

The Signs of the Times, Vol. 26 (1900)

May 16, 1900

"Our Divine Helper" *The Signs of the Times* 26, 20.

E. J. Waggoner

"Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O Lord." Ps. 130:1. And he did not cry in vain. The depths from which she cried with the depths of sin; for he said: "If Thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared." "Let Israel hope in the Lord; for with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption. And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities." So out of the depths of iniquity we may cry to be Lord, with the assurance that he will gladly help us. We can not be too low down for Him to reach us.

The pagan maxim, which too many quote as tho but it weren't one Bible, is "God helps him who helps himself." But the truth revealed in the Bible is that God helps the man who is not able to help themselves. Read the account of a storm on the sea, and of deliverance from it, as recorded in Ps. 107:23-30. Of the men in the storm is said: "their soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses." So yet was when a Jehoshaphat, in behalf of the people, said to the Lord, "For we have no might against this great company that cometh against a; neither know we what to do; but our eyes are upon Thee" (2 Chron. 20:12), that the Lord sent deliverance.

All these things "were written for are learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hoped." Rom. 15:4. "For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Heb. 4:15, 16. Infirm means without strength; without strength implies been overcome by sin. So we learn that, in the midst of defeat, when borne down under sin, we may come with boldness to Jesus, and find forgiveness and help; for if it is only at the very lowest possible state that we become connected with Christ. He came not to call the righteous, but sinners and repentance. Matt. 9:13. As he came to save the lost, we commend ourselves to his mercy by acknowledging that we are lost sinners. But sin is death. Therefore, Christ bore our sins, and died for us. "Christ hath redeemed this from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; . . . that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." Gal. 3:13, 14. So it is in our wretched, sin-cursed condition that we receive help from the Lord.

Death is the lowest condition possible; and it is in His death by but that we become perfectly united to Christ. "For as many of you as had been baptized in the Christ have put on Christ." Gal. 3:27. We put on Christ by baptism. And what

is baptism?-"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Rom. 6:3, 4.

What does this show?-Simply this, that not only may we be saved when in the very lowest state, but we cannot be saved in any other condition. As a matter of fact, all men are in that lost condition; for "all have sinned;" "they are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." Rom. 3:12, 23. But in order for any to get the benefits of Price salvation, they must acknowledge themselves to be in that condition. But the law of faith, boasting is excluded, and this not only once, but always. The question can never boast of his goodness, for boasting shows the absence of faith, and "whatsoever is not of faith is sin." Rom. 14:23. The Christian must always it knowledge himself to be a sinner, and then he may always be a share in the sacrifice of Christ. So he always lives only in the present. With Paul he may well say, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom *I am chief*." 1 Tim. 1:15. "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is *crucified* unto me, and I into the world." Gal. 6:14. E. J. WAGGONER.

November 28, 1900

"The Christian's Outlook" *The Signs of the Times* 26, 48.

E. J. Waggoner

"He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." Ps. 91:1. This is the dwelling-place of every true Christian: for God has made us alive together with Christ, and "hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:6); and in that we are made alive in Christ, and raised to the heavenly places in Him, we are placed "far above all principality, and power, and ight, and dominion." Eph. 1:21. From this elevated position the Christian has a broad outlook.

First of all, he sees the King in His beauty. "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seed after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple. For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion, in the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me; He shall set me up upon a rock. And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me." He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High must necessarily see the Lord.

God is the one great object in the Christian's horizon, and it is this continual view that insures his safety. "I have set the Lord always before me; because He is at my right hand, it shall not be moved." Ps. 16:8. With the Lord always before him, he can not fail to obey the injunction, "Behold! your God!" "We all, with open [unveiled] face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory." 2 Cor. 3:18.

None of this language is figurative, it is literal and real. "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God"-not only in the future, but now, for nothing but impurity can shut out God from the sight. Wherever there is purity of heart and life, there is the vision of God. His glory is to be seen in the heavens, while every flower reveals some of His beauty. "The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord," and therefore the one whose eyes are opened has all the goodness of the Lord continually passing before him.

For the Christian's eyes are opened. Christ is the light of the world, and God "hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son." Those who have fellowship with God "walk in the light, as He is in the light," so that we can say, "Whereas I was blind, now I see," for "the Lord openeth the eyes of the blind." Ps. 148:8. And with his opened eyes the Christian sees "wondrous things" in the law of God. Ps. 119:18. The law is magnified and honorable in his eyes, but he sees it as "the perfect law of liberty," the life of Jesus Christ.

What more glorious outlook could anybody have than this, to behold God and His salvation? for of the one who dwells in the secret place of the Most High, it is said, "With long life will I satisfy him, and show him My salvation." Ps. 91:16. It could not be otherwise, since God is his salvation. The Christians, therefore, beholds the arm of the Lord revealed,-the arm that brings salvation,-and he rests in Him.

