



What Will Your Wages Be?

By Albert Hannigan

This is a day when people in the work force are concerned about receiving good and sufficient remuneration for what they do. What one earns can be determined by many factors. A lot will depend on who you work for, what kind of business he has, how successful he is and how generous he is. Besides, a lot depends on how you as an employee perform; how diligent you are, how much effort you put into doing what you have to do, how careful you are to obey and please your employer, your ability to show consideration and work with others etc. etc.

I was thinking recently of the possibilities for us more along the line of spiritual and eternal rewards. We have many examples and guidelines in the scripture which can help us to know the direction to take. If we walk with the Lord the blessings and benefits are beyond description. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man the things that God hath prepared for them that love him." In order to fulfill our place in God's Kingdom we must first come to know him as our Saviour. True repentance is necessary. Some go through the motions of accepting Christ as their Saviour but do not necessarily feel the great need of being forgiven and having their sins washed away. The man in scriptures that Jesus talked about who said, "God be merciful to me a sinner" was truly repentant and went away justified. We all need to be truly

sorry for our sin and desire to be delivered from judgment and to receive eternal life. After that transformation takes place in our hearts then we are ready to walk in newness of life and serve the Lord.

God is not interested in a half hearted Christian, a lukewarm Christian. He wants us to mean business with Him. Jesus said in Matthew 22:37, "...Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" and verse 39, "...thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

This is the attitude we should have as Christians, to serve God with all that is in us and to love our neighbour as ourselves.

Abraham was a good example of obedience. He left the land where he was, to look for a city whose builder and maker is God. He did not strive for the best in the natural realm but let his nephew Lot have the better land for his cattle.

Abraham's faith in God and obedience to His command led him to the point of even sacrificing his son of promise. God stopped him from actually slaying Isaac but he proved his implicit obedience in doing what he did. And God is no man's debtor. He said to Abraham, "Because thou hast done this thing and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son; that in blessing I will bless thee and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon

the sea shore: and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blest because thou hast obeyed my voice," Genesis 22:16-18. We read in Galatians 3:7, "Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham," verse 9, "So then they which be of faith are blest with faithful Abraham." In many ways you and I will have to deny ourselves and our own carnal or selfish desires that we too might inherit the promises of God; but it will be more than worth it all. "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us."

Joseph, Jacob's son was another wonderful example of obedience and suffering. He absolutely did not deserve the treatment he got. But Joseph had a vision of the future that lay before him. I am sure that many times he could have had reason to doubt the visions of his brothers bowing before him. But somehow he was in such a close relationship with his God, and he believed against all odds and was greatly rewarded. Not only did he come to the place of rulership in Egypt, but he had the privilege of saving his brothers and the families from starvation and also he had a tremendous reunion with his father Jacob, his full brother Benjamin and all the family.

David the psalmist walked with God even as a boy herding his sheep. When

the time came he was ready to meet the giant Goliath, and by the power of God slew him. He is called a man after God's own heart.

These are just a few of the many patriarchs of faith who have set such a good example for us.

By contrast we see the sad story of men like Lot, Saul, Solomon and others.

Lot was more concerned about his own welfare than that of his uncle Abraham. He chose the best of the land for his herdsmen rather than Abraham's.

Saul started out as a great king over Israel. The possibilities for him were very positive. Through disobedience he lost the kingdom to David and actually became an enemy to the one God chose to lead.

It is incredible that a man with the wisdom of Solomon, the writer of much of the Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Songs of Solomon should lose out with God. The tremendous advice that God

gave us through that instrument, and then that he should give way to the lust of the flesh and miss out on the glorious Kingdom of God.

May you and I take our calling of God very seriously. Our "labour" for Him "is not in vain in the Lord". Nothing can compare to the wages which we will receive by being faithful to God.

The time you spend in secret with your Lord and with His word, the Bible, will pay greater dividends than anything else you can imagine. Jesus said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you."

