

For Jesus' Sake

By Charles S. Price

THE OTHER DAY I came across a passage of scripture about which the Holy Spirit led me to mediate for the greater part of the day. It was the twenty-fifth verse of the forty-third chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah: "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions FOR MY OWN SAKE."

It is unanswerably true that we preachers have been presenting to our congregations the other side of the miracle of forgiveness and salvation. There is ample justification for this in the Word of the Lord, for Jesus Himself did this in His ministry when He walked among the sons of men.

The preacher faces his congregation and if he is an evangelist, as I happen to be, he begins his appeal for the people in the congregation to consider the transformation which will come into their lives if they will only accept Christ as a personal Saviour.

He tells the drunkard that for his own sake he should mend his ways. He tells him of deliverance from the power of the habit which has gripped him, and portrays the transformation in a home which has been made unhappy and miserable because of his addiction to drink. He sees little faces once so dark now made light and happy because of the fact that they have a "new" daddy.

He thinks of cupboards once bare which can be transformed through the grace of God into veritable little storehouses of plenty. It is undoubtedly true that the burden of his message is based upon an appeal for that man to accept Christ as his Saviour because of what it will mean to him, to his family, and to the people with whom he comes in contact.

Then again he paints a picture of the home over there. He describes in Biblical language and truth the glories that await us in the Father's House of many mansions! He implores his listeners to accept the atoning work of Jesus, for the remission of their sins; but during such a presentation he invariably appeals to the people to accept Christ for their own soul's sake.

Now this is perfectly proper, and I would not deprecate the efforts of the man who appeals for the unsaved to open the door of their hearts to the coming of Jesus in this manner. It is perfectly proper, and it is absolutely scriptural; but there is another side to the question, and it is with this other side that I wish to deal for a little while today.

In the words of the text, we are instructed that it is not only for the sake of the

sinner that Christ blots out our transgressions, but it is for His own sake as well! In every satisfying relationship there must, of necessity, be mutuality. If a sinner longs to be pardoned, there is also the longing on the part of Christ to pardon him. If a sinner desires to be forgiven, there is also a desire in the heart of Jesus to forgive him.

If the voice of a man is heard crying out for salvation, there is also the voice of Jesus crying out that he can have salvation. The desire to receive on the part of the man is no greater than the desire to give on the part of God! In the marvelous and supernatural processes of God's saving grace, we do not find a willing man coming to an unwilling God; and inversely, we do not discover a man who is unwilling coming to a God who is willing.

There is mutuality of desire and the same willing purpose on the part of both before the miracle of regeneration can be accomplished. If, on the other hand, a man desires to be saved, and find happiness thereby; there is on the other hand, the desire of God to save him--thus bringing happiness to the Heart divine. As a matter of fact, the divine desire far outweighs the human desire. We go to God for our own sake, and discover that He has come to us for His own sake!

The Lost Sheep

One of the most beautiful pictures in the entire New Testament is the story of the sheep that went astray. Every one of us has put himself in the place of that sheep, and that is exactly what the Lord intended we should do. That was the purpose of the parable. That was the intent of the Master's heart when He gave to us this beautiful, pastoral picture.

“There were ninety and nine that safely lay in the shelter of the fold;” but one sheep had gone astray. A sheep will apparently unthinkingly and unwittingly wander from the fold without ever intending to end up in the bleak, barren, abysmal depths of the valley of despair; and at last that solitary sheep found itself alone!

As we read the story, and sit and reminisce, we say to our own hearts that we were that wandering sheep. We quite probably try to excuse ourselves for the extent of our derelictions by telling our own hearts we never intended to wander away so far. Now, that no doubt is perfectly true, but we cannot escape the penalty of the lashings of our own conscience by seeking to excuse ourselves on the ground that we never intended to be quite so bad!

The story of the sheep, however, is not the central part of this remarkable narrative. In other words, the sheep is not the chief character in the drama; for the part of the chief character is reserved for the Shepherd. The sheep was only incidental to the ministry of the Shepherd. The parable is not given to tell us about a sheep who was lost; but the primary purpose of this remarkable story is to portray the Shepherd who found it.