From his safe retreat in the Lord the Christian looks out upon the earth, and having been made a new creature, he sees everything with new eyes. He that sits upon the throne says, "Behold, I make all things new," and He begins with the man who abides in Him. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new." 2 Cor. 5:17. Looking beyond that which to the mere physical eye seems to be all there is, he sees all things transformed, and tastes even here the power and the joy of the world to come. In every stream of pure water, in every shower of rain, and in every sparkling dewdrop, he sees the "pure river of water of life clear as crystal." What matters it to him if others say that they can see nothing? He whose eyes are opened must needs be a seer, and the universe of God will reveal to him wonders that are hidden from those who have eyes, but they see not." He has in earth a heaven in which to go to heaven.

Some one may object to the statement that the Christian can see the river of life, saying that is spiritual. Very well, have we not the assurance that "the things of the Spirit of God "are spiritually discerned"? 1 Cor. 2:14. And, further, "Ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." Rom. 8:9. God Himself is a spiritual being, yet He is revealed to the pure in heart, to the one who is spiritual. As to seeing the water of life, we have in it a daily illustration of how people can have eyes, and can look directly at an object, and not see it. Read the following from Ps. 65:9-11:-

"Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it; thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water; thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it. Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly; thou settlest the

furrows thereof: thou makest it soft with showers; thou blessest the springing thereof. Thou crownest the year with thy goodness; and thy paths drop fatness."

There is nothing good that does not come directly from God, and He does not keep any good thing back from us. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." James 1:17. The rain that falls from heaven, enriching the earth and making it fruitful, is the overflowing water of life from the throne of God, and it comes to us laden with God's own righteousness. Isa. 43:8. All may see it as such if they are dwelling in the secret place of God, the place whence the water of life springs. God does not reserve the right of His glories for a select and specially favored few; but He spreads them out in full view of everybody, so that whether or not any one sees them depends wholly on himself. Whoever walks in the Spirit can daily see wonders that are hidden from the eyes of the one who as only the mind of the flesh.

The Christian, having God continually before him, sees the power of God, which saves; "for the invisible things of Him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even His everlasting power and divinity." Rom. 1:20. R.V. Thus it is that he sees the salvation of God. Everything that is made, even his own body, reveals the personal presence of the Divine Word that upholds all things, so that he sees victory written on every blade of grass and every leaf of the forest; upon every flower, and in every star. So he is glad through the works of the Lord, and triumphs in the works of God's hands.

Still more, the one who dwells with God, sees His ways, and learns how to live. "Thou wilt show me the path of life; in Thy presence is fullness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures

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forevermore." Ps. 16:11. So, instead of going about feeble in body and mind, the Christian has before him the prospect of renewed youth and fresh, joyous life, which, beginning now, will continue without interruption throughout eternity. Surely no outlook could be more pleasing and encouraging than this. Everybody who has ever been ill-and how few there are who have not suffered more or less from disease-knows how dark is the outlook when the vitality is low. It can not be otherwise, even though one hopes in God for a final release from pain. But God provides for us a glorious view, and invites us to enjoy the reality of it here and now. "The life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us; that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full." God wishes all of His children to be healthy and happy, and He provides the means to that end.

If the Christian looks ahead, he sees before him a time of trouble such as never was when plague and pestilence-the out-breaking of the plague that is in the hearts of all who have not turned to the Lord will ravage the land, but in that time of trouble he sees deliverance for "every one that shall be found written in

the book." Dan. 12:1. Though a thousand fall at his side, and ten thousand at his right hand, he has no fear that any plague will come near him. Where others see nothing but darkness, he sees only light, "because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth."

In short, the Christian, "looking unto Jesus," "the fullness of Him that filleth all in all," in whom all things consist, and beholding God, "who is over all and through all, and in all," sees only perfection, for his eyes are turned away from beholding vanity. He beholds Christ crucified before him, and he unto the world. He sees the new creation in the cross, and knows no man after the flesh, so he begins the life everlasting, living in this world just as he will continue to live throughout eternity, for he lives now in the secret place of God, as close to Him as he can possibly be. Taking refuge under the shadow of God's wings, he sees light in God's light, and drinks continually from the river of God's Eden." Ps. 36:7-9.

And so, with Christ and His power and goodness filling the whole range of our vision, we look forward with glad anticipation to the time when we shall see Him come in the clouds of heaven, even as He left the earth (Acts 1:11), for we shall behold His face in the righteousness which he imparts, and shall be satisfied with His likeness. E. J. WAGGONER.

The Signs of the Times, Vol. 27 (1901)

February 20, 1901

"Calling and Election" *The Signs of the Times* 27, 8.

E. J. Waggoner

Much trouble many people make for themselves, and others also, by limiting the love and mercy of God. "I should like to be saved, but it is impossible unless I am one of the elect, and I have never been called." Sad to say, not a little religious (not Christian) teaching it in time past, and even to the present time, has tended to produce an impressive piece false ideas of God. That professed atheist should blasphemed God's name and character, is to be expected; but that professed followers of God should ever for a moment sanction, not to say promulgate, so horrible a libel upon Him as that He has chosen a certain view to be saved and that He has deliberately doomed all the rest to return all destruction, regardless of their desire or willingness to be saved, is beyond comprehension. Let us note a few simple Bible facts.