Your time in service with others without thought and remuneration will command the highest pay you can ever hope for. Moses was a man who had every opportunity to cater to his carnal and fleshly desires while in the king's court in Egypt. But the scripture tell us in Hebrews 11:24-26, "By faith Mo

ses, when he was come to years, (grown up) refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt, for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward." We read in Psalms 19:9-11, "The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned and in keeping of them there is great reward."

Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

The greatest joy you will ever have on earth is to be able to minister to and help others, to see people lifted and comforted and brought to a closer relationship with our blessed Lord.

God bless you.

Just Keep on Keeping On

By F.T. Paterson

In the midst of adversity the avenue of prayer is often the only source of comfort we have. In times of sorrow people will try to console us by saying "I know just how you feel," yet no matter how sincere words, unless anointed by the Holy Spirit, can never express the deep feelings that we feel within. This is not in any way meant to put down those who try to console us because no matter how inadequate the words, the fact that someone cares and reaches out to us in love brings much comfort to our troubled souls. The scripture also is a great source of comfort in times of trouble. **Matt 11:28-30** "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." There is a place of rest and comfort in God by the power of the Holy Spirit that we can enter into, where even though the storms of life beat against our house it will stand because it is founded upon the rock. **Matt 7:24-25** "Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will

liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock." **Ps 91:1-6** "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust. Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler. Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday." What is the rock that we are to build our house upon? It is at least in part the wonderful promises of the word of God. The Ninety First Psalm should be such a comfort to us. The Lord God covers us with His feathers and we are secure under the covering of His wings even as the little birds are covered by their mother's wings. The old hymn says it so well:

Under His wings I am safely abiding;
Tho the night deepens and tempests
are wild,

Still I can trust Him; I know He will
keep me;

He has redeemed me and I am His
child.

Under His wings, under His wings,
Who from His love can sever?

Under His wings my soul shall abide,
Safely abide forever.

The story is told about a fire which destroyed a large section of a forest. Two forest rangers were walking through the forest assessing the damage when they saw an object on the ground, one of the rangers touched it with his boot and from underneath a number of chicks scurried out. The rangers looked at the object and realized it was the remains of the mother bird. In the heat of the fire she had gathered her brood and covered them with her wings. She gave her life but her babies were safe. What an example of a mother's love. We are safely abiding under the wings of the almighty. When we pass through the fires of affliction we are covered with His pinions. He has redeemed us and we are

His children. The Psalmist deals with fear and how we can overcome it by abiding under the shadow of the Almighty in the secret place of the Most High. More and more we see pestilence in the world around us but under the shadow of the Most High there is deliverance and protection. Destruction, in the form of earthquakes and great winds, are reported almost daily and yet they that dwell in that secret place shall not fear because God's promise is to deliver us from these things. **Isa 43:1-2** "But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passeth through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." There are many scriptures that should cause us to rejoice in the blessings of God. It would be well for us to make ourselves familiar with them, for they build up faith within us. **Rom 10:17** "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." In the time of trouble and trial the word of God is the only sure thing that we can depend on. If we are honestly seeking the Lord in the time of trouble He makes these promises available to us. If we read them ourselves or hear them ministered to us they are anointed faith building promises which can help us in the darkest hour. If these promises are ministered in the Spirit they will bring life, but if we only hear them with our natural ears they will not accomplish very much. **2 Cor 3:6** "Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." As I am writing this I am reminded of many scriptures concerning these wonderful promises to those who are in the throws of despair and tribulation. One that comes to mind is **Rom 8:31-39** It starts out by asking, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" And ends with "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." How wonderful. Please read the whole portion. We serve a

great and mighty God. He has provided everything we need to live a victorious and overcoming life.

