

## EASTER THOUGHTS

Joseph H. Smith

Have you ever wondered why the angel that declared the resurrection of Jesus to the women at the tomb, made such a distinction between the "disciples and Peter" when he charged them to Go and make it known? (See Mark XVI:7). Did the angels know what had happened to his allegiance to Christ when Peter denied his Lord? And could they hear the cursing and swearing with which he defaulted from the righteousness of the gospel? And did they see the penetrating eye of the persecuted and arrested Jesus as "he looked upon him"? And is one's record and place on high so immediately thus altered as that only three nights before he had vowed "though I should die with thee yet will I not deny thee," angels had come already to distinguish between "Peter and disciples"? Since "Christ saw Satan like lightning fall from heaven"; and since Adam and Eve in one day and by a single act forfeited Edenic bliss and lost their likeness to God; so one single deed of sacrilege may plunge a King who for near 3 score years had been a faithful servant of God into the hopeless leper's camp, or precipitated an Ananias and Sapphira from God's altar of sacrifice into a grave of death and doom. We are admonished to beware of sudden sin! Achan, Saul, and Judas may have all committed various sins; and doubtless the seed of inbred sin was lurking in all their hearts; but in each of their cases, just a single act of sin is seen to plunge them into death.

But in Peter's case we find an explanation of his name being mentioned at all the angels' commission to the women. Those were tears of penitence he shed when Jesus looked on him so, and heaven took cognizance of these too, as well as of his sin. The message sent to him (as well as to the disciples) assured him of a hope. And in that private appearance of the Lord to Cephas (or Peter) 1 Cor. 15:5, doubtless he received pardon and recovered his place among the disciples. Evidently a single lapse from Christian faith and love and righteousness is much more serious than those suppose who carelessly speak of "sinning and repenting every day."

Please see the reward of early morning devotion as illustrated here at the emptied tomb of Christ. "The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark unto the sepulchre." (John 20:1). Like hospitality to others in Christ's name, denial of self indulgence for worship of Christ himself has spiritual compensation. We may miss many of the beauties of providence as well as abounding blessings of Grace, by lying too long in bed in the morning.

And here is another thing to note while we are here with Mary Magdalene that early first day morning. Two things in fact: (1) She that has been forgiven much loveth much. Christ puts no premium on a sinning life, but rather magnifies his own saving grace in sometimes making the greatest saints out of those who once were greatest sinners. And, (2) while it is true that "woman was first in transgression," she was also first in the publishing of the Resurrection! As it was the "seed of the woman" whose heel was bruised by the serpent in the crucifixion of Jesus, so it was a wonderfully saved woman that heralded the bruising of the serpent's head by the resurrection of Jesus.

The Holy Spirit, with great care and completeness has recorded details that establish beyond question the verity of Christ's Resurrection. An array of these proofs is cited by Paul in I Corinthians, 15th Chapter. And here in John 20, there is the experience and testimony of the

Magdalene, the running of Peter and John and their entering into the opened tomb, the details of the grave clothes and the napkin, the sight of the two angels in the tomb by Mary and their communication with her, and last of all, the appearance in metamorphose of Jesus himself as the gardener to her, and his full identification to her as he called her by name, "Mary," and she responded in adoration, "Rabboni!" And the truth is, beloved, Christ even now can make himself appear as truly living, personal, and loving by his blessed Spirit to the believer's heart, as he did then to Mary's eyes and ears. See in Ephesians 4:20, 21, as those who had never seen him in the flesh are addressed as having "seen him and heard him: and been taught by him and learned of him." Valuable and important as are the historical records and proofs of the resurrection of our Lord, the most transcendent and most to be treasured of them all is the fact that he lives now to make intercession for us, and that he is truly a living personal presence in our hearts as well.