Who Are Called?

First as to who are called. Read the words of the apostle Peter to those who assembled on the day of Pentecost: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all

that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Acts 2:38, 39. Who are they whom "the Lord our God shall call"? Note carefully it is those to whom the apostle was speaking, and to their children, and to "all that are afar off." That includes everybody.

The same thing was spoken through the prophet Isaiah. By that prophet the Lord said, "I create the fruit of the lips; peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near." Isa. 57:19. The Lord proclaims peace to him that is afar off, and to him that is near; there is no chance for anybody to find an exception.

With this agree the words of Christ, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden God, and I will give you rest." Matt. 11:28. This includes every needy soul. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." Isa. 55:1. "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Rev. 22:17. Not only is every one who hears invited to come, but he is also authorized to invite everybody else whom he sees. There is no partiality with God.

In view of these plain calls, who dare limit the grace of God? "The grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men." Titus 2:11, R.V. "As by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." Rom. 5:18. All men have gone astray, like lost sheep, and all are called back. God "willeth that all men should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth." 1 Tim. 2:4, R.V. The Lord is "long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." 2 Peter 3:9.

Self-elected

"Yes; but does it not say somewhere that many are called, but you chosen"? and is not that evidence that all can not be saved?-Yes, and no. That statement is indeed made, but it by no means teaches that there are any who cannot be saved if they wished salvation. The question is really equivalent to this, "Does not this last taxed overthrow all the others?" The Word of God is not divided against itself. Read the passages in which this statement is found (Matt. 20:1-16 and 22:1-14), and it will be apparent that those who are not chosen are those who themselves do not choose to accept the terms of salvation. That is the whole of the matter. Election means choice. The free choice is given to all. "Choose life, that both foul and thy seed may live." Deut. 30:19. "Choose you this day and who eat will serve." Joshua 24:13.

Whoever chooses salvation, or, in other words, elects to be saved, is one of the elect. The non-elect are, of course, lost, but it is of their own choice. Of those who are lost, the Spirit of God says, "For

that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord; they would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices." Prov. 1:29-31.

When the Jews at Antioch "spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming," the apostle said, "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you; but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles." Acts 13:45, 46. They judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life, by refusing to receive it. It was indeed given to them, and they put it away from them. Note that it was all in their own hands; they were made judges in the case. And so it is with all men; each of man determines his own worthiness or unworthiness. Whoever will receive the eternal life, is counted worthy of it. Each man judges of his own fitness, and he elects himself. Surely God could not possibly deal more fairly with mankind.

That the matter of the election is one that rests with the individual, is seen from the exhortation of the apostle Peter: "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling an election sure." 2 Peter 1:10. All men are called of God's own free grace; but the call avails nothing if men do not choose to accept it. Having chosen the gift of God, it rests with the individual to make his selection sure, "by a patient continuance in well-doing" thru keeping the faith.

Man's Destiny in His Own Hands

There is a grave responsibility in the fact, yet it is a most glorious truth, that God has placed every man's destiny in his own hands. Every soul can have just what he himself chooses. Surely God is good to all, and His goodness is manifest even in the destruction of the wicked, since even in their destruction God is but allowing them to have that for which they manifest did a most determined choice even after the fullness of the blessing of life had been set before them. They simply get the wages for which they have labored; for "the wages of sin is death." Rom. 6:23. Men who persistently choose their own way, in opposition to that of God, "treasure up" unto themselves "wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God." Rom. 2:4, 5. It would be unjust not to give them the wages which they have so carefully laid up.

But is it not a fact that Jesus said, "No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him"?-Yes, Jesus did say that; and He also said of Himself, with reference to His crucifixion, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." John 12:32. Now when we remember that "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son," and that it was "by the grace of God" that Jesus tasted "death for every man" (Heb. 2:9), we can see that it is caught Himself who in Christ is growing all men to Himself. "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have by drawing thee." Jer. 31:3. E. J. WAGGONER.

February 27, 1901

"What Is This?" *The Signs of the Times* 27, 9.

E. J. Waggoner

When the children of Israel first saw the food which God provided for them, they said, "Man-hoo?" that is, "What is this?" And that question, Anglicized into "manna," has served as a name for it ever since. People generally think that "manna" is the name of that which the children of Israel ate for forty years, whereas, on the contrary, it is only an indication of ignorance as to what it was. That is the way with many of the "scientific" names that we meet with. In this case, however, there was no excuse for ignorance; for God had told them beforehand that He would send them "bread from heaven," and we are told that the people ate of "the corn of heaven"- "angels' food." If they had called it by its real name, "bread from heaven," or "heavenly bread," it would have kept them in much closer touch with heaven, and they might have been saved from much evil. Likewise in these days if men would recognize God's gifts as coming directly from Him, instead of inventing names which serve only faintly to conceal their own ignorance, and effectually to shut off the view of God, the world would be in a far better condition. E. J. WAGGONER.

