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For the Lutheran Visitor.

Preserved Blameless.

NUMBER II.

"I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ."—1 Thes. v: 23.

II. How shall we be preserved blameless?

As God in his sovereign mercy has called us, He also will preserve us thereto unto His heavenly kingdom. Whilst we have no strength within ourselves, and are in great temptation—to abstain from every evil thing as far as our moral ability renders us competent, we are to look to the Omnipotent One who said, who has promised that we shall hear a voice saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it." "The just shall live by faith," justified by faith and preserved blameless by faith. Whilst our resolutions and efforts are ineffeacious in themselves, yet we hope for success only, through the finished work of our Lord and Saviour, we believe they will not be unacceptable. They prove our *desire* to render perfect obedience to his commands, and He who knows our mental structure to be only of dust, will have respect to the feeble offerings. In sincerity we must present our body, soul and spirit, subject entirely to His disposal, with the unalterable determination to crucify whatever pertains thereto that is in conflict with his will and requirements. We are to believe that *all* things work together for good to those who love God, and to rest quietly, contented under the most trying dispensations, and not, in our presumptuous arrogance, undertaking to direct the Ruler of the Universe in reference to our individual government, when we know that we can not make one hair upon our head white or black.

We are firmly to believe that there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. We are to *realize* that our sins are expiated by his atoning blood—that blood which cleanseth from all sin—and to rest calmly and without distrust in that most glorious truth. This faith is not to supersede daily repentance, sorrow for sin, and constant desires and endeavors to become purer and holier. This Christian life is constantly progressive, and shineth more and more unto the perfect day; but this assurance is to furnish us with an abiding consciousness that we are forever safe in Christ Jesus, and that no one can pluck us from His hand. It is to fortify us against that despair which would otherwise prove our ruin, when we are overtaken by a fault in consequence of strong temptation, or the infirmities of our still unredeemed human nature. We are to have faith in, and appropriate the expiatory virtues and life-giving powers of that atoning blood, as made effectual to us through His holy sacraments, that we may grow in grace thereby, and bear much fruit to His honor and glory. When we are *thrown* into temptation—not when we seek it—we are to believe that we shall not be tempted above that we are able to bear, but to trust that a way of escape shall be opened. We are *not* to do evil that good may come, from a faint hope that the worldly may be influenced for good thereby. Let us compromise the immaculate truth of God to the smallest extent, and trifle with our consciences in the least degree, and we shall quickly feel how ineffectual is our influence for good, and how impotent we are to resist evil.

We are to *shun* the world, its contaminant pleasures and pursuits. We are not make common cause with it; there can be no compromise between Christ and Belial; their spirits are so diverse they can never be made to harmonize, and the attempt to serve two rival potentates can only end in sorrow and shame. Oh, for the devotion to Christ possessed by the early christians, for their self-denial, renunciation of the world, crucifixion of the flesh, and faith and love. Let us strive to emulate their example, that when tribulations arise because of the word, we may not so soon become offended, but rejoice with them that the martyr's cross must precede the martyr's crown.

Is not this glorious consummation, this prospective crown and kingdom, worth all the pain, toil, self-denial and ignominy that human nature is able to bear in this present evil world? Should we not aspire to it with all our hearts, and pray that by any means we may attain thereto? If we are so satisfied with this world, and participate in its enjoyments, and covet its riches and honors, shall we care to relinquish them? There may be a crown and kingdom in reversion, but if we are *satisfied* with our present transient inheritance, shall we trouble ourselves to establish our titles?

M. E. S.

For the Lutheran Visitor.

Deacon Large to Elder Slim.

Dear Bro. Slim: I have read your letters with great interest, and, I hope, with much profit. You have set me to *thinking*. I had noticed the evils in our congregation of which you most properly complain, but I had not thought that their correction devolved so much upon the officers of the church. I find that I have been very much inclined to dismiss consideration of them, with the hope that, by and by, our pastor by prudent management would be able to bring about a better state of things. But I am now fully convinced that duty requires that we move in the matter, and that no small portion of the burden rests upon our shoulders. True, we look for our minister to carry his share. We expect him to lead off, but we must keep abreast with him if we are to reap much harvest of good result.