Now, ordinarily, we have put the parable the other way. We have emphasized

the sheep, the fact that it cried in its distress, and that it was carried back in safety and rejoicing to the gates of the fold. Read the story carefully and you will discover that the emphasis belongs upon the other side. It was not only for the sake of the sheep, but also for the sake of the Shepherd that the restoration was made.

The fact of the lost sheep has been pretty well established ten thousand times ten thousand in human history. There it is in its helplessness; but wait, something happens! The ninety and nine are within the safety of the fold in which divine providence has placed them; and down the deep, dark trails of human wanderings the feet of the Shepherd travel, until He nears the gorge where the sheep, which went astray, has at last come into full consciousness of its condition and its helplessness.

The Shepherd hears its cry. He lowers Himself into the precipitous depths, and after a while finds His sheep. The poor, helpless creature is too weak, bruised, and battered to walk home, and so the kindly Shepherd lays it upon His shoulders and carries it back to the fold.

“And all up the mountain, thunder-riven,
And up from the rocky deep;
There across a glad cry,
To the Gates of Heaven,
'Rejoice, I have found My sheep!
And the angels echo around the throne:
'Rejoice for the Lord brings back His own.
Rejoice for the Lord brings back His own! ”

What was the cause of the rejoicing? Why did the angels begin to sing? Read the narrative carefully and you will discover that the courts of heaven were ringing with praises and with shouts of victory, not because of the salvation of the sheep, but because of the *joy* of the Shepherd. It was “Rejoice with Me for I--I--I have found the sheep which was lost!” You see, Jesus saw once again the travail of His soul and was satisfied.

Is not the same truth exemplified in the statement Jesus made to His disciples, as recorded in the fifteenth chapter of John's Gospel, the eleventh verse? “These things have I spoken unto you that my joy might remain in you and your joy might be full.” You see there were *two* joys mentioned in this particular statement by our blessed Lord. The first was the joy of Jesus and the second was the joy of the disciples. He came not only to make men joyful, but He came to find joy Himself in seeing them joyful. There was as much satisfaction in His heart at the accomplishment of His ministry as there would be in their hearts because they were the recipients of it.

We all know, to some degree, of the suffering of Jesus; of His agony in the Garden and the pain of His death as He hung upon Calvary's tree. We know that He

was a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief, and that upon those divine Shoulders, the Father laid the iniquity of generations yet unborn! We know that the road He trod was the Via Dolorosa, and that the burden of the cross He bore along that Way of Weeping was so heavy, He fell beneath its load.

We also know that it was for us He bled and died. We believe, and it is perfectly proper for us so to do, that He suffered to emancipate us from our sins and shed His blood that all our iniquities could be blotted out. All this is true, but it is also true that He did this not only for the sake of mankind, but for His own.

The Eternal Purpose

Were the eternal purposes of God to be frustrated and cast aside by the power of the devil? Was God to be deprived of communion with the highest of all His creation--MAN--who was made to be a companion of the Divine and who, in the days before sin entered the world, walked and talked with God in the cool of the evening? Was the devil to have the power of completely overthrow the divine purposes and bring to naught all the desires of the divine Heart--purposed and desired, according to the scripture, before the world began?

In the realms of ineffable splendor and holiness dwelt God with the angelic throngs, in a country which knows no sin; but here on earth, which is His footstool, His highest creation--MAN--staggered beneath the cross of his own iniquity, and bore the pain and suffering of his own transgression. The Prince of the Power of the Air laughed at God and ridiculed the plans of the Eternal! He injected the virus of his poison into the veins of the human creations of our loving Heavenly Father.

The angels must have folded their wings over their eyes and refused to look at the sight of man--who was made to be a companion of God--consorting with the devil and living in wilful disobedience to the Word of the Lord. Then, after a long succession of preparatory and contributory events, Jesus came to the earth to redeem us. He, as a little babe, was born in the manger-home of Bethlehem; and in that little bundle of humanity dwelt the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

The Miracle of the Incarnation was consummated. God had become man in order that the plan of redemption might be perfected, and the highways to heaven opened once again to the feet of children who had wandered astray. So--Jesus died on Calvary, and by the shedding of His blood made possible the salvation and redemption of a lost race.