There is a great deal of difference between 'hearing' and 'appropriating' the promises of God. There is also a difference between God - breathed faith, which appropriates the promises, and just believing that they are true. It is not a great leap of faith to know about God and to know He exists because the creation of God is evident to our natural senses. **Heb 11:3** "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." We can gaze up in the heavens and see the marvelous creation of God, seeing stars that would take many lifetimes at the speed of light to reach. Some are so far away that, even though we still see their light, they have ceased to exist. Because of the time required for their light to reach earth they still shine. The trees, the flowers, animals, ourselves and the wonders of creation all point to the creative work of God almighty. To know about God is one thing; to actually know God is something else again. To know God comes by a revelation of the Holy Spirit, is a fruit of the Spirit, a gift from God. The faith of God is not experienced by the reasoning of the natural mind but, rather, as we take on the mind of Christ. It is an act of becoming not just believing. When we first commit our lives to the Lord it is usually on the level of feeling. We feel the convicting power of the Holy Spirit and respond to it. As immature children of God we also may operate our spiritual gifts in the realm of feeling also, knowing when to prophecy because our hands tingle or we have a quickening heartbeat in our breast or some other physical sign. As we mature we rise to know God on a higher spiritual level, a realm of 'knowing by the Spirit.' It is at this point that we do not go by feelings but by the revelation of the Holy Spirit. This is the realm where many of the saints of God dwell and truly this is a wonderful place to be in our spiritual experience. Our spiritual walk is one of progression or becoming fully mature so we can enter into an experience of becoming; that is taking on the attributes of the risen Lord and partaking of the divine nature. **2 Pet 1:3-4** "According as his divine power hath given unto us all

things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." Faith is not just meeting the requirements of certain Christian rules and regulations but entering into a relationship where God is all in all to us and we are all in all to God. **Col 3:1-3** "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."

I hope that I have, to some extent, laid a foundation on which to build your faith. One thing is sure; God is completely trustworthy. **1Jn 5:14** "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us": **Isa 65:24** "And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." **1 Cor 1:9** "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." To enter into this confidence in God, wherein we are able to put our trust completely in Him, is no doubt a progressive experience we do not appropriate all at once. As our experience of salvation grows so also does our faith and trust in God. **2 Pet 1:5-8** "And beside this, giving all diligence, **add to your faith** virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." The scripture says 'add to your faith', and faith is an imparted virtue from God which **He** imparts to us at the time we give our hearts to the Lord. Then as we grow in the Lord, if we are faithful, our faith and trust in God will grow also. **Phil 2:12-13** "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." We

cannot add or subtract anything from the plan of salvation, but we do have a responsibility to walk in the paths of salvation. God in His sovereignty imparts salvation and forgiveness to us without money or price (**Isa 55:1**) therefore we have a responsibility to walk in faithfulness to that calling. **2 Pet 3:18** "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever. Amen"

Our faithfulness has much to do with our trust in the Lord. As we look at the saints that have gone before us we can see by example the degree of trust they had by their faithfulness. Consider Abraham as he left his homeland in the Ur of the Chaldees and traveled to the place God led him. He did not know where he was going but he was faithful to follow as the Lord led him. Sarah and he, though childless, trusted God far past the years of bearing children to give them a son. During all their journeys the promise was real in their hearts. God gave them Isaac; and to further prove Abraham's faithfulness God asked him to take his only son to a place of sacrifice to offer him as an offering. Because of his faithfulness God blessed him and said; **Gen 22:18** "And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice." Abraham just kept on keeping on, hence the title of this article. Noah is another example. God told him to build an ark and he laboured many years in building it. He was in the midst of dry land. It had not rained neither was there anything other than his faith in God to sustain him in the task. He just kept on keeping on, realizing that, even though it was contrary to natural reason, the still small voice of God within him kept encouraging him on. The eleventh chapter of Hebrews is a text book on those who, through many trials and tribulations, just

kept on keeping on; and so with us also, in the midst of trial and tribulation, we can give up or just keep on keeping on. **Matt 7:7-8** "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that knocketh it shall be opened." Just keep on asking, seeking and knocking until the door opens. God will not turn us away for asking too much. **Luke 18: 1-5** "And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me." The widow just kept on keeping on.

