

Run to Win

**A Study About the
Race of the Faith**

Arlen L. Chitwood

Run to Win

“Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain [the prize].

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

I therefore so run, not as uncretainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air:

But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway [“be rejected”] (I Cor. 9:24-27).

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By the Same Author —

THE STUDY OF SCRIPTURE
HAD YE BELIEVED MOSES
THE MOST HIGH RULETH
SO GREAT SALVATION
SALVATION OF THE SOUL
FROM ACTS TO THE EPISTLES
IN THE LORD'S DAY
FOCUS ON THE MIDDLE EAST
FROM EGYPT TO CANAAN
LET US GO ON
REDEEMED FOR A PURPOSE
JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST
MYSTERIES OF THE KINGDOM
THE BRIDE IN GENESIS
SEARCH FOR THE BRIDE
SEVEN, TEN GENERATIONS
GOD'S FIRSTBORN SONS
THE TIME OF JACOB'S TROUBLE
SALVATION BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH
THE SPIRITUAL WARFARE
BROUGHT FORTH FROM ABOVE
JUDE
RUTH
ESTHER

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FOREWORD

The race in which Christians presently find themselves is, in the light of Heb. 11:1ff and other related Scriptures, *a race of the faith* (cf. II Tim. 4:7). The “saving of the soul” is in view (Heb. 10:39), which is what Peter in his first epistle referred to as “the end [goal]” of the Christian’s faith as he runs the race — “Receiving the end [goal] of your faith, even the salvation of your souls” (I Peter 1:9). And the saving or losing of one’s soul has to do with occupying or being denied a position with Christ in His kingdom (cf. Matt. 16:24-17:5; 25:14-30; Luke 19:12-27).

Thus, the race in which Christians are presently engaged is being run with *a kingdom in view*; and it is being run, more specifically, with a view *to proffered positions on the throne with God’s Son in that kingdom*.

This is what is at stake. And there can be no higher prize than that of one day being elevated from a servant in the Lord’s house on this earth to a co-regent with Christ on His throne in the heavens.

How many Christians though know these things? How many, for that matter, are even interested? Christians talk about being saved and going to heaven, though most don’t have the slightest idea concerning what is involved in saved man’s association with the heavens.

Being saved, with a corresponding assurance of heaven, is often looked upon as an end in itself. However, if such were the case, where would the race in which we are presently engaged fit in the Christian life? It couldn’t, for one’s eternal salvation and assurance of heaven are based entirely on Christ’s finished work, completely apart from the race.

One is saved with the race in view, and the race is for a revealed purpose. The teaching so prevalent today which views salvation *only* in the light of eternal verities — *i.e.*, one’s eternal destiny is either Heaven or Hell, depending on the person’s saved or unsaved status, with that being the end

of the matter — is a theology which completely ignores and obscures the Word of the Kingdom. Teachings concerning *the importance of salvation* have not been balanced with teachings concerning *the purpose for salvation*.

If ever there was a group of individuals on the earth with something to live for or something to die for, it is Christians. They are in possession of the highest of all possible callings. But in spite of this, the world has never seen a group quite like those comprising Christendom today — a group of individuals who *could profess so much* but *really profess so little*.

The message is there, but Where are the Christians who know and understand these things? The race is presently being run, but Where are the serious contenders? The offer to ascend the throne with Christ has been extended, but Where are those who have fixed their eyes on this goal?

1

PREPARATION FOR THE RACE

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God (Heb. 12:1, 2).

The Epistle to the Hebrews is a book in which the author continually draws his spiritual lessons from the Old Testament Scriptures. And this is a book which deals primarily, not with the salvation which we presently possess, but with the salvation of the soul. The author of this book, rather than directing his main focus upon the events of Calvary, focuses instead upon that which Calvary makes possible.

Man has been saved for a purpose, and this purpose is the same as the purpose for his creation almost 6,000 years ago. *Man was created to "have dominion"* (Gen. 1:26-28), and *man has been saved* with this same "dominion" in view.

It is this dominion, rather than the message concerning eternal salvation itself, which forms the crux of that which the writer of Hebrews presents in his epistle. There is a repeated look back to Calvary (1:3; 2:9; 7:27; 9:12, 26; 10:12; 11:4, 17-19), for *everything* is based on the Son's finished work of redemption (*cf.* Gen. 3:15). But Calvary is not where the author of this epistle places the emphasis. He places the emphasis upon *the purpose for man's redemption*, which involves *possessing dominion in complete accord with the opening verses of Genesis*.

This is really what the whole of Scripture is about — God providing redemption for fallen man, *with a purpose in view*. This is why the writer of Hebrews could reach back into the Old Testament and call attention to numerous verses and sections of Scripture in order to teach deep spiritual truths surrounding the reason for man’s redemption.

The matter could be looked upon within the same framework as Christ drawing from the Old Testament Scriptures in Luke 24:27-31 to reveal numerous truths surrounding His person and work to the two disciples on the Emmaus road. Beginning “at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself” (v. 27; cf. vv. 44, 45). He could do this because all of the Old Testament Scriptures were about Him.

And since the Son is the “appointed heir of all things” (Heb. 1:2; cf. Gen. 24:36; 25:5; Psa. 2:8; 110:1ff; Dan. 7:13, 14; Luke 19:12), the Old Testament Scriptures, dealing with the Son, likewise deal with the Son’s inheritance. Thus, the writer of Hebrews could derive teachings from Old Testament Scriptures concerning the Son’s inheritance — *an inheritance having to do with dominion* (Heb. 1:5; cf. Psa. 2:7, 8) — in order to deal with the purpose for man’s salvation, which has to do with *this same inheritance and dominion* (cf. Heb. 1:9; 3:14).

A number of Messianic passages are quoted in Hebrews chapter one, and the writer then immediately leads into the thought of an inheritance set before Christians (1:14). This is called “so great salvation” in Heb. 2:3 and is connected in verses five and ten with dominion over the earth as “sons,” exercising the rights of primogeniture.

The main purpose for the present dispensation is given in what could be looked upon as the key verse in the Book of Hebrews: “For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory...” (2:10). The great burden of Hebrews is not that of rescuing the unsaved from the lake of fire but that of delivering the ones already so rescued (John 3:18) safely through their present pilgrim journey to the goal of their calling.

Rather than the book being a call unto salvation for the unsaved, it is a call unto Christ’s “kingdom and glory” for the saved (cf. I Thess. 2:12). Its message is directed to those who are already the “children of God.” And this message, built around five major warnings in the

book, centers around the Christians' present pilgrim journey in view of the coming manifestation of the "sons of God" (Rom. 8:19), when Christ will bring the "many sons" of Heb. 2:10 "unto glory" (cf. Rom. 8:18, 23; Heb. 2:5). These "many sons" will exercise *the rights of the firstborn* as co-heirs with Christ during the coming Messianic Era.

Beyond chapter two, the Book of Hebrews continues its teaching, as before, through constant reference to the Old Testament Scriptures. Chapter three begins by referring to the Christians' calling, which is "heavenly"; and the author takes all of chapter three and part of chapter four to call attention to the journey of the Israelites as they left Egypt under Moses and headed toward an inheritance reserved for them in another land. And this is set forth as a type of the Christians' present journey toward an inheritance reserved for them in another land (cf. I Peter 1:4).

For the Israelites, *an earthly inheritance* was in view; for Christians, *a heavenly inheritance* is in view. And that which befell the Israelites on their pilgrim journey (*i.e.*, falling short of the goal of their calling) can also befall Christians on their pilgrim journey. This is the warning which the Spirit of God goes to great lengths to clearly set forth through the author of the Book of Hebrews, not only in chapters three and four but also in chapters six (vv. 4-9) and ten (vv. 23ff).

The latter part of chapter four moves into teachings concerning the present high priestly ministry of Christ (which is patterned after the order of Aaron), and then in chapter five the book moves into a discussion of things concerning the future ministry of Christ when He will come forth as *the great King-Priest* "after the order of Melchizedek."

Then, in chapters six through ten both the Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthoods are in view, placing the emphasis not only upon Christ's present ministry on our behalf in the heavenly sanctuary but also upon His future ministry when the results of His present ministry will be realized — that day when He will rule the earth as *the great King-Priest* "after the order of Melchizedek."

This entire section in Hebrews terminates with a warning concerning the "wilful sin" (10:26). There is *no sacrifice* for a wilful sin. Instead, only *judgment* awaits the perpetrators.

Contextually (Heb. 10:19-22), one might think that the wilful sin in verse twenty-six (for which there is no sacrifice) would be a

Christian's refusal to avail himself of Christ's present high priestly ministry. Within this line of thinking, though the sacrifice exists, there would be no sacrifice for his unconfessed sins (for a Christian refusing to confess his sins would be refusing the provided sacrifice).

But Christians harboring sins of the flesh and refusing to confess these sins *cannot possibly* be that which they are warned against in Heb. 10:26. This verse continues the thought from the immediately preceding verses (vv. 23-25), and the thought has nothing whatsoever to do with Christians confessing (or not confessing) their sins.

Nor can the wilful sin in this verse be thought of in the broad sense of sins committed by Christians in a wilful, a deliberate, or a knowing manner. If the truth were known, it could probably easily be shown that most sins committed by Christians would fall into a singular category — things which Christians knew were sins before they committed them, knew were sins during the time in which they were committing them, and knew were sins after they had committed them.

The only possible way to properly understand the wilful sin in Heb. 10:26, for which there is no sacrifice, is to view this sin, *contextually, within the Book of Hebrews where it is found*. And, *contextually, within this book*, only one thing awaits Christians who sin wilfully — “a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries” (v. 27).

(Christians sinning wilfully in Heb. 10:26 is simply another facet of exactly the same thing seen in the previous two major warnings in the book [in chs. 3, 4 and 6]. For additional information on the wilful sin, refer to the author's book, JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST, Revised Edition, pp. 46-52.)

Then, closing out chapter ten, the converse of that seen in the wilful sin is dealt with. Attention is called to the “great recompense of reward,” “the promise,” Christ's return, the necessity of Christians living “by faith,” and “the saving of the soul” (10:35-39).

This then leads naturally into chapter eleven, which records numerous accounts of faithful servants of the Lord in the Old Testament. Over and over these individuals are said to have acted, “By faith.” That is, they believed what God had to say about the matter,

which resulted in their acting accordingly.

Chapter eleven forms a climax to all which has preceded. Individuals in the Old Testament pleased God one way — “By faith.” And the necessity of exercising faith in order to please God is just as true today as it was then. An individual coming to God “must believe [exercise faith] that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (11:6). *There is no other way.*

Individuals in chapter eleven were moved to do certain things because of their faith, because they believed God. Such actions (works) emanated out of faith and brought faith to its proper goal, which is spoken of in I Peter 1:9 as the salvation of one’s soul (*cf.* Eph. 2:10). And this is the same salvation upon which the author of Hebrews focuses his readers’ attention. Works emanating out of faith which, in turn, result in faith being brought to its proper goal — the salvation of one’s soul — is exactly what is in view in Hebrews chapter eleven. The verse leading into this chapter refers to the saving of the soul (10:39), and then, beginning in chapter eleven, the same thing is taught as in I Peter 1:4-9.

Chapter twelve then forms the capstone to the whole matter. The writer’s exhortations and instructions in the first two verses reflect, in a broad sense, back on everything which he has previously said. Christians are in a race (*cf.* I Cor. 9:24-27; II Tim. 4:7, 8); and the writer’s exhortations and instructions, based on what has previously been said, outline for Christians exactly how to run the race after the fashion necessary to win the prize.

