between the faithful and God who said "when I see the blood, I will pass over you."

What the law could not do Jesus did, for during His lifetime in the flesh He condemned sin and at the same time provided forgiveness for the sinner who will go to Him in faith. By the shedding of His blood, by the substitutionary atoning death and resurrection, the Throne of God, which by the law was a throne of judgment and death, became a throne of grace, mercy and life.

From Adam to Christ

How were people saved before Jesus died and rose to justify the faithful believer? How was Abraham saved? The Bible tells us that the law was not given to Israel until 430 years after Abraham was saved, (Galatians 3:17). Certainly Abraham was not saved by keeping the law, nor was he kept saved by it. However, the Bible takes great pains in telling us how Abraham was saved. In the first three chapters of Romans Paul had gone to great lengths to prove that no one was ever saved by works, but by grace. He comes to the final conclusion in chapter three verse 28 “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.”

This was a difficult truth for his hearers to accept, for they made great pretence at keeping the law and so Paul refers them to Abraham, who was revered and honoured by all. He asks “How then was Abraham saved? By the law, or by grace?” Listen to Paul “What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? (always the final word) Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh (the works of the law) is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” (Romans 4:1-5).

What did Abraham believe? He believed what God said. He believed the good news of the virgin birth, the redeeming blood and the resurrection of Jesus! “And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying. In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then, they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, ‘cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.’ But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, the just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: the man that doeth them (the works of the law) shall live in them.” (Galatians 3:8-12).

Paul contrasts faith and the law, and proves that Abraham was saved by faith, by believing the gospel. So what was the gospel which Abraham believed? Let us define what we mean by Gospel, The word in the Greek is ‘evangelium’ or ‘good news’. Usually the gospel is defined as the good news of the death and resurrection based on Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 15:3 “That Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures. And that He was buried and that He rose again the third day according to the scriptures,” But there is more to the good news than this, for the good news also includes the virgin birth.

The Virgin Birth and Isaac

The virgin “birth was declared to be the gospel by the angel on the hills of Judea, for the angel announced “Fear not; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy... for unto you is born this day... a Saviour.” (Luke 2:10,11). The word here translated ‘good tidings’ is the Greek word ‘evangelium’, the gospel, for the miraculous begetting of Jesus is a very important part of the Gospel message.

God revealed to Abraham the gospel of the miraculous conception, the substitutionary death and the glorious resurrection of the coining Redeemer. Abraham believed in the supper-natural conception of a promised son, for God had promised him a seed, in the birth of a son. God had said concerning Sarah, “I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her . . . , and she shall be. a mother of nations . (Genesis 17:16). But the years dragged on and this promise remained unfulfilled until Sarah had long passed the age at which, in the course of nature, she could conceive. Abraham was 100 years old and Sarah was 90 when we read “Now Abraham and Sarah were old and well stricken in age; and it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women.” (Genesis 18:11). Sarah had well passed the age of child bearing (Romans 4:19

and Hebrews 11:11), and it was at this time God told Abraham that he and Sarah would become parents of the promised son, Abraham believed this word of God, even though it was impossible in the course of nature, and it would take a miracle, a supernatural act, to make these two old people parents of a son, Abraham “believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness.” (Genesis 15:6). Abraham believed the gospel of the birth of a promised son by a supernatural conception, and the birth of Isaac was as great a miracle as the virgin birth of Jesus, although of course, in the case of Isaac there were two human parents.

The “Slaying” of Isaac and His “Resurrection”

There is more to the gospel than the virgin birth. The next step is the substitutionary death of this promised son. This part of the gospel was preached to Abraham and believed by him. When the miraculously begotten son, Isaac, was a grown young man Abraham was commanded to take him to mount Moriah and sacrifice him upon the alter. Abraham again believed the gospel and in Genesis 22 we have a detailed account of Abraham (type of the Father) taking his son (type of Jesus) up the mountain and there potentially and typically offering his son upon the alter. Yes, Abraham believed that while he would have to put his son to death, God would also resurrect him. It had to be that way. How else could God fulfil His promise that in Isaac would his seed be called as Isaac had no seed when he was to die. If then God Was to keep His word, Abraham reasoned. God would have to raise him from the dead after the sacrifice. But in the event, Isaac was not literally slain, nevertheless. God reckoned it as though it actually occurred. And then God provided a substitutionary ram to die in Isaac’s stead, to take his place. But as far as God was concerned He reckoned it as though Isaac was actually slain, and that Abraham also potentially sacrificed his son. Abraham looked ahead and saw in this the gospel of the supernatural conception, the substitutionary death and the glorious resurrection of the Greater Son of Isaac, for we read in Hebrews 11:17 “By faith, Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son... accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure, “(type), For to Abraham, Isaac was as good as dead for three whole days from the time of the command to sacrifice his son until God spared him. So when God suddenly intervened it was a potential resurrection of the son» Abraham, therefore believed the gospel of the miraculous conception, the substitutionary death and the victorious resurrection after three days.

