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THE
BIBLE RECORD

Vol. IX

DECEMBER, 1912

No. 10

The Loyalty of Christ

Leonardo da Vinci

German National Life

Some Essentials of Bible Teaching

ONE DOLLAR A YEAR

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The Bible Record

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ROBERT M. KURTZ, Managing Editor

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PRAYER WITH WORK *Versus* WORK AND PRAYER

Does this title mean anything to you? Do you see any distinction between the parts? Is there any difference between prayer with work, and, work and prayer? I believe there is a very important distinction, and that the Biblical way is, prayer with work, whereas the ordinary method adopted even by many Christians is work and prayer.

It is a striking fact that our Lord spoke of His works as the gift of God. In the fifth chapter of the Gospel by John He speaks of the works which His Father had given Him to accomplish, and declares that these very works bear witness of Him, that the Father sent Him. We do not desire to push the meaning of the word "given" too far, but in harmony with the whole spirit of the Gospel and the teaching in many parts thereof, is the assertion that our Lord moved out in His life work, performing this act or that, engaging in this conversation or that, saying this word or that, only after association with His Father and assurance of His Father's leading.

Of course, it is inaccurate to suggest, as one might infer from the sentence just written, that the Son was ever out of association with His Father. This was continuous. His life motto was, to do the will of His Father; His meat and drink were to accomplish His Father's work. Thus His attitude of life from start to finish was the attitude of dependence, which is in fact the attitude of prayer. It is more; it is the act of prayer. We do not pray merely when we say words of prayer or lift hands of prayer. There are many prayers of which it may be said, as Hamlet's royal uncle said of his own:

"My words fly up,
My thoughts remain below;
Words, without thoughts,
Never to heaven go."

THE LOYALTY OF CHRIST

By Doctor J. Ross Stevenson

MY text is found in the Second Epistle to Timothy, the fourth chapter, and seventeenth verse, the last clause of the verse, according to the Revised Version: "But the Lord stood by me."

In his book entitled "The Philosophy of Loyalty," Professor Boyce endeavors to establish loyalty as the fundamental principle of the true social, moral, and religious life. Jesus Christ was loyal to the mission on which His Father sent Him, and He was faithful and true to all who were enlisted in the same Divine enterprise. He brought about Him disciples, and to these He was unswervingly loyal.

The Christian life of this great Apostle to the Gentiles began after the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus, and while he knew a great deal about the Saviour, he did not have the advantage of friendly association with Him during His human career. But the life of Paul is so loyal in its character, so sublime in aspect, so great in service, and so abiding in influence that it can only be explained by assuming that he enjoyed the personal friendship of the risen and living Christ. In his magnificent Christian life there was fulfilled the promise made, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," so that this man could boldly say, "I will not fear what man shall do unto me."

Paul counted Christ unfailingly loyal, and he gives us a beautiful instance of this at the close, or near the close of his life, when he was being tried before Cæsar. We have a record of this in the last message which he ever gave. At this crisis in his life the Lord stood by him, and Paul was contented. He was satisfied. He could depend upon the love of Christ, and that seemed to be everything. Here we have a sure and inspiring evidence of this loyalty.

To Paul friendship meant a great deal. I believe it was Dean Stanley who said concerning Paul that the Apostle had a thousand friends, and loved each one as if he had a thousand souls, and died a thousand deaths when he was parted from them. We might suppose that a man so strong in his character and so self-reliant in his spirit would be indifferent to the associations of other people, and could live and work independently of human sympathy and human strength, but it was not so. Friendship to Paul was the

chief, or a chief means of grace and of usefulness. Through all of his Christian career, and especially his missionary career, he always had somebody to stand by him, to go with him on his journeys and help him in his work. Now it is Barnabas or Silas, again Timothy or Luke. In Rome gathered about him a large number of beloved brothers, in whose fellowship he greatly rejoiced. Wherever he planted a church and labored for any length of time, he gathered about him a large number of friends. He was always sending loving messages, as well as brethren, to the churches where he had so many friends. When he received some message of love from his brethren he was simply jubilant, just as he was depressed beyond measure when no message was brought to him. He was always asking their prayer on his behalf, and it would seem as if he was entirely bound up in his friends, craving constantly their grace of friendship, and we will never know until we get to Heaven how much of the success of Paul can be traced back to the influence of those whom he loved and who dearly loved him.

But Paul had come to a point in his life, as we all must do sooner or later, when earthly friendships will not avail. Luke was still with him, and doubtless did everything in his power, but his help seemed to be inadequate. Such beloved friends as Timothy, Crescens, Tychicus, and Titus had been sent off upon one mission and another and were far away and knew nothing of his dire need. Demas, on whom he seemed to depend, had forsaken him because he loved this present world. But there were local friends, Christians in Rome, members of the church there, who had received from his lips the very message of life. Some of them owed their own souls to him in the Lord, belonging to the household of Cæsar, and occupying positions of great influence. Surely they would stick closely to him in the hour of his extremity. But when he was brought into court, not one took his part. There was not one to plead his cause. There was not one even by his presence there showed that he had sympathy for this man of God. "All men forsook me." The word is a strong one.

As we would express it to-day, they left him in the lurch. Yet how kindly disposed he is toward them. We do not know why they had done this; perhaps it was because of a cruel persecution that was then arising, so that it meant as much as a man's life was worth publicly to acknowledge himself to be a Christian. The implication is, however, that their conduct was reprehensible and that they were guilty of gross infidelity, and yet what kindness of heart this great man, this great Christian, showed. He does not rebuke

them; he does not crave the opportunity to tell them what he thinks of them and to get even with them. That it may not be laid to their account, is his unselfish prayer.