Naaman, the Syrian captain, was a leper. His wife's maid, who was a captive from Israel, told that there was a prophet in Israel who could cleanse him of his leprosy. He went to the prophet who's messenger told him to wash seven times in the Jordan river. He was offended because he thought that the prophet should make more of his rank and person. His servants said, "If the prophet had asked you to do some great thing would you not have done it?" Naaman humbled himself and began to dip in the water, he dipped up to six times and nothing happened but on the seventh time he came up cleansed from leprosy. Imagine if he had quit after the first to sixth time, and gave up, he still would have had leprosy; but he kept on keeping on and was delivered from that dread disease. The children of Israel marched against Jericho. God instructed them to march around the city seven times. Every

day they marched around the city blowing the ram's horns but the people remained silent. On the seventh day they marched around the city seven times and on the seventh time around the city they blew the ram's horn. The people shouted a great shout and the walls of the city fell down flat and they conquered the city. They just kept keeping on even though it may have seemed like an exercise in futility. Even in the realm of forgiveness we are admonished to forgive seventy times seven. **Matt 18:21-22** "Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven." Just keep on keeping on forgiving. Just keep on keeping on walking with the Lord. **Gal 6:9** "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."

Just Keep on Keeping on

Just keep on keeping on,
When the way is steep and some-
times long,
Just keep on keeping on,
When sorrow has come and taken
your song,
Just keep on keeping on,
When everything you do turns out
wrong,
Just keep on keeping on,
When hope has left and now is gone,
Just keep on keeping on,
Just keep on keeping on,
For when you're weak God makes you
strong,
Just keep on keeping on,
Maybe you'll find the road is not too
long,
And up ahead you may find your song,
And even though you did it wrong,
There's always hope when you think it's
gone,
For the darkest night will become the
dawn.
If you just keep on keeping on.

To the Young People and the Rest of Us: "Church" Manners

Recently, it was necessary for me to sit in the back row in the church service. This area in our assembly has often been the domain of young people, and the place where families with young children sit. I was saddened by what I saw. I wondered how much people

received back there, because there was so much other activity in those rows than what actually pertained to the service. I began to wonder if we parents have become lax in teaching our children "church" manners.

In our family, our parents taught us

how to act, at home, at school, on the job, and at church. The training began early, while we were still babes in arms. We all gathered in Family Worship once a day. The Brethren have taught us that the family is like miniature church. So when the family gath-

ers for Worship, this is a miniature church service. Father is the Elder, and mother is his helper. And the children are the people in that little assembly. So the behavior used in Family Worship is similar to what is used when we gather as an Assembly. And the home is a wonderful place to practice that behavior.

In our home, everyone from our aged grandfather, to my baby sister attended Family Worship. So we had to find a time in the day when everyone was present. Most often when our friends came calling, we just told them we were busy with Family Worship now. They were welcome to join us. Generally, we kept a specific time of day for Family Worship, and we worked other things around Worship. It wasn't long before others began to respect that time of day. They began calling at a different time. The point I want to make is that Worship was important, and other interests were secondary. In time we came to also appreciate the time for Service, and other things, including sports and work, were secondary. I saw a young lady revising her work schedule, until she had every Sunday morning off; and she was blessed for her diligence. I met another family who hesitated to put their son into football, because it meant that he would miss a number of Sundays, and church. It was hard for that lad to miss out on football, but to this day he thanks his parents for encouraging him to go to Service; he is a valued member of his Assembly.

We all, including baby sister, had to sit quietly as the Word was read. In fact, as we got older we followed along in our Bibles, or even took turns reading. Then we were encouraged to ask questions about what we had read, or we could add some insight we had gained from what we read. We began to participate in this tiny church service. And as we participated we began to feel we were part of that service. When the children became older teenagers, they were given a particular day to tell what they had been reading in their own devotions. And they were encouraged to tell what it had meant to them. And this was all practice for Sunday Service. They had to be still, and listen and participate in an orderly manner.

The first Family Worship after our Sunday meeting, each child would be

asked if they had a verse from their own reading they would like to memorize for next Sunday service. If they didn't then my parents had one ready for us. We practised that verse ALL week and we knew it well before the next Sunday service. It was so well learned it stuck with us well into adulthood. Often I rely on those verses I learned long ago at Family Worship.

