

God and Human Life.

John 18:22.

REV. W. B. HINSON.

Have you sometimes noticed, how, between the dark glooms of a dull morning and a damp evening, nature has inserted a thin wedge of light? Or how a lull occurs in the drip of the rainstorm; during which interval the robins shake the wet drops from their plumage, and merrily sing? Or how, between the lightning glare, tearing the dark clouds asunder, and the thunder roll jarring the cowering rocks, there is a pause, a stillness, a calm? If you have noticed these things you will better understand the context of this passage of Scripture; the circumstances under which my text was uttered, Christ had foretold the grim, ghastly treachery of Judas;—that doomed one, to whom thirty pieces of coin were more than the parables and miracles of the God man. Christ had foretold this treachery; and now He tells Peter, the impetuous and fiery, the *Cœur de Lion* of the apostles, how he too will quail and deny his Lord. But between these two mountains of belching fire, the Master places the rich, flowery plain of the text; 'twixt these two frowning thunder clouds He inserts a scrap of blue, as He talks of possible, nay, certain glory while He says: "If God, be glorified in him, God shall glorify him in Himself, and shall straightway glorify him."

Severing the text from its environment, I proceed to apply it to your life and mine, while I notice the possibility herein hinted at viz., that human life may glorify God. Granting man's ability to measure continents and name the constellations, to navigate the seas and foretell the coming storms; it is, nevertheless, true, that in moral and religious things we are prone to be easily satisfied, or content to live on too low a range; and we repose where we should be restless, and are content where ambition would be more pleasing to the Deity, and more beneficial to ourselves. "Give me unfailing water," said the Samaritan woman to the weary Christ. This was the high water mark of her desire. "Blind as foolish," responds Jesus, "hadst thou known—had thy ignorance been less dense—thou wouldst have asked grace to satisfy thy soul, and not merely for water to slake thy body's thirst."

"Stupid ruler of the nations, unfit leader of the people," said Elsha to Jonah, "why didst thou not shoot all thine arrows from the quiver, then thou shouldst have obtained many victories o'er the enemies of thy kingdom."

"Tis ever so, we are too easily satisfied; content with the inferior and the low, when it is ours to face the horizon, look into the starry skies, and drawing from the unpoverished resources of God's grace, attain to the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus."

"Let me barely get inside the pearly gate of the New Jerusalem; and drop down on the seat nearest the door, that is all I crave, for that alone I endeavor." These words were said in my hearing some time ago. 'O unwise one, enlarge thy desire; for to thee the heavens are as free as to Moses or John, and if thou truly desirest, and dost energetically strive to obtain, there will be ministered to thee an "abundant entrance into the eternal glory."

Voyager o'er life's main, be not content to barely escape wreckage and wild doom; be not satisfied if with torn sails, rent cordage, strained timber, thy bark reach the heavenly harbour; but in firm reliance on the Great Pilot, and rigid adherence to all His rules, seek to close thy life's voyage gloriously—to come off "more than conqueror" through Christ thy Lord.

Be sure there is more in Christianity than merely escaping hell, and taking the first seat inside heaven's gate;—it is life to thee, O feeble brother, to live a life more pleasing in God's sight than roll of planet or song of spring; to reflect credit on Him; whose you are and to whom you belong; in a word, within thy reach is the massive possibility of glorifying God.

I say THIS POSSIBILITY for I should be recreant to the trust reposed in me by God and this church, were I not to emphasise the fact, that this glory is but a possibility, and not an ESTABLISHED CERTAINTY. For heir of the stars though thou art, thou canst bury thyself in policy and pleasure seeking, in flippancy, in selfishness, in sin. And grand though the stream of thy religious profession appear, it largely rests with thyself whether that stream ever broadening and increasing in beauty and usefulness, shall flow with an enlarging capacity and force; or trail its weary course amid the swamps of indolence and earthliness, where the lament of thy good angel, and the crackling laughter of the devil moan drearily among the blasted undergrowth.

The good ship, from stem to stern, its every timber, belongeth to the Father, who is the Great Captain; and by virtue of thy relationship to Him, thou hast a right to the choicest cabin passage the ship affords. But with all this as it is, it yet remains true that thou mayest through lack of knowledge, wrongness of desire, or incapacity of rightful ambition, drag out the voyage length in the steerage; where instead of patriarchs, prophets and martyrs for company, thou hast the inferior passions, desires and aims.