Angels who were on hand that Christmas morning to herald the Incarnation of the Son of God, are here early this Easter Day to announce the Resurrection of the Son of Man. These, in fact not only "had been given charge of him lest at any time he bruise his foot against a stone," and "came and ministered to him" when Satan left him hungry in the wilderness. Also they strengthened him in the Garden of Gethsemane, and now announced his Victory over death and the grave. They had likewise pre-announced his conception in the womb of the virgin Mary, and now, besides loftily sounding his praises in the courts of glory, are sent forth in His name to minister "for us who shall be heirs of Salvation." See their relationship to Christ in all phases of work in our Redemption, and their service to Christians in all stages of our Salvation! We venture there will be an intimacy between the very angels and the Blood-washed saints in heaven that we scarcely can dream of now.

Lastly, we notice that it required the Resurrection of Christ to open many Scriptures to the devout. (Wonder if it may not be so as to many more at his Coming again?) Here in John 20:9, it is stated: "For as yet they knew not the Scripture, that he must rise again from the dead." And in Luke 24:27, we read of the risen Christ that beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

Doubtless it takes the New Testament to open the Old. Peter tells us it requires the gospel age to interpret much the prophets had written. Most probably those who foretold the outpouring of the Spirit in the latter days, had no such clear and full understanding of the significance of this as Jesus gives us in his discourse on the Comforter, and as Christians even can only know under the Pentecostal Baptism. And we apprehend that many of our guesses and speculations about the next dispensation will vanish as dreams before the sunlight of day when He shall appear and we shall know as we are known.

And now if we be truly risen with Christ, "let us set our affections on things above where Christ setteth on the right hand of God."—Heart and Life.

I truly believe that nothing is permitted to enter our lives that may not in some way work together for good, although everything depends upon our trustfully accepting and wisely using it.—S. P. Smiley.

## CHRISTIAN COURAGE

(By Louis G. Hamilton)

All courage is not Christian courage. There is a natural and merely human courage, and there is a spiritual and Christian courage. The former may be good, the latter is always good. The one is a principle that may be applauded, the other is a grace to be coveted. And as a genuine and sparkling diamond excels in lustre, in beauty and real worth the glass imitation, so does Christian courage transcend in value, in beauty and glory the courage which is merely human and natural.

It goes without saying that merely natural and human courage may be inherent in any individual; more manifest and prominent in some, to be sure, than in others, and, like any other human virtue, may be developed and strengthened by its exercise and use.

But it may be asked, is not Christian courage likewise possessed in greater degree in some than in others, and may it not be developed and increased by its exercise? To both questions we answer, Yes. Wherein then lies the difference?

The difference lies mainly in its source. One is of human nature, the other is of the Spirit. The one comes through the law of heredity, or the law of environment, or education or other natural law. But Christian courage never grows in Nature's garden. Its true source is the Spirit of God. It is an element of and an outgrowth from faith, that is, saving faith. In Galatians 5:22-23, we have a cluster of fruit which is of the Spirit. There are mentioned nine different kinds of fruit of the Spirit. They are, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. All spiritual graces and virtues are included in these nine. Thus Christian courage is an outgrowth from saving faith, as well as one of the elements of divine love.

History, both sacred and profane, furnishes us with numberless instances of these two types of courage. Let us cite a few cases illustrating each kind. Perhaps in all history there is not a more outstanding case of courage of the first mentioned class than that of Leonidas, who, about 480 B. C., with his three hundred brave Spartans held the narrow pass of Thermopylae against the invading army of nearly two million Persians. This small band of fighting Spartans held the mountain pass until the last one of them was killed. Here is a striking example of manly courage, but in no sense was it Christian courage. It may seem a strange paradox but such courage may sometimes be prompted by mere cowardice. In other words the ruling motive for some deeds of seeming valor may be but the fear of being called a coward. True courage, that is, Christian courage both in its very nature and motive is pure, unselfish and beautiful.

One of the grandest examples of Christian courage is found in the life of the great Apostle to the Gentiles. Paul, on his way to Jerusalem for the last time, declared that it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that bonds and afflictions awaited him, and added, "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself," and went forward with an overcoming faith and true Christian courage Acts 20:22-24.

And nowhere in all history or literature is real spiritual courage more in evidence and better displayed than in the field of missionary biography. John G. Paton voluntarily offered himself to go as a missionary to the New Hebrides when he knew there was not a white inhabitant in those islands, and also knew that the last two