My folks were sticklers for us being quiet and sitting during Family Worship and Sunday Service. It took real persistence on their part, to keep a full-life brother anywhere near still, but it was important for him to learn to be still so he could hear the voice of God's Word. It also taught him reverence. I can still hear my mother, who really looked up to Queen Elizabeth, ask him, "Would you wiggle around, and make such a fuss, if the Queen were here." Of course he wouldn't; he would be in awe of her regal presence. And we must teach our children to be in awe of His presence. We must also teach them that the Bible is the word of God, that it is to be revered. When someone prophesies, that is the Word of God, too; or sings in the Spirit, or exhorts, or teaches or ministers in any way. That is the Word of God, and is to be respected with quietness. Also it is a good idea to close one's eyes when praying, or singing or listening to a prophecy, because it shuts out other things that would disturb and take one's mind off the message. This is taught in childhood, before the years of adolescence when they are so self-conscious of what their peers think if they close their eyes, etc.

My parents were also strict about us moving about in church service. We went to the bathroom before we entered the assembly room. Then we only left that room in the most dire of circumstances. We picked a moment when no one was praying or prophesying, so we wouldn't disturb the meeting. If we were taken out of the meeting room by our parents, we knew we needed correction!

I remember my mother prompting me. "They are singing, now, so you should sing too." This was not a time to be flipping through my Bible, or looking around; it was a time to sing. And when the order of the meeting was prophecy, then I later knew it was time for me to focus on prophecy. I encourage parents to teach their children at an

early age to participate as much as they can. Sing when the people are singing, clap when the people are clapping, close your eyes and pray along with whoever is praying, lift your hands in praise and submission, etc. If it is taught early, they are much more aware of what is going on in the service.

It is hard to keep a toddler quiet for extended periods of time, so we brought along a favorite book and a small toy, even a small snack if the meeting was longer. They were only brought out as a last resort, and by the time a child could understand, we left those things at home. Church is not a time to play or eat, but to praise and worship our Lord.

Now, I want to talk directly to the Young People. You are wonderful, and I don't want to scold you. I only want to encourage you in your walk with the Lord. When I became an older teenager I wanted to sit with my friends rather than Mom or Dad in Service. But you know the farther back I got, the easier it was to lose track of what was going on. I knew I was there to meet the Lord, and when seated closer to the front where there were fewer distractions, I got more out of the Service.

Often the week seemed so long, and by Saturday night I was anxious to see my friends. We often got together Saturday evening. And the more fun we had, often the hour got pretty late. Next morning it was hard to get up in time for church, and harder still to concentrate on what the Meeting held for me. Finally, I realized if I had fun with my friends Friday night, and then kept Saturday night free to go to bed early, I was up much earlier, and got much more out of the service.

Finally, Adults, are you in your seat, quietly meditating, praying or reading the Word for a length of time before the Meeting starts? Are you built up, ready to give that psalm, hymn or spiritual song, that prophecy, teaching or exhortation? are you respectful of all the member of the Body? We are examples to our children, and it is us they will imitate.

When I was a child I heard much about the Order of the home and the Order of the Church Manners are part of that Order. They help you and others to get the most out of a Service. They portray reverence for our Lord, and consideration for others.

- A Member of the Body

God's Presence

By Crafton Lewis

The word "PRESENCE" speaks of the immediate nearness of a person. It also means "A Divine or Supernatural Spirit felt to be present."

As we look into the Scriptures in relation to this topic, I hope we will be able to glean much, and as a result, be able to find ourselves being in the intimate presence of God and making ourselves available to Him.

My reason for making such a statement is simply this: It is one thing to know that God is Omnipresent, but it is another thing to be in His presence.

Into the scriptures we go: Ps. 139: 7 - 12: Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?

8 If I ascend into heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there.

9 If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,

10 Even there Your hand shall lead me, And Your right hand shall hold me.

11 If I say, "Surely the darkness shall fall on me," Even the night shall be light about me;

12 Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, but the night shines as the day; The darkness and the light are both alike to You.