March 13, 1901

"Imitators of God" *The Signs of the Times* 27, 11.

E. J. Waggoner

"Be ye therefore imitators of God, as beloved children." Eph. 5:1, R.V. If God Himself had not commanded us to do this, we might think that the requirement was a manifest impossibility, but since it is God Himself who bids us be like Him, to say that it is impossible is to charge God with light and foolish talking. Impossible instructions only bring ridicule upon the person who issues them.

God's ambition for men is only limited by the length and breadth of His own life, and as this is infinite, so is His mercy toward the children of men. "For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him." Ps. 103:11.

God is love, and love can not be content with bestowing less than its all upon the loved one. "God loved His Son, and to Christ was given all the fullness of the Godhead, the very brightness of the Father's glory. But the same love was extended to us, and so the Saviour says, "The glory which Thou hast given Me I have given unto them; . . . that the world may know that Thou. . . lovedst them, even as Thou lovedst Me." John 17:22, 23.

It is as beloved children that we are to be imitators of God. A father counts nothing too good for his children. They inherit his life and physical characteristics, and in addition, all the means and advantages that he is able to bestow. If we are children of God, we are heirs, "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." The servants of a king may by faithful service rise to high rank, but they never earn the throne. That is reserved for one who never did anything to attain to it, for the child who was born to the privilege. So also no one becomes the child of God by virtue of his own efforts or sacrifices. He is born to the position, and then that

right to the kingdom and free share in all is Father's glory, which he never could hope to win as a servant, are his birthright.

To how many is this wonderful privilege given? The word "therefore" connects with the preceding sentence, so that we read, "Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you. Be ye therefore imitators of God." The children do not become so by reason of their spotless character. They have stood in sore need of a free forgiveness. They are not beloved children because they are so lovable. It is in Christ that God forgives them. "God commendeth His own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Rom. 5:8, R.V.

Since, then, not a single soul becomes a beloved child by his own deserving, it is evident that the way is as open for any one to have his sins forgiven and become a child and an imitator of God, as it can possibly be for any other one. If a single soul obtains the salvation, it will condemn every other one who does not; for the way is equally open to all, and the fact that one can be saved shows that all may if they will. Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely.

Remember that the imitating of God is to be done "as dear children." We are to walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us. The son does not work for what he receives from his father. The greater the wealth and power of the father, the better it is to be born his son. So, as God's holiness and ways are seen to be infinite, the children will not gaze with despair at the awful distance that separates God from them, but instead will rejoice in the riches of the glory of the inheritance. The ever-deepening sense of God's glory will not bring a corresponding depression of mind and quenching of hope, but will produce an ever-deepening thankfulness at the remembrance of His holiness. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." 1 John 3:1.

"As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him." Col. 2:6. He is received as a free, undeserved gift, and all that pertains to life and godliness comes in the same way. Many think that it is a very simple matter to get their sins forgiven, but a very complicated and difficult matter to live a Christian life, such as God commands. This is because they think they must rely upon themselves in part to complete the good work which Christ has begun in them. It is as easy for God to keep us from falling and preserve us faultless at last, as it is for Him to lift us out of the miry clay in the first place. He does both by imparting Himself, "and if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness." Rom. 8:10. E. J. WAGGONER.

May 8, 1901

"Unity and Uniformity" *The Signs of the Times* 27, 19.

E. J. Waggoner

Without the slightest approach to unity, there may be the most perfect uniformity. A lot of marbles may be exactly uniform as regards size and shape and color, but there is no unity among them.

So there may be uniformity among people, without unity. Since the days of Constantine strenuous efforts have been put forth by the ecclesiastical politicians to produce uniformity, and these efforts have been thought to be in the interests of Christian unity. In some cases uniformity has been attained, but there has been no more unity than there is in a gross of buttons fastened together by a string.

The Bible is full of the idea of unity in the church of Christ, but we do not read so much about uniformity. This unity is to be the unity of life and growth, and not a mere outward connection. In Christ's prayer to the Father for His disciples, He said, "And the glory that Thou gavest Me, I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one." John 17:22, 23. Here we see that the glory of the Lord is to effect the union of believers, and the union is to be that of the Father and the Son.

The union of the Father and the Son is union of spirit. We can not comprehend this union, but we may know that it is not a forced union, but that it results from their very nature. They have *one life*. Their thoughts and purposes are the same, not because they come together and compare notes and agree to be alike, but because one life is in them both. So the union of believers is to be a vital union, or it is not any union at all. It is not accomplished by strife and debate and decisions of majorities, but by yielding the mind to Christ and hearing His voice. They are to be united by the mind and Spirit of Christ. The life of the Father and the Son in each member of the church will produce the most perfect union in the whole body.

For the human body is the most perfect example of unity, and it is the example that the Bible gives us. Christ is the Head of the body, the church. Eph. 1:22, 23; Col. 1:18. "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many." 1 Cor. 12:12-14. In the human body there are many members, and each member has a different office from the rest; there is not uniformity of action among the members, but there is the most perfect unity. All work together in perfect harmony for one object. So it is in the body of Christ. "There are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all."

