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The Gladdest News

AN EASTER MESSAGE

by

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The Gladdest News

One day an American war mother received a very special letter. It was written in familiar handwriting and headed "Somewhere in the South Pacific."

Dear Mom (the letter ran):

It is comparatively quiet where I am today, but no one knows how long it will be. If this letter reaches you, it will mean that I can't write another one, for I'm putting this away with my things, and asking that it be sent to you.

I just want to say, Mom, don't grieve for me. "I know that my Redeemer liveth." My trust is in Him "who loved me and gave himself for me." And because He lives, we too shall live.

Don't ever say of me, "He's gone." Say, "He lives!" Because, Mom, when you read this, I shall be very much alive, and waiting for you in Christ's presence.

With love,

John

That letter was read through blinding tears. But in the darkest hour of a mother's life, this woman at length could say, "This—really—is good news. **He lives—**waiting . . . in Christ's presence."

The sting of death is gone when one contemplates the blessings of eternal life through Christ. "He lives"—there is no happier news.

Throughout the Word, this message applies gloriously to Christ, "the firstfruits of them that slept." One cannot follow Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John without realizing that each writer produces positive proof of Christ's victory over death and the grave. Each Gospel ends with our Lord's triumphant mastery over the King

of Terrors. Every one of the evangelists shows conclusively that, tearing away the bars of the tomb, Christ emerged as the Lord of Life.

But this Easter message, "He lives," is in the Old Testament as well as in the New. Even a casual reading reveals that resurrection truth is everywhere in promise, parable, and prophecy.

For example, through the telescope of revelation, the ancient Job saw Christ, the mighty Victor, and in his astonishing declaration there are the cardinal truths of Christ's death, resurrection, and coming glory. The portion dealing with this sublime fact of Christianity—uttered even before Christianity appeared—read thus:

For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth:

And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God:

Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.
Job 19:25-27.

Here is a glorious message. The chapter out of which the foregoing quotations are taken registers Job's protest against the supposed kindness of his so-called friends. At first, the man of God is found recounting his woes. Then he moves beyond that, and proceeds to avow his faith in Jehovah. He has a heavenly Redeemer, a Vindicator of righteousness! With an unmistakable tone of exaltation, he testifies of this bright glimpse of his living Redeemer.

Here is a profound message. Various endeavors have been made to explain away the somewhat mysterious import of these verses. Undoubtedly the Holy

Spirit intended a meaning beyond that which Job himself fully understood. It is evident that the language he uses relates to two advents of Christ. Job's friends urged him to set his hopes upon a return to temporal prosperity, to health, wealth, and friends. Job, however, longed for God and His salvation. Upheld by this Spirit-given hope, the patriarch spoke of vindication in a future life.

Here is an ancient message. Job's declaration of the Redeemer is all the more striking if, as many scholars affirm, his book was the first book of the Bible to be written. It seems unquestionable that this book was in existence before the giving of the Law. Job, then, was probably the first herald of Easter.

Here is a central message. Job's Easter prediction is almost in the center of the Old Testament. This is significant, since the central truth of Christianity is that which Christ made possible by His death and resurrection.

In Job's triumphant utterance, there are at least six related truths for the comfort of every believer.

1. A CHRISTIAN ASSURANCE "I know"
2. A COMPLETE ATONEMENT "My Redeemer"
3. A CONTINUOUS ADVOCACY "Liveth"
4. A CONDITIONAL APPROPRIATION "I . . . my"
5. A CERTAIN APPEARING
"Shall stand . . . upon the earth."
6. A CONFIDENT ASPIRATION
"Whom I shall see for myself"

Because of Christ's atonement, His advocacy, and His appearing, the believer has ground for assurance, appropriation, and aspiration.

Father of Jesus Christ, my Lord,
My Saviour, and my Head,
I trust in Thee, whose powerful word
Hath raised Him from the dead.

A CHRISTIAN ASSURANCE

Job was positive in his assertion: "I **know** that my Redeemer liveth."

"Perhaps," "maybe," "possibly"—these were not words in this man's vocabulary of faith. He had a deep-rooted conviction. Unlike many present-day preachers, he did not doubt his beliefs and believe his doubts. Although he lived years before Christ, and on the other side of the cross, still he knew that as the Redeemer, Christ would come.

To know anything is to be confident of its existence. How did Job know that his Redeemer was alive and that ultimately he would see Him? Knowledge, such as Job speaks of, is not a mere mental comprehension founded upon scientific statements. As used by Job, the word implies an inner knowledge and inborn conviction. This kind of knowledge regarding the redemption of Christ can never be acquired merely by acquiescing to statements of Scripture. It comes by the Holy Spirit's burning into one's consciousness the true meaning of these inspired statements—a meaning that will apply personally to heart and life.

There is no greater tragedy than for one to rest upon

a superficial head knowledge of the finished work of Christ, and to refuse to experience that heart knowledge which is essential to salvation.