THE GREAT CLOUD OF WITNESSES

Chapter twelve begins with “Wherefore” in the English text (“Therefore” in a number of translations), which is the translation of a Greek inferential particle (*Toigaroun*), pointing to the logical conclusion of a matter. The word could perhaps be better translated in this instance, “For that very reason then...” The reference is a continuation of the thought in the immediately preceding verse, which sums up that which is taught throughout chapter eleven — certain Old Testament and New Testament saints being “made perfect [brought to the goal of their calling]” *together through faith* (11:40).

The word “perfect” in this verse is from the same word in the Greek text translated “perfect” in James 2:22 (*teleioo*). In James, “faith” is said to be made perfect through “works,” which is the identical concept taught throughout Hebrews chapter eleven. In fact, the two examples used in James to illustrate how faith is made perfect through works (brought to completion, brought to its proper goal [as in I Peter 1:9]) are also listed in Hebrews (*cf.* James 2:21-25; Heb. 11:17-19, 31).

Some Old Testament saints, *through faith*,

“...subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to fight the armies of the aliens...received their dead raised to life again...” (Heb. 11:33-35a).

Others though had opposite experiences. They, *through faith*,

“...were tortured...had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented...they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth” (Heb. 11:35b-38).

Regardless of the experiences which these Old Testament saints were called to enter into, each “obtained a good report through faith [*lit.* ‘bore a favorable witness through faith’].” The point of the matter though is the fact that not a single one received “the promise” (v. 39). “The recompense of the reward,” the reception of “the promise” (*cf.* vv. 26, 39), awaits a future day.

The day when Old Testament saints will receive “the promise” is the same day Christians will also receive “the promise,” which is *Messianic* in its scope of fulfillment. And “the promise” is *heavenly*, not earthly (Heb. 3:1; 11:10-16). The realization of this promise by Old Testament and New Testament saints has to do with both groups being brought to the goal of their calling, *i.e.*, both groups occupying positions in the kingdom of the heavens as co-heirs with Christ during the coming age.

The nation of Israel was made the repository for both *heavenly and*

earthly promises and blessings during Old Testament times (Gen. 14:18, 19; 22:17, 18); and certain Old Testament saints had a proper respect for the “recompense of the reward” in connection with *heavenly promises and blessings* (Heb. 11:8-16), governing their lives accordingly. And even though the nation of Israel rejected the proffered kingdom of the heavens at Christ’s first coming, resulting in the heavenly portion of the kingdom being taken from the nation (Matt. 21:43), Old Testament saints who qualified to occupy positions in the kingdom of the heavens will still realize these positions when the promise is received.

The fact that the nation of Israel rejected the proffered kingdom at Christ’s first coming cannot nullify that which had occurred, “by faith,” in the lives of numerous Israelites prior to that time. And, according to Hebrews chapter eleven, this entire line of thought appears to even go back behind the beginning of the nation of Israel, all the way back to the time of Abel (vv. 4-7).

And it is apparent that those from Old Testament days who occupy positions with Christ in the kingdom of the heavens will include not only certain individuals from the seed of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob but certain individuals from the two-thousand-year period preceding Abraham as well (*cf.* Matt. 8:11; Luke 13:28, 29). Note that Hebrews chapter eleven includes individuals from this period (Abel, Enoch, and Noah).

The thought in Heb. 11:40, concluding the chapter dealing with *the faith* exhibited by numerous Old Testament saints and leading into chapter twelve, is often misunderstood. The thought in this verse is not at all that God has provided something better for Christians than for the Old Testament saints previously mentioned. This verse, in order to properly continue the thought from the preceding verse (concerning Old Testament saints not having received the promise), could perhaps be better translated,

“God has foreseen something better [for them], which concerns us, that apart from us they might not be made perfect [that apart from us they might not be brought to the goal of their calling].”

Certain saints from both Old Testament days and New Testament

days, through faith, will inherit the promises *together, at the same time and place*. The faith of both will have been made perfect, brought to its proper goal, through works (works emanating out of their faith), and this will result in the salvation of their souls. They will be brought to this goal *together*, which is what God in His omnipotence and omniscience had foreseen and thus revealed in this verse.

(The rulers in the kingdom of the heavens who will exercise power with Christ from His throne will be comprised of saints from more than just the present dispensation. Even Tribulation martyrs will be included in this group [Rev. 20:4-6]. There, thus, seems to be a *first-fruits, harvest, and gleanings* aspect to the matter. *The first-fruits* would be comprised of individuals from the Old Testament, *the main harvest* would be comprised of individuals from the present dispensation, and *the gleanings* would be comprised of individuals coming out of the Great Tribulation.)

The great “cloud of witnesses” presently surrounding Christians (Heb. 12:1), forming an example and encouragement for Christians to exercise faith in their present pilgrim journey, as they exercised faith in their past pilgrim journey, can only be the saints mentioned in the previous chapter. These “witnesses” are not to be thought of as presently viewing Christians as spectators, but rather as ones who bore witness, through faith, at times in the past.

Rather than these witnesses viewing Christians, the thought is actually the opposite. Christians are the ones who view them, through that which has been recorded about their lives in Scripture. And through viewing their walk “by faith” during times past, Christians can derive instruction and encouragement for their own walk “by faith” today.

The word in the Greek text translated “witnesses” is the noun form of the participle translated “having obtained a good report” in Heb. 11:39. In this verse, those previously mentioned obtained a good report through their actions. That is, they bore witness *through faith*, which resulted in works. And the same thought is set forth two verses later, at the beginning of the next chapter, in Heb. 12:1.

The great “cloud of witnesses” in Heb. 12:1 is comprised of those in chapter eleven, set forth as an example for Christians today. Faith resulted in their entering into numerous experiences at different times

in the past, being victorious; and faith will result in the same for Christians today. Then, in that future day, all those in view (faithful Old Testament and faithful New Testament saints alike) will be brought *to the goal of faith and obtain the promise together*.

WEIGHTS WHICH CAN HINDER

The great cloud of witnesses surrounding us finished their pilgrim journey in a victorious manner, and we are exhorted to finish our pilgrim journey after the same fashion. Paul, during the course of his pilgrim journey, said,

“But none of these things move me [bonds, afflictions, other things which should befall him], neither count I my life dear unto myself [cf. Phil. 1:21], so that I might finish my course with joy“...” (Acts 20:24).

And Christians are to exhibit the same attitude toward their present pilgrim journey, knowing that a “just recompense of reward” awaits (Heb. 2:2; 11:26).

Paul pictured himself as being in a race (I Cor. 9:24-27), which is the thought Heb. 12:1, 2 presents. The pilgrim walk is a race which is to be run “by faith”; and Paul’s burning desire was to finish the race in a victorious manner. He didn’t want to find himself having to drop out along the way because of exhaustion, or find himself disqualified at the end by not having observed the rules (II Tim. 2:5).

And we’re told that Paul succeeded in victoriously finishing the race which he had set out to run. Near the end of his life, in II Tim. 4:7, 8, he wrote,

“I have fought a [‘the’] good fight, I have finished my course [Acts 20:24], I have kept the faith:

Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”

Numerous things can hinder a runner in a race, and these things are referred to as *weights* in Heb. 12:1. The thought is taken from

practices of athletes preparing for the ancient Olympic games. Participants training for a race, would wear weights around their ankles, waist, and wrists in order to help build their muscles and endurance; then “every weight” would be removed prior to actually running the race.

This type conditioning is a common practice in athletic events today. A baseball player, for example, often swings his bat with weights affixed immediately prior to taking his turn at bat. But no baseball player steps up to the plate with the weights still affixed to his bat.

Roger Bannister, the first man to run a mile in less than four minutes, tells how he trained by running in the sand and running uphill to condition himself. But when it came time to run the race and go for the record, the surface upon which he ran was hard, and the race was run on level ground.

The thought though is not that we are to wear weights as we train for the race, for no Christian trains for the race after this fashion. Every Christian is *presently in the race*, not training for a race which lies ahead. A Christian cannot choose whether or not he wants to enter the race. Every Christian has already been entered. He was entered at the time of his salvation. And, because of this, he is exhorted to lay aside every weight which could impede his successfully running and completing the race.

The Lord brings us through various trials, testings, experiences as we study the Word and run the race, allowing us to progressively grow from immaturity to maturity (James 1:2-4). This is the only counterpart to the conditioning and training process which an athlete undergoes prior to the race. For Christians, this training and conditioning process occurs during the course of the race; and the better equipped Christians are spiritually (the more they will have grown from immaturity to maturity), the better equipped they will be to run the race in a satisfactory manner.

Weights which Christians are to lay aside as they run the race are not necessarily things sinful in and of themselves. One’s appetite for spiritual things may have the edge removed by indulgence in any number of things, and what may be a weight for one Christian in this realm may not necessarily be a weight for another.

A “weight” is simply *anything which can impede one’s progress in the race of the faith*. Anything which deadens or dulls one’s sensitivity to spiritual things can only hinder his maximum efficiency and thus impede his progress in the race, being a weight.

No serious runner in the ancient Olympic games would ever have given any thought at all to running while carrying something which could impede his movement or ability to run. His training weights were put aside, and his long-flowing garment which he normally wore on the street was removed. He, as runners in athletic contests today, wore only that which was absolutely necessary.

(Participants in the original Olympic games actually ran naked, with men being the only spectators present [reflecting on these early games, our word “gymnasium” comes from the Greek word *gymnos*, meaning “naked”].)

A runner in the ancient Olympic games ran after a fashion which would provide him with the best opportunity to win. And any Christian, serious about also running to win, must run after the same fashion. He must lay aside any encumbrance which could hinder his progress.

In the course of the parable of the Sower in Matt. 13:3-8 and the explanation which follows (vv. 18-23), the Lord mentioned several weights which could hinder one in the race. In the third part of the parable (vv. 7, 22), the individual sown among thorns (v. 22 should literally read, “He also that was sown among thorns...”) allowed three things to “choke the word [*i.e.*, to choke ‘the word of the kingdom’ (v. 19)]” and cause him to become “unfruitful”:

- 1) The “care of this world [‘age’].”
- 2) The “deceitfulness of riches.”
- 3) The “pleasures of this life” (see Luke 8:14).

The person sown among thorns was in a position to bring forth fruit, which indicates that the Lord was referring to His dealings with the saved, not the unsaved. Only the saved are in a position to bring forth fruit, or, as the rich young ruler in Matt. 19:16ff, in a position to accumulate “treasure in heaven.” But the cares of this present age,

accumulated wealth, and pleasures which the present life afford (all interrelated) *can and will* — if one does not properly conduct himself within the framework of each — produce a barren life, resulting in no accumulated treasure in heaven.

Christians today, as possibly never before, are faced with problems in this whole overall realm. The commercial world has been busy providing man with every pleasure and convenience which he can afford, and man has set his sights on monetary gain so that he can live “the good life.” This is the direction which the world has gone, and too often Christians have allowed themselves to be caught up in many of the ways and practices of the world.

The end result of the whole matter can be easily seen throughout practically any Church across the country today. The Word of the Kingdom is not being taught from the pulpit, those in the pew know little to nothing about this message, and Christians are so weighed down with encumbrances that many of them have never been able to even get off the starting blocks in the race of the faith.

It is simply the Laodicean Church, prophesied to exist at the end of the present dispensation — a Church so overcome by the ways and practices of the world that it is difficult, if not impossible, to tell where the world ends and Christianity begins.