Abraham understood that the birth, death and resurrection of Isaac pointed to the birth, death and resurrection of the Greater Son, the promised seed of which Isaac was only a type. In Genesis 22:14, after he had offered his son and saw him restored, Abraham called the name of that place JEHOVAH-JIREH, “The Lord will provide as it is said to this day, ‘In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen.’

This then was the gospel Abraham believed and by which he was saved. It had nothing to do with him keeping the law, for that was not yet given, and. God’s plan has never changed. Salvation today is still believing what God says about His only Son, who was virgin born, who died to redeem us and who rose again from the dead. Paul says, referring to Abraham’s faith, “Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him (for righteousness) but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.” (Romans 4:23-25), Salvation is believing “the record God gave of His Son” (John 5:10,11). Salvation is by faith in the virgin born, crucified, risen Saviour. The law is bad news for the sinner, the gospel of redemption is good news for the faithful.

The Laws Requirements

The law of God is holy, eternal, perfect and good, it is the Devine pattern of righteousness which God required of those who would be saved by their works. The law of God is powerful and is absolutely just in treating all alike without respect of persons. There are no exceptions, for the soul that sinneth, it shall die. It is inflexible and rigid and makes no allowance for effort if that effort fails to measure up to every single demand of the perfect law. The law knows no distinction between big sins and little sins as far as guilt is concerned. Sin is sin. “Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are

written in the book of the law to do them.” (Galatians 3:10). And as Paul records “for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God,” (Romans 3:25).

While the law is holy it cannot produce holiness in the transgressor . While the law is perfect, it cannot produce perfection in sinners. While the law is just, it cannot justify injustice nor unrighteousness. These things the law cannot do nor was it ever intended, to do. The law reveals the perfect righteousness of a holy God and. righteousness is the one requirement for salvation for those depending on the law.

James says “For whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.” (James 2:10). Adams sin in taking of the forbidden, fruit we would, call petty larceny, but God regarded it as rebellion and His righteousness was incompatible with the unrighteousness of Adam. The law reveals the gravity of sin and the righteousness of God.

No Judgement

The law stands as the pronouncer of death to all who fail to accept, by faith, God’s means of salvation from it’s power and condemnation and curse. We do not meet the high standards of the law and we cannot lower it’s standards to meet our own imperfections. While the law is powerful in condemning the sinner it is powerless to save the sinner. Also it is powerless to condemn the faithful in Christ, for the child of God is ever free from its judgement. For there is no judgement to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit and in spite of our failures there is NO JUDGEMENT. There may well be the chastening of the Lord when we offend, but there is no judgement, for if this were not the case it would mean that each time the believer sinned he would need to be baptised. That cannot be and God has made provision for our sins after we have been baptised into Christ, for He is our High Priest interceding for us and when “we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness,” (John 1:9). “For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made us free from the law of sin and death” (Romans 8:2). For we have passed from death into life.

Not Our Way but His

In Romans chapter 7 Paul, speaking of the time “before his conversion and while he was yet “kicking against the pricks,” admits his failure to keep the law of God by his own efforts. Paul earnestly desired to keep the law of God but found the desires of the flesh opposing him at every turn. He now, after his conversion, disclaims any perfection of his own and relies entirely upon the imputed perfection of Jesus. He now rejoices in the fact that there is now therefore no condemnation (judgement) to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit,

God sees us in Christ as perfect and sinless and accepts us, not on the basis of our own righteousness, but on the basis of the imputed righteousness of Jesus. The law could not give us this righteousness, and it was beyond our reach as sinners, so the scripture says “what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh. God, sending His Son in the likeness of sins flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.” (Romans 8:3).

