

GOD'S JEWELS

"Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." Malachi 3:16-17.

At no time in history has God left Himself without a witness. This was never more obvious than in the days of Malachi, the prophet. Darkness was upon the land in those days; but notwithstanding the "blackout" of faith and morals, there were a few people, for the most part obscure and undistinguished, through whom the light still shone. The nation at large was weak, but the godly people, whose conduct the prophet praised, were unshakeably strong. They were knit together in feeling, principles, and desires. This godly remnant saved the nation from extinction.

For us to-day nothing is more worthy of imitation than the behavior of these godly people. Just as the lamps of truth, hope and faith were kept burning in those dark days, so they should be kept burning in our day. God's Word is especially rich in encouragement and comfort for dark and difficult days. Scattered throughout its biographical pages are the portraits of the godly men of unfavorable periods, who by grace were made strong to meet and to endure trying surroundings, and also to illuminate and bless them.

Malachi was the last messenger sent by Jehovah to the restored remnant of Israel after the seventy years' captivity. The burden of his message was the love of God, the sins of the people, and the inevitable day of the Lord. He prophesied in the midnight of the religious life of Israel. For the most part, the worship of the people had become hypocritical and repulsive to God. They called Him their Father, but they did not worship Him as such. They desecrated the holy temple. They polluted the sacred altar with unclean beasts. But, thank God, there was a small remnant which was still in love with the Lord, was true to His Book, and refused to follow in the ways of sin. They assembled and worshiped God, much to His delight and joy. Looking over the parapet of heaven, He saw them and heard them, and said in effect: "I will write a book of remembrance concerning them." He had such a great love for this faithful company, living in the midst of a faithless society, that He added: "And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels."

Remembrance enriches life by bringing into focus the hazy, indistinct and silent past, and making it vivid and vocal. For this reason books of remembrance have been kept from very ancient times. Moses referred to such a book, and one was mentioned in the Psalms. The one to which Malachi referred was one of God's most valued treasures, a book inscribed with the names of the most heroic and loyal worshipers, whose deeds were to shine with eternal luster and never to be tarnished by the breath of forgetfulness.

This book of remembrance reminds us of the custom of ancient courts. On State occasions the king would bring out and display his jewels, and would appoint an official journalist to keep a record of the passing events. Naturally the pages of his book were filled with the doings of people in the upper ranks, and with the

happenings which excited the world of aristocracy and fashion. There was very little room for the annals of the poor or for anything that touched the life of the common people.

Here the prophet directs our thoughts to another book in which the doings recorded are those of a different class of people. Its pages are not devoted to the people who fill the exalted stations and make a great display of wealth and power; because, as Malachi tells us, in those days those who occupied the high places were characterized by injustice, immorality and irreligion, and there was not anything in their lives which was appropriate for the pen of the heavenly scribe. But there were a few, whom the searching eyes of God followed with tender love and approval, obscure people whom the court scribe would not give any consideration. However, they were the chief object of interest to the great King, for they alone in those godless times were living soberly, righteously and godly, keeping the old religious fires burning.

Those of whom Malachi wrote in our text certainly never thought of themselves as being precious. Likely they only thought of themselves as ordinary, unknown and stumbling mortals who were not having any effect on life at all. But God spoke of them as jewels. He called them, "My jewels."

I. Jewels are procured at a great cost.

Some jewels are of tremendous value. Rubies and diamonds are the most valuable of jewels. Queen Victoria had a diamond, which was called the Kohinoor, that was valued at a million dollars. The Orloff diamond, which was owned by the Emperor of Russia, was valued at a million dollars. The Jubilee diamond, which was found in South Africa in 1893, and exhibited at Paris, France, in 1900, was valued at two million dollars. Cleopatra had a jewel that was valued at two and one half million dollars. One of the princes of India possessed a diamond valued at five million dollars. Rare gems are owned chiefly by governments, kings, and multi-millionaires.

God did not mean such rubies and diamonds of such enormous value when He spoke of His jewels. When God said, "My jewels," He was referring to His peculiar treasures, His children. The humblest and most obscure of God's children bears about in his person a Jewel, an immortal soul, which is worth more than all the diamonds and other precious stones on earth. God alone can comprehend and estimate its value.

God sets great value upon those whom He calls His jewels, as we may gather from their costly redemption. He values His people very highly, even the least and most unworthy believers are His jewels.

II. Jewels are prepared with great pains.

Jewels are difficult to obtain. It is a rare thing for a jewel to be found on the surface of the earth. The heart of the mountain is cut out to find it. Boring, blasting and huge machinery make the rock open and drop the jewel. There is the sawing and splitting process by which the gem is taken from its rough state and changed into that which the lapidary chases.

It is possible that some of you have seen the crown jewels in the Tower of London. But they were not always there. Where did they come from? They were drawn up out of the depths of the sea or dug out of the bowels of the earth. Likewise, while it is true that you and I are the children of God today, it is well to remember that we have not always been such. Once we were the children of wrath. Therefore, it is well for us to do what David did at times, namely, go back and remember the pit from whence we were lifted. Some of God's children are so occupied with their present blessings and their future prospects as to well-nigh forget what they once were.