This gives no ground for the idea that there may be divisions in the church of Christ, one division believing one thing, and another division believing and practicing another thing. God has tempered the body together, that there should be no schism in the body." 1 Cor. 12:24, 25. "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as we are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and thru all, and in you all." Eph. 4:4-6. The apostle's exhortation is, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that ye be perfectly joined together in

the same mind and in the same judgment." 1 Cor. 1:10. But let it be borne in mind that this union is not artificial, but natural; not the human nature, however, but the divine nature.

The unity of belief in the church is not forced by the church coming together and the majority defining the creed to be beloved. The church can not define doctrine, nor make laws for itself or anybody else. The church of Christ is made up of all who obey the Lord's commands not a body to issue commands. The Head directs, the body obeys. God speaks; each one must listen to His voice, for faith comes by hearing the Word of God, and no one can give faith to another. "It is the gift of God." E. J. WAGGONER.

May 15, 1901

"Comfort from Hard Sayings" *The Signs of the Times* 27, 20.

E. J. Waggoner

"I will hear what God the Lord will speak; for He will speak peace unto His people."

This is a universal truth, and worthy of all acceptation. God never speaks a word that is not laden with peace for all who will listen to it. In "every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" there is life. Therefore "blessed is the people that know the joyful sound."

If we would but take this truth to our hearts, and keep it always in mind, it would smooth many a difficult passage. Instead of feeling that we have been rebuffed by some dark saying, we should consider it diligently to see what new phase of comfort it has for us.

When the Lord said to Jacob, "Let Me go, for the day breaketh," what a loss the patriarch would have sustained if he had said disconsolately, "It is no use; I can't get any satisfaction," and had let go. When the Lord said, "Let go," he held on the more firmly, and received more than he had asked for, or thought of getting.

But how could Jacob have the face or the heart to continue his hold on the Lord after such a peremptory, almost curt, command to let go? Because he was quick enough to perceive in it the promise of all that he desired. Consider the case for a moment. Jacob had wrestled all night with one whom he supposed was an enemy. As the day began to break, his antagonist touched his thigh, and it was immediately out of joint. By that Jacob knew that he had not been wrestling with a man, but with God in human form. He could not for a moment longer suppose that human power could avail anything, even if he had been able to stand so as to exert it any longer.

He could do nothing but cling to the Lord for support. But he knew that the One who with a touch of His finger could dislocate his thigh could sever his arm-clasp if he chose. But He did not choose. God can not deny Himself, and He is all love and compassion; therefore He can not turn away from any one who trusts Him. So Jacob saw in the words of the mighty God, "Let Me go," the assurance

that as long as he held on the Lord could not turn away from him. Jacob had the matter all in his own hands, and he improved the opportunity.

When Moses was pleading for Israel after their great sin at Sinai, God said, "Let Me alone, that My wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them." Ex. 32:10. But Moses was far from being discouraged by this seemingly stern command. He saw in the words the proof that God could not be angry with the sinful people as long as one pleaded in their behalf, even tho they themselves were not seeking His favor; so the petition was pressed with boldness, and the people were spared.

Think of Abraham pleading with God for Sodom. Not a request but was granted. At first Abraham asked only that the city might be saved if fifty righteous persons were found in it. To this the Lord readily agreed. Then, waxing bolder, Abraham reduced the number to forty-five, then to forty, to thirty, to twenty, and at last to ten, and at each successive step the Lord agreed to save the city if so many righteous persons were found in it. Then having come down to ten, Abraham left off interceding. He doubtless had in view the size of Lot's family, his married daughters and their husbands, and supposed that his last request would suffice to save the city. From all that is given, there is no reason to suppose that God would have refused if Abraham had asked that the city be saved if five righteous persons were found in it, or if he had asked for the sake of Lot alone. But the point is that the mercy of God endures forever, and that He never has the heart to refuse any petition that is made in the boldness of faith.

If when God says, "Let Me alone," there is such strong consolation, and such assurance that we shall receive all our heart's desire, what confidence may we not have when He calls us to come to Him, and tells us to put Him in remembrance, and "give Him no rest"! Then "wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart. Wait, I say, on the Lord." E. J. WAGGONER.

June 13, 1901

"I Am" *The Signs of the Times* 27, 24.

E. J. Waggoner

Jesus was walking on the stormy sea, coming to the aid of His disciples, whom He had seen "toiling I rowing; for the wind was contrary unto them;" "but they, when they saw Him walking on the sea, supposed that it was an apparition, and cried out; for they all saw Him, and were troubled. But He straightway spake with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid." Mark 6:48-50, R.V.

These were comforting words to the disciples, and they have comforted many disciples since that night on the sea; but the disciples at that time did not derive all the comfort from them they ought, "for their heart was hardened;" and very few of the disciples since that day have seen in the words as they read them all that the Saviour really said.