Any Christian *serious* about the race in which he finds himself will run after a manner which will allow him to win. The first order of business is the putting aside of any encumbrance which would impede his progress. A Christian must not allow himself to be caught up in any of the ways and practices of the world after a fashion which could be considered as weights in the race.

There’s nothing whatsoever wrong with certain activities in the world, the possession of wealth, etc. The problem comes when a Christian becomes involved in these areas, or any other area, to the extent that these things become encumbrances and impede his progress in the race. They would then be considered “weights,” necessitating corrective action, for “whatsoever is not of faith is sin” (Rom. 14:23).

THE BESETTING SIN

The sin “which doth so easily beset [‘ensnare,’ ‘encircle’] us” as we

run the race is not a reference to different sins for different Christians, depending on what may be thought of as a particular Christian's weakness in a certain realm. This sin is *the same* for every Christian, and the realm of weakness is also *the same* for every Christian.

Any Christian's weakness in any realm can always be traced back to the same central weakness — a weakness really in only *one realm*. The sin which "doth so easily beset" Christians is a reference to this central weakness. The word "sin" is articular in the Greek text, referring to a specific sin; and, contextually (ch. 11), this sin can only be understood as one thing — *a lack of faith*.

A lack of faith is responsible for the multitude of problems which surface in the lives of Christians. Spiritual weakness produced by a lack of faith will manifest itself numerous ways, causing Christians to view certain weaknesses after different fashions. One may see himself as being weak in one realm and view something connected with that realm as his besetting sin; another may see himself as being weak in a different realm and view something connected with that realm as his besetting sin. Such though is not the case at all. Problems in both realms stem from the same central problem — a lack of faith on the part of both individuals.

The question, simply put, is, "What has happened to cause you to lose confidence in God?" Or "Why have you chosen not to believe God about this matter?"

God has made the necessary provision for equipping and training Christians in the race (*cf.* Eph. 4:11-13; James 1:2-4), He has made certain promises concerning what He will do for Christians as they run the race of the faith (*e.g.*, I Cor. 10:13), and He has provided instructions on how to successfully run the race (Heb. 12:1, 2). God is *very interested* in seeing every Christian run in a successful manner.

No Christian has been enrolled in the race to fail.

Though all of this is true, numerous Christians pay little attention to that which God has stated in this realm. Their interest lies elsewhere, and spiritual matters connected with the race are of little moment to them.

Such Christians will ultimately fall along the pilgrim pathway, as the Israelites under Moses fell in the wilderness. They, as the Israelites who fell under Moses, will fall on the right side of the blood but on the

wrong side of the goal of their calling.

On the other hand, numerous other Christians heed that which God has said. They have a proper respect for “the recompense of reward.” They exercise faith and run the race in a manner which will provide victory.

Such Christians, rather than falling along the pilgrim pathway, as the Israelites under Moses fell in the wilderness, will ultimately realize the goal of their calling. They, as Caleb and Joshua, will have believed God, gained the victory, and be allowed to enter into the land of their inheritance. They will come into possession of “so great salvation,” *the salvation of their souls* (Heb. 2:3; 10:39).

2

PARTICIPATION IN THE RACE

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God (Heb. 12:1, 2).

Christians are in a race, and the highest of all possible prizes is being extended as an encouragement for them to run the race after a manner which will result in victory. In Heb. 12:1, 2, the Spirit of God has provided Christians with instructions concerning how this race is to be run, and any Christian running the race after the revealed fashion can be assured that he will finish the contest in a satisfactory manner. On the other hand though, any Christian not so following these provided instructions can, under no circumstances, expect victory in the contest.

If ever there was a group of individuals who should be preparing themselves for that which lies ahead, it is Christians. God has set aside an entire dispensation lasting 2,000 years to acquire a bride for His Son, who will rule the earth during the coming age as co-regent with Him. Positions among those who will form the bride are to be earned, not entered into strictly on the basis of one's eternal salvation. And even among those who eventually enter into these positions, there will

be no equality. Rather, there will be numerous gradations of positions held by those occupying the throne as co-regents with Christ in that day.

Christians will receive positions in Christ's kingdom exactly commensurate with their performance in the race. That is to say, positions with Christ in the coming age will be assigned to household servants in perfect keeping with their faithfulness to delegated responsibility during the present dispensation, for faithfulness after this fashion is how Christians run the race.

There will be "a just recompense of reward" for each and every Christian after the race has been run (Heb. 2:2; 11:26), which is the Biblical way of saying that exact payment will be given for services rendered. And such payment will be dispensed at the judgment seat following an evaluation of the services rendered in the house.

The one thing which consumed Paul, governing his every move following the point of his salvation, was being able to successfully complete the race in which he had been entered. Paul knew that he was saved and that he would go to be with the Lord when he died (II Cor. 5:6-8; I Tim. 1:15, 16). He spent no time rethinking circumstances surrounding his salvation experience to make certain he was really saved; nor did he live after a certain fashion out of fear that he could possibly one day lose his salvation — something which Paul knew to be an impossibility (Rom. 8:35-39). Rather, Paul set his eyes on a goal out ahead, a goal which salvation made possible (Phil. 3:7-14).

The race in which Christians presently find themselves is, in the light of Heb. 11:1ff and other related Scriptures, *a race of the faith* (cf. II Tim. 4:7). The "saving of the soul" is in view (Heb. 10:39), which is what Peter in his first epistle referred to as "the end [goal]" of the Christian's faith as he runs the race — "Receiving the end [goal] of your faith, even the salvation of your souls" (I Peter 1:9). And the saving or losing of one's soul has to do with occupying or being denied a position with Christ in His kingdom (cf. Matt. 16:24-17:5; 25:14-30; Luke 19:12-27).

Thus, the race in which Christians are presently engaged is being run with *a kingdom in view*; and it is being run, more specifically, with a view to *proffered positions on the throne with God's Son in that kingdom*.

This is what is at stake. And there can be no higher prize than that

of one day being elevated from a servant in the Lord's house on this earth to a co-regent with Christ on His throne in the heavens.

How many Christians though know these things? How many, for that matter, are even interested? Christians talk about being saved and going to heaven, though most don't have the slightest idea concerning what is involved in saved man's association with the heavens.

Being saved, with a corresponding assurance of heaven, is often looked upon as an end in itself. However, if such were the case, where would the race in which we are presently engaged fit in the Christian life? It couldn't, for one's eternal salvation and assurance of heaven are based entirely on Christ's finished work, completely apart from the race.

One is saved with the race in view, and the race is for a revealed purpose. The teaching so prevalent today which views salvation *only* in the light of eternal verities — *i.e.*, one's eternal destiny is either Heaven or Hell, depending on the person's saved or unsaved status, with that being the end of the matter — is a theology which completely ignores and obscures the Word of the Kingdom. Teachings concerning the *importance of salvation* have not been balanced with teachings concerning the *purpose for salvation*.

If ever there was a group of individuals on the earth with something to live for or something to die for, it is Christians. They are in possession of the highest of all possible callings. But in spite of this, the world has never seen a group quite like those comprising Christendom today — a group of individuals who *could profess so much but really profess so little*.

The message is there, but where are the Christians who know and understand these things? The race is presently being run, but where are the serious contenders? The offer to ascend the throne with Christ has been extended, but where are those who have fixed their eyes on this goal?

RUN WITH PATIENCE

After one lays aside "every weight" (any encumbrance which could prevent maximum efficiency in the race) and "the sin which

doth so easily beset us" (lack of faith [*ref.* ch. 11]), he is then to run the race "with patience."

"Patience" is a translation of the Greek word *hupomone*, which could perhaps be better translated, "patient endurance." The thought has to do with patiently enduring whatever may come your way (trials, testings) as you run the race and keep your eyes fixed on the goal.

Hupomone is the word used in James 1:3, 4:

"Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience [‘patient endurance’].

But let patience [‘patient endurance’] have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

Trials and testings are a means which God uses to work *patient endurance* in the lives of His people; and a person, in turn, is to patiently endure through whatever trials and testings the Lord may send his way. Patient endurance is to be exercised at all times, and patient endurance through trials and testings of this nature will gradually result in the person reaching the desired goal in the race of the faith.

One is to allow *patient endurance* to "have her perfect [end-time] work." This is *not* something which occurs overnight or in a short period of time, but this is something which progressively occurs during the entire course of the race.

And, with respect to the preceding, as seen in Rom. 8:28, "all things [trials, testings, patient endurance]" *are working together for good* in the lives of those called according to God's purpose. Nothing happens by accident within God's sovereign will and purpose for an individual; everything occurs by Divine design. Man can see only the present while patiently undergoing trials and testings (except that part of the future revealed in God's Word, which he sees "by faith"). But God sees the complete future, along with the present. He sees the complete outcome of that which is presently occurring.

(Note, for example, men such as Joseph and Moses. Joseph couldn't see the end result of God working in his life while in an Egyptian prison; nor could Moses see the end of the matter while herding sheep in Midian. God though ultimately exalted Joseph to a position on the throne in Egypt, and He later used Moses to lead His people out of

Egypt.

And God is working after a similar fashion in the lives of Christians today, calling upon them to patiently endure trials and testings, *all for a revealed purpose.*)

Patient endurance being allowed to have its end-time work will result in the individual being “perfect and entire, wanting nothing.” That is, it will result in the individual being brought to the desired goal through the progressive working of the transformation (the metamorphosis) in Rom. 12:2 (a work of the Spirit of God within the life of a Christian as he patiently endures through trials and testings, bringing about a progression from immaturity to maturity). The goal of the Spirit of God working in the life of a believer after this fashion is to ultimately produce a mature Christian, who lacks nothing.

Thus “patience” and “endurance” are the two inseparable key words in this respect. A Christian is to always exercise *patience*, and he is to always exercise *endurance* with his patience. The race in which we are engaged is not one to be run over a short period of time but one to be run over the long haul. It is not a race for sprinters, though one may be called upon to sprint at times in the race. Rather, it is a race for marathon runners, set over a long-distance course. This is the reason *one must run with patient endurance.*

Sprinting doesn’t really require patience of this nature; nor does it require one to pace himself after the fashion required to be successful in a long-distance race. In sprinting, one exerts a maximum burst of speed over a short distance, knowing that his body can endure for the short time required to run the race. However, one has to properly pace himself in the long-distance race in order to endure, exercising patience throughout the course of the race.

If he allows himself to drop below his pace, he will not be continuing to exert the maximum effort his body can endure for the distance required, possibly resulting in defeat in the race. He may come in second or third rather than first, or he may not come in high enough to win a prize at all. Or, on the other hand, if he pushes himself above his pace, he will be placing a strain on his body beyond what it can endure for the distance required, possibly resulting in his having to drop out along the way and not finish the race at all.

The statement is sometimes heard in Christian circles, “I would rather burn out than rust out.” This, of course, is an allusion to how one paces himself in the race of the faith; and those making this statement usually look upon “burn out” as something to be desired.

However, there’s a problem with the pace which would be exhibited by either “burn out” or “rust out.” “Burn out” is something which a person would experience who tried sprinting the long-distance race, and “rust out” is something which a person barely running would experience. Neither would allow the runner to reach the goal.

This whole overall thought is alluded to by Paul in II Tim. 2:12 where he sets forth one requirement for reigning with Christ: “If we suffer, we shall also reign with him...” The word “suffer” in the Greek text is the verb form of the same word translated “patience [‘patient endurance’]” in James 1:3, 4 and Heb. 12:1 — *hupomeno*. Thus, II Tim. 2:12 should literally read,

“If we patiently endure, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him [remaining within context, ‘if we deny Him with respect to patient endurance’], he will deny us [again, remaining within context, ‘He will deny us with respect to reigning with Him’].”