God's people are likened to jewels because of the refining process through which they go. You admire a lovely diamond, but did you ever think of the cutting and the polishing that were necessary before it was ready to be worn. The most precious stone is unfit for use in its natural condition. When a diamond is taken out of the mine it is covered with a dark, rusty coating, every particle of which must be removed. If a single speck should remain on its surface it would detract from its value. The process of cutting and polishing is both tedious and expensive. Two years of skilled labor and \$23,250 were spent on the famous Regent diamond of France in cutting and polishing it into a brilliant.

Need I say that God's jewels require a lot of cutting and polishing before they are fit to be placed in Christ's royal diadem? The cutting and polishing are necessary if we are to shine for Him. God often develops the value and spiritual beauty of His children through the ministry of human suffering. The holiest and best of His children are often subjected to much pain and misfortune because God sees flaws in their character that can be removed only by the whirling wheel. No lapidary ever knew so well when and where to cut a crown jewel as does our Heavenly Father. When we, as God's children, are called upon to bear severe suffering and trials, we are being burnished and polished in order that we may shine in the King's crown in that great day when He shall make up His jewels. Frequently affliction is the wheel that grinds the character into shape.

There is a way in which the lapidary tells whether a diamond is genuine or not. He breathes on it, and if the breath lingers there it is not a real diamond; but, if the breath vanished immediately, it is genuine. Then, if that method fails, he has the grinding process. In like manner you can tell God's jewel. If the breath of temptation comes on it, and soon vanishes, it is a real diamond. If that breath lingers and continues to blur, it is not genuine. But better than all is the grinding machine of affliction. If a soul can go through affliction and keep bright, it is one of God's jewels. God's children come up out of the ruins of misfortune and disaster as bright as when they went down. Many professing Christians cannot stand up for one day when Satan's pressure is brought to bear on them.

Jewels are the production of the divine Creator, and not of human manufacture. A chemist may successfully analyze the component parts of a jewel, but he cannot duplicate one. An attempt may be made to form precious stones from a cheap glass, but, under the skillful scrutiny of a jeweler's trained eye and his microscope, the deception is soon detected. Just as surely as a true gem is the

product of God's making, so is a Christian. No human endeavor, either moral or religious, is capable of creating even one Christian. A Christian is made by the power of God through the Holy Spirit. Please do not trust in your good works, your ethics, or your religion, but stop long enough on your way to eternity to ask yourself the solemn question, "Do I know objectively, on the authority of God's Word; and, subjectively, by the authority of the spirit within, that I am a Christian?"

It goes without saying that there is a great variety of jewels. You do not get two jewels alike. They are not the same size. They are not the same shape. They do not have the same value. Jewels differ, and is it not so with God's people? No two faces are exactly alike. They all differ. There is variety with the Lord's people. There was Abraham. He was a man of faith. There was Joshua. He was a man of courage. There was Job. He was a man of patience. There was Daniel. He was a man of integrity. There was Simon Peter. He was a man of impetuosity. There was Paul. He was a man of dedication. There was John. He was a man of gentleness. God's jewels are different. They are different in history, in education, in tastes, and in preferences. Do not worry because God made you different from others. Do not worry because you do not have as much faith as somebody else, or because you cannot pray as effectively as another, or because you cannot sing as well as someone whom you know.

"Do what you can; be what you are;
Shine like a glow worm,
If you can't like a star.
Work like a pulley,
If you can't like a crane.
Be a wheel-greaser,
If you can't drive the train."

III. Jewels are preserved with great care.

Like jewels, man is precious to his owner. God bought the Christian with the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jewels and Christians are for the same purpose, namely, to shine and bring honor to their owner. God's people are likened to jewels because they are found in unlikely places. You will find them nearly everywhere you go. Some of the brightest of God's jewels are on the back streets and in the rescue missions. But, regardless of where they are shining for the Lord, He is exceedingly careful to preserve them from all harm. I rejoice to know that God takes care of His jewels, and never loses a single one of them.

People buy jewels not in order to conceal them, but rather to display them. One day God is going to display His jewels also. Listen to what He says: "They shall be mine in that day when I make up my jewels." As yet, God's jewels are not made up. Why are His jewels not assembled now? Because new jewels are yet to be found. All of God's jewels have not been collected. In the secular world, for centuries treasure hunters have been digging for precious treasures. Although billions of dollars' worth of rare objects have been found, men continue

seeking for more. Likewise, for more than nineteen centuries the gospel of Christ has been preached. Millions have come to know Christ through the preaching of His gospel. From the greatest depths of sin Christ has often gathered up His brightest jewels. Paul was a persecutor, Bunyan was a blasphemer, and John Newton was a libertine; and yet the grace of God plunged through the fathom of their abominations until it found them and brought them up to the light, and enabled them to shine for the glory of the Lord. There is not any depth to which that grace cannot reach and save. Are you not thankful that you are one of God's jewels?

Unsaved friend, Christ died that you might be saved and live the abundant life. Miraculous though it be, it is true that God, through the power of the cross, can transform you into a precious jewel. He can take you into His laboratory of grace, and, by the chemistry of the atoning blood, process you so that you can and will come out as His jewel. Then, after a time of cutting, buffing and polishing, He will present you at last absolutely flawless. What a joy it is to go through life knowing that you are among God's gems, and "in that day" when He makes up His jewels you will be included.

"When He cometh, when He cometh,
To make up His jewels,
All His jewels, precious jewels,
His loved and His own:

Like the stars of the morning,
His bright crown adorning,
They shall shine in their beauty,
Bright gems for His crown."