The great proprietor is thy Father; that no man can rightly dispute. Yet, prodigal like, thou, thy Father's son—"for are we not sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty?"—thou mayest drag out thy life "in idleness and companionship of swine, where only hucks are available."

"Is LIFE WORTH LIVING?" is the question modern thought persistently asks. Like a flash of lightning lighting up the glory of some mighty mansion, this text, with its great possibility stretching out away down God's eternity, answers that walling question with an affirmative cheery and loud. It may not seem to be worth living to him whose highest platform is a competency; whose chief ambition is a little brief authority; whose main hope is to eat and drink heartily, and leaning back in an easy chair, sleep and snore; but if it is possible for mortal man to glorify the eternal God; if it is possible for me in my Time Life to cast an influence into the Eternal years; if it is possible for me to win the "well done" of an applauding Deity in the doom day; then, as with a gathering thunder of emphasis we say—"Life worth living!"—Yes, ten thousand times yea!

And the MEANS OF GLORIFYING GOD are placed—thanks to His mercy—within the reach of the unscientific and unlearned; the poor and the unknown. For, while the achievements of the great in psalmody, in writing and research, may cast glory on the God who ruleth all, it is certain and sure that no glory derived by God from man exceeds, or equals, that of a consistent Christian life.

The seasons and the continents; the suns and stars must glorify their maker; for being matter, having neither will nor active might, they cannot do otherwise. But the great power is given to man to choose, whether he will seek the highest Good, or the deepest Ill; and when man, able to go down, determines to go up, and resolutely seeks His glory who is the Source of all Good; then is the Eternal glorified as He never is by science or song; by prowess of intellect or achievement of skill. And the realization of this magnificent possibility thrills one as the singing constellations never did, or can; for to see a man who might be self-seeking and mean; to see that man sinking self in the God will, is the most beautiful sight the wide sweep of the universe opens to the gaze of mortal. To see him strive, and plan, and endeavor; wrestle and work, and achieve; and then pour his consecrated fulness into the Deity, as a river into the sea—to see that man, willing to decrease that God may increase; wishing to burn as did the Midian bush, that the God may be made visible; willing the waste of the marble, that the statue may grow and become manifest; this side the sea of glass and the burning throne of God, it is not probable that ought else is so impressive and nobly grand.

To realize that all life is God's workmanship; that the world outside is His, and not devil's; that life's chief elevation is prostration at His feet; that man's greatest good is to seek God's glory, trust His love, cling to His mercy, and know the Judge of all the earth does right; to be willing to wait the explanation of all the chastisement and crushing blows; to be an instrument passive in the Master's hand, letting Him strike major or minor chord, as He sees fit; to say, "Thou art the ringing voice, I but the echo faint;" "Thou art the great Sun, I but a dew drop dazzled with Thy glory; to know and will all this, my brothers, is to eat angel's food, and walk with God.

And it is ours,—yours and mine—to—

"Feel as weak as a violet,
Alone 'neath the awful sky."

Aye! but it's ours also to feel—

"As weak; yet as trustful also;
For the whole year long I see
All the wonders of faithful nature,
Still worked for the love of me;

Winds wander, and dew drip earthward,
Rains fall, suns rise and set,
Earth whirls, and all but to prosper
A poor little violet."

Northern Alberta Correspondence.

DEAR EDITOR:—The weekly visits of your excellent paper, the MESSENGER AND VISITOR remind of obligation to supply its columns with notes of news from this remote field of labor.

Our winter is now nearing its close; and a more delightful winter, so far as weather is concerned, could scarcely be found anywhere on earth. For nearly three out of four months we have had almost uninterrupted Indian summer. The snow fell in November on the unfrozen ground, and with the exception of a few days now and then we have had but very moderate degrees of frost. Once it took an excursion down into the forties, and for a week it played among the high twenties, and in the thirties, but the atmosphere was so calm and quiet that it was not only tolerable but quite enjoyable even with that degree of cold to be out in the open air. On the day the thermometer marked 44° below zero, the writer, had an appointment some twelve miles out in the country, and attended it with no inconvenience, driving his ponies the use of a pair of light gloves.