The failure of the law to justify the sinner became the occasion for God to step in and redeem lost humanity, for God, sending His Own Son in our likeness, tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin, as a sin offering, to condemn sin once and for all, for Jesus was born with our humanity, with our corruptible nature.

By Jesus miraculous conception and virgin birth He assumed our human nature but escaped the guilt of Adam’s sin. (He was “Free-born, of whom Paul was a type). The law could not redeem Adam’s race so God sent His Son to redeem lost humanity from bondage to sin. But Jesus’ miraculous conception and virgin birth was not sufficient of itself to obtain redemption for us. It was only the first step. While Jesus did not share Adam’s condemnation as we do, Adam’s sin had first to be taken care of

and in order to pay for Adam's transgression every demand of the law had to be fully met and Jesus did this in His perfect life of obedience for He said "Who convinceth Me of sin?" Jesus fought extremely hard against sin in order to condemn it "who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared." (Hebrews 5:7). In the days of His flesh tells us when Jesus condemned sin as in Romans chapter eight where Paul says Jesus "condemned sin in the flesh" that is. He condemned sin while He was in the flesh. This is why Jesus was so very precious in the eyes of His Father. The righteous demands of the law must be met and the price paid to the last farthing. This was accomplished by Jesus, who needed no redemption for Himself, who was free of Adam's sin, took it upon Himself to pay the price of our redemption on Calvary's cross.

The fact that the law cannot save the sinner, nor keep those in Christ saved, is not the fault of the law but of our weakness and sinfulness, because we cannot, of our own efforts, attain unto the righteousness of God. So God, in His great love for us, sent His Son into the world, and though He was born with the same nature as ourselves. He trusted not in His own strength, but appealing constantly to His Father, He walked not after the flesh, and paying the price required by the law for our redemption, offered us His own righteousness that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us. Not by us, but IN us. Have we been trying to make ourselves fit for salvation? Have we tried to earn God's favour by doing our best? Our best is not good enough. We must accept His righteousness and live by faith. Abraham was saved by believing. "Abraham believed God and it was accounted unto him for righteousness." And even as God is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6), a person may believe in God and be lost for ever and indeed will be, if all he does is believe in God, for hers is no diligent seeking. It is necessary to believe and seek diligently. We are His disciple and must follow His discipline.

We are His servants and our duty is to serve Him.

The great things Jesus accomplished on our behalf satisfied all the requirements of the law and condemned sin. It shewed the awfulness of sin and the great love of God and His own great love for us, for "greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends... "(John 15:15). The result is that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us! The imputed righteousness provided by Jesus, who died to pay the price demanded by the law; who rose from the dead to take His own righteousness and clothe us with it!

The price is now paid and because we are in Christ, God looks upon us as being righteous, for Jesus is "made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption," (1 Corinthians 1:30). God accepts what Jesus has done on our behalf and reckons it to our account. Now He sees us in Jesus as "to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved. In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace," (Ephesians 1:6,7).

The four essays of which the above is a synopsis was written about 1948
The writer is unknown.

Russell Gregory.

The Twelve Legions Of Angels

Christ was not under a wrong impression when He said that He could ask His Father for twelve legions of angels; for He knew that His Father would have given them to Him if He did but ask; in which case does it not prove that Christ that the laying down His life for His Friends was a voluntary act and in no way would He have broken any of God's laws had He declined to face the cross? The thought that Christ must die on the cross in order to fulfil all righteousness would make God an accessory to Christ breaking a Divine commandment had He accepted His Father's willingness to send the angels to defend

Him. Christ received from His Father a “precept” which did not carry with it any mention of transgression or punishment had He not carried it out. This passage reads in the A.V. - “This commandment have I received of my Father.” The word commandment was translated from the Greek word *entol* and its true meaning is - ‘a thing given in charge’. It is wrong to conclude that Christ would have “been a transgressor worthy of death had He not dyed on the cross. This is not true, neither does it harmonise with His saying - “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and dye it abideth alone”. Christ would not have been a transgressor had He declined to die on the cross. It therefore follows that He did not die to save Himself. Never was He in bondage to sin. He knew He was the Just One dying for the unjust, and He did so as anyone would who voluntarily died for another.

O.E.H.Gregory. Salcombe. South Devon. (1-12-72).

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