

The Standard of the Truth

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NOV/DEC. 1970

Ahaz, king of Judah, came to the throne at a remarkable time in the history of God's earthly people. The three previous kings, Jotham, Azariah and Amaziah, whose reigns covered a period of some 130 years, had all "done what was right in the sight of the Lord." All this was surely known to Ahaz, who would thus have an understanding of kingly standards according to the mind of God. Commencing his reign at 20 years of age it is sadly recorded that he "did *NOT* that which was right in the sight of the Lord" but he acted "according to the abominations of the heathen." 2 Kings 16, enumerates the several things he did which were inconsistent with the instructions given by God to those who ruled over His people; in this paper we are concerned with his actions as given in verses 17 and 18. With startling impiety he had placed his Assyrian altar alongside the altar of Jehovah, and had made it the centre of sacrifice. He then proceeded to remove the bases of the lavers, taking down the sea from its elevated position and placing it on a pavement of stones. Similarly he altered the way of the king in order to meet the caprices of the king of Assyria. Thus the divinely appointed standards of worship, of approach to the House of God, and of purity in so approaching were lowered to accommodate the thoughts and desires of men! In minute detail God had made known His commands to Moses, and meticulously Moses had carried them out — the divine standard was apparent! Ahaz, as king, should himself have written out a copy of God's commandments (Deuteronomy 17: 18), reading therein all the days of his life, and not turning from God's standards either "to the right hand, or to the left."

Careful reading of Exodus 30 and 1 Kings 7 will reveal the great importance in the tabernacle system of the laver and its bases and their typical teaching is of equal importance to us today. Solomon in his approach to God recognized the necessity of maintaining a right standard. He "stood before the altar of the Lord." He had made a "brazen scaffold" (the word used for "laver") — the measurements of which were exactly those of the altar, suggesting surely the true features of purity involved in an approach to a holy God. *God's standard* was maintained "in the presence of all the congregation of Israel."

Looking back over the year now drawing to its close we have to admit that standards are being lowered on every hand — the point need not be stressed! What is so outstandingly sad is the encroachment of this feature into the profession of Christianity. Truths as to the Person of Christ — plainly stated in Scripture — are ridiculed, weakened and even totally denied, and this by men who are, professedly, ministers of the Word. Modern translations mutilate the original text with the apparent intention of distorting the truth of the Lord's virgin birth, atoning death, glorious resurrection and His coming again. In Isaiah 53, a chapter which so plainly speaks of Christ, verse 4 in a modern version states "He was struck down by disease and misery;" verse 3 that "He shrank from the sight of men." These and other similar statements are derogatory to His glory. He who "received sinners and ate with them;" He who could invite all to come to Him; who "freely handled" the leper and healed the sick, He Himself being spotless, sinless, holy, impeccable in life, uncorrupted in death. Let us, beloved brethren, hold fast to the unadulterated Word of God in which the Holy Spirit ever delights to exalt the precious Saviour before our gaze. Repeatedly our Lord, in the gospel records, refers to the words and writings of Moses; but a modern translator tells us that "Moses has left no writings, and we know little of him with certainty." Thus would an endeavour be made to lower the standard of the Lord's sayings — He who

refers to Himself as "a Man who has told you the *truth*".

In our Lord's pathway He calls attention to the way in which the Jews sought to lower the standard, making His house a den of thieves and a house of merchandise; the latter, at least, not unknown in religious circles today!

Paul's letter to the Galatians provides the antidote regarding those who would seek to reduce the precious truths of Christianity to the level of man's own works and law keeping. Likewise his letter to the Corinthians reminds the saints of their dignity as those "that are sanctified in Christ Jesus . . . called into the fellowship of His (God's) Son Jesus Christ our Lord." In 1 Cor. 11 he labours to restore their lowered appreciation of the preciousness of the Lord's supper. Do we not need to have the truth of this precious privilege maintained in *our* affections, especially when we consider the way in which christendom has distorted the observance of this most blessed ordinance?

Again in Acts 15, we see how the Apostles sought to maintain features of the truth in the face of those who would introduce Judaizing principles into the sphere of Christianity. We may be thankful that every suggestion made by Satan to reduce the standard of the truth was, in principle, apparent in the days of the apostles who, in the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit of God, were able to combat the error by presentation of the Word of God.

The Galatian saints "did run well" but were hindered that they "should not obey the truth;" the Ephesians left their "first love;" Peter himself dissembled "fearing them which were of the circumcision" (Galatians 2: 12); and the Colossians were in danger of losing the joy and substance of the Spirit's ministry concerning the glories of Christ through the beguiling influence of "philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men."

The pathway of faith has been trodden by men and women who surrendered their lives rather than compromise as to the truth; we are surrounded by "so great a cloud of witnesses" and we are thankful for those whose faith we can follow, "considering the end of their conversation." Preciously the Scripture in Hebrews 13, continues — "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and *for ever*". No change in Him — He who is the "Leader and *Completer* of faith." Christ is God's standard — thus the standard in itself cannot change; alas! our appreciation of it and consequent practice may sadly do so. In their wilderness journey the manna provided for God's earthly people remained intrinsically unchanged — but their appreciation of it sadly declined! When they first saw the manna "the taste of it was like cake with honey" (Exodus 16). In Numbers 11 they said "there is nothing at all *beside this manna*". The manna in itself was no longer sufficient for them — something "beside" it, something additional was sought. The standard of their appreciation reaches its lowest ebb in Numbers 21 — "our soul *loatheth* this light bread." Is not this typical of the course christendom has taken? The simplicity and purity of the precious truth which exalts the Person of Christ as sufficient for the food of His people has in many spheres been almost lost sight of by the addition of men's ideas and arrangements, and in some circles He is not mentioned at all!

Beloved brethren, let us hold fast to the "faith once delivered to the saints," treasuring every precious truth which the Scriptures unfold as to the glory of Christ. In a scene dominated by "modernism" and its consequent lowering of the divine standard, it will be a costly matter. Naboth refused to allow the inheritance of his fathers to be reduced to "a garden of herbs" (1 Kings 21) and died rather than lower the standard, *but his name lives inscribed in the divine records!*

Over a hundred years ago it pleased the Lord to revive amongst a few of His people certain precious truths — the truth of the Church as the body of Christ; the simplicity of the saints meeting together for the Lord's Supper (and yet maintaining a deep sense of its profound importance); the

Second Coming of our Lord in relation to the rapture of His own (1 Thess. 4) and also in regard to His "glorious appearing." These, and other truths, are now in many quarters either distorted, ignored or denied completely. Brethren, if we are to "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we (ye) are called" it is essential that we, by the Holy Spirit's help, seek to maintain every feature of God's truth, in its pristine power and beauty, not *lowering the standard*, and refusing every suggestion, whether by word or by spurious translation of the Word, which would becloud in our vision the glory and preciousness of our beloved Lord. It is in *Him*, and in the truth concerning Him, we see the features of the true Altar; the true approach to God, and the true standard of purity.

As we await the coming of our beloved Lord let us ever cherish the fact that "we have an altar" which stands unique in its glory and effect — the cross of *Christ*; it is through *Christ* we "have access by one Spirit unto the Father;" and *Christ* is the standard of our purity. Nothing that the modern Ahaz can introduce can successfully challenge the unfading blessedness of these glorious truths.

"And every man that hath this hope in *Him* purifieth himself, even as *He* is pure" (1 John 3: 3).