Have you this experimental knowledge that Christ is the only Redeemer, and that because of your receiving of Him as the crucified Saviour, you too will see Him some glad day? Paul, you remember, shared this inborn conviction of Job. He declared, "I know whom I have believed." And please notice that Paul, along with Job, did not speak of "what" he believed, but of "whom." Knowledge and faith, then, are centered in a Person, the Son of God.

If this certainty of Christ's redemptive work is not yours, then my friend, pause and ask God to reveal the reality of it to you by His Spirit. He longs to do that!

Just when this unshakable certainty gripped the heart and mind of Job we are not told. Whether the truth of a living, loving Redeemer came as a crisis or as a process in Job's experience is unrecorded. **He knew**—and that was sufficient for time and eternity.

Many there are who can point to a definite day and hour when the miracle of the new birth was accomplished in them, and they became children of God. Others, just as certain that they possess personal faith in Christ, cannot give the exact date of this transaction.

We are told that when the old-age pension system was introduced in Britain, hundreds of old people had no birth certificate to produce that would prove that they were eligible for a pension. They did not know when they were born nor how old they were, but they **knew** they were alive and aged. Similarly, there are

many saints who cannot name the time and place when they were "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever" (1 Pet. 1:23). The important consideration is not **when**, but **whether** this has been accomplished. The question each of us must be assured of is whether the Redeemer, whose death and resurrection we commemorate at the Easter season, actually has delivered **us** from the guilt and penalty of sin. We may have this assurance through the simple acceptance, by faith, of what God's Word declares.

Can you say with Job, "I know that my Redeemer liveth"? If not, then before another moment rolls into eternity, you can—if you will—pass from darkness into light and share the knowledge that God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven your sins. You can say:

I know, I know that Jesus liveth,
And on the earth again shall stand;
I know, I know that life He giveth,
That grace and power are in His hand.

A COMPLETE ATONEMENT

Just what did Job mean when he affirmed that he knew that his **Redeemer** lived?

Some expositors explain the word "Redeemer" by saying that Job expected one of his relatives to arise after his death as the avenger of his blood and to exact retribution for it. Job's hope, however, utterly contradicts this interpretation.

Already the man of God had expressed his desire for a "daysman" (R.V., "umpire") between himself and

God, who could be no other than a divine personage (9:32-35). He also declared his conviction that he had his "witness . . . in heaven" (16:19). He longed to have an advocate to plead his cause (cf. 16:21). He called upon God to be "surety" for him (17:3). Thus, having already acknowledged God as his Judge, Umpire, Advocate, Witness, and Surety, Job is not taking a long step in the acknowledgment of God as his Redeemer.

The word Job uses for "Redeemer" is of intense significance. In the original, it is **gael**, that is, a kinsman-redeemer. It is a term which means one who has the right and duty to vindicate someone of near kin who has suffered wrong—a technical expression for the avenger of blood. In the Old Testament, **gael** was one who brought back a forfeited inheritance, redeemed a slave, avenged the slain, or one perpetuating a family name and heirship among the families and estates of Israel.

We have no hesitation in affirming that Job's "Redeemer" is likewise ours—even the Lord Jesus Christ—for the language he uses suggested a divine **Gaal**: "I shall see **God**" (19:26). Though he lived hundreds of years before Calvary, Job meant, when he used the word "Redeemer," exactly what we mean when, in the full blaze of divine grace, we use the same word.

Commenting on Isaiah 59:20, C. I. Scofield reminds us that the Old Testament kinsman-redeemer is a beautiful type of Christ in the following ways:

1. The kinsman redemption was of **persons**, and an inheritance (Lev. 25:25, 48; Gal. 4:5; Eph. 1:7, 11, 14).
2. The Redeemer must be a kinsman (Lev. 25:48, 49; Ruth 3:12, 13; Gal. 4:4; Heb. 2:14, 15).

3. The Redeemer must be able to redeem (Ruth 4:4-6; Jer. 1:34; John 10:11, 18).
4. Redemption is effected by the **Gaal** paying the just demand in full (Lev. 25:27; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19; Gal. 3:13).

Going on to explain the New Testament doctrine of redemption, Dr. Scofield points out that there are three words translated "redemption" in the Scriptures. One word means "to purchase in the market"—in which there is the thought of a slave market. Another word implies "to buy out of a market." And still another word suggests "to loose" or "to set free by paying a price." The Saviour performed all these services on behalf of the believer. Christ is our **Gaal**.

Our heavenly inheritance was mortgaged by sin, and we were utterly unable to pay the debt, to satisfy God's justice for sin, to renew our mortgage, and to provide a new settlement of our inheritance. Something of our condition is seen in the experience of Ruth, the Moabish woman. As the widow of Mahlon, she was involved with her first husband in his losses and liabilities. But when she became the wife of Boaz, the redeemer of her estate and the lord of the harvest, she and her inheritance were redeemed, and she became the sharer of his wealth and social standing. In Christ, we who in Adam were condemned and alienated, are justified and reconciled.

From another angle, we were slaves of Satan and justly doomed to eternal woe, having no kinsman to vindicate our cause and interpose for us by power or price. We were sold under sin.