Understanding that which the writer of Hebrews teaches about the race in Heb. 12:1 and that which James teaches about progression in growth from immaturity to maturity in James 1:2-4, one can easily see what Paul had in mind when he used the verb form of this same word in II Tim. 2:12. It’s very simple. As noted in the previous comments within the verse, if we patiently endure in the race of the faith, we’ll be allowed to ascend the throne with Christ, for the one patiently enduring will have run the race after the correct fashion and will have finished his course in a satisfactory manner.

The same word translated “patience” in James 1:3, 4 also appears in its verb form in James 1:12 (same as II Tim. 2:12):

“Blessed is the man that endureth [‘patiently endureth’] temptation: for when he is tried [‘approved’], he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to them that love him.”

Thus, patient endurance in the race of the faith during the present

time, allowing the runner to complete the race after the correct fashion and in a satisfactory manner, will result not only in the runner being approved before the judgment seat but also in his receiving the crown of life.

And James, as all other New Testament epistles, deals centrally with the salvation of the soul. In James 1:21, after the author has dealt with patient endurance and the end result of such endurance — *i.e.*, has dealt with how the race is to be run, along with the outcome of satisfactorily running the race — he then refers to “the engrafted word [that Word which is compatible with and natural for the new nature, the living Word of God]” as that “which is able to save your souls.”

The reception of the Word of God is able to bring about the salvation of one’s soul because it is this Word which the Spirit of God uses as He effects the metamorphosis of Rom. 12:2. And in association with this metamorphosis, the trying of one’s faith in James 1:3 cannot be done apart from a reception of the Word of God.

Faith “cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). A Christian receives that which is compatible with and natural for his new nature. He receives the living Word of God into his saved human spirit. The indwelling Spirit of God then takes this living Word and progressively works the metamorphosis in the Christian’s life, progressively moving him from immaturity to maturity. And a Christian passing through this experience correspondingly exercises patient endurance in the trials and testings of his faith, which is the manner in which he is to run and properly pace himself in the race of the faith.

The Christian life, the race in which we are presently engaged, progression from immaturity to maturity, and the goal of faith are all inseparably linked together after this fashion.

(For a more detailed discussion of *the metamorphosis*, refer to the author’s book, SALVATION OF THE SOUL, Chapters III-V.)

LOOKING UNTO JESUS

The writer of Hebrews instructs Christians, during the course of the race, to keep their eyes fixed *on Jesus*. The Greek text though is

much more explicit than the English translation. There are two prepositions used in the writer's instructions concerning "Looking unto Jesus"; and the first preposition, prefixed to the word "Looking," has not been translated at all. The literal word-for-word rendering from the Greek text reads, "Looking *from unto* Jesus." The person *looking unto Jesus* is to correspondingly *look away from* anything which could, at any time, result in distraction.

Jesus referred to this same truth when He said,

"No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62).

Such an individual would have begun after the correct fashion by putting his hand to the plow. He would be looking straight ahead to a point at the end of the row he was plowing, which, in the light of Heb. 12:2, would presuppose that he had looked away from surrounding things. Should he though, during the course of plowing a row in the field, begin to look around or look back, he would be taking his eyes off the point toward which he was moving at the end of the row. He would no longer be *looking away from* anything which could distract and be *looking toward* the goal.

The distraction away from the goal would invariably result in the person straying off the course leading toward the goal. And Jesus said that a man who could not keep his eyes fixed on the goal was not fit for the kingdom of God.

Paul stated the matter in these words in Phil. 3:13, 14:

"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting *those things which are behind*, and reaching forth unto *those things which are before*,

I press *toward the mark* for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

And Paul, within this same framework in I Cor. 9:26, said, "I therefore so run [run to obtain an incorruptible crown (vv. 24, 25)], *not as uncertainly...*" That is, he didn't run aimlessly; he didn't wander back and forth from lane to lane on the track. Rather, he had his eyes fixed on a goal, and he strained every muscle of his being as he moved

straight ahead toward this goal. His every action centered around one thing: completing the race in a manner which would allow him to win the prize.

The race of the faith in which Christians are presently engaged is thus not only to be run with "patient endurance" but the runners are to keep their eyes fixed on the goal out ahead. And the manner in which the runners are to do this is to *look away from* anything which could distract as they *look unto* Jesus.

1) KNOWING CHRIST

In Phil. 3:10 Paul wrote, "That I may know him..." Paul, of course, "knew" Christ insofar as his eternal salvation was concerned. Thus, he had to be referencing something beyond that which he had already experienced. The remainder of the verse, along with the context, shows that Paul had in mind a progression in spiritual growth from initially knowing Christ to that of coming into possession of a knowledge which afforded him an intimate relationship with Christ; and he counted *all things* in his life "but loss" to accomplish this end (v. 8).

One comes into a knowledge of and begins to understand different things in life by spending time in the realm where he desires familiarity. And knowledge gained is invariably commensurate with the time invested. This is true in any aspect of life.

Christians come into a *knowledge of Christ* through time invested in studying God's Word, through time invested in studying *the written Word*, which reveals *the living Word*. Christians begin to understand more and more about Christ, about God's plans and purposes surrounding His Son, through gaining a knowledge of that which God has to say in His revelation to man.

There is a rudimentary knowledge of things, gained by investing a limited amount of time; and there are varying degrees of knowledge beyond that, gained by investing varying amounts of time.

A Christian cannot "know" Christ without spending time in *the written Word*, which reveals *the living Word*; and the more time one spends in this realm, the more he will move toward that intimate relationship which Paul, above everything else, sought. This is the reason Christians are to *look away from* anything which could prove to be a distraction as they *look unto* Jesus.

Paul sought to know Christ after this fashion in three realms:

- a) "The power of his resurrection."
- b) "The fellowship of his sufferings."
- c) "Being made conformable unto his death."

A) THE POWER OF HIS RESURRECTION

Death could not hold the One Who had come to accomplish the will of the Father (John 4:34; 6:38). This was the Father's "beloved Son [the One Who would one day exercise the rights of the firstborn]," in whom the Father was "well pleased" (Matt. 3:17; cf. Psa. 2:7; Acts 13:33, 34). And this was the One Who, at the end of His earthly ministry, could say, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (John 17:4).

God raised Him from the dead (Acts 13:30), the Spirit raised Him from the dead (Rom. 8:11), and Christ raised Himself from the dead (John 10:17, 18; 11:25). He then sat down at the Father's right hand awaiting a future day — that day when His enemies would be made His "footstool" and He would rule the earth with "a rod of iron" (Psa. 2:6-9; 110:1ff; Heb. 1:13-2:10).

According to Acts 13:30-34, Christ's resurrection is inseparably connected with that future day when He will rule and reign. The quotation in verse thirty-three, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee," refers, not to Christ's resurrection per se, but to the *purpose* for His resurrection. This is a quotation from the second Psalm, which is clearly Messianic (cf. Psa. 2:6-9); and Christ was raised from the dead in order that God might fulfill His *promise* to His people (v. 33) by giving to Christ "the sure mercies of David [*lit.*, 'the holy things of David']" (v. 34). That is, Christ was raised from the dead in order that God might fulfill His promise concerning a coming Redeemer Who would ascend "the throne of his father David" and "reign over the house of Jacob forever" (Luke 1:32, 33; cf. II Sam. 7:12-16).

"All power" has been delivered into the hands of the Son (Matt. 28:18), and He has been raised from the dead and positioned at God's right hand, the hand of power. And in this *position*, with His Son in possession of *all power*, God has clearly stated to His Son:

“Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool...” (Psa. 110:1ff).

The Son seated at His Father’s right hand is not presently exercising the power which has been delivered into His hands; nor is He presently fulfilling the purpose for His resurrection as given in the second and one hundred tenth Psalms. But one day this will all change.

A day is coming when the Son will take possession of the kingdom which He has gone away to receive (Luke 19:12, 15). The Father will give the kingdom to His Son (Dan. 7:9-14; cf. Rev. 11:15), and the Son will then come forth as *the great King-Priest* “after the order of Melchizedek,” exercising power and authority as He sits upon His Own throne (Psa. 110:2-4; cf. Heb. 5:6-10; 6:20-7:21; Rev. 3:21).

It was these things which Paul had in mind when he said that he wanted to know Christ in “the power of his resurrection.” As Christ was (and still is) seated with His Father on a throne from which power and authority emanates, awaiting the day of His Own power on His Own throne, Paul wanted to be among those who would one day be allowed to ascend the throne with Christ and have a part in the exercise of that power.

B) THE FELLOWSHIP OF HIS SUFFERINGS

Sufferings followed in the wake of Christ’s ministry, and they followed in the wake of Paul’s ministry as well. And sufferings will follow in the wake of anyone’s ministry who seeks to come into an intimate knowledge of Christ.

“All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall [not might, but ‘shall’] suffer persecution” (II Tim. 3:12).

Persecution is the natural outcome of godly living. And the “fellowship” of Christ’s sufferings has to do with possessing the mind of Christ concerning His and our sufferings (the word “fellowship,” from the Gk. word *koinonia*, means to be “like-minded”) It is looking upon our sufferings the same way Christ looked upon His sufferings.

And how did Christ look upon His sufferings? Note Heb. 12:2. Christ, relative to His sufferings,

“...for the joy that was set before him [the day when He would rule and reign] endured the cross, despising the shame [considering it to be a thing of little consequence in comparison]...” (Heb. 12:2).

The apostles in the early Church rejoiced that “they were counted worthy to suffer shame” for Christ’s name. Why? Because they knew what lay beyond the sufferings.

1) *Godliness*, 2) *Sufferings*, and 3) *Glory* constitute the unchangeable order. This was true in the life of Christ (Luke 24:25, 26; John 17:4, 5); and it will be equally true in the lives of His followers (Matt. 10:24; Acts 14:22; I Peter 4:12, 13), for He has left us “an example” that we “should follow his steps” (I Peter 2:21).

C) BEING MADE CONFORMABLE UNTO HIS DEATH

The Greek word which Jesus used relative to laying down His life (John 10:15, 17) is *psuche* in the Greek text. This is the same word translated “soul” numerous places throughout the New Testament. This is the word used in Matt. 16:25, 26, translated “life” twice in verse twenty-five and “soul” twice in verse twenty-six. “Soul” and “life” are used interchangeably in this respect. Christ *laid his life down* in order that He might “take it again” (John 10:17), which is essentially the same truth taught in Matt. 16:25, 26 — “...whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.”

“Conformable” in the text is the translation of a Greek word which means *to take on the same form*. A Christian is to conduct his life after the same fashion that Christ conducted His life, which moves toward *death* rather than *life*, *for a revealed purpose* (cf. John 12:24). He is to take the same form as Christ in this respect in order that through losing his life during the present day he might gain his life during that coming day. And the entire matter is in connection with Christ *coming* “in the glory of his Father with his angels,” *rewarding* “every man according to his works,” and *reigning* in the “kingdom” which follows (Matt. 16:24-17:5).

2) ATTAINING TO THE GOAL

Paul sought to “know” Christ in “the power of his resurrection,” “the fellowship of his sufferings,” and through conformity to “his

death" *for a revealed purpose*, expressed in verse eleven:

"If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection [‘out-resurrection’] of the dead."

And this out-resurrection to which Paul sought to attain had to do with "the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (v. 14).

