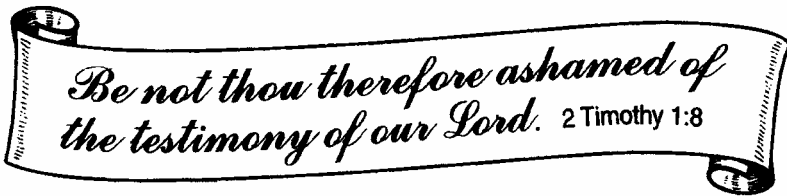


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Editorial.

"Lift Up Your Eyes, and Look on the Fields"

The farmer looks on a freshly planted field with visions of the harvest. His eye is trained to observe the sprouting plants, the growing stalks, and the swelling heads of grain. With keen attention he discerns the varying shades of color as the time of harvest approaches.

Men of other occupations may scarcely notice the changes that take place in a field. Or they may look on the fields unseeingly—their minds elsewhere. They may even pass by a field without realizing that it is there.

Spiritually speaking, we mortals may be so nearsighted that we cannot see the needs beyond us. Or we may have lost our peripheral vision through our constant focus upon one part of one field.

The Master is calling us to a higher vision, a broader view, and a clearer perception of the fields. What should we be seeing?

Expanding fields.

Of the parable of the tares, Jesus said, "The field is the world" (Matthew 13:38). In 1850 the world's population was one billion souls. Within the last twenty years, it has

increased from five to six billion. One third of that population is under fifteen years in age. How many of those souls have never heard the Gospel?

Are our eyes open to the fields in our own homes? Are we seeing the fields in our growing congregations? Have we been looking on the untouched fields in other localities in North America? Are we looking on the fields in South America and other continents? Jesus spoke the words, "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields" from the Samaritan field.

Eternal souls.

When Jesus saw the multitudes, He "was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd" (Matthew 9:36).

What does it take to move us with this compassion for souls? Can we fathers be moved out of our vocational preoccupations to minister to the souls in our families? Are we allowing God to move us to make the visitors at church feel welcome to come again or to help a neglected member feel the warmth of brotherhood? Can we talk with any soul who knows not God or who longs for a pure church, and not be moved?

Limited opportunity.

When Jesus traveled from Judea to Galilee, He took the path the

Jews deliberately avoided—through Samaria. "And he must needs go through Samaria" (John 4:4). He had to stop at Jacob's well and talk with one woman who would arrive there shortly after He would. This was a prime opportunity to reach not only one soul, but many Samaritans. He would not miss it!

In what seems like a few short years, pliable infants become patterned adults. Young parents choose church fellowships that greatly influence the course of their posterity. With godly parents, devoted Christians, and faithful congregations nearby to point souls heavenward, "by all means" some can be saved.

Repeatedly, when congregations have begun in new communities, local persons have responded to the call of the Gospel. Where would those souls be without that witness?

Limited laborers.

Diligent, devoted disciples of Christ are in short supply. God-fearing parents who nurture with faith and vision are a minority. Faithful Christian congregations are very scarce in many areas. At home and abroad there is a growing need for selfless servants who will lovingly labor with God for the eternal good of souls. May the Lord depend on you? "The harvest truly is plenteous, but

the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest" (Matthew 9:37, 38).

—FKC



"The Path of the Just"

God's Word is clear that there are only two paths in life and that they lead to opposite eternal destinations. However, Satan has successfully deceived men into thinking that many, many paths exist. He has also blinded men's eyes to the outcome of those two paths. Let us consider the path on which God's children are found. As we consider "the path of the just," let us personally ponder the path of our feet so that all our ways may be established (Proverbs 4:18, 26).

Although the way to heaven is for "whosoever will," the Bible tells us that this way is restrictive. "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life" (Matthew 7:14). Job asked, "How should man be just with God?" (Job 9:2). We need to humbly conclude that it is only by the miracle of grace that the holy God accepts poor frail man.

The Book of Proverbs has many verses that help us understand the

path of the just. Solomon used word pictures to paint the portrait of a man on this path and to describe his character.

1] The just man is known by his speech. "The mouth of the just bringeth forth wisdom" (Proverbs10:31). This is a rare and valuable characteristic. "The tongue of the just is as choice silver"(Proverbs10:20). To reflect wisdom, speech must be "pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy" (James 3:17).

2] The just person endeavors to treat others fairly. This includes all areas of life including home, church, and community. 'A just weight is [the LORD'S] delight" (Proverbs11:1). The dictionary describes a just person as one who does what is right, proper, lawful, fair, and impartial. Because of his fair dealings with those around him, others are glad when he prospers. "When it goeth well with the righteous, the city rejoiceth" (Proverbs11:10). Even after his death, he is remembered with fondness. "The memory of the just is blessed" (Proverbs10:7).

