

"TIMES OF REFRESHING."

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As the firmament is studded with glittering stars, so the Word of God is resplendent with glorious promises. And there are places where these promises seem to cluster in profuse abundance, and form galaxies of surpassing glory. Such an instance is Acts 3:19-21:

"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you; whom the heavens must receive until the times of restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began."

What an assemblage of comforting words! What a concentration of cheering hope! What an array of life-giving promises! The hope of repentance, the privilege of conversion, the refreshing from the presence of the Lord, the revelation of Jesus Christ, and the restitution of all things, the grand climax of all human experiences and human destiny . "Repent ye therefore." We may now do this.

We are not absolutely fixed in the galling habits of sin; we may break from them. "And be converted." This is still our privilege. Our hearts may be changed; our affections may be unloosed from earthly and unworthy objects, and made to twine with a living grasp around heavenly things. And our sins may be blotted out. Yes, the wrinkles in our garments, the stains upon our raiment, the eating-leprosy upon our hands, and the hidden canker of our hearts, which we have no power to remove, and in ourselves no hope of redemption from, - this may all be removed. And this blotting out, contrary to all analogy, does not leave a deeper stain. Our sins are not blotted out by being covered with something of a darker dye; but the foul traces of sin, and that which blots them out, pass off together, and the record is left without a blemish or a stain. It was thus presented to one in a dream:

He stood appalled before a parchment containing a long dark catalogue of his sins; but suddenly a being came forward, and poured a fluid upon the scroll. It rushed like a torrent over it, and rolled away a wave of inky blackness at his feet; but, lo! The parchment stood forth as pure, and clean, and bright; as the driven snow . To one who feels the vileness of sin, and bows beneath its crushing load, and anticipates a little of its dire results, what promise could be sweeter than this?

And after the blotting out of sin, come the times of refreshing. Our version of the Bible reads, "When the times of refreshing shall come." The original rather demands the translation, "That the times of refreshing may come."

The sense is not materially changed either way. It shows that it is subsequent to the blotting out of sins, that the refreshing comes from the presence of the Lord upon His people . And it is just before the coming of Christ; for immediately after, Christ is sent for His waiting ones. This refreshing is thus definitely located. It is between the blotting out of sins and the coming of Christ.

The blotting out of sins is the conclusion of the work of our Lord in His priestly office as Mediator for man. Between that and the coming of the Lord, a little period intervenes ; and at that time His people are refreshed from His heavenly presence.

What is the nature of this refreshing? It is something that cannot come till sins are blotted out. And that which sin hinders is the full and complete communion of the Holy Spirit. The word contains the idea of refreshing coolness after heat, and rest and recreation after labor . It will be to the people of God, as a cooling shower to the dry and thirsty land, and a period of relaxation and rest to the worn and weary toiler. The heat and struggle of sin's conflict are then over.

Their record is clear for an entrance to the heavenly land. They are accepted candidates for immortal glory. And as they thus stand upon the threshold of the celestial world, they are given to feel a little earnest of their approaching inheritance, a foretaste of the coming joy.

Once God came unto His people as the former rain, and the glorious manifestations of the day of Pentecost were the outward record of the inward work. Again He is coming to His people as both the former and the latter rain together, and they will receive a refreshing adapted to their position as they are about to enter the immortal kingdom .

Then God sends Jesus Christ for them . Mark the love God is here represented as having for His people. Christ who gave His life for them, would of His own free will, come for them again . Winged with His own love, His care for His people would speed Him forward for their rescue. But here God is represented as sending Him .

God so watches over and cares for His people that not even a hair can perish without His notice; and at last He sends His Son, who once came to suffer and die for them, to escort them in triumph and glory into His presence.

Then the restitution. Glorious promise, consoling hope? We travel back in imagination to the world in its innocence and purity, as it came from the satisfied hand of its Creator. Sorely have the race, plunged in sin and misery, bewailed the loss of original innocence and Edenic joys; and for many weary and slow-revolving years have the church waited and longed for the day of deliverance and redemption to dawn upon them. And they have not waited in vain.

That day will surely come. Again and again, to make assurance doubly sure, is it promised in the Word of God. The time of restitution is determined. The earth shall regain its lost position, and the worthy of its inhabitants shall recover the joys of paradise.

The accomplishment of all this is in the hands of our faithful God. The refreshing is His to bestow. The return of the Lord is one of the counsels of His will. The glorious restitution is one of His unalterable purposes. What belongs to us? Repent and be converted. Repent and be converted. This is our part. This is our duty. Have we done it?

Are we doing it? May the words ring in our ears till every heart is fully aroused. And when all have repented, and all who will receive the gracious provisions made for the penitent are converted, and when all sins are blotted out and put away from the righteous forever, then the refreshing will descend upon the waiting ones.

Would you share it? Then remember, it will not come upon the sleepy, the careless, the proud, the worldly, the unrepentant, and the unconverted. And lo! These times of refreshing with their unalterable decisions are just upon us. What are we doing to prepare for them?