Then came the struggle. It was light against darkness; Christ against Apollyon. It was right against wrong, and life against death. One by one the wayward children were to come back Home! I declare unto you that the desire in Heaven for men to return was a million times greater than the desire of men to come back Home! The upper world was a thousand times more anxious to see the salvation of a soul than ever a soul was to find salvation. There was more anticipation up there than down

here.

After the ministry of Jesus was completed; after He had gone back to His Father's House, Heaven waited to record the names of every one who would return, and with gladness put them down in the Lamb's Book of Life. You say the sinner is happy when he finds Christ as his Saviour. I thank God that he is; but I know in my heart that he is not nearly as happy as the Christ Who found him. There is more rejoicing over there than there is here. There is more happiness over the return of the prodigal who comes home than ever could crowd itself into the heart of the prodigal, though that heart were to be as big as the world.

The Old Saint

For Jesus' sake! Yes--for Jesus' sake--there is a very large sense in which we should be willing to walk the highways of holiness for Jesus' sake as well as for our own. In a campaign I conducted some time ago, I met the mother of quite a large family. She was the essence of spiritual beauty and loveliness--so reserved and quiet that she hardly ever spoke to me. I doubt, however, if anyone in the congregation listened to the messages I delivered with a deeper appreciation than she.

One day I saw her sitting in the congregation with a far-away look of sadness on her dear, old face. Her hair was very white and her clear blue eyes shone out of a parchment-like skin, aged by the passing of the winters and the summers, and made mellow by the experiences of the years. Later on in the day it was my privilege to engage her in conversation; and I found out that my diagnosis of her case had been absolutely right.

Underneath that quiet exterior and demeanor was a heart which was filled with sorrow. Every one of her children--but one--had come into the Ark of Safety. She had dedicated her little ones to the Lord in their babyhood days, and had watched them individually surrender their hearts and lives to the Master. Her youngest boy with the passing of the years, however, had grown more antagonistic to the gospel message.

Every time his loved ones spoke to him about salvation, he became a little more vindictive and began to believe that they were "ganging up" on him, to try to force him into something he did not want. Of late years he had developed a habit of drinking very heavily at periods, which had proved too great a load for his dear old mother to bear.

It took me nearly two weeks to do it, but I accomplished the seemingly impossible when I contacted her boy. After one method failed, I tried another; until at last we were seated together across a table in a dining room. For over an hour I talked with him. I pleaded with him but all the while he seemed to be getting a little harder. As fast as I would advance to the spiritual attack, he would put up his defences; and I could sense that had he not wanted to be extraordinarily courteous, he

would have got up and left the table.

At last, I was about to give up in despair; but suddenly I changed my tactics. I told him frankly of the talk I had had with his mother. I told him of the far-away look in her eyes, as she sat in the meeting, and the evident sorrow which was written indelibly upon her dear old countenance. I told him that during my conversation with her, there had not been a single word of criticism about him--nothing but love coming from her maternal heart--and that I would never forget the tremble in her voice as she said to me: "Some day I feel my heart will break with joy, when at last my boy comes Home."

No sooner had I said those words than he commenced to break. The tears started in his eyes and he hastened to brush them away. I tried to keep him, but we parted with the promise that he would come to the meeting in a few nights. His promise was kept; and you, of course, know the end of the story. One night he bowed at an altar with his mother's arm around his shoulders; and the joy, of which the mother had dreamed, broke like a sunrise over the horizon of her life.

At the end of the service, she said to me: "My cup is so full, I could not contain any more. My happiness is complete!" As I turned from her to shake hands with the "new convert" and wish him the blessing of our Heavenly Father, with the presence of the Lord, as he walked in new light from that hour, he looked at me for a moment and said: "I want you to know, Brother Price, that I came for my mother's sake." The fact that he came in that manner did not detract from the joy which overwhelmed his own soul; but the more he saw his mother's happiness, the more his own became. The more he became conscious of his mother's joy, the greater the joy surged like an ocean within the confines of his own heart.

How Jesus Felt

I think our Heavenly Father must feel like that. I believe Jesus enjoys the same experience as did that mother. With what concern and love He looks at the wayward children for whom He shed His blood and gave His life! With what anticipation He watches their surrender; and oh, what joy there is in the Heart which was wounded, when at last they come home.