3] The just person has unusual stamina and zeal. A just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again" (Proverbs24:16). Although he is not perfect, he knows what is right. By God's grace, he gets up

and tries again rather than giving up in discouragement.

4] The just person enjoys the path he is traveling. "It is a joy to the just to do judgment" (Proverbs21:15). A songwriter observed that the only way to be happy in Jesus is to trust and obey. Living an upright life is not always the easiest thing to do, but it is always the best and it produces peace and joy in the heart.

5] The just person is concerned for the spiritual welfare of others. "The just seek his soul" (Proverbs29:10). He is not in competition with fellow brethren and sisters. Rather, he views their success as an aid in his own experience. He does "good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Galatians 6:10).

6] The just person identifies all unrighteousness as sin and draws safe lines in social life. 'An unjust man is an abomination to the just" (Proverbs29:27). While he is not critical of other people, he is able to divide between right and wrong. The hatred he possesses toward sin helps him stay on the just path.

7] The just person wants to learn and grow. "Teach a just man, and he will increase in learning" (Proverbs 9:8-10). It has been observed that the biggest room in the world is the room for improvement. Those on the path toward heaven are humble individuals who are

open to advice. The closer we walk with God, the brighter His will illuminates our path, and the more clearly we will see our need for improvement.

Having considered these seven characteristics, what do they reveal about you and me? Are we walking on the path of the just? The sobering truth that confronts us is that if we are not on the path of the just, we are on the path of the wicked. This path includes characteristics that are the opposites of the ones that we just considered. On this way there is darkness, perpetual stumbling, and in the end eternal death.

Solomon observed that "the path of the just is as the shining light" (Proverbs 4:18). Walking on a well-lit path gives a sense of confidence and a sense of purpose for life. This shining light not only lights the path of the just but also shines into the hearts and lives of others, showing them the right way to go. "His children are blessed after him" (Proverbs 20:7). The darker this world becomes, the brighter our light will shine. The perfect day is a day when all injustices will be forever settled. Anything that causes darkness or confusion will be wiped away, and the just will live forever in the land of perfect day.

As we walk in the path of the just, we can enjoy God's blessings both

here in this time and at the end of this path as well. "The LORD ... blesseth the habitation of the just" (Proverbs 3:33).

E.G. Millerstown, PA



The Sufferings of Christ.

The suffering and death of our Lord are foundational aspects of our salvation and are proof of God's eternal love. Without His redemptive work, we would be "of all men most miserable" (1 Corinthians 15:19).

Christ's suffering and death carry a deeper significance than those of the martyrs. Christ suffered and died as the spotless Lamb of God, thus providing for our salvation. His intense sufferings were on our behalf.

Christ's sufferings were intense indeed. Much of Jesus' body was wounded by the cruel, inhumane treatment received from His captors before He was crucified. Truly, Jesus suffered much for us as He had shown His disciples (Matthew 16:21).

Wicked men bound Jesus' hands in the Garden of Gethsemane, taking Him away so that they might torment Him and disgrace Him, who had already been condemned

without trial. But for the fact that He had already bound Himself to the work of being our Mediator, their cords would not have held Him. As He stood there with bound hands in the court of judgment, Jesus allowed an officer to unjustly strike Him. Thus He fulfilled the Scripture that spoke of Him being stricken and afflicted (Isaiah 53).

After Jesus was severely beaten as a criminal, a crown of thorns was placed upon His head, and a purple robe was given in mockery for Him to wear. What pains, reproaches, and hardships our Savior quietly and resolutely endured for us and for our salvation!

After unsuccessfully trying to convince the Jews that he should pardon and discharge Jesus, Pilate finally surrendered to the demands of the Jewish leaders. The fear of man had a greater power over him than the fear of God. The sentence of death was passed upon the most holy and innocent Man that ever lived.

The soldiers joined in leading Jesus away to the place of execution. They added to His misery by causing Him to carry His own cross (John 19:17). A cross was usually a long, thick piece of timber that was neither seasoned nor hewn. Jesus apparently was suffering acute exhaustion, and He could not go on under this heavy load.

Placing greater reproach upon

His sufferings, Jesus' persecutors brought Him outside the city to the common place of execution, a place called Calvary. There, His hands and feet were nailed to the cross as it lay upon the ground, and it was then lifted up and fastened into the earth. The only spotless Lamb of God, dying for the sins of the entire human race, now experienced this shameful, bloody, painful death normally reserved for the worst of criminals.