The word "resurrection" in verse eleven is a translation of the Greek word, *exanastasis*. This is the same word used in the preceding verse relative to Christ, but without the preposition *ek* prefixed to the word, as in verse eleven (*ex* is the form this preposition takes when prefixed to words beginning with a vowel — thus, *exanastasis*).

The preposition *ek* means "out of," and when prefixed to *anastasis*, as in Phil 3:11 (the only occurrence in the N.T.), the word should properly be translated "out-resurrection" (*ref.* THE NEW TESTAMENT, *an Expanded Translation*, by Kenneth Wuest).

The compound word, *anastasis* ("resurrection" [v. 10]), literally means "to stand up" (*ana* means "up," and *stasis* means "to stand"). When referring to the dead, it means "to stand up" from the place of death ("to be resurrected"). *Exanastasis*, on the other hand, means "to stand up out of"; and if a deceased person were in view, the word would have to refer to that person *standing up out* ("being resurrected out," an "out-resurrection") from among others (others not raised from the dead at this time).

The word *exanastasis* though is *not* used referring to bodily resurrection in verse eleven, for there is no such thing in Scripture as selective resurrection among Christians. Rather it is used referring to certain Christians being allowed "to stand up out of" (*i.e.*, being elevated above) other Christians. This is something which will occur as a result of decisions and determinations made at the judgment seat. This is where the separation of Christians will occur (set forth by the word *exanastasis*), not at the time of the previous bodily resurrection of Christians.

THE AUTHOR AND FINISHER OF THE FAITH

"Faith" in Heb. 12:2 is not "our faith," as in the English translation, but "the faith" (note that "our" is in italics [KJV], indicating that it has

been supplied by the translators). The word is articular in the Greek text and is a reference to the same faith seen in both I Tim. 6:12 and Jude 3.

I Tim. 6:12 reads,

“Fight the good fight of [the] faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.”

This verse could be better translated,

“Strive [‘Strain every muscle in your being’] in the good contest [the race] of the faith; lay hold on life for the age, whereunto thou art also called...”

The word “strive” in the latter rendering is a translation of the Greek word, *agonizomai*, from which we derive our English word, “agonize”; and the word “contest” is from the Greek word *agon*, the noun form of the verb *agonizomai*.

Then Jude 3 reads,

“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”

The words “earnestly contend” are a translation of the Greek word *epagonizomai*, an intensified form of the word *agonizomai* used in I Tim. 6:12. This part of the verse could be better translated, “earnestly strive [‘earnestly strain every muscle of your being’] for the faith”; and understanding this passage in the light of I Tim. 6:12, earnestly striving for the faith is not defending the faith, as some expositors suggest, but a striving *with respect to the faith*. Such a striving has to do with remaining faithful to one’s calling within the house, properly running the race, *i.e.*, earnestly striving in the race of the faith.

Christ is both the “author [the Originator, Founder]” and “finisher [the One Who carries through to completion]” of “the faith.” He is the “Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending...” (Rev. 1:8). And we are to fix our eyes upon Him, as we look away from anything which could distract, and run the race with patient endurance.

3

GOAL OF THE RACE

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God (Heb. 12:1, 2).

The race in which Christians find themselves is not something optional in the Christian life. Rather, it is a race in which all Christians have been automatically enrolled. Individuals enter the race at the moment of belief, at the moment of salvation, at the moment they become Christians.

Thus, there is nothing which a Christian can do about entering or not entering the race. He has no choice concerning the matter. He has been entered in the race, with an ultimate God-ordained goal in view.

He does have a choice though concerning *how he runs* the race. He can follow the instructions which God has provided and run the race after a fashion which will allow him to win, or he can ignore the instructions which God has provided and run the race after a different fashion, one which can only result in loss.

And not only are instructions given for properly running the race, but information is also given concerning why the race is being run and exactly what awaits all Christians, all runners, after the race is over.

The race is being run in order to afford Christians the highest of all possible privileges — that of occupying positions on the throne as co-heirs with Christ during the coming age. Awards having to do with positions of honor and glory in the Son's kingdom await the successful competitors; and the denial of awards, resulting in shame and disgrace in relation to the Son's kingdom, awaits the unsuccessful competitors.

Understanding these things will allow an individual to view both *his presently possessed salvation* and *the Christian life* within a proper interrelated Biblical perspective.

Man has been saved *for a purpose*, which has to do with the coming kingdom of Christ. He has been saved, he has "passed from death unto life," he has come into possession of eternal life, in order that he might be able to participate in the race of the faith and be provided an opportunity to win one of the numerous proffered positions in the Son's kingdom.

God is taking an entire dispensation, lasting approximately 2,000 years, to acquire the rulers who will ascend the throne and rule in the numerous positions of power and authority as co-heirs with His Son. These individuals will form the bride who will reign as consort queen with God's Son. And the numerous rulers, forming the bride, will be those having run and having finished the race in a satisfactory manner.

(Refer to the author's book, REDEEMED FOR A PURPOSE, for details concerning the work of the Spirit in the preceding respect during the present dispensation.)

Salvation removes man from one realm (one in which he cannot run the race) and places him in another (one in which he automatically finds himself in the race). Redeemed man has been removed from a realm associated with *darkness* (one in which he was alienated from God), and he has been placed in a realm associated with *light* (one in which he now has an association and relationship with God). And he finds himself in the race *only after* this transference has occurred, for the revealed purpose surrounding God's reason for the present dispensation.

The opening chapter of Colossians touches upon this overall matter, though from a different perspective. This chapter reveals the Christians' transference *from a realm of darkness to one of light*. And this transference is dealt with in a context which centers around *the reason* that God has brought this change about.

Because one has been saved (with his eternal destiny now a settled matter), *because* he has been removed from one realm and placed in another, a "hope" and an "inheritance" come into view (*cf.* vv. 5, 12, 23, 27). And Colossians chapter one concerns itself primarily with this hope and inheritance, which are in connection with the present race of the faith and have to do with positions of honor and glory in the future kingdom of Christ.

The Christians' removal from one realm and placement in another is spoken of in verse thirteen:

"Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son."

The words "hath translated" are from a word in the Greek text which means *to be removed from one place and positioned in another*; or the word can refer to *a change in one's point of view*.

Regardless though of how the word is understood, the verse *cannot* refer to being removed from the kingdom of Satan and being placed in the kingdom of Christ. And this would be easy to understand, for such an act would not be possible during the present day and time.

Satan is God's appointed ruler over the present "kingdom of the world" (though a rebel ruler), and both Christians and non-Christians alike reside in this kingdom. And there is no present existing kingdom of Christ into which Christians can be translated. The present kingdom under Satan is to one day become "the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ" (Rev. 11:15, ASV); but that day will not, it cannot, arrive until the present age has been completed, at which time the Father will remove Satan from the throne and place His Son on the throne (*cf.* Dan. 7:13, 14; Rev. 19:11ff).

The thought in Col. 1:13 would, contextually have to be understood along the lines that God has brought about a change of sides with respect to *the present-existing kingdom*. "The power of darkness"

(cf. Eph. 6:12) and “the kingdom of his dear Son” in Col. 1:13 point to places diametrically opposed to one another, but these places must be looked upon in the sense that both have to do with the same thing. Both are *regal* and have to do with “a kingdom” — *a kingdom presently under Satan’s rule but to one day be under Christ’s rule.*

Satan is the present world ruler, and “the whole world lieth in wickedness [‘in the wicked one’],” *i.e.*, in the kingdom of Satan (I John 5:19; cf. Luke 4:5, 6).

Christ, on the other hand, is the coming World Ruler; and Christians, “not of the world” as Christ is “not of the world” (John 17:14), have changed sides with respect to the existing kingdom.

Viewing matters in this respect, redeemed man, at any point in his existence, has never been removed from the kingdom in which he is destined to one day exercise regal power and authority (though, in that coming day, under a different Ruler than presently holds the sceptre [cf. Rev. 11:15]). Redeemed man *can’t* be removed from this kingdom as long as he resides upon the earth during the present age, in this “body of death.” But he *can* be placed in a position where his allegiance is to the Ruler of the future form of this kingdom, *which is exactly what has occurred.*

(This can be graphically seen in the Books of I, II Samuel, with Saul and David in the Old Testament theocracy, foreshadowing Satan and Christ in the present and future theocracy.)

Saul was anointed king in Israel, as Satan was anointed ruler over the earth; Saul rebelled against the Lord, as Satan rebelled against the Lord; Saul was disqualified to continue on the throne, as Satan was disqualified to continue on the throne; but Saul continued to reign until the one whom God had chosen to replace him both appeared and was ready to ascend the throne, as Satan continues to reign until the One Whom God has chosen to replace him will both appear and be ready to ascend the throne.

[A principle of Biblical government, seen in this type, necessitates that even though an incumbent ruler disqualifies himself (as Saul), he must remain on the throne until the one whom God has chosen to replace him (as David) is both on the scene and ready to ascend the throne.]

David was anointed king while Saul was still in power, as Christ was born King while Satan was still in power; but David didn’t

immediately take the sceptre and ascend the throne, as Christ didn't immediately take the sceptre and ascend the throne; David found himself out in the hills, separated from the kingdom, as Christ found Himself in heaven, separated from the kingdom; certain faithful individuals joined themselves to David, with a view to his one day occupying the throne [as seen in I Sam. 22:1, 2], as certain faithful individuals join themselves to Christ, with a view to His one day occupying the throne [as seen in Col. 1:5-12].

That is to say, certain Israelites during David's day in the type changed sides with respect to the kingdom, and certain Christians in the antitype today have done exactly the same thing. In the type, the Israelites during David's day still resided in the kingdom of Saul, but their allegiance was to David, with a view to that day when Saul would be put down and David would take the kingdom. And exactly the same thing is seen in the antitype. The Christians in view still reside in the kingdom under Satan, but their allegiance is to Christ, with a view to that day when Satan will be put down and Christ will take the kingdom.

It was during this time that David acquired the rulers who were to occupy positions of power and authority with him when he ascended the throne. And exactly the same thing is seen in the antitype. It is during this time [during the present dispensation] that Christ is acquiring the rulers who are to occupy positions of power and authority with Him when He ascends the throne.

Only at the end of this time in the type was David ready to ascend the throne; and only at the end of this time in the antitype, at the end of the present dispensation, will Christ be ready to ascend the throne. Until that time arrived, in the type, Saul remained on the throne; and until that time arrives, in the antitype, Satan will remain on the throne.

Then, to complete the picture in the type, the day came when Saul was put down, his crown was taken, and it was given to David; and then David and his faithful men moved in and took over the government [the same kingdom which Saul had ruled].

And the day is coming when exactly the same thing is going to occur in the antitype. It has to occur, for it is seen in the type, among numerous other places in Scripture. Satan will ultimately be put down, his crown will be taken, and it will be given to Christ; and then Christ and His faithful followers will move in and take over the government of the kingdom [the same kingdom which Satan had ruled].)

Thus, the “kingdom of his dear Son” in Col. 1:13 should not, it cannot, be thought of in either a present sense or in some spiritual sense. The kingdom in view is presently ruled by Satan, and this kingdom is a very literal, tangible kingdom. And the coming kingdom of Christ can only be viewed in exactly the same manner — a future, literal, tangible kingdom, with Christ as the Ruler. It has to be viewed in this manner, for the coming kingdom of Christ will be *the same presently-existing kingdom under a new Ruler*.

