

The Promise of Life in Christ.

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John iii. 16).

We Christadelphians often stress this Scripture, which clearly implies that those who do not believe will certainly perish, and that therefore the popular notion of the immortality of the soul is a myth. A little reflection will also show that Scripture teaching is equally fatal to the human concept of the reason of life and its proper use.

The promise of eternal life, if allied to the way and manner of life that men now live, would be a curse and not a blessing. Few people know what to do with the short time that is now at their disposal, and if eternal life were theirs the problem of what to do with it would be a desperate one.

It may be replied that the question does not concern the believer; but we are not so sure of that: it is possible to profess the Truth, and yet devote almost all our energy and talents to temporal pursuits and interests: in that case, how are we preparing to spend eternity? The principle involved is of vital importance and should be clearly stated: viz., that the gift of eternal life is predicated upon the transformation of the mind and desires, from temporal and fleshly objects to eternal and spiritual realities. If we think this will come automatically with a change of nature we may assume too much, with disastrous results in the day of judgment.

Those who hope for the blessings of eternal life must in this life of probation gradually alter their outlook, together with their mode of thinking and acting. In short, they must see and take into account things that to the ordinary eye are invisible (2 Cor. iv. 18). The only enduring realities are related to Christ and the Gospel, and to these "many are called, but few are chosen." Now this choice depends upon a complete reorientation of the mind and elevation from the carnal to the spiritual plane. The proof of this is too copious to set out here, except very briefly. In Gal. vi. 15 the obedient believer is termed "a new creature," and in Rom. xii. 2 we are commanded to "be transformed by the renewing of the mind," and in Gal. ii 20 Paul writes: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." To Paul this was a living reality, for he cheerfully suffered the loss of all things for Christ's sake, and in much affliction he brought forth "the fruits of the Spirit" and carried the burden of all the churches, until relieved by martyrdom in a Roman prison. But the Master Himself is the supreme example. At 12 years of age he was "about His Father's business"; already he was seeing things "invisible," and at Jacob's well He had "meat to eat," of which His disciples, were ignorant. The work that the Father gave Him to do was always uppermost in his affections, and all other things were strictly subordinate, as, for instance, "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body what ye shall put on." And he adds, "for after all these things do the Gentiles (or unbelievers) seek."

These worldly things, then, are unworthy objects upon which to centre our thoughts and efforts, and we can come even closer, for He has said: "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me, and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me, and he that taketh not his cross and followeth after Me is not worthy of Me" (Matt. x. 37).

Christ must be first then, and rightly so, for all earthly possessions have to be relinquished at last. We all come into the world empty-handed, and we depart in the same condition, as Paul writes (1 Tim. vi. 8). Eternal life is an attribute of the Divine Nature, and when that state is attained it will be natural to be spiritual: we will then be in perfect "tune" with the Deity, and, like Christ, who is the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person. Weakness, pain and unhappiness will be known no more, as it is written: "And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and

if there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away” (Rev. xxi. 3).

The redeemed will be constituents of the Name and attributes of the Father, and the bride and happy consort of the Son, as the king-emperor of all nations and lands, and fellow-heirs with Him, of all things that may subsequently be revealed.

Happiness in this mortal state is transient, and at its best is marred by much evil; only in divine nature can happiness, true and unalloyed, be found.

These facts were realised by all the worthies of old, who are set forth as our examples; on this account Abraham left his kindred and country and went out, not knowing whither he went, he dwelt in tents—as a stranger in the land of promise, and was content with his lot, for he looked for a city which hath foundations, even the city of God—"the new Jerusalem."

Moses forsook the pleasures of Egypt, choosing to suffer affliction with the people of God, esteeming the reproach of Christ, greater riches than those of the Court of Pharaoh, for he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible, and "had respect unto the recompense of the reward."

The soul-stirring happiness of the Divine connection was the mainspring of the psalms of over-flowing joy, penned by David, and for which he danced before the Lord with all his might. Note his enthusiasm, and let us catch it as far as possible: —

"Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous: for praise is comely for the upright. Praise the Lord with harp: sing unto Him a new song and play skilfully with a loud noise. For the word of the Lord is right: and all his works are done in truth" (Psalm lxxiii. 1-4).

And again in Psalm lxxxiv. 2-10: "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."

The Saviour himself, however, is the highest example, for it was for the joy set before Him that He endured the cross and despised the shame; and the spirit of Christ in the psalms tells us of the joy that now is His, and which will be even better "when He comes to be admired in all them that believe in that day."

The children of God, then, in their respective generations, have been the only realists, in the world of dreamers. This may seem extravagant to some, but it is true, for all they and purposes of this world are destined to pass away like mists of the night, before the rising dawn of the kingdom of God.

The course of true wisdom, then, is to detach ourselves as far as possible from the world and its ways and throw ourselves heartily into the service of Christ, using well the talents which have been given to us. The nearer we keep to God, the more we realise the grandeur of His purpose and the perfect security of His ways. In this way we will be delivered from the tension occasioned by the vanity and futility of fleshly relations.

The children of God do not grope in the darkness for the way of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day, and even if we make a brief stop at the cemetery on the way, it matters not, for the faithful have the hope of the glory of God.

B. A. WARRENDER.

Glendale.