Talk about a church of people rejoicing over the conversion of a sinner, I wonder if that can compare to the shouting which must ring through the corridors of glory when the angels are writing down another name in the Lamb's Book of Life. We come home not only for our own sakes, but for Jesus' sake!

I do not think that it is possible for one to travel with the Lord along the highways of revelation from Genesis to the closing chapter of the grand old Book without coming in contact with abundant evidences of a sorrowing God and a rejoicing God; and we must be led to the inevitable conclusion that creation itself must have been the result of a divine desire. The spiritual and physical fact of creation

would never have been consummated had there been no desire for something more in the heart and mind of the Creator. God made the world and the people and the animals who dwell within it for His own sake, as well as theirs. In the beginning, before the birthday of the world, such desires must have been entirely on the part of God, for there were no people to express such desire.

God made the world then for His own sake! He made the people who dwell in it for His own sake. He looked upon His own creation and He Himself proclaimed it good! It brought satisfaction to His heart. Now, when the fellowship of the people of His own creation is denied Him; it of course brings Him pain. This is not conjectural on my part, but is factual; as proved over and over again by the Biblical narratives as well as the Word of the Lord expressed through the mouths of His prophets. It is also doubly expressed in the Miracle of the Incarnation, when the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.

There is a sense in which the Incarnation must have been the highest effort of our Eternal Father to enter into the lives and experiences of men. When they grieved, He grieved; and when they sorrowed, He sorrowed. When they rejoiced, He rejoiced; and the gladness and happiness of earth was but a reflection of the gladness and happiness of heaven. I know it was for the sake of the sinner He came to bleed and to die; but I submit that it was for His own sake as well.

The Family of The Father

Throughout the whole of New Testament scripture, there runs the analogy of the Family. To me that is transcendently beautiful and most wonderfully sweet! It puts us into a relationship with our Heavenly Father which takes away the difficulty of approach which would forever be ours if we contemplated nothing but His majesty, His greatness, and His attributes divine. All these belong to Him, but the contemplation and recognition of them merely enhances the glory of our relationship with Him. He is our Father and we are His children! Let others decry what they say is this undue familiarity--but my heart will rejoice for it is in the discovery of this fact that my soul is exulting day by day. We are His children, and He is our Father!

I, too, am a father, and I have children. I have discovered that my joys are inseparable from theirs. Selfish is the man and self-centered the woman who can so separate themselves from the lives of their children that they care not whether they live on the mountains or in the valleys. They care not whether they suffer pain or enjoy the blessing of health. Such parents have become so self-centered and selfish in their pattern of living that they live for themselves alone, and for themselves alone they die.

As far as this world is concerned, my greatest joys have come when I have seen joy in the hearts of those I love. I have wept when they wept, and I have laughed when they laughed. The deeper one's affection, the more intense does this truth

become.

A man and wife can travel down the long highway of time together and become so like each other, as did Daraby and Joan, that mutually they share each other's joys and sorrows; and without being told, they know the feelings of the other. The Bible tells us "How can two walk together except they be agreed?" As there is this merging of the lives of two people, when they travel down the road of time side by side, is it not also true that there can be such merging with God when we walk and talk with Him?

There is a vast difference between the experience of a man or woman who kneels at home and prays to a God who is in the heavens, and the experience of one who lives in his home--conscious that his Father, his Heavenly Father, is living there *with* him. The manner of his speech, as he thus dwells in communion with the Divine, is altogether different.

The method or manner in which he prays and talks with God, of necessity, has undergone a transformation. While the distinct entities of personality are always individual; there can, nevertheless, be a merging of the two--human and Divine--until self is literally crucified with Christ, the flesh subjugated, and the whole being rise to sing in the Oratorio of Glory, "Christ liveth and dwelleth in me."

In this regard then, He shares in our happiness; He finds joy in our joy, as well as grief in our grief. It is not the will of the Heavenly Father that any of His children should perish, and in the divine Heart there is always more rejoicing in the breast of the Father than in the bosom of the prodigal.

What delight He takes in giving! All He asks is that we give Him our broken and contrite heart. True--all we possess are the filthy rags of the pig-sty; they are the only things we could contribute--everything else is done. But with what prodigality He imparts to us! He gives us the ring and the robe, and for our blessing He kills the fatted calf. But what is more than all, He gives us His pardon and imprints upon our cheeks His kiss. It is not only for our sakes that we are drawn by the Holy Spirit and come; but for His sake of Whom we pray, "For Jesus' sake."