My brother, I greatly fear that the true reason why our church does not grow as it ought, why the word preached seems to have so little effect, is to be found very often in sins lying at our door. If we, as the officers of the church, were always to keep our installation vow, which pledges us to "set before the church a truly christian example," how much inconsistency on the part of church members would be severely rebuked, and how much ungodliness condemned! An unholy example on the part of any christian, and particularly on the part of a church officer, produces untold injury, while the winning, convincing power for good of a holy life, God alone can estimate and eternity only reveal.

And further, if we were to be, what our office constitutes us, in reality co-workers with the minister in all proper efforts for the good of the church, what greater results would be achieved! I feel sure that one source of discouragement with the minister, as well as the cause of the entire or partial failure of his plans, is to be found in the lack of hearty, efficient co-operation on the part of church officers. How very few are found willing to share their part of the *work* of the church!

Would it not be well to bring up at our next regular council meeting this subject of the *duty of church officers?* And after giving it careful and prayerful consideration to adopt these two standing resolutions:

1st. That, by the grace of God, we will set before the church an example of holy and fervent piety. And

2d. That we will, to the utmost of our ability, co-operate with our pastor in all proper plans for the welfare of the church.

Indeed, I believe it would do good if one of our ministers, or one of our lay-officers of intelligence and experience, would publish in the *Lutheran Visitor* a series of articles on Duties of Church Officers. You, Bro. Slim, have served as an Elder for some time, and have given this subject a good deal of thought; suppose you write, and give the church the benefit of your matured views.

Among others matters of which you wrote, that of our pastor's *unpaid salary* causes me no little anxiety, and I may, in another letter, give you some of *my* thoughts on this subject.

Hoping to hear from you soon, I remain, yours fraternally,

LARGE.

HEART WORK.—Heart work is a difficult work. Heart work is hard indeed. To shuffle over religious duties with a loose and heedless spirit, will cost no great pains—but to set thyself before the Lord, and tie up thy loose and vain thoughts to constant and serious attendance upon him, this will cost thee something. To attain a dexterity and facility of language in prayer, and put thy meaning into apt and decent expressions, is easy, but to get thy heart broken for sin, while thou art blessing God for it, to be really ashamed and humbled through the apprehension of God's infinite holiness, and to keep thy heart in this frame, not only in, but after duty, will surely cost thee some groans and pains of soul.

Selections.

Brother Financier.

Ah! here comes Brother Financier all bristling with self-esteem. Most principal brethren have a certain amount of it, some more, some less. Your modest, backward men seldom attain to the position of principal brethren; they lack the requisite quantity of *this* commodity, which brings a man into prominence.

He scarcely exchanges salutations till he inquires:

"Brother C., are you aware how low the church treasury is?"

I can not plead ignorance, and he continues:

"We must retrench immediately; churches are going to be pretty expensive things to carry on. I think the trouble is we pay too high a salary."

I make the remark that it is no more than others are doing.

"We are not to be measured by others," he retorts.

I then remind him that we paid the same sum last year.

"Yes, but our other expenditures were less."

"The receipts were less, too, were they not?" I ask.

He admits it.

"Then you must remember," I add, "that we have had the church in use more frequently on account of the revival."

"That's just it!" he exclaims. "There has been a fearful waste of gas and coal this past winter, not to speak of the wear and tear of the church and carpets."

"Well, then, it is unusual expenses and not the pastor's salary that make the deficiency; for you acknowledge, Brother Financier, that *it* has not advanced, notwithstanding his increased labor."

"That may be, but I think so many extra meetings are entirely uncalled for."