Most certainly, one can see David, in no way, was trying to hide from God's Presence. In fact, he realized there was no way he could escape and thus resigned himself to the fact; being in God's presence is the place to be.

GARDEN OF EDEN

In a different setting, let us go to the Garden of Eden. God gave specific instructions to Adam which he (Adam), in turn, passed on to Eve; those instructions were disobeyed, thus sin entered into the Garden.

(Gen 3:8 NKJV) And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

Because of disobedience, the rich

fellowship Adam and Eve had with God was broken, and instead of being in God's presence as was accustomed, they were now hiding from Him. Why? Because sin had come into the picture and placed a barrier between our fore parents and God.

They tried hiding, but soon discovered God's presence was inescapable. Even though they tried their best to cover their nakedness, (which before their sin they did not see nor were ashamed) yet sin, being what it is, stripped them and made them naked. So to them, the only alternative was to hide from God's presence.

Sin will strip us naked, it will remove us from being in God's presence; but thank God, He will not remove His presence. This is why we feel convicted and can turn to Him in repentance, be clothed again and sense that sweet presence of the Lord, desire, and then walk in holiness before our God. O HALLELUJAH !

JONAH'S EXPERIENCE

Samuel said to Saul: Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams. Jonah preferred to flee Nineveh thinking he would escape the presence of God, thus not doing what God wanted him to.

(Jonah 1:3 NKJV) But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. He went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare, and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.

(Jonah 1:4 NKJV) But the LORD sent out a great wind on the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship was about to be broken up.

(Jonah 1:5 NKJV) Then the mariners were afraid; and every man cried out to his god, and threw the cargo that was in the ship into the sea, to lighten the load. But Jonah had gone down into the lowest parts of the ship, had lain down, and was fast asleep.

(Jonah 1:7 NKJV) And they said to one another, "Come, let us cast lots,

that we may know for whose cause this trouble has come upon us." So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah.

(Jonah 1:10 NKJV) Then the men were exceedingly afraid, and said to him, "Why have you done this?" For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them.

In trying to flee from his calling, Jonah put the lives of others in jeopardy. He felt quite comfortable to go down to the lowest part of the ship and fall asleep, while the mariners were having, maybe, the worst weather ever encountered as they tried to keep the ship afloat.

In the process of all of these things happening, Jonah was "dead to the world." Jonah became dead to the presence of God, not because God's presence was not there, but he was dead to it because he tried to flee from it (God's presence). What a cost attached, what a price was paid which involved so many others who had nothing to do with Jonah's decision to flee from the presence of God.

Yes, like Jonah, we too can put the lives of others in jeopardy by failing to walk in God's presence. There was no way the ship would have been saved with Jonah on board; he knew it, and so the alternative was that he be thrown into the ocean.

God prepared a great fish for Jonah, and remained three days and three nights in its belly. At the end of those three days and nights, he still had to go and do what God commanded. He did not escape God's presence. When we make a commitment to the Lord, the price Jesus paid comes into focus. He keeps that which has been committed to Him. When we try to get away from Him, He does not just let us go, but He puts obstacles in the way that would remind us of the commitment we have made. At times He uses a heavy hand so we would know it is not as easy to depart from His presence.

MOSES AND GOD'S PRESENCE

There are those who would not do anything without the presence of God

being with them. Moses was such a person: he wanted to have God's presence with him at all times.

(Exo 33:12 NKJV) Then Moses said to the LORD, "See, You say to me, 'Bring up this people.' But You have not let me know whom You will send with me. Yet You have said, 'I know you by name, and you have also found grace in My sight.'"

(Exo 33:13 NKJV) "Now therefore, I pray, if I have found grace in Your sight, show me now Your way, that I may know You and that I may find grace in Your sight. And consider that this nation is Your people."

(Exo 33:14 NKJV) And He said, "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest."