The whole of the matter should be understood in the same framework as Christians being *raised up together and made to sit together* “in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” in the Book of Ephesians (1:3; 2:6). Note that Ephesians and Colossians are companion epistles and parallel one another in a number of places. Ephesians deals with one facet of the matter and Colossians with another.

Positionally we are *in the heavenlies* “in Christ,” the second Man, the last Adam (completely separated from Satan’s kingdom), even though actually here and now we still reside in this body of death in Satan’s kingdom. In Colossians, a transference from the present form of the kingdom to the future form is in view. Spiritual values are involved throughout, but these spiritual values cannot ignore a literal fact: We reside exactly where Eph. 1:3; 2:6 and Col. 1:13 state that we reside. We have been moved from one realm and placed in another, but not moved from one kingdom and placed in another. A change of sides has occurred with respect to the existing kingdom, which is presently under Satan but will one day be under Christ.

Not only would the first part of Col. 1:13 necessitate that “the kingdom of his dear Son” be looked upon as a present reference to the *literal coming kingdom of Christ* but the context of the verse would demand this as well. Within the context, there is a “hope” laid up for Christians in heaven (vv. 5, 23, 27), which has to do with an “inheritance” (v. 12) and the “mystery” revealed to Paul (vv. 26-29); and these things have to do with that day when Christ takes the kingdom. The simple fact is that a change of sides relative to the kingdom has occurred among Christians, with a view to “the hope of glory” (v. 27), which has to do with an “inheritance” *as co-heirs with Christ in that kingdom*.

This involves a transference from one realm into another in

relation to the kingdom, which has to do with *the purpose for our salvation*. It involves the transference of power in the kingdom, looking forward to that day when the Father removes the sceptre from Satan's hand and places it in His Son's hand.

And, as seen within a different frame of reference in Col. 1:13, the race in which Christians are presently engaged is, in like manner, associated with *the future state of the kingdom*, not with the present state. Christians are presently running to win awards, and these awards all have to do with the same thing — positions of honor and glory in “the kingdom of his dear Son” in that future day when Christ and His co-heirs ascend the throne together.

(Viewing matters relative to the place Christians reside in relation to “the kingdom of the world” will settle the matter once and for all as to what part, if any, Christians should have in the political structure of the present world system. In the light of Col. 1:13 and related Scripture, the matter can be viewed only one way: Christians involving themselves, after any fashion, on any level, in the politics of the present world system [in the politics of world government as it presently exists, under Satan] are delving into the affairs of a kingdom from which they have been delivered.

Refer to the author's book, THE MOST HIGH RULETH, for more details concerning the preceding.)

THE JOY SET BEFORE HIM

The “author and finisher of our [‘the’] faith,” the One we are to *look unto* as we *look away* from anything which could cause distraction, is described in Heb. 12:2 as One Who had His eyes fixed on “the joy that was set before him” as He bore “our sins in his own body on the tree” (I Peter 2:24). Christ viewed Calvary within the framework of that which lay beyond Calvary.

The ignominious shame and indescribable sufferings of Calvary had to come first. There was no other way. But beyond Calvary lay something else, described as “the joy that was set before him.”

Following His resurrection, when Christ confronted the two disciples on the road to Emmaus and other disciples later in Jerusalem, He called attention to a constant theme throughout the Old Testament

Scriptures: Israel's Messiah was going to *first suffer these things* [events surrounding Calvary] and *then enter into His glory* (Luke 24:25-27, 44, 45).

Joseph, a type of Christ, first suffered prior to finding himself seated on Pharaoh's throne ruling "over all the land of Egypt" (Gen. 37:20ff; 39:20ff; 41:40ff). Moses, another type of Christ, first suffered rejection at the hands of his people before being accepted by them. Rejection was followed by his experiences in Midian, and acceptance was followed by the people of Israel being led out of Egypt to be established in a theocracy in the land covenanted to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Ex. 2:11ff; 3:1ff; 12:40, 41).

Passages such as Psa. 22-24 or Isa. 53:1ff (Israel's future confession concerning what had happened to the nation's Messiah *before* He entered into His glory [Isa. 52]) present the same order — *sufferings*, and then *glory*. This is *the only order* one finds in Scripture, and enough is stated about Christ's sufferings preceding His glory in the Old Testament that He could say to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus,

"O fools, and slow of heart to believe *all that the prophets have spoken:*

Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory?" (Luke 24:25, 26).

Peter, James, and John on the Mount with Christ during the time of His earthly ministry "saw his glory" (Luke 9:32), and Peter, years later, associated the "glory" which they had seen at this time with "the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (II Peter 1:16-18). Christ's "glory" thus has to do with that day when He will occupy the throne and rule the earth (as Joseph on the throne ruling Egypt [always a type of the world in Scripture]).

In Heb. 12:2, the wording is slightly different. In this passage we're told that Christ's "sufferings" preceded "the joy [rather than 'the glory']" set before Him. This though, in complete keeping with Old Testament prophecy, is clearly a reference to "sufferings" preceding Christ's "glory" and to Christ looking beyond the sufferings to the time when he would enter into His glory.

In the parable of the talents in Matt. 25:14ff, Christ referred to individuals who would enter into positions of power and authority

with Him as entering “into the joy of thy Lord” (vv. 21, 23; cf. Luke 19:16-19). Thus, the “sufferings” and “joy” of Heb. 12:2 follow the same order and refer to the same two things as the “sufferings” and “glory” found elsewhere in Scripture.

In keeping with the theme of Hebrews though, there’s really more to the expression, “the joy that was set before him,” than just a general foreview of Christ’s coming glory. The thought here is much more specific. Note in the parable of the talents that “the joy of thy Lord” is associated with Christ’s co-heirs entering into positions on the throne with him, and the key thought throughout Hebrews is that of Christ “bringing many sons unto glory” (2:10).

This is what Christ had His eyes fixed upon when He endured the humiliation, shame, and sufferings of Calvary (cf. Heb. 1:9). Christ, at Calvary, fixing His attention on “the joy that was set before him,” fixed His attention on that day when *He and His co-heirs would ascend the throne together in His kingdom.*

1) ENDURED THE CROSS

Note something, and note it well. It is *because* of Calvary that unredeemed man, “dead in trespasses and sins,” can be “quickened” (Eph. 2:1, 5; Col. 2:13). It is *because* of Calvary that unredeemed man can be eternally saved, changing once and for all his eternal destiny. But Christ looked beyond Calvary. He looked at the *purpose* for man’s redemption, a *purpose* which would allow redeemed man to realize the highest of all possible callings.

Christ viewed the events surrounding Calvary more in the light of Col. 1:13. Christ’s finished work on Calvary allows God to take fallen man and bring about a change in sides with respect to the kingdom. This allows God to take a man who is “dead in trespasses and sins,” produce life in that individual, and place him in the very sphere for which he had been created in the beginning.

And being more specific, Christ, through His work at Calvary, provided redemption for His bride, the one who would reign as consort queen with Him. Christ’s finished work at Calvary (Gen. 22) allows the Holy Spirit to presently call out a bride for the Son (Gen. 24). “Sufferings” *must* come first, but the “joy” toward which Christ looked *must* follow the sufferings.

Christ “endured the cross,” knowing these things, with His eyes accordingly fixed on “the joy that was set before him.” And man today, viewing Calvary apart from also looking ahead to this same “joy,” is not looking upon Christ’s redemptive work the same way Christ viewed it at all.

2) *DESPISED THE SHAME*

Christ, “for the joy that was set before him,” not only *endured the Cross* but He *despised the shame*. The word “for” in this verse — “for the joy” — is a translation of the Greek word *anti*, which refers to setting one thing over against another. The “joy” was set over against the “shame.” Christ considered the ignominious “shame” associated with Calvary a thing of little consequence compared to the “joy” which lay ahead. The ignominious “shame” was no small thing, but the “joy” was so much greater that, comparatively, Christ could only look upon the former as of little consequence.

Events of that coming day when He and His bride would ascend the throne together so far outweighed events of the present day that Christ considered being spat upon, beaten, and humiliated to the point of being arrayed as a mock King as things of comparatively little consequence. He then went to Calvary, paying the price for man’s redemption, so that even the very ones carrying out His persecution and crucifixion could one day (through believing on Him) find themselves in a position to participate in the “joy” set before Him.

And a Christian should view present persecution, humiliation, and shame after the same fashion Christ viewed these things at Calvary. This is what Peter had in mind when he penned the words, “Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps” (I Peter 2:21).

The Epistles of I, II Peter have been written to encourage Christians who are being tested and tried; and this encouragement is accomplished through offering compensation for the sufferings which one endures during the present time. And this compensation — rewards having to do with positions of honor and glory in the Son’s kingdom — will be exactly commensurate with present sufferings (I Peter 1:6, 7; 4:12, 13; cf. Matt. 16:27).

(Note that the “sufferings” in I, II Peter, resulting in future rewards, appear in connection with an *inheritance* “reserved in heaven” and a *salvation* “ready to be revealed in the last time,” which is “the salvation of your souls” [I Peter 1:4, 5, 9].)

Following the example which Christ set at Calvary, a Christian should place the *coming* “joy” over against the *present* “sufferings” and consider the sufferings of little consequence compared to “the just recompense of the reward” which lies ahead. And he should not think it strange when he finds himself suffering for Christ’s sake, for “all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (cf. II Tim. 3:12; I Peter 4:12). This is the norm for the Christian life. Rather, he should rejoice, knowing that as a *partaker of Christ’s sufferings*, he is also going to be a *partaker of Christ’s glory* (I Peter 4:13).

SAT DOWN AT GOD’S RIGHT HAND

Following His death and subsequent resurrection, Christ spent forty days with His followers, presenting “many infallible proofs” concerning His resurrection and instructing them in “things pertaining to the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3; cf. Luke 24:25-48; I Cor. 15:3-7). He was then taken up into heaven. With His arms outstretched, blessing His disciples, “a cloud,” the Shekinah Glory, received Him out of their sight (cf. Luke 24:50, 51; Acts 1:9; I Tim. 3:16).

Then, even before the disciples had removed their eyes from that point in the heavens where Christ disappeared from their sight, two messengers who had been dispatched from heaven stood by them and said,

“Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11).

Two things are certain from the words of these messengers: 1) Christ will one day return, and 2) His return will be in the same manner as His departure.

Christ ascended in a body of flesh and bones, and He will return in this same body (Zech. 12:10; 13:6); Christ ascended from the land

of Israel, from the midst of His people, and He will return to this same land, to His people (Zech. 14:4); Christ was blessing those in His midst at the time He was taken into heaven, and Christ will bless Israel at the time of His return (Joel 2:23-27; *cf.* Gen. 14:18, 19; Matt. 26:26-29); Christ was “received up into glory,” and He will return “in the glory of his Father with his angels” (Matt. 16:27; I Tim. 3:16).

During the time between His ascension and His return — a period lasting approximately 2,000 years — Christ has been invited to sit at His Father’s right hand, upon His Father’s throne, until a particular time (Psa. 110:1; Rev. 3:21).

The Father has told His Son,

“Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy foot-stool” (Psa. 110:1).

The “right hand” points to *the hand of power*, and *universal rule* emanates from this throne. Though the Son occupies a position denoting *power* and is seated upon a throne from which *universal rule* emanates, the Son is not exercising power and authority after a kingly fashion with His Father today. Rather, He is occupying the office of *Priest*, awaiting the day of His power as *King*.

He is to sit on His Father’s throne until that day when the Father will cause all things to be brought in subjection to the Son. Then, and only then, will Christ leave His Father’s throne and come forth to reign upon His Own throne as the great King-Priest “after the order of Melchizedek” (Psa. 110:2-4).