The sleighing through the last four months has been something superb, without a break by drift or thaw; and all the while appalling accounts have been reaching us of winds, blizzards and terrific drifts in Manitoba, Dakota and Minnesota, resulting not only in great inconvenience and hardship to many, but in not a few cases of sad loss of human lives, truly our lot in Northern Alberta has been given us in pleasant places, and we have a goodly heritage so far as climate favors are concerned.

As the result of last year's good crops and some other circumstances finances are greatly improved here, and the "times" on the whole are much bettered. The prospect is that with a few more years such as last year the character of the country for productiveness will become known, and immigration of the right class of people will flow in prepared to build up the country, and success will develop in all lines.

The revival of business in the mining districts of British Columbia, southwest of us, is opening up for this a market for produce both in grains and meats which, with improvements in freight rates, will help this country greatly.

In mission work there has been nothing very startling or even very cheering during the winter. In the two Edmonton Sunday services have been held regularly morning and evening by the two English speaking Baptist missionary pastors; and in additions some five or six outstations have been reached by either Sunday or week evening service. The prayer meetings and the Young People's meetings have been fairly well attended and the two Sunday Schools have been doing good work with a moderate attendance. Our earnest cry is, "Oh Lord revive thy work," because greater and better things are needed, yet we feel conscious that we are here witnessing to, and emphasizing great and important truths that would be, to a great extent, ignored were we not here to bear testimony. Some of our good, zealous brethren here of other denominations who preceded us in the work have thought, and sometimes have said openly, that we were not needed in the work, and have even gone so far as to say that we were intruders on the field, but God helping us we shall not at all be intimidated by such talk, believing that the Lord's last commission marks out a work for us as baptized believers and churches of baptized believers that the other churches have not begun to do and are not likely to begin. Both of our churches in the town have suffered from the removal of several of our most active young men in church work on account of dull times and lack of labor here during the winter months. We confidently hope, however, that some of them at least will return with the opening up and the improvement of the country, as their hearts still seem to cling to the Edmonton district with its many excellent traits as a place for a home.

The little line church organized last summer in the Sturgeon settlement, some eighteen miles north of Edmonton, has been at work during the winter, and are about finishing for themselves a snug little church house which in a few weeks they hope to dedicate to the Lord and His cause. Their great distance from Edmonton hinders them from having the amount of preaching service they really need. We trust the near future may have better, or rather, more service in store for them. They are a loyal and worthy little band, and with sufficient preaching and pastoral service the field is one that is full of hope, and with the divine blessing will yield a good increase. We learn of a good work going on in the German Baptist churches south of us. In the East Leduc church a very cheering work is in progress in connection with the labors of our excellent brother, Frederick Mueller. Some two weeks ago he had the joy of baptizing several rejoicing believers, and the prospect is that more will soon follow. These Russian German Baptists are of the heroic class and scorn the use of men made baptisteries, attending to the ordinance in the very coldest weather in open waters, and without any bodily or spiritual injury believing thoroughly in the old homely couplet:

"If your hearts are warm,
Ice and snow will do no harm."

They are also aggressive. Although but a little over three years in the country, and not a few of them less than half that length of time, they have already organized three churches and built three places of worship, and are now at work with the fourth in which a fourth organization will be brought together. In this last undertaking they need some fifty or a hundred dollars of assistance from their more wealthy brethren in the east. Such amount could not be more profitably spent than in assisting these enterprising, noble brethren. Any brother or sister in the Lord who has a few dollars of the Lord's money for such work may forward it by mail either to the writer at South Edmonton, to Pastor C. B. Freeman at Edmonton, or to Pastor Frederick Mueller, of Leduc, Alberta, and it will be properly placed in the work.

We have now in Alberta eight baptized churches, five English speaking and three German, with the prospect of a fourth in the near future; and we hope soon, perhaps in the approaching summer, to organize an Association for mutual edification and encouragement in the good work. Six of the churches are within a radius of forty or fifty miles of each other, and can easily have their representatives together once a year. The other two are somewhat inconveniently situated, but could easily send their delegates by means of the C. and E. railroad to meet with those in the north.

Mr. Editor perhaps some time in the near future you may be taking an editorial vacation and making a Western trip, and we may adapt out time of Associational meeting to suit, and have you with us to give us some wise counsel by word of mouth as well as by the medium of pen, ink and paper. "So mote it be." A. McD.