(Exo 33:15 NKJV) Then he said to Him, "If Your Presence does not go with us, do not bring us up from here."

(Exo 33:16 NKJV) "For how then will it be known that Your people and I have found grace in Your sight, except You go with us? So we shall be separate, Your people and I, from all the people who are upon the face of the earth."

Moses was aware of the need of the presence of God going before him and the children of Israel. He knew he was unable to lead that vast number of people. He recognized the importance of God's presence and knew his (Moses) leadership would be nothing without it. What a lesson this should be for us. The arm of flesh cannot be relied upon; it must be the presence of God going before us.

David too, recognized the need and importance of God's presence. Having had a close relationship with God and then falling into sin, in his confession and prayer his cry to the Lord was, (Psa 51:1 t NKJV) Do not cast me away from Your presence, And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.

Psalm 97 tells us what the presence of God is like. (Psa 97:5 NKJV) The mountains melt like wax at the presence of the LORD, the presence of the Lord of the whole earth.

The Presence of the Lord is awesome. As with the mountains we also as individuals and as members of His Body, should allow Him to melt us then mould and shape us, that we would no longer be the old person. In His Presence this is what will take

place, His image and likeness will be perfected in us.

HOW DO WE COME INTO HIS PRESENCE?

(Psa 95:2 NKJV) Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving; Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms.

Of all people, Christians, as members of the body of Christ, ought to be a thankful and joyful people for what the Lord has done for us, (of course, He has done it for the whole world. But if the world does not want to appreciate and accept it, still those who have should be thankful and joyful and realize, He who is greatest, He who is above all has made it possible for us to dwell and have His presence with us at all times) "My Presence shall go before you." "I will never leave you neither forsake you." Tremendous assurance.

(Psa 140:13 NKJV) Surely the righteous shall give thanks to Your name; The upright shall dwell in Your presence.

Being in the presence of God has all the benefits we can ever hope for. (Psa 16:11 NKJV) You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

The path of life He makes known. That's how we are able to know and find the way which is IN HIS PRESENCE and there too, we find FULLNESS OF JOY, enjoying all the pleasures which come along not just for a time, but long after time is no more.

HOW TO SERVE IN HIS PRESENCE

(Psa 100:2 NKJV) Serve the LORD with gladness; Come before His presence with singing.

There are times when I wonder whether we think we are doing the Lord a favour when we come to the meeting or when we do something that requires some effort on our part. We need to remember, God requires of us our best.

He gave His best, not grudgingly, but the cost attached was His only begotten Son. In turn, His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ gave His all. No sacrifice was too much for our total redemption. He is now asking us, in recognition of such, to

serve Him with gladness, be joyful, sing unto Him, make a joyful noise; lift up our hands willingly whether at home or in the meeting place.

We come into His presence, not because we are asked to do so, but because we have recognized, in our service to Him, He deserves and must have the very best. There are times we don't want to open our mouths to sing. We fail to testify about the goodness of God. In so many areas of our lives we take things and the presence of God for granted. We become distracted by people, or things, forgetting that we are always in His Presence.

Paul, in writing to the Thessalonians, referred to the Apostles being absent from them for a short time, eagerly wanted to be with them, but was hindered. The apostles had an overwhelming desire to be with the saints, they were looking forward with joy...

(1 Th 2:19 NKJV) "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?" This was important to Paul and the other Apostles, as it should be to us today; wanting to see the saints of God in His Presence not only now, but most of all, at His coming.

(Heb 9:24 NKJV) For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;

What wonderful encouragement this should be to us. Christ is going beyond the realm of man right into God's presence on His behalf, and for us. Him being there for us should give us all the confidence we need to know that we can make it in our walk and relationship with God; because of Jesus Christ being in the presence of the Father on our behalf. We are not depending on ourselves, but as we desire His fullness and yield our all to Him, He will keep us in His presence. This is what God wants for us, and this is what is best for us.

God has never led anyone, (who wants His fullness in his or her life,) away from His presence; and He is not about to do so now. Let us come before His presence and dwell therein. That's where we will find His best.