"But they resulted in an addition to the church of nearly a hundred members."

"Yes, I know," he answers reluctantly, "but they were mostly young, and did not add much to the financial strength of the church," and he walks away unconvinced.

The blessing attending these meetings does not alter his opinion that these sinners might have been converted in a less expensive manner, and he still sees but one alternative to prevent a bankrupt treasury—to reduce the minister's salary or omit revival efforts.

Brother F. is a principal man (in the financial sense). He has money, and he is not considered penurious. He is always willing to give if the object strikes him favorably, but almost everything in the church line strikes him as expensive and needing limitation. He gives generously to the Sabbath-school, especially toward their picnics and Christmas trees, and he likes good singing so well that he grumbles not at the exorbitant demands of a quartette choir. When a collection is taken for the orphan asylum he promptly responds, but to the cries of the heathen perishing for the bread of life he is actually deaf. He seems to have an idea that spiritual work ought not to be expensive; as the gospel is free, its preaching should cost as little as possible, and as the early disciples were satisfied to meet in an upper room, church houses should cost much less than they do. If he had had the control of the building fund, the meeting-house would, in his opinion, have cost one-third less; by the way, however, the material for this purpose, which was bought of him, was really dearer than it would have been if purchased of other dealers; and he is perfectly confident that if he were minister he could live on a salary one-fifth less than we give our pastor. Perhaps he could, but at present he is spending three times as much.

Economy is one thing and pinching is another. If Brother Financier does not groan at his own funeral on account of allowing so costly an article as his coffin in the church, it will be because it contains his own body, for which he always felt great respect, and treated liberally.—*Baptist Weekly.*

Be docile. Cultivate an humble, willing and docile mind, or desire to be instructed in the ways of God; for persuasion enters like a sunbeam, gently and without violence; and open but the window and draw the curtain, and the Sun of Righteousness will enlighten your darkness.—*Jeremy Taylor.*

More Abundantly.

In a recent address on "Life in Christ," with special reference to the words, "that they might have it more abundantly," Mr. Spurgeon said:

"In a great many christians the life of Christ is not supreme. A christian in the old times was, first of all, a christian, and then along way down, perhaps he was a shoemaker. He was a christian, and perhaps he might belong to Cæsar's household, but that you might hardly know. Now-a-days what are we? We are bankers and merchants; everybody knows that. Then, after a little inquiry, perhaps it may be found out that we are christians. The thing ought to be reversed. Our religion should be the first thing. Too much the Lord Jesus gets the scraps and the spare victuals, and the world gets the banquets. Men give to the Lord Jesus their odd minutes, and to money-getting the main strength of their lives. I do believe that will have to be altered before we shall see any great work done in the land and multitudes of conversions. How it is going to be altered I can not tell, except by this, that life has a wonderful faculty for accomplishing great things. A little seed has been sown in a mass of rock, and you could hardly suppose it could live. But yet it has thrust itself up and has become a tree, and has lifted up the rock, and by-and-by it will move the rock away to make space for itself. And life in God's people at this time is very like that seed in the rock. Our modes of living and our habits are altogether prejudical, I believe, to any very wonderful display of life, but life will do it somehow, it will achieve its purpose by some means. I pray God to give us that life. Here is the whole world lying in wickedness.

"Do you believe the world is to be converted?' he inquired of a certain brother. 'Do you believe we shall ever do it?' 'Well,' he answered, 'I don't know; but I should like to know how the people do you think that they are to accomplish it all? Oh, never! The whole Church must be of one heart; the entire mass must be consecrated for Christ. Christian women must give themselves to church work. Some of them are doing it, but they are only a few. Oh, for a real setting on fire of the whole Church! As yet I see the bush in the wilderness, and here and there upon some twigs of its boughs I can see the glow of fire, for God has not left the Church. But I can see yet more bush than fire. But the day shall come when through the entire bush a divine fire shall glow and the bush shall be full of the glory of God. Oh, poor Church of God! how low is thy state, how cruel are thy foes against thee; but the Lord on high is mightier than them all, and he shall set thee ablaze with his glory and power. It must and shall come."