In all the details and happenings leading up to and including His crucifixion, Jesus fulfilled all that the Scriptures had prophesied of Him regarding His suffering, including those found in Psalm 22. Jesus fulfilled yet another prophecy when He cried from the cross, "I thirst" (Psalm 69:21). His persecutors filled a sponge with vinegar, put it on a stalk of hyssop, and gave Him this to drink.

What is the significance to us today of the agony, sufferings, and wounds our Lord received as He went all the way to Calvary's cross?

The work of man's redemption is now completed. Jesus' three dying words, "It is finished," are words holding tremendous truth and meaning for each recipient of His mercy and grace.

God's provision for salvation was finished. The power of Satan and death has been broken.

Christ's blood provides full deliverance for those who believe in Him. His blood can do what all the blood of the world could not do—provide forgiveness, freedom from sin, and a cleansing of the conscience. Applying Jesus' blood removes the scarlet stain of sin and makes a person "white as snow."

Jesus' suffering and death on the cross established the New Testament. The long-awaited promise of the Redeemer has now become a reality. We do not need to merely hope for a future provision, but we can have a living faith in an already accomplished work.

Jesus' sacrifice as a man qualifies Him to be our Intercessor before God. The beginning of His new role as our Intercessor before God began with His ascension into heaven at the end of His earthly ministry. His presence at His Father's right hand positions Him for His ongoing intercessory work.

Jesus' wounds, which He suffered once and for all, are the means by which believers can be forgiven, sanctified, and perfected. One perfect sacrifice of God's Son, "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," paid the price for our salvation. This met the divinely appointed requirements for the salvation of the entire human race.

The redemption of man from sin was an extremely costly matter for both the Father and His Son. Even

though both knew in advance the awful cost that it would incur, both were fully committed to do it because of their wondrous love for the entire human family. We cannot comprehend the fact that Jesus Christ, King of kings and Lord of lords, could suffer so greatly at the hands of creatures He had personally created.

Because of the wounds that He suffered for us, we experience the wondrous gift of salvation and can now approach our heavenly Father confidently through our perfect High Priest, Jesus Christ. "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16).

M.M. Lebanon, PA



Seasoned Speech (Part 3) A Tree of Life.

A wholesome tongue is a tree of life: but perverseness therein is a breach in the spirit" (Proverbs 15.4)

"Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never harm them" is true as far as it goes. But while words cannot break bones, they can break hearts. A look at the definitions of words in the above verse reveals a vivid contrast.

Wholesome means "healing" and perverseness means "viciousness." Breach means "fracture."

Our tongues have the power to make wounds or to heal wounds. Gossip, backbiting, slander, and sarcasm are daggers to the heart. A lack of tact and graciousness may cause even right words to grate and grind. On the other hand, we can speak words that soothe, calm, and heal hurting hearts.

Wholesome words help heal the ravages of sin. Many sin-wrecked souls are left "stripped ... and wounded ... and ... half dead" along life's road. They need a Good Samaritan to bring the balm of Gilead and minister healing to them. One elderly neighbor asked a brother if the killing he had done while in the army would be held against him at the Judgment. The brother shared God's answer for sin—confession and repentance—and the neighbor found peace by repenting of his past. God gives us many opportunities to bring words of healing to sin-battered souls.

Wholesome words help heal the wounds of strife. Whether we are party to strife or a witness to it, we have the responsibility to speak words that make for peace. The children of God are peacemakers (Matthew 5:9). Humble words of apology and accepting responsibility for our mistakes will help re-

store peace. If brethren are at odds, we can plead for reconciliation based on their relationship in Christ (Philippians 2:1). A few words can help neighbors who are upset to put things in perspective. One mother would ask her quarreling children, "What will it matter one hundred years from now?" May our words quench, rather than fuel, the fires of strife.

Wholesome words help heal the aches of sorrow and the pangs of loneliness. How many around us are suffering grief, affliction, or bereavement? Have we spoken healing words of comfort to them? The promises of God strengthen, soothe, support, and stabilize. We can share pleasant memories of the past when someone has lost a loved one. Giving a testimony of God's help in our trials will minister hope to similarly suffering people.

In the early dawn of time, God barred the path to the tree of life in the Garden of Eden, mercifully preventing man from living eternally in his fallen state. In the dawn of our eternal day, God will welcome man to partake freely of the tree of life; thus he will live forever. Today God has planned for our tongues to be trees of life. May our tongues be used of God to bring healing, not hurt, to those about us.

—M.S.G.