Again I would remind you that our lives should be measured by the double rule. One of the wise sages of old said, "Tis sharper than a serpent's tooth to have a thankless child." The wound in the heart of such a child is not nearly as deep as the wound in the heart of the parent.

A Double Rule

A man once said to me, when I upbraided him because of his continuity of transgression, "I am not hurting anybody but myself." My reply was, "Oh, yes, you are. You are hurting Jesus." Are we not admonished, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God." What do we mean by that statement? Is it not possible for God to grieve and be wounded? Is it not possible to crucify Jesus afresh to our own hearts?

Do we ever stop to think of the effect of our conduct upon His heart? Think not that our actions concern only ourselves, and that the ripples on the pool of influence fade away when they reach the shores of our own hearts. No man can live to himself alone. The grief we bring to those with whom we come in close contact, as far as earth is concerned, is not nearly as great as the grief we bring to the One who dwells within the glory.

Picture Jesus standing at the door of the human heart! Picture Him, I say, not knocking once or twice, but waiting through the long, weary years for the opening of the door--the latch-string of which is on the inside. Is there no yearning in the Heart divine? Is there no pleading in the Voice that says, "Oh, weary heart, oppressed with sin, may I come in, may I come in?"

Would you or I ever show such persistence in our supplication or waiting for the answer to our petitions? Have we ever had to come to Him year after year, asking for things we have never received? Have you ever heard or known of a sinner who had to pray from childhood, through adolescence, into youth and then through the years of manhood toward old age before he found the door of mercy would open to him?

We would never be as persistent as that, and yet that is the persistent longsuffering of Jesus. Why does He do it? It is for our sake and for His! There may be indifference on our part, but there is no indifference in God.

"Behold Me standing at the door,
And hear Me pleading evermore.
Oh, weary heart, oppressed with sin,
May I come in, may I come in?"

For Jesus' sake! I love those words. They will hold me from this time on, if I am tempted to forget. I will put them before the eyes of my soul so that they will burn in all their brilliance into my very heart against the dawning of a day when I am inclined to put self above my Lord. For Jesus' sake! I would not reserve the privilege of wounding even myself now that I know in so doing I am wounding Him.

I came across an account not so long ago which John Masefield wrote in the "Everlasting Mercy." One of the characters was a man named Saul Kane. He was a prize-fighter and, having won some money, he went to a certain place of debauchery with his evil companions. While he was there, a knock came on the outside door--and there was a little woman who happened to be a Quaker.

This little woman was ever going from place to place, endeavoring to win back to the fold of Jesus the sheep who had gone astray. Into that room she went and looked around at Saul Kane and his evil companions. Before the man could open his mouth to speak, for she anticipated what vile and evil things he was about to say, she spoke to him; and this is what she said:

“Saul Kane! Pray tell what makes you drink?
Do me the gentleness to think
That every drop of drink accursed
Makes Christ within you die of thirst;
That every dirty word you say
Is one more flint upon His way;
One more rock on which to tread,
One more thorn upon His head,
One more nail, and one more cross;
All that you are is Christ's great loss.”

So that is my message. You won't forget it, will you, when you kneel down to pray and say, “For Jesus' sake.” You will remember it, will you not, when you walk the road of life tomorrow? You will think of it when you are tempted to do wrong. You will weigh it when the tendency to evil overwhelms you. Then, in that day when the power of the enemy seems so great that you are unable to withstand his seductions and his snares, you will repeat those words, “For Jesus' sake,” as you lift your eyes for help toward the Throne of God.

When you walk with Him in newness of life, and your soul is ablaze with heavenly glory, remember that what you feel is only a small part of what He is feeling about you. When the joybells ring within your heart, remember that their pealing is just like the tinkling of a little bell in comparison with the cathedral tones of joy which are sounding from the belfries of Heaven. When His grace brings you happiness sublime, forget not that your little heart is not capable of receiving the happiness which fills the heart of God.

You won't forget it, will you? Remember what you mean, and what you are doing to Him Who loves you, and that it is for Him Who died for you that you pray “For Jesus' sake.”