

CONSIDER CHRIST

"Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus." Hebrews 3:1.

"For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." Hebrews 12:3.

Any Christian who looks into his own life is sure to see there a number of spiritual ills. By nature man is totally depraved. He is "carnal, sold under sin" (Romans 7:14). It is true that those of us who are saved may rightly claim the righteousness of Christ, but this glorious fact of our standing does not alter the reality that we have tremendous needs in our state. It is that these needs may be cared for that the Bible speaks to us in the language of Hebrews 12:1-6.

"Consider" is one of those words which staggers under the weight of its own meaning. It suggests that we are to acquaint ourselves with Christ Jesus not only by scrutinizing and comparing but also by pondering, dwelling upon Him with long and earnest attention, with a view to some practical results. It implies earnest, fixed and prolonged attention of mind. Rotherham renders the Greek word as "attentively consider," that is, we are not to give Him a passing thought and then forget all about Him in this glorious capacity. We are to take Him into account. Christians are definitely commanded to fix their hearts and minds upon the risen Saviour. There is no greater safeguard against failure in our Christian experience than to follow this injunction.

When the Hebrew Christians were suffering dire persecution, the Apostle could suggest no better support for their faith than this, "Consider him." He bade them look to Christ and compare their case with that of their Lord. Such contemplations would prove to be a balm for their distressed minds. A consideration of our Lord and Master is the best conceivable stay and support during persecution. When enduring persecution the believer should remember that he is not suffering any strange thing, but he is only experiencing that which befell his Master before him. The disciple need not expect to be above his Lord.

1. Consider Christ as Creator.

"For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him" (Colossians 1:16).

"All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made" (John 1:3).

"He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not" (John 1:10).

2. Consider Christ as the Son of God.

"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (I Peter 1:18-19).

"Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth" (I Peter 2:22).

3. Consider Christ as Saviour.

Of Him the angels said, "thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).

Christ's death was no ordinary one. The robbers who died with Christ were suffering for their sins and dying because of their own misdeeds. Yet, Jesus Christ was without sin. Why then was He dying? "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures" (I Corinthians 15:3). "For he hath made him, who knew no sin; to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (II Corinthians 5:21). "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed" (I Peter 2:24). "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit" (I Peter 3:18).

I. Consider Christ--The Prescription For Self-Pity.

Have you ever been afflicted with the disease known as self-pity? Perhaps even now you have some touch of it in your soul. The world has not treated you as you think it should. You have not had a square deal from everyone. Your own family and friends do not seem to understand you. You may have even decided that God has gone back on you.

Possibly you have done some service with the best of motives only to meet with the coldest kind of response and accusations that your motives had been base. Yes, there are any number of things which might seem to give excuse for self-pity, but do they really? "Consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself." Compare His suffering with your own. Then answer the question, "What reason have I to pity myself?" Christ bore the most horrible torture the cruelty of man could devise. He bore the bitter agony of separation from the Father's love. When we "Consider Him" there can remain no self-pity in our hearts.

II. Consider Christ--The Antidote For Self-Righteousness.

I shall not ask you if you are self-righteous; for, if the answer were "no," it would be but the demonstration that you are. One of the sins common to mankind seems to be that of looking about for someone we can consider more sinful than ourselves, and we seem always able to find the thing for which we look. In this day not only does the Pharisee commend himself that he is not a Publican, but the Publican openly rejoices that he is not a hypocrite like the Pharisee. The antidote for this condition is to "Consider Him." Christ was the perfect One. "He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth" (I Peter 2:22). It was not for His sins, but for ours, that He suffered--"Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree" (I Peter 2:24). If we are self-righteous it is because we are making the wrong comparison. We have measured our lives by those of other men. Let us consider ourselves in the light of Calvary.

"When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain, I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride."

III. Consider Christ--The Remedy For Self-Seeking.

The Christian is called upon to seek the glory of God and the good of his fellows. His desire should be to render all the service possible. His motive should be to please the One Who gave Himself on his behalf. Such should be the condition. Is it in your case? Do you with a full heart seek to do service for Christ, or are your private ambitions and plans uppermost in your mind? Even when we have the right motives, are there not other motives deep within our souls that are not wholly good? Do we not by our words or deeds often seek to bring advancement or commendation to ourselves? Almost all of us must admit that--though we love the Lord deeply and truly desire to serve Him--our lives are yet filled with self-seeking.

This condition will find its remedy as we "Consider Him." It was not for Himself that Christ suffered, but for our salvation. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him" (I John 4:9). "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich" (II Corinthians 8:9). If we think upon the wondrous love that led to such a sacrifice for utterly unworthy sinners such as we, surely we will learn in a fuller way to live for Him.

IV. Consider Christ--The Preventive Of Discouragement.

"Consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." It is easy to become discouraged in Christian things. One proof of this is the number of former ministers now selling real estate and insurance. There is the probability that you have better proof in your own experience. Satan would seek to make us think that we have not grown in grace and that our service has not been of any value. He would have us throw up our hands in despair and repeat the time-worn expression, "Oh, it's no use for me to try to do anything, anyway." Such discouragement is not possible if we "Consider Him." The ministry of the Son of God was not a popular one. He did not meet with great success. Rather, we are told that, He was "despised and rejected of men" (Isaiah 53:3). At the time of His arrest the record is, "Then all the disciples forsook Him, and fled" (Matthew 26:56). Yet, He was not discouraged. He willingly went to the cross to finish the work that had been given Him to do. Why then should we grow discouraged? We have a Saviour Who has risen victorious over death and the grave, Who now lives to lead us on in triumph, and Who one day will crown our service for Him. Let us "Consider Him."

V. Consider Christ--The Antitoxin For Indifference.

Evidently the Hebrew Christians to whom this letter was written had need of the exhortation, "Consider Him" because they had grown indifferent. The writer said, "Ye have not resisted unto blood, striving against

sin" (Hebrews 12:4). No doubt our need is even greater. Today Christians are characterized by their lethargy. We are not often deeply concerned about our own condition. It is seldom that we are really interested in the souls of others. We need the antitoxin, "Consider Him." One cannot look away to Calvary and still remain indifferent. The contemplation of the sufferings of Christ will give new purpose and energy to the coldest believer. If we see the love there manifested toward us, it is impossible that we should remain indifferent. How can we be thoughtless of the needs of other souls in view of the fact that Christ gave Himself that those needs might be met? How can we be unconcerned about our own sin when we realize the great price that was paid that we might have victory over sin? Let us lay aside our indifference by considering Christ.

VI. Consider Christ--The Cure For Forgetfulness.

It would seem that another reason the message "Consider Him" was given is that the Hebrew Christians were forgetful. "Ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him: for whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth" (Hebrews 12:5-6). These Hebrew Christians had forgotten a spiritual truth because of their failure to "Consider Him." We will find that when we are considering Calvary the truths of the Scriptures are not nearly so hard to remember. When our hearts are centered upon the cross, the Holy Spirit will bring to our remembrance those things that are needful. Our part is to "Consider Him."