Knowledge, Its Use and Abuse.

"What an excellent thing is knowledge," said a sharp-looking, bustling little man to one who was much older than himself. "Knowledge is an excellent thing," repeated he; "my boys know more at six and seven years of age than I did at twelve. They can read all sorts of books, and talk on all sorts of subjects. The world is a great deal wiser than it used to be. Everybody knows something of everything now. Do you not think, sir, that knowledge is an excellent thing?"

"Why, sir," replied the old man, looking gravely, "that depends entirely upon the use to which it is applied. It may be a blessing or a curse. Knowledge is only an increase of power, and power may be a bad as well as a good thing."

"That is what I can not understand," said the bustling little man; how can power be a bad thing?"

"I will tell you," meekly replied the old man, and thus went on:—"When the power of a horse is under restraint, the animal is useful, bearing burdens, drawing loads, and carrying his master; but when that power is unrestrained, the horse breaks his bridle, dashes the carriage that he is drawing to pieces, or throws his rider."

"I see! I see!" said the little man.

"When the water of a large river is properly conducted by trenches, it renders the fields around fertile; but when it bursts through its banks it sweeps everything before it, and destroys the produce of the field."

"I see! I see!" said the little man, "I see!"

When a ship is steered aright, the sail that she hoists up enables her the sooner to get into port; but if steered wrong, the more sail she carries the farther she will go out of her course."

"I see! I see" said the little man, "I see clearly!"

"Well, then," continued the old man, "if you see these things so clearly, I hope you can see too that knowledge, to be a good thing, must be rightly applied. God's grace in the heart will render the knowledge of the head a blessing; but without this it may prove to us no better than a curse."

The Reward of Envy.

In one of the cities of ancient Greece, a man had been victorious in the public games, and his fellow-citizens had reared a statue to his honor. One of his rivals envying him his victory and his fame, went forth night after night, seeking to destroy the monument. After repeated efforts he removed it from its pedestal, and it fell; but in his haste he forgot to provide for his own safety, and was crushed beneath the descending mass.

In this story we find an illustration of the working of envy. Many a man, in seeking to destroy his fellow, has destroyed himself. The higher the gallows built of Mordecai, the higher Haman who builds it, will hang at last. The great God reserves to Himself the right to rebuke, to chasten, and to punish. "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord," and by ten thousand instances God manifests His displeasure toward those who assume to exercise His prerogatives of judgment and of punishment.

The downfall of many a wicked man dates from the time when he seeks to destroy some one who is more righteous than he. Sins which have long slumbered unseen and unknown, at the bidding of a righteous God start forth to the public view; and he who thought himself secure in his iniquity, fortified by all the arts of craft and crookedness, finds himself in one moment stripped of his hypocritical covering, his character revealed, his refuges of lies swept away, and himself exposed not only to the wrath of God, but to the scorn of men whose praise and honor he has loved so well.

Let the curious take heed, and be-others. God can punish evil men without their aid, and if they presume to lift their hands against those that He is chastening, or to pour the vials of their wrath upon the drooping head of the man who in penitence bewails his own sins and faults, the day of their triumph may be the day of their doom; their violent dealings shall come down upon their own heads, and into the pit which they have digged for others they themselves shall fall and perish.—*The Christian.*

The Mother's Influence.

"I have long felt that, until the fathers and mothers are better men and women, our schools can accomplish comparatively little. I believe that any improvement that could be brought to bear on the mothers, more especially, would effect a greater amount of good than anything that has yet been done."—*Earl of Shaftesbury.*

An obscure and pious woman lived in a city in the south of England. History is silent respecting her ancestry, her place of birth, or her education. She had an only son, whom, in his infancy, she made it her great business to instruct and train up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. At seven years of age his mother died, and a few years after he went to sea, and became at length a common sailor in the African slave trade. He soon became a great adept in vice, a most horribly profane swearer, and, through younger than many of his companions in years, he was one of the oldest in guilt.