Then over against this background, he puts the shining person of the Lord Christ. "But the Lord stood by me," and it is evident that everything which his friends might have done, everything which they failed to do, Christ did in such a complete and in such a satisfactory way that his joy was greater than it otherwise would have been, and his triumph exceeded anything that he could have otherwise known. It was as when one could say, "The Lord alone is a thousand companions. He alone is a world of friends."

We can learn in this lesson what the ultimate design of this loyalty of Christ was. I say the ultimate design; it is expressed here for us: "The Lord stood by me, and strengthened me; that through me the message might be fully proclaimed, and that all the Gentiles might hear." Paul had not gone to Rome as a criminal, as someone who had been guilty of dire transgressions, and as one who had a guilty and sinful past. Nor had he gone to Rome on a pleasure excursion, or in commercial pursuits, although even then he might have claimed the full benefits of religion, for it is possible for one to be enjoying life to the full and still be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. But Paul was in Rome on the business of his Lord. From the very time he first became a Christian on through his life, it had been his purpose to make Jesus everywhere known. He lived no longer for selfish ends, but for Christ who died for him, who had risen from the dead and was his living Master. His work in life was simply part of that great commission which every Christian has received, to carry the Gospel everywhere, and he executed the commission through love for the cause of Jesus Christ.

It was because this man lived, not unto himself, but lived unto Christ and unto those for whom Christ died that the entire race might be saved, that he had so many beloved ones such as Timothy who loved him as if he were his own father.

The express instructions given to the apostles were to make disciples of all nations, of all neighbors, of all acquaintances, of all friends, and of all kindred, teaching all things that He had taught them. So, down through the history of the Kingdom of God, those who have stood for this purpose of Christ toward humanity are turning humanity from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God. We have those throughout the world to-day who enjoy the great sense of the nearness of Christ, knowing the good pleasure of His will.

Is it not folly then for us to imagine that we can live for selfish ends, that we can have our worldly pursuits, and for long periods of time forget God and forget Christ, and then expect Him to be a very present help in the time of trouble, even when in our hearts there is no definite purpose of obeying Him or of turning ourselves to usefulness? Our hearts are away from the very presence of Christ.

"The Lord stood by me," said Paul, "that the message might be proclaimed and that all might hear." Oh, that we could grasp the full meaning of this thought! We cannot, my friends, have the full benefits of religion and live only for ourselves. It is only when in self-forgetful love we are thinking of others and living for others that Christ becomes a real power in our lives. So much for the ultimate design.

There was a more immediate purpose on account of which the Lord stood by Paul. It was that he might be strengthened. This was a time of testing, a time of great trial. He was compelled to appear before Cæsar, and there was involved reproach and ignominy if not certain death. But why did not the Lord deliver him from the trial altogether? He did deliver him from any evil in it. Paul was confident that He would always do so. He knew that no device of Satan, nothing evil, or immoral in its character could ever overtake, apprehend or gain the victory over him. But, though the Lord delivered him for the time being out of this trial, why was he brought to Rome at all? Why had He not prevented all this? We must keep in mind the great purpose for which Paul lived. It was that he might make Christ known everywhere.

Only a short time previous to this, in writing to the Philippians from a Roman dungeon where he was in chains, perhaps dictating to someone else, he said that the thing which had happened unto him had fallen out unto the furtherance of the Gospel, and the message was one of grace and of rejoicing. And now at Rome he was to have that opportunity which he was coveting all through the years, the opportunity of standing in the imperial court, before Cæsar and the most representative audience he could find in all the world, there to proclaim Christ in order that from that point as a center, the Gospel might go to the uttermost parts of the earth.

If we only interpreted trials by the context of their redemptive purpose, I am sure we would find them rich in opportunity and overflowing in blessing, and we would not be so eager to run away from or get rid of them. So the trial must go on for the progress of the Gospel, but the needed strength was given which made the

whole case easy to bear. As we look back upon it, it was a great deal more important for the ministry, a great deal more important for the spiritual progress and triumph of Paul, that he should have the trial with the grace and strength needed, than that he should have escaped it altogether.

Character and capacity for usefulness are priceless possessions and more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold, but character can only be developed, usefulness can only be promoted by what we call the lessons of experience. The leaders in the world of thought and of action to-day are the men and the women of experience, those who have learned their hard lessons with difficulty, but who know whereof they speak because they have tested it and tried it. Thus we can understand why the apostle in chains could say, "Count it all joy when ye fall into manifold trials, my brethren, for the proving of your faith worketh patience, and let patience have its perfect work that ye may be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing."

That is what Paul wanted to be—lacking in nothing. His boast was, "I can do all things, I can endure any trial, I can perform any task through Christ who strengtheneth me."

I remember a concert which I once attended in a foreign city, where a gifted pianist was living. It was the trial of her life. Musical critics were there to record their judgment, and a verdict was to be given that would determine her whole future, her whole course in life. But her teacher, one of the music masters of Europe, did not desert her. He introduced her and he stood by her with the pages of the music, whispering to her words of encouragement and joining in the applause. Because he stood by her, she was strengthened and the trial became her triumph.

If we wish to complete our course, if we wish to be delivered from the evil in the world and attain the heavenly Kingdom, we must submit to the discipline of the Great Teacher, our one Master. Spare not the stroke. Do with us as Thou wilt. Let there be naught unfinished, broken, marred. When we are willing to have Him complete His purpose in us, then as a loyal, abiding friend He stands by us. He always has done so. He always will.