1) MY THRONE, MY FATHER’S THRONE

In Revelation chapters two and three, there are seven short epistles directed to seven Churches, and each of the seven epistles contains an overcomer’s promise. These are promises to overcoming Christians, and all seven are millennial in their scope of fulfillment. All seven will be realized during the one-thousand-year period when Christ and His co-heirs rule the earth.

The last of the overcomer’s promises has to do with Christians one day being allowed to ascend the throne with Christ, and this forms the pinnacle toward which all of the overcomer’s promises move.

“To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne” (Rev. 3:21).

The analogy in this verse has to do with Christians patterning their lives after Christ’s life, with *overcoming* and *the throne* in view. Christ overcame and is presently occupying a position with the Father on His throne, and Christians who overcome are to one day occupy a position with the Son on His throne.

Note the exact wording of the text: “...to him that overcometh... even as I also overcame...” A *conflict ending in victory* is in view first, and then *the throne* comes into view. The latter cannot be attained without the former.

Christ’s overcoming is associated with His *sufferings* during the time of His shame, reproach, and rejection; and Scripture makes it very clear that overcoming for Christians is to be no different. Christ has “suffered for us, leaving us an example...” (I Peter 2:21). But beyond the *sufferings* lies the *glory*, as the *night* in the Biblical reckoning of time is always followed by the *day* (cf. Gen. 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31).

In Revelation chapters two and three, *overcoming* is with a view to the *throne*; and in portions of Scripture such as the Books of I, II Peter, *suffering* is with a view to *glory*. In this respect, *overcoming* is inseparably associated with *suffering*, as is the *throne* with *glory*.

2) A RULE WITH A ROD OF IRON

The Father has not only invited the Son to sit at His right hand, awaiting the day of His power on His Own throne, but He has told the Son certain things about that coming day, things which He has seen fit to reveal to man in His Word. Portions of the second Psalm provide one example of this:

“Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen [Gentiles] for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.

Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel” (vv. 8, 9).

Then a portion of these words of the Father to the Son have been repeated by the Son in His words to the Church in Thyatira, forming

the fourth of the seven overcomer's promises in Revelation chapters two and three:

“And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:

And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father” (Rev. 2:26, 27).

For one thousand years Christ and His co-heirs are going to rule the earth with a rod of iron. They are going to rule the earth after this fashion to produce perfect order where disorder had previously existed, to produce a cosmos where a chaos had previously existed. And at the end of the thousand years, after perfect order has been restored, the kingdom will be turned back over to God the Father so that “God may be all in all [*i.e.*, that ‘God may be all things in all of these things’]” (I Cor. 15:24-28).

Co-heirship with God's Son, participation in the activities attendant the bride, being seated on the throne with Christ for one thousand years, ruling the earth with a rod of iron — events which will occur once, never to be repeated — await those who run the present race of the faith after a manner which will allow them to win.

(For additional information on the messages to the seven Churches in Rev. 2, 3, refer to the author's book, JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST, Chapters IV-XI.)

CONCLUDING REMARKS:

This is what lies ahead for those who, as Moses, possess a proper respect for “the recompense of the reward.” Moses looked beyond present circumstances and, “by faith,” considered “the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt” (Heb. 11:26). And Christians must run the present race of the faith in which they find themselves after the same fashion.

Christians must look away from anything which could distract as they look unto Jesus, “the author and finisher of our [‘the’] faith.” Christians must keep their eyes fixed on the goal, looking beyond present circumstances to that which lies ahead. Christians must center their attention on

the "joy" which lies ahead rather than upon present "sufferings," viewing both the "joy" and "sufferings" within the same framework which Christ viewed them at Calvary.

Runners who heed Christ's instructions and follow the example which He has set will win. They will realize the goal of their calling.

Those though who fail to so govern their actions in the race cannot win. They can only fall by the wayside, short of the goal of their calling.

"So run, that ye may obtain" (I Cor. 9:24b).

Appendix

When He Is Approved

Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried [approved], he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him (James 1:12).

The Epistle of James — as all epistles in the New Testament — centers its teaching around different facets of the salvation of the soul (1:21; 5:19, 20), which is with a view to an inheritance in Christ’s coming kingdom (2:5). This epistle opens by pointing to the fact that the various trials, testings in one’s life (the trying of one’s faith) result in “patience [‘patient endurance’]”; and a Christian is to patiently endure under these trials and testings, allowing the Lord to progressively lead him from immaturity to maturity in the faith. He is to let “patience have her perfect work [‘patient endurance have her end-time work’]” in order that he might be “perfect and entire, wanting nothing [‘mature and complete, lacking nothing’]” (James 1:2-4).

Christians are not brought from immaturity to maturity in the faith overnight. Maturity in the faith is *a lifelong process*. When God called Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees, Abraham had numerous things to learn about how the Lord works patient endurance and brings about maturity in one’s life. Abraham failed many times (*e.g.*, not leaving his kindred behind in Ur, going down to Egypt for help, seeking to help God fulfill His promise concerning a son, etc. [Gen. 12:1, 10; 16:1ff]); but God continued to work in Abraham’s life until he had been brought to the place of unquestioned obedience, to the place

where there was complete reliance upon the Lord.

It was not until some sixty years beyond the time Abraham had left Ur that he is seen being brought into a state where he was ready to undergo the supreme trial, the supreme test, in his life. God, at this time, instructed Abraham to offer His son "for a burnt offering," at a particular place (Gen. 22:1ff); and Abraham simply set about to do exactly what God had told him to do. There was no remonstrance, no delay, and no questions were asked; instead, *there was perfect obedience and complete reliance upon the Lord to bring matters to pass.*

Abraham had been brought into this mature state in the true sense of James 1:2-4. He had learned *patient endurance* through his faith being tested. He had *patiently endured* under various trials and testings over a period of about six decades (though failure had occurred at times); and the Lord had, through this process, brought him into that mature state where he was "complete, lacking nothing."

And Christians today are to be brought into a mature state through this same process (though failure, as it did with Abraham, may occur at times). Abraham's faith (a belief in that which God had said) was tested, and a Christian's faith (a belief in that which God has said) is to be tested.

(Note that there is an inseparable connection between a person being led from immaturity to maturity and that person receiving the Word of God into his saved human spirit. There can be no growth from immaturity to maturity apart from a reception of the word, *for faith is the key to the whole matter; and "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"* [Rom. 10:17].

In James, Christians are to "receive with meekness the engrafted ['implanted'] word" [1:21]. *They are to study the Word, meditate upon the Word, allow the Word to flow into their saved human spirits.* The indwelling Holy Spirit then takes this Word and leads Christians "into all truth" [John 16:13-15]. It is this "implanted word" which lies at the heart of all activity surrounding *the testing of one's faith, which brings about patient endurance.*

The continued reception of the Word can only be *an integral part* of the entire process. There can be no *testing of one's faith* apart from "the implanted word," and there can be no *patient endurance and progressive growth toward maturity in the faith* apart from such testings.)

APPROVAL

In James 1:3, the trials and testings of one's faith bring about patient endurance. Then, in verse four, as in verse twelve, the individual is to continue to patiently endure under continued trials and testings which the Lord brings to pass in his life. A continued refining process after this fashion, progressively working *maturity*, is for a *revealed purpose*.

According to verse twelve, the man who patiently endures temptation in the manner set forth in these verses will be "*blessed*" of the Lord, he will be "*tried* [*approved*]" by the Lord, and he will then "*receive the crown of life*" from the Lord.

Thus, the entire matter is with a view to issues of the judgment seat of Christ and the Messianic Era to follow. "Approval" or "disapproval" in connection with *blessings* and *crowns* will occur at the judgment seat; and the reason for approval, blessings, and crowns will be realized in the era beyond the present, during the Messianic Era.

In this respect, the revealed purpose for the present patient endurance of Christians, leading to maturity, is in order that *they might one day realize the purpose for their calling*. This maturing process, for those allowing it to occur in their lives, will result in their one day being *approved* for positions as co-heirs with Christ in the kingdom.

(The word translated "tried" in verse twelve is from *dokimos* in the Greek text, meaning "approved [through testing]." This same word, with the prefix "a," appears in I Cor. 9:27 [*adokimos*]. The letter "a" negates the word, making it mean exactly the opposite. The context of I Cor. 9:27 has to do with running the present race of the faith, with a crown in view [vv. 24-26], which is the identical thought in James 1:12. Paul sought to always keep his body under subjection (in reality, a patient endurance under trials and testings), lest after instructing others concerning this very thing, he himself could be "a castaway [be disapproved' (or, 'be rejected')]."

Dokimos in its verb form [*dokimazo*], with the preposition *apo* prefixed to the word [*apodokimazo*], appears in Heb. 12:17, where Esau was *rejected* for inherited blessings associated with the birthright. The preposition *apo* means "from"; and, prefixed to *dokimazo*, the word, for all practical purposes, means the same as *dokimos* with an "a" prefixed, as in I Cor. 9:27.)

In relation to the preceding, an object is in view — *the birthright*. Esau, although he was the firstborn, had sold his birthright; and, relative to *the inheritance*, he was now “rejected” (*apodokimazo*).

Esau was rejected immediately after his younger brother, Jacob, had received the blessing belonging to the firstborn. Prior to this time, Esau had *made light of* his birthright, considering it to be of *little value* (“Esau despised his birthright” [Gen. 25:34]. The Hebrew word translated “despised” means *to hold in contempt, to make light of*. The Septuagint Version of the Old Testament uses a word which means *to consider of little value*).

Esau did not come into a realization of the true value of the birthright until *after* Isaac had bestowed the blessing belonging to the firstborn upon Jacob. It was *only then* that Esau realized what he had forfeited and sought to retrieve the rights belonging to the firstborn.

Esau, at this time, “cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry, and said unto his father, Bless me, even me also, O my father.” But it was *too late*. The birthright had been forfeited, the blessing belonging to the firstborn had been bestowed upon another, and no reversal of the forfeiture and blessing could occur. The birthright, with its attendant blessing, was now beyond Esau’s grasp forever.

Esau, after realizing that the birthright was no longer his and was beyond his grasp forever, referenced the forfeited rights of the firstborn after this manner:

“Hast thou but one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also, O my father” (Gen. 27:38; *cf.* vv. 34-37).

And it is recorded that Esau then “lifted up his voice, and wept.”

This is seen within another frame of reference in Matthew’s gospel where individuals are seen *weeping and gnashing their teeth* (Matt. 13:42; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30). This is an Eastern expression showing *deep grief*; and the contexts of these passages clearly show that things relating to *the rights of the firstborn*, not eternal life, are in view.

The rejection experienced by Esau is the last of five major warnings in the Book of Hebrews, and this rejection constitutes an Old Testament type of that rejection which Paul referred to in I Cor. 9:27. The reference is to Christians who will have forfeited the rights of

primogeniture, appearing in Christ's presence at His judgment seat.

Many Christians are presently following the same path which Esau took (considering the birthright to be of little value), and such Christians will one day come to the end of the matter in exactly the same way as seen in Esau's life. They, although presently in line to be blessed as the firstborn (every Christian is a firstborn child of God), will have forfeited this right; and they will be rejected for the blessing.

The rights of the firstborn must be retained or there can be no blessing belonging to the firstborn. The "spiritual blessings" associated with *the heavenlies* in Eph. 1:3 cannot be appropriated by Christians who forfeit the rights of primogeniture, for these blessings are intimately connected with *the inheritance* belonging to the firstborn (1:10-18). These blessings are reserved for those who overcome the inhabitants of that heavenly land *during the present age*, who will be shown qualified to enter as *Sovereigns during the coming age*.