The words rendered, "It is I," meant far more than a simple assurance that it was their Teacher, a real person, who was coming to them, and not an apparition. They included that, which was certainly reassuring; but if the hearts of the twelve had not been hardened, they would have found not merely relief from their childish fears, but eternal comfort; for the words that Jesus uttered, literally translated, were, "Be of good cheer; *I am*."

Here we see that Jesus identified Himself with the "I AM" who sent Moses to deliver the children of Israel from Egypt. Ex. 3:14. "I AM THAT I AM." That expresses infinity of existence,-the One, "who is, and was, and who is to come, the Almighty." Of God alone can it be said that "He is." That means that He is the Source of all existence; for everything that exists, exists solely in Him. "I Am" is the power that creates and upholds. In Jesus is the name of God, "for in Him were all things created."

The words that Jesus spoke that night on the sea, were used by Him several times, but only once do they appear in our translation, namely, in John 8:58, "Before Abraham was, I am." But twice more in the same chapter He declares Himself to be the "I Am," and points us to the cross as proof of the fact. Thus: "When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that *I am*." Verse 18. From John 12:32, 33 we know that the lifting up of Christ is His crucifixion. There is no salvation except by the cross of Christ; and the cross, as we have just seen, is the proof that he is the "I Am," the Creator; therefore He said, "If ye believe not that *I am*, ye shall die in your sins." John 8:24.

"I AM" signifies eternal power,-self-existent, independent power. It is the name of Him who is "from everlasting to everlasting, and who is the dwelling-place of all mankind,-the One in whom "we live, and move, and have our being." "In His hand are the deep places of the earth; and the strength of the hills is His also. The sea is His, and He made it; and His hands formed the dry land." Ps. 124:5. So when Jesus said to His disciples, "Be of good cheer, I am," He really assured them that in Him was the power that made the sea, and that could therefore rule its raging, and that could save them, not only from momentary danger, but from eternal death.

In that name, "I Am," there is everlasting strength. And it is all our hope. "He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that seek after Him." Heb. 11:6, R.V. To us, as well as to the disciples on the sea, He says, "Be of good cheer; I am." He is always present, with all power in heaven and on earth. Simply believe that He is, and continue believing, and you have eternal salvation. "I am He that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive forevermore, and have the keys of hell and of death." How boundless are those words, "I am."

"He that hath ears, let him hear." "To-day, if we will hear His voice, harden not your hearts," as did the twelve and thus lose the infinite comfort and strength that lies in the assurance "I am." When in deep trouble or temptation, fix your mind upon the fact that He is. Listen to His voice saying, "I am," and let your soul be swallowed up in contemplation of it, and you will be lost to everything else. Trouble will be light as air, and temptation will lose its power. The tempter will flee from you. What can not one endure, who knows not only that Christ is near, but

that His presence creates, upholds, and saves! Let Him be to you the "I am," and you will find that in Him you have everything that is. For "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" Let this be your confidence, and soon you will see Him as "He is." E. J. WAGGONER.

August 14, 1901

"A Lesson from the Lilies" *The Signs of the Times* 27, 32.

E. J. Waggoner

"Consider the lilies how they grow; they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothe the grass, which is to-day in the field, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, how much more will He clothe you, O ye of little faith?" Luke 12:27, 28.

Jesus has sent us to school to the lilies, and has appointed them our teachers in the way of life. We have not by any means exhausted the lessons that they have to give us; indeed, few of us have made more than a beginning, for although the instruction that they give is so simple that a child can understand it, yet no philosopher of the schools can compare with them in depth of wisdom.

What are we to consider about the lilies?-"How they grow." It is not how they *look*, but how they *grow*. One would naturally suppose that, since Jesus was talking of clothing, and how we are to be provided with what is necessary, He would have directed us to the looks of the lilies, to see how tastefully they are dressed; but such an exposition is evidence of our need of instruction. We are so ignorant of the first principles of the wisdom which the lilies teach.

"The Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." It is not that the Lord despises outward beauty; far from it. "Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary;" and He has promised to "beautify the meek with salvation." He delights in beauty; but He knows that as corruption comes from within, and not from without (Mark 7:18-23), so beauty, to be real, must come from within. He severely rebuked the scribes and Pharisees, because they made clean the outside of the cup and the platter, while within they were full of impurity, and said, "Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also." Matt. 23:25, 26.

Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like a lily. How is that? Is a lily, then, so much more wondrously beautiful than other things? Jesus did not say so. Some lilies are most gorgeous, but others are very plain, and scarcely noticeable. It is quite likely that when Solomon was arrayed in his royal apparel on State occasions, his clothing would outshine a whole bed of ordinary lilies. Yet in all his glory he was not clothed like the most modest lily that grows. Why?-Because no matter how gorgeous and beautiful his clothing was, it was all *put on*; it was no part of himself; but the beauty of the lily's dress is the lily itself. All that it looks to be, it is.