But he could not shake off the remembrance of his pious mother's instructions. Though dead and in her grave, she seemed to be speaking to him still. After many alarms of conscience, and many pungent convictions, he became a christian, and subsequently a devoted minister of the gospel.

Let us follow that mother's influence still further. Her son was the instrumental means of the conversion of Claudius Buchanan, who subsequently became a minister of the gospel, and went to the East Indies. Here he occupied a responsible station, and his labors in behalf of the English population, and for the improvement of the moral and spiritual condition of the natives, are deservedly ranked among the noblest achievements of christian philanthropy. His little work, entitled, "The Star in the East," was the first thing that attracted the attention of Adoniram Judson to a mission in the East Indies.

The converted sailor was also the means of the conversion of Thomas Scott from the dark mazes of Socinianism to the belief, practice, and preaching of evangelical truth. The latter was a christian minister for a good portion of his long life, in the metropolis of England, and he engaged with vigor and zeal in every enterprise that he thought conducive to the moral welfare and salvation of man. To the same pious mother's influence, operating through the efforts of her son, all this, under the divine blessing, is to be traced.

Besides, to the connection of this son with the poet Cowper are to be mainly attributed the evangelical character and great influence of Cowper's poetry. It was by the heavenly counsels and prayers and letters of his friend that the poet's piety was deepened, and the gloom of his mind relieved.

Again, to his influence, in connection with that of Doddridge, the conversion of Wilberforce is by some traced, for during fourteen years after he first saw Wilberforce, and until his conversion, he made him the frequent subject of his prayers.

And with what important results was the conversion of Wilberforce fraught to the interests of man! To his exertions, and that of his coadjutors, may we impute the abolition of the African slave trade, and, in subsequent years the emancipation of slaves in the British West Indies; the former step prepared England for taking the latter. In addition to this, Wilberforce was the author of "A Practical View of Christianity," a work which did much to commend spiritual religion to the wealthier classes of his countrymen, and which, since his death, has been widely circulated and extensively useful. It was apparently the means of the conversion of Leigh Richmond, the author of the "Dairyman's Daughter," a book which has been blessed to thousands.

glorious results of the holy woman's efforts to educate her son for God. Who was she? The mother of John Newton.

"These words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shall talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."

"That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children."—Dent. vi: 6, 7. Psa. lxxviii: 6. Prov. xxii: 6; xxxi: 28. Eph. vi: 4.

How a Sceptic Concedes Deity.

Herbert Spencer, whose psychology is so inadequate to account for religious emotions, declares that contact for countless generations with the unknowable has produced a hereditary awe of the Ultimate Cause, so that men are now born with an aptitude for religious feeling, and that this native religious sentiment is ineradicable.

