

## Life Problems

Answers by REV. W. QUANCE, Lambeth

Two young Leaguers of Chilliwack, B.C., have written an interesting letter asking for counsel regarding prayer. In connection with Matt. 26, 39, they ask (1) Did Christ pray that He might not be crucified? (2) Was He afraid that physical weakness would bring death before the time for the Crucifixion, and so be the innocent cause of defeating His Father's plan—thus the "cup" meant his physical weakness. (3) Was Christ, as a man, averse to death, but wished to set this aversion aside and do His part in carrying out His Father's will, "not as I will?"

From your letter it is a little difficult to see what you require. Your difficulties seem to arise in relation to answers to prayer, so you refer to Matt. 26, 39. But you proceed to give interpretations of the passage and none of them seem to bear upon that subject. You wish to know which of your interpretations is correct, and why?

Our space forbids a lengthened discussion.

1. In view of John 12, 32, 33; Mark 8, 34; Luke 9, 23, we can scarcely regard your text as correct.

2. Neither can we think that physical weakness bringing death would frustrate the Father's plan. He knew that He must "taste death." The mode is not the essential thing.

3. We should therefore deem your last as the most nearly correct.

But we ought to approach with reverence and solemn shrinking the story of our Saviour's anguish. We must not argue about the agony, as to forget that a suffering human heart was there, and that each of us owes his soul to the victory which was decided, if not completed, in that fearful place. The sinless perfection of Christ's manhood would intensify the bitterness of the elements in the cup. The exquisite sensitiveness and perceptivity of our Saviour's spirit would marvellously qualify Him at once for discriminating them, and for feeling the accumulated effect of them all. We must remember that at the bottom of the cup, heavier by far than all the other elements, there was the inevitable death-penalty, the proper penalty of sin (Rom. 6, 23). It was death, in the most awful and comprehensive sense of the term—so far as it was fitted to express a divine indignation, a penal outgiving of holy divine agency.

Was Christ's prayer answered? Yes. Heb. 5, 7—"In that he feared"—on account of His pious resignation to the Father's will, or on the ground of it, so that it prevailed—He was strengthened from heaven. He did indeed drink the cup to the dregs, but He was enabled to do it, and this strengthening was the answer to His prayer. Compare 2 Cor. 12, 7-10.

Prayer is not for the removal of suffering. There will most surely be an element of selfishness in that prayer. But that pain, or the cup, or lot, or portion which is appointed for us by God may be so used by us. There will most surely be an element of holy character, and subserve the purpose of God (2 Cor. 1, 3-7). Hence the Sinless Christ was made perfect through suffering. Heb. 2, 10.

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Another asks:

Can a person be saved who seeks salvation on the grounds that he desires to "flee from the wrath to come," and because he realizes that this is the only right and sensible course to take; or must salvation be sought because of a heartfelt sorrow for sinning against God?

Dear Seeker—Your questions, and the letter of which they form a part, reveal the

fact of your sincerity and earnestness. And I take it that there is nothing in your life either mental or moral, that holds you from the joy of perfect peace and communion with God.

1. You speak of "seeking salvation." It is God in Christ, and Christ as revealed in the Cross, that must be sought. It is with personal relations, yourself and God, and not abstract things, or ideas, that we have to do. As to the motive of return to God—"flee from the wrath to come"—how much higher, or lower, would that motive be, than that of the prodigal, when he says, "I perish with hunger. I will arise and go to my father?" When, therefore, we speak of a desire "to flee," etc., it is impossible for us to see, or say, just what may be the exact impulse, or motive, or what train of moral and spiritual agencies may have been at work in the hidden heart, and like a flash comes up into consciousness, and so impels us to cry, "God be merciful to me, the sinner." For, as you see, the language implies self-conviction for sin. And a quickened, individual conviction of sin is the first step in passing into a new and Christian life. It depends upon how you view the words, "flee," etc., as to whether the motive is regarded as true and honest, or whether it is without moral reality.

2. "Or must salvation be sought," etc. As we see it, your second question is really a complement of the first, so that the two may be viewed as one.

It is well for us to be clear in our minds as to the meaning of the terms we use. Clearness of terms helps to clearness of thought. In your letter you use "believe" and "trust" as if they were synonymous. It is true they are fundamentally allied, but they are not the same. Belief is from the intellect, trust is from the affections and will. Belief respects facts and relations, trust always rests on a person. We believe on the ground of evidence; we trust on the ground of character. Salvation comes through trusting with the whole soul in Jesus Christ, the Crucified and Risen Saviour.

God loves the honest mind, hears the honest prayer, pours all His fulness into the honest bosom. No great flights of ecstatic feelings are wanted; frames carry nothing; but that silent, sound integrity is so mighty that it wins its way to God also be used. The Junior Society was visited, and interest in missions was increased there.

We will try to enroll twice as many members in our Prayer Band as were enrolled last year. Every member of the band was furnished with a prayer calendar. This is made by pastepartouting a missionary picture, six by eight inches in size, and attaching twenty-six weekly prayer-sheets to it. Each slip is made of a sheet of white paper three inches square, lasts for one week, gives the name of one of the fields where this society's denomination works, and contains the name of the missionary in that field for each day in the week. Thus twenty-three prayers go up every day for some worker out on the firing line. The entire calendar is so arranged that a complete trip is made around the world, and each field of the denomination to which this society belongs is visited during the half-year while the calendar lasts. In order that the prayers may be intelligent and definite, a large map of the world is displayed in each Sunday prayer meeting, and the journey around the world is indicated upon it as it proceeds.

## How a Live Committee Worked

Mr. C. E. McBurney, in the Chicago Endeavor, tells of what one Christian Endeavor missionary committee in Chicago has accomplished. After considering the needs of the society, the members of the committee pledged themselves to do a number of definite things. These things were clearly stated in clauses, and each committeeman was given one clause to look after as his special task. The plan was to achieve: (1) missions, (2) circulation of the library, (3) missionary meetings, (4) missionary study, (5) systematic giving, (6) practical work, (7) work among the Juniors, and (8) work in the Sunday School. Each member had one of these points in charge. Untidely, they expressed their intentions in the following way:

We promise to try to get our members to read one hundred and fifty missionary books during our term. A reading contest enabled them to carry out this scheme.

We promise to add at least ten more books to our missionary library. Members and friends were invited to give the cost of any book they chose from a list given them; some gave the full amount, others formed a group of four or five and jointly subscribed the purchase price.

We will try to make our monthly missionary meetings more interesting than ever before. This was accomplished by the whole society's studying one chapter of "The Uplift of China" each month, the leader asking questions on the chapter and the society answering.

We will hold another mission-study class. Classes had been held, but there were still room for more.

We will increase the amount of practical work done by our society. Books and magazines were collected, "comfort-bags" made, and other pieces of work were done.

We will try to get our members to give systematically to missions. Pledges were given them to sign, and gifts were made averaging from five to fifty cents a week for the cause of missions.

We will seek to introduce the study of missions in the Sunday School. This was accomplished through the teacher in the kindergarten department, who was a member of the missionary committee. She was provided with a set of missionary object-lessons on Africa, which she used once or twice a month, and other sets of object-lessons were also used. The Junior Society was visited, and interest in missions was increased there.

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The splendid results of this effort may well be emulated in every society.