Christ is presently in the process of "bringing many sons unto glory" (Heb. 2:10). He, through the things which He suffered, has become the "captain ['Originator,' 'Founder']" of a *salvation* associated with *sonship* — the "so great salvation" of Heb. 2:3. In I Peter 1:9-11, suffering with respect to Christ's sufferings is connected with both *the salvation of the soul* and *the glory to be revealed* ("sufferings of Christ" [v. 11] should literally be translated, "sufferings with respect to [or 'on behalf of'] Christ"). The reference is not to Christ's sufferings but to Christians entering into these sufferings.

In I Peter 4:12, 13, such sufferings are connected with the trials and testings in James chapter one. *The trying of one's faith* (working patient endurance) and *the sufferings with respect to Christ's sufferings* (suffering through trials and testings) cannot be separated one from the other. That which is in view has to do with *patient endurance under trials and testings*, and the end of the matter in both James and I Peter is the salvation of one's soul. It is being *approved* (as in James 1:12) and being *placed in the position of a son* (as in Heb. 2:10), *realizing the rights of primogeniture* during the coming age.

SOVEREIGNTY

To exercise sovereignty during the coming age, *one must possess a*

crown; and to possess a crown *one must first be approved* for the crown. Approval will occur at the judgment seat, and approval at this time will be based on *works which endure the fire* (I Cor. 3:11-15).

The “trying of one’s faith,” working *patient endurance*, is intimately connected with “works” in James. Comparing Gen. 22:1ff with James 2:21 (along with the text leading into the passage in James) reveals that a servant’s works emanate out of his patient endurance under trials and testings; and viewing James 2:14-26 as a whole, works are seen to emanate out of faith. It is faithfulness under trials and testings, resulting in works. Such works are those which God would have the one being tried and tested to carry out; and these are the type works which will endure the fire at the judgment seat.

The trial of “every man’s work” *in fire* at the judgment seat will be with *a view to approval or disapproval — approval if found worthy, disapproval if not found worthy*. This approval or disapproval will occur through testing, and the method of testing will be “by [‘in’] fire”:

“Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by [‘in’] fire; and the fire shall try [test, with a view to approval] every man’s work of whatsort it is” (I Cor. 3:13).

Approval at the judgment seat will be for a prior revealed purpose. God’s purpose in working *patient endurance* in a Christian’s life through trials and testings (progressively effecting maturity) is the corresponding issuance of works in his life, *the heart* of that which this entire process leads into in the Epistle of James. *Approval* follows Christians allowing the Lord to work *patient endurance* in their lives; and *approval* will, in turn, be followed by *sovereignty* during the coming age (Rev. 3:21).

1) TO RECEIVE A KINGDOM, AND TO RETURN

During His earthly ministry, Christ delivered two companion parables to His disciples to graphically illustrate various aspects of the matter at hand — the parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14-30), and the parable of the pounds (Luke 19:11-27). The “man” or “nobleman” in the two parables called “his own servants,” delivered unto them “his

goods," commanded them to "occupy till I come," and then departed "into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return."

The "man" or "nobleman" is *Christ*, the "servants" are *Christians*, "his goods" have to do with *His business*, and the "far country" is *heaven*. Christ has departed into heaven to receive a kingdom from His Father, with a view to returning for His servants (to reckon with them) following the reception of this kingdom (cf. Dan. 7:9-14; Rev. 11:15; 19:11ff).

During the time of the Lord's absence, His servants are to "occupy" themselves with that entrusted to their care. The "ten servants" and "ten pounds" in Luke's gospel, showing *ordinal completion* in both instances, reveal that *all of His servants* and *all of His business* are in view. Christ called *all of His servants* and left them in charge of *all of His business* during the time of His absence.

While the parable of the pounds in Luke's gospel reveals the overall scope of both the Lord's servants and the Lord's business ("ten servants," "ten pounds"), the parable of the talents in Matthew's gospel reveals the different portions of this business delivered to different servants within the overall scope of His dealings with His servants ("unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability").

Simple teachings derived from comparing the two parables point to the fact that *every servant* of the Lord has been entrusted with some facet of the Lord's business during His time of absence. No servant has been overlooked; nor has any portion of *the Lord's business* been withheld from His servants.

The one thing above all else required of servants is *faithfulness* (I Cor. 4:2; cf. Luke 12:42-46). Servants of the Lord *must* exercise faithfulness in carrying out that portion of the Lord's business with which *they have been entrusted*. "Success" is an entirely different matter. No servant has ever been called to be successful, only *faithful*. Success though will always follow faithfulness, whether man so recognizes that which the Lord deems as success or not.

Placing the entire matter over into the framework of the Epistles of James and I Peter, it seems apparent that God brings about the necessary trials and testings in a Christian's life which will move that Christian into that area of work (that portion of the Lord's business) which has been outlined for his life (delivered unto him by the Lord).

The individual is to exercise faithfulness as he patiently endures trials and testings; and as he progressively matures in the faith after this fashion, the Lord brings about an outworking in his life of that facet of the Lord's business entrusted to him (*cf.* Phil. 1:6). Thus, such works, in reality, are those done under the direction and leadership of the Lord as the Christian exercises faithfulness to his calling.

All of this occurs for a *purpose*. In the parable of the talents and the parable of the pounds, the day eventually came when the "man" or "nobleman" returned to reckon with His servants — pointing to the return of Christ "in the air" for His servants and the subsequent reckoning "at the judgment seat" with His servants.

The *only concern at hand* in this reckoning in both Matthew's and Luke's accounts was that which the servants had done with the Lord's possessions which had been entrusted to their care during the time of their Lord's absence, and *the only matter in view* beyond this reckoning was that of *occupying positions of sovereignty in the kingdom*.

2) THOU GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT

According to both the parable of the talents and the parable of the pounds, hearing a "Well done..." from the Lord at the time He reckons with His servants will be contingent on the servants having brought forth an increase through the use of the talents and/or pounds. The increase not only had to come from within the scope of that which the Lord had left in charge of *all His servants (the ten pounds)* but it also had to come from within the scope of that which the Lord had entrusted *individually to each servant (the various talents)*.

In the parable of the pounds, the servants were judged strictly on the basis of their use of the pounds during the time of the Lord's absence. *Nothing else was in view*. The increase was wrought *only* through the use of that which the Lord had entrusted to their care: "...thy pound hath gained ten pounds"; or, "...thy pound hath gained five pounds" (Luke 19:16, 18). And the revealed reward for faithfulness therein was *completely commensurate with the increase*: "Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities"; or, "...likewise...Be thou also over five cities" (vv. 17, 19).

In the parable of the talents, a slightly different facet of the picture

is presented. Judgment in this parable is based strictly on *the increase of that delivered to individual servants within the scope of their calling*, and an increase of the same proportion percentage-wise (though not necessarily in quantity) brought about identical commendations and rewards: "...thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more"; or, "...thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them" (Matt. 25:20, 22). The increase in each instance was one hundred percent, and the response of the Lord to both servants was identical:

"Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" (vv. 21, 23).

The thought is not necessarily how *hard* or how *long* one works, but how *faithful* one is in carrying out the task which the Lord has delivered into his hands *during the time allotted* (cf. Matt. 20:1-16). Through comparing the parable of the talents with the parable of the pounds, faithfulness among Christians to the task at hand is not always the same.

Thus, it would seem apparent that there could be increases of less than or more than one hundred percent, allowing a two-talent Christian to realize an increase above that of a five-talent Christian, or vice versa. *The number of talents* is not really the issue. *Faithfulness to the task at hand* is that which God looks upon and requires.

And a person *always* reaps that which he sows, whether faithfulness or unfaithfulness is manifested (Gal. 6:7-9).

Blessings, rewards, and crowns are for those exercising *faithfulness* in the proper use of the talents/pounds entrusted to them. A commendation of "Well done..." from the Lord awaits Christians exhibiting faithfulness after this fashion. But, a task "well done" is just that — *one well done*.

"Jesus will never say 'Well done' to anyone *unless it has been well done*."

— G. Campbell Morgan

3) THOU WICKED AND SLOTHFUL SERVANT

In both the parable of the talents and the parable of the pounds,

unfaithfulness on the part of the Lord's servants and *the end result of unfaithfulness* are shown in the latter part of each parable. Such unfaithfulness resulted in rebuke and loss in each instance; and also in each instance, the unfaithful servant was not associated in any manner whatsoever with positions of power and authority in the kingdom.

These things can be clearly seen through the Lord's actions in both parables. That which the unfaithful servants possessed (the talents and pounds) was taken from them; and in the parable of the talents, the unfaithful servant was cast into "outer darkness."

In the parable of the talents, one talent had been delivered to the servant who proved unfaithful. He was just as much a servant of the Lord and just as much in a position to bring forth an increase as the servants to whom five and two talents had been delivered; and, had this unfaithful servant brought forth an additional talent, which would have been an increase of one hundred percent, it is apparent that he would have received *the identical commendation* which the others received.

However, he hid his talent; it remained unused. He did not exercise faithfulness in that realm of service which the Lord had entrusted to him; and at the time when the Lord called all His servants before Him to ascertain how much each had gained through trading and trafficking in the Lord's business (through each servant exercising faithfulness to that entrusted to his care), the unfaithful servant experienced *rebuke* and *loss*.

The case of the unfaithful servant in the parable of the pounds is very similar. He, as the other servants, could have received *authority* over one or more cities had he brought forth an increase; but he kept the pound "laid up in a napkin" (v. 20). He didn't use the pound. He didn't involve himself in the Lord's business during the time of his Lord's absence. He proved unfaithful concerning that which the Lord had left in his care, during His time of absence. And, following the Lord's return, at the time when the Lord called His servants before Him to ascertain how much each had gained through trading and trafficking (through each servant exercising faithfulness to that entrusted to his care), the unfaithful servant — as the unfaithful servant in the parable of the talents — experienced *rebuke* and *loss*.

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Christians are in a race, and *the highest of all possible prizes* is being extended as an encouragement for them to run the race after a manner which will result in victory. In Heb. 12:1, 2, the Spirit of God has provided Christians with *instructions* concerning how the race is to be run, and a Christian running the race after the revealed fashion can be assured that he will finish the contest in a satisfactory manner. On the other hand though, any Christian not so following these provided instructions can, under no circumstances, expect victory in the contest.

If there was ever a group of individuals who should be preparing themselves for that which lies ahead, *it is Christians*. God has set aside an entire dispensation lasting approximately 2,000 years to acquire a bride for His Son, who will rule the earth during the coming age as co-regent with Him. Positions among those who will form the bride *are to be earned*, not entered into strictly on the basis of one's eternal salvation. And even among those who eventually enter into these positions, there will be no equality. Rather, there will be numerous gradations of positions held by those occupying the throne as co-regents with Christ in that day.

Christians will receive positions in Christ's kingdom *exactly commensurate with their performance in the race*. That is to say, positions with Christ in the coming age will be assigned to household servants in perfect keeping with their *faithfulness* to delegated responsibility during the present dispensation, for faithfulness after this fashion is how Christians run the race.

There will be "a just recompense of reward" for each and every Christian after the race has been run (Heb. 2:2; 11:26), which is the Biblical way of saying that *exact payment will be given for services rendered*. And such payment will be dispensed at the judgment seat following an evaluation of the services rendered in the house.