But this sentiment, which Spencer confesses to be, in this generation, inborn and of the highest value, can not possibly have the form assigned to it by that ingenious writer, of a mere awe of the unknowable. The unknown and unknowable can not excite awe, for it can not affect our feelings in any manner—a conclusion which would not be affected by conceding Spencer and Maudesley's doctrine of the hereditary accretion of our mental and moral powers. What is wholly unknown and unknowable to the race can not affect the consciousness of an individual. Were Spencer right in making all religious emotion consist in awe of the Ultimate Cause, that awe would not arise from the contemplation of the unknowable, but of the known. In recognizing the existence of a cause, we just so far know it as a cause. This is precisely the way in which we know all that is known—as the causes of phenomena; we know the causes in the effects. Spencer says that our belief in an omnipresent, eternal Cause of the universe has a higher warrant than any other belief, that is, that the existence of such a Cause is the most certain of all certainties; but asserts that we can assign to it no attributes whatever, that it is absolutely unknown and unknowable. Yet in his very statement of its existence, he assigns to the Ultimate Cause four attributes, viz., being, causal energy, omnipresence, and eternity. And afterwards he implicitly assigns to it two other attributes—repeatedly expressing his faith that the cosmos is obedient to law, and that this law is of beneficent result; which is an implicit ascription of wisdom and love to the Ultimate Cause. By his own principles, it could be shown readily that these six attributes are absolutely known attributes, and that, therefore, the being of God, in the Jewish and christian sense of that sacred name, is the most certain of all certainties. For when we have arrived at the generalization that the whole universe is moving by intelligible law to the fulfilment of benevolent ends, it is impossible to refrain from assigning its origin to a Being Omnipresent, Eternal, Almighty, All-wise, and All-good. It has, indeed, taken a long course of culture, aided by the sublime word of Genesis, which Spencer ignorantly calls a Hebrew myth, to lead men to this clear perception of the presence of God in the creation; but this does not show that the idea is the mere product of culture. Some of the self-evident truths of mathematics have required thousands of years of the culture of mathematical genius to bring them now to light; yet they were true from before eternity.—*Thomas Hill, D.D., in Bibliotheca Sacra.*

Stone-Cutting.

In a great house there are stones formed into different shapes, according to the design of the architect, by the skill of the artisan.

In the preparation of these stones, it sometimes happens that the strength, skill, and tools of the stone-cutter are sorely put to it in order to get the stone into its required shape, and that by a peculiarity in the stone. This peculiarity is known by the masons as a "bone." The unpracticed eye would not see it, for apparently the stone is the same throughout. But with this apparent sameness there is [illegible] than the rest. If the mason has not detected it before he has commenced operations on the stone, he is made aware of it as soon as the chisel comes in contact with the "bone," either by the tool breaking, or starting up from it. Well, what is to be done? If he take his sharp tools, and prepare them as for the ordinary stone, they will break, and so he will suffer loss in his tools. Shall he throw the stone away? Nay, his master can't afford to lose that stone, for it has cost him as much as those which had no "bone." He pauses, and selects his tools. He takes those that have been well worn—his experienced tools (if it be lawful to apply the word to tools,) and sharpens them by rubbing them on the stone. He begins work. His blows are harder now than formerly, and his progress is slower. But when the stone is finished and polished, the "bone" is the smoothest part of the stone, and that because of its hardness. Such are the materials out of which the living temple is built up, such the process of discipline by which the living stones are hewn and polished, and fitted in their place.—*Christian Treasury.*

Let all Men Pray.

Let us not be too particular whether we pray philosophically or not. I have tried in opposition to the scepticism of the time to find a philosophical basis for prayer; but in the act of devotion philosophy may be forgotten. Indeed, the language of devotion must be different from the language of philosophy. In the act of devotion, we crave a human sympathy and love responsive to our own; we wait to place our hands in a warm, loving hand; we want to feel the pulsations of a loving heart; we want to see the smile of affection beaming upon us from eyes and lips that respond to ours.

Poor babes that we are in our weakness, we may still be the children of God. Let the child pray for toys and gingerbread; he will grow to a condition in which he will want them no longer. Let the farmer pray for rain and sunshine; he will come some time where the twelve-fruited tree of life needs no rain to water it, and no sunshine to make it grow. Let the sailor pray for favorable breezes; he will come some time to a haven where no stormy winds ever blow. Let the sick man pray for recovery; he will come at last to a land where sickness is unknown. Let anxious friends, watching by the bedside where life trembles in the balance, pray that that life may be spared; the friends shall meet at last where the one great family of God is never broken. Let us pray then for things we seem to need; but let the undertone of "Thy will be done" run through all our prayers, till that alone of all our earthly petitions shall blend with the myriad-voiced chorus of adoration in heaven. After this manner therefore let us pray: "Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done."—*Zion's Herald.*