

THE IMPORTANCE OF A POSITIVE NEGATIVE  
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He . . . shall not come into condemnation (John 5:24).

Dr. F. E. Marsh, who was one of the most brilliant preachers in Britain. spoke of a minister who visited an elderly but despondent member of his congregation. She was very concerned about the possibility of financial insecurity, and said. "I fear I shall be in want." He listened to her problems and then began to read Psalm 23. "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall want." "No, no." she cried. "It's not like that in my Bible." He read it again making the same mistake. Again she objected. and taking the book from his hand, read. "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." "There." she cried again. "I told you it was not like that in my Bible." Then, quite suddenly. she realized the mistake had been made to draw attention to her lack of faith. To her credit it can be said she never repeated her mistake. The word "not" seems insignificant and unimportant. but when it is removed from certain Scriptures, the biblical spectrum changes.

The Possible Peace

Verily, verily, I say unto you. He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life (John 5:24).

One of the saddest experiences in life is to meet a fellow Christian who lives in constant fear of being rejected by God. The lack of assurance is appalling, for it keeps the soul in a state of uncertainty and ruins the joy of salvation.

When I was a young Christian in a Welsh church, one of the leaders often said he hoped to be accepted by the Lord and confessed he feared the possibility of rejection. In fairness to the man. let it be admitted he had made profession of faith, but the promising beginning had been followed by serious backsliding. He feared this might happen again and said he could not believe God would forgive a repeated mistake. His viewpoint troubled me. The brother was always looking at himself. I believe he would have welcomed a premature death to avoid the possibility of future failure. I was reluctant to argue with him, but my childlike faith in the

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promises of Christ made it impossible for me to agree with him. I had already discovered that Christ said to His disciples that those who belong to Him have "everlasting life and shall not come into condemnation." Remove the not from the promise, and the entire fabric of Christianity begins to disintegrate. Men are not saved from the penalty of sin because of their unbroken loyalty to the Lord. They are accepted because the Savior bore their sin, paid their debt, and guaranteed they would never perish. Either He meant what He said, or He was untruthful. It is regrettable when a Christian becomes unfaithful, but even that cannot break the bonds that bind him to Christ. It is wiser to trust in the Lord than to worry about things that may never happen.

The Possessed Power

Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace (Rom. 6:13-14).

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Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome, saying. "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. 8:29). It might be true to say that God is far more concerned with what we are going to be than with what we were! He has saved us from the uttermost, but the miracle of grace will never be completed until Christians have been changed into the likeness of the Savior. It has often been said that although the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt in one night, it took Him forty years to bring Egypt out of Israel. Unfortunately, the journey through life is hindered by enemies, many of whom live within the believer. It is often easier and wiser to confront external difficulties than to subdue carnal inclinations of self. Even Paul said: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death!" (Rom. 7:24). It was evident even to the Lord that man was unequal to the task of conquering himself. Therefore, it was arranged that God's strength should be made perfect in our weakness. The Holy Spirit came to reside within the believer to become the Commander-in-Chief in the ongoing struggles against evil. To fight alone could only lead to defeat. To assist the Lord

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and follow' His guidance makes possible the realization of the promise: "Sin shall not have dominion over you. The secret of continuing victory over self, sin, and Satan is found in the apostle's command: "Yield yourselves unto God." When General Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, was asked what was the secret of the continuing success of the movement, he replied. "God has had all there was of me." That was, and still is, the secret of successful service for the Savior. Paul said. "Not I. but Christ."

The Permanent Pleasure

But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her (Luke 10:42).

What happened in Bethany two thousand years ago has been immortalized within the hearts of Christians everywhere. Martha's irritability regarding her sister's avoiding work in the kitchen and the Lord's intervention in the dispute is known throughout the world. Mary was so intent on sitting at the feet of Jesus, that all thought about preparing a meal was forgotten.

And she [Martha] had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her. Martha. Martha. thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her (Luke 10:39-42).

To change the reading to "the good part which shall be taken away from her," would not only spoil the story, it would offend the conscience of Christians in every nation. Evidently the Savior loved a gracious listener. He ministered to needs within Mary's soul. When she sat at His feet, she believed she was in the presence of God. All housewives appreciate the frustration of Martha and understand why she became annoyed. Nevertheless, when Jesus compared the sincere work of the one woman with the glowing devotion of her sister, He judged between the two and said: "Mary hath chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her." Service is necessary and wonderful, but

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adoration and worship are better. Christians should seek that privilege and refuse to allow its glories to be lost. The Savior no longer appears before His followers, but the Holy Spirit has taken His place. His word can still be heard: blessed are they who spend time with their Bible.

### The Promised Presence

I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say. The Lord is my helper. and I will not fear what man shall do unto me (Heb. 13:5-6).

When Moses died, it became the privilege and responsibility of Joshua to continue the work which the patriarch had commenced. This was a task that wise men would have avoided. The tribes of Israel were cynical and rebellious. They did not hesitate to criticize Moses, and it was to be expected their attitude would remain unchanged. Joshua agreed to become the leader of the nation only because he was assured this was the will of God for his life. His success was sustained by his faith in the promises of Jehovah. Realizing he would not find sufficient strength in his own capabilities, he relied upon the everlasting arms of God's kindness and remembered the promises given to him.

There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I swear unto their fathers to give them. Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest. This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth: but thou shalt meditate therein day and night. that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success (Josh. 1:5-8).

The entire nation knew that God had been with Moses, and the new leader believed the presence of God would be just as

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real to him. This promise was amplified when God's special messenger arrived. "And it came to pass. when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay: but as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come. . . . Loose thy shoe from off thy foot: for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so" (Josh. 5:13-15). Thus was the leader of the tribes assured he was never alone. Somewhere nearby stood the Lord who was aware of everything that was happening.

The same assurance filled the mind of the early church leaders. The writer to the Hebrews reminded his readers that God promised never to leave His people.

### The Prolonged Prosperity

A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he

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not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he hath set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law (Isa. 42:3-5).

Isaiah provided many entrancing word pictures, but this was one of his best. It must be remembered that authors used reeds as pens, and when through excessive use the end of the reed became saturated, it was replaced by a new one. Similarly, flax was used in primitive lamps, and when the wick or flax became old, it was removed. Perhaps Isaiah was actually doing one of these chores when God whispered, "When my servant comes, he will not abandon nor discard an old friend; He will breathe upon the flax and rejuvenate its flame," This renewing ministry will continue until "he has set judgment in the earth, and the isles wait for his law." This was a special covenant made with the Savior, but it applies to all who, following in their Master's footsteps, endeavor to be Christlike. David was elderly when he wrote, "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread" (Ps, 37:25). The Lord reiterated that promise when He said, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness: and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33). He also said, "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and

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shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again" (Luke 6:38). It is impossible to outgive the Giver of every good and perfect gift. God is never a debtor. He is more generous than any of His people.

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