Thus it is that the lilies, who are teachers by divine appointment, teach us that the only clothing that is of any real value is that which can not be put on and off, but that which *grows*; that which is formed from within. Even such clothing did the apostle Peter write about, saying to the women, "Whose adorning let it not be the outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing jewels of gold, or of putting on apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in the incorruptible apparel of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." 1 Peter 3:3, 4.

How strange that people should proudly boast of that which is no part of themselves? Not only is our clothing no part of ourselves, but the very fact that we are obliged to wear manufactured clothing at all, is proof of our fallen and degraded state. God is clothed with light as a garment, for He Himself is light. His clothing is the beauty of His own character. His clothing, like that of the lily, is what He is. Even so it was with man in the beginning, for man was made in the image of God. It was not until they lost their first estate through sin, that our first parents had any need of clothing that must be put on from the outside. So that upon which most people bestow so much care and worry, and in which they take so much pride, is the mark of their shame.

Until the kingdom is again restored as in the beginning, all mankind, the children of God as well as the wicked, will be obliged to wear manufactured clothing; but let them not worry about it, nor be proud of what is no part of them. What should they do?-"Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness." Then clothing and everything else that is necessary will be added.

This agrees with the exhortation to us on apparel that is "the hidden man of the heart." Where the King is, there is the kingdom; and the King is the Word of God, that "was made flesh." This Word is in us, in our mouth, and in our heart, that we may do it. If we yield ourselves to it, we shall be filled with righteousness. We shall grow up "trees of righteousness," and our clothing will be "the robe of righteousness," the product of the growth from within. He who is able to supply us with this beautiful clothing, of which no one can boast, because it comes only with humility, can very easily provide the other necessary clothing. Temporal things are very easily managed by Him who handles eternities.

The lesson therefore which we learn from the lilies is that absolute dependence and trust. "Consider the lilies how they grow." How do they grow? They simply grow. They grow by the power of God in them, which they do not try to resist. You will remember that the name "Israel" was given to Jacob when he cease all his struggling against the Lord, and cast himself wholly upon the Almighty. His strength was demonstrated to be nothing, and he let the Lord support him. Now the Lord says, "I will be as the dew unto Israel; he shall blossom as the lily, and cast forth his rose as Lebanon." Hosea 14:5. That is, "they that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength." Their beauty will be "the beauty of holiness." Their clothing will be not simply that which can be put on and off, but, like that of the lily, it will be the product of the growth of grace within; it will be themselves, and will endure to all eternity. E. J. WAGGONER.

October 2, 1901

"That Convenient Season" *The Signs of the Times* 27, 39.

E. J. Waggoner

When Paul was before Felix, reasoning of "righteousness, temperance and judgment to come," strong conviction seized the Roman governor, so that he trembled; but he was not willing to yield to it, so he said to the apostle, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." Acts 24:25.

From what we know of the character Felix, it is quite likely that he had no intention of every accepting Christ, and that his talk about "a convenient season" was only an excuse to Paul, and a means of throwing off conviction. But it is a fact that there are very many who say the same thing, who really think that at some time or other they will serve the Lord, and who by the plea of a convenient season delude themselves into believing that they are at present doing as well as can be expected of them.

One man says, "If I could get away from these associates, I would reform." The youth thinks, "When I get a little older, temptations will not be so strong, and then I can serve the Lord;" while the old man thinks, "If I were younger, it would be easy to be a Christian, but now I am too old to change." Another says, "If my circumstances were different, I would keep the Sabbath." "As soon as I get out of debt," or, "As soon as I can get out of this business, I will begin keeping all the commandments." And thus people deceive themselves, and continue in sin.

They deceive themselves often into thinking that they are as good as they need be. For if it were true that they absolutely *can not* at present serve the Lord, then of course it can not be required of them. But the very statement of the case shows its fallacy: for there is no time when one ought not to serve the Lord. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind." Luke 10:27. This leaves no moment of one's existence when he is free not to serve the Lord; for if one does not serve God all the time, he is not serving Him with all his strength. It certainly is not serving God with all our strength, when we devote the most and best of it to self and the devil before we begin to obey the Lord.

What Sin Is

Sin is sin no matter or why it is committed. "Sin is the transgression of the law." 1 John 3:4. To do anything contrary to God's will, therefore, is sin. "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." James 4:17. Now when a person says that he intends to serve the Lord, or to begin to do it; and therefore by not doing it he convicts himself of sin. And yet by pleading inconvenience and unfavorable circumstances, he makes himself believe that his sin is not really sin. He assumes great virtue to himself by thinking of what he would do if he were in the proper circumstances. Because he thinks he would if he could he takes to himself the credit of the deed, and thus often goes along

contentedly, and never finds the "convenient season" for which he is looking. So well satisfied does he become that he is doing the best he can, that no time ever seems to him convenient for changing his course.

Suppose now that the "convenient season" has come, or that the change in circumstances or associates has been effected, and that the person has changed his manner of life as he proposed to do; is he really any better than he was before? What think you?-Certainly not; it is not he that has changed; it is only the circumstances. The conditions have changed, he remains the same as before. Since he began to serve the Lord (as he thinks) only when the conditions became favorable, it is evident that when the conditions become unfavorable again, he will leave off.

Does the man really accept Christ, when he professes to serve Him only at a more convenient season?-Not by any means. He really dishonors Christ, bearing false witness against Him. Christ is a perfect Saviour. "He is able to save them to the uttermost who come unto God by Him." All power in heaven and in earth is in His hands. He is the Head of all principality and power. He has power over all flesh. John 17:2. He has spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, exhibiting them in triumph by His cross. Col. 2:15. Even the bars and gates of death He has burst asunder, and "all the power of the enemy" was nothing, to Him. Now what does the man say who pleads that his circumstances or temptations are such that he can not now serve the Lord?-Why he virtually charges Christ with lack of power to save him in his present condition. He limits the power of God. He does not accept Christ as a full and perfect Saviour, able to save one from the lowest depths, and to pluck a brand from the fire, or a soul from the jaws of the lion. But he who does not take Christ as a perfect and all-powerful Saviour, does not really accept Him at all; for Christ is nothing but perfection.

"Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." 2 Cor. 6:2. Jesus is "mighty to save." He says, "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." Isa. 45:22. "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." John 6:37. "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Matt. 11:28. "I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye Me in vain; I the Lord speak righteousness, I declare things that are right." Isa. 45:19. The Lord does not deceive anybody. He does not call all to Him to find present salvation, and then say to some, "I didn't mean you; your case is too difficult; I shall have to wait till a more convenient season." No He can save all, and He can save *now*.

Then turn to Him now. Why not have rest? See; you do not have rest now; for you admit that the conditions are too hard for you. Well, suppose your more convenient season came, what then?-Why those supposedly more favorable circumstances would be all that you could endure, if not more, so that even if you kept on with your confession, you would never know enjoyment and peace in the service of God. It would be a hard service to you, which shows that it would not be real service; for His yoke is easy, and His burden is light. But if you accept Him now, when everything seems to be the hardest and most unfavorable, you will find immediate rest. Then when the more favorable circumstances come, if

there be any such, you can have so much the more ease in His service. So in Christ you will always find green pastures and still waters, a table will be spread for you in the presence of your enemies, and you can eat without fear. Being delivered out of the hand of your enemies, and from the hand of all that hate you, you can serve the Lord without fear, in holiness and righteousness all the days of your life. Luke 1:74, 75.

What is the assurance for this?-The One who is made unto us "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption," is "the power of God." 1 Cor. 1:24, 30. He in whose life we have redemption, is the One in whom all things were created, and in whom all things hold together. Col. 1:14-17. "Ah Lord God! behold, Thou has made the heaven and the earth by Thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for Thee." Ps. 37:17. Then commit the keeping of your soul to Him in well-doing as unto a faithful Creator, and *do it now*. E. J. WAGGONER.

The Signs of the Times, Vol. 28 (1902)

January 8, 1902

"Bond-Servants of Christ" *The Signs of the Times* 28, 2.

E. J. Waggoner

With what has the Lord bought us? and what is the strength of our bondage to Him? "Ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold. . . . but with precious blood. . . . even the blood of Christ." 1 Peter 1:18, 19. The church of God "He hath purchased with His own blood." Acts 20:28. The price paid is great enough, and the transaction is valid.

As great as is the price paid for us, so powerful are the bonds that hold us in our servitude to God. Hear Him: "Yes, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." Jer. 31:3. "I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love." Hosea 11:4. Ah, then, it is not hard, cruel bondage to which we have been sold, although it is everlasting, and stronger than death. No; our fetters are bonds of love, and the service is the service of love. "This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not grievous." 1 John 5:3. His yoke is easy, and His burden is light.

Why Purchased?

Why has the Lord bought us? What does He want of us?

He wants to use us as instruments of righteousness through whom His will may be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Of this He assures us in the very words in which He makes known to us our lawful condition of slavery: "Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" And

stronger still: "Yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall have no dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace." Rom. 6:13, 14, 16. E. J. WAGGONER.

February 26, 1902

"Christian Work" *The Signs of the Times* 28, 9.

E. J. Waggoner

Some one has said, "Let Christ be in you, your all in all, and it will surprise you how much you can do for Him." Yes; but it will not all be in the line of preaching and singing, or of holding Gospel conversations. These are good and necessary; but they do not by any means constitute the sum of work for Christ. The term "Christian work" is almost wholly restricted to these things, but it is a great mistake. All the work that Christ did was most certainly Christian work in the highest sense, and for eighteen years He worked as a carpenter. He spent six times as long in Christian work at the carpenter's bench as in public teaching; and it is by that part of His life that we are saved, as much as by the latter part. Whoever does his daily task faithfully, no matter what it may be, giving diligence to become master of it, and to do it as well as it can possibly be done, is doing work for Christ; and whoever slights his work, no matter how small it may be, is not serving the Master. "Whatsoever ye do in work or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." E. J. WAGGONER.