Easter, however, calls to our minds the matchless grace of Christ our Redeemer, who, veiling His deity in human flesh that He might sympathize, suffer, and

save, paid a terrible price in order to redeem His enemies from their curse. He "gave himself a ransom for all." By His own blood, He redeemed us from sin and the grave, and by His power He conquered our murderer. Hallelujah, what a Saviour!

The story is told of a Russian officer whose accounts could not be made to balance and who feared that the merciless despotism of the empire would allow no room for leniency in dealing with him. While hopelessly pouring over his balance sheet, and in despair of ever making up his deficiency, he wrote half inadvertently on the page before him, "Who can make good this deficit?" And then he fell asleep at his table.

The Czar, passing by, saw the sleeping officer, glanced curiously at the pages, and taking up the pen wrote underneath the question these words: "I, even I, Alexander."

Who is there who is sufficiently able to pay the sinner's debt to a broken law? There is One who died and rose again, and from the cross of Calvary, from the tomb in the garden, from the throne in heaven, He answers: "I, even I, the Lord Jesus."

My friend, have you claimed your redemption? Many a Negro lived on in servitude, even after Abraham Lincoln had proclaimed the emancipation of all American slaves. Christ died to ransom you—but are you free? You may be free, now and forever, if you will act upon His clear commands in the Word of God.

A CONTINUAL ADVOCACY

One of the most amazing aspects of Job's Easter evangel is that he knew that his Redeemer was alive.

He declared: "I know that my Redeemer **liveth.**" This present-tense word implies a continual existence. As the Eternal One, the Redeemer must have been alive **in,** as well as **before,** Job's day; He is "alive for evermore." Job used the term "liveth," as applied to the Redeemer, in opposition to his own condition. Man dies; his **Gaal** lives!

Because of the ravages of a skin disease, Job anticipated the utter destruction of his bodily frame, but he affirmed that his Redeemer is deathless. Having been made by the living God, Job needed a living Redeemer, one who would be able to undertake for him when he slipped away among the shadows of the tomb.

Like Job, we too face separation and the grave. Unless we are among the number who are "caught up together . . . in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air" at the return of the Lord Jesus Christ for His own (1 Thess. 4:17), we must each pass through the experience of death. When we come to the end of life, we shall need Someone to hold our "right hand, saying . . . Fear not; I will help thee"—Someone who has gone that way before, and has come through, living and triumphant!

Bless God, there is no trusting child of His who approaches "the valley of the shadow," alone. "I am he that liveth," cries our victorious Lord, and "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

During her lifetime, my mother had a dread of death. Whenever the subject was mentioned, there would come a tremble to her lips. And then a day came, after a comparatively brief illness, when she knew she was going to be with Christ. Over and over she said something like this: "Death—this is the thing I have

feared all my life, but I have no fear now. The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. All the dread is gone." She had an Advocate on high.

The advocacy of Christ has to do not only with the possibly distant prospect of our dying, but also with the present fact of our living. He "ever liveth to make intercession" for us. There, at the right hand of God, He pleads our cause; He prays for us. Sometimes we hear Christian people complaining about a lack of sympathy among believers, and perhaps one will say: "I have just nobody to pray for me!" Brother, if you are a child of God, Jesus Christ prays for you. Day and night, He intercedes on your behalf.

A CONDITIONAL APPROPRIATION

In Job's majestic utterance, note the personal element: "I . . . my." Phrases like "I know," "my Redeemer," "I shall see for myself," and many others, speak of Job's individual faith. Had he known the hymn of assurance that we often sing, he could have joined heartily in the testimony:

Blessed assurance, **Jesus is mine,**
O what a foretaste of glory divine!

There were many things that Job did not know. Suddenly stripped of all his possessions and crushed by sorrow and disease, he did not know the reason for all his anguish. He could not read the meaning of his tears. But blessed be God, he could appropriate the grace of God for his specific need, and thus face the future unafraid.

Have we this joy of personal assurance? Separating ourselves from the multitude that is about us—the

multitude that knows not Christ—can each of us say: "I know that **my** Redeemer liveth"? Or, realizing that countless myriads are trusting the Saviour, can we look up into His face and confess: "Thou art **my** Redeemer"? Unless this matter is intensely personal, and we can say with Job, "I know," the present Easter season will mean nothing more than a spring holiday.

We have called this aspect of our meditation, "A Conditional Appropriation." If the Christ of Easter is not our personal Saviour, He can become so, only by the exercise of a personal faith. Christ died for the sins of all men, and rose from the dead for their justification; but that general truth must be made personal. With the hand of faith upon that dear head of His, each soul must be able to confess: "This is **my** Redeemer. He died for **my** sins, and I know that His everlasting life is **mine**."

A CERTAIN APPEARING

By faith, Job was enabled to see far into the future, to behold not only the first coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to earth, but also His return in power and glory. It is as though two great mountain peaks loomed before him, the one obscured by the other, so that he was unaware of the valley that lay between.

Job spoke of One who "shall stand at the latter day upon the earth." The picture suggests authority. Isaiah described this coming One as "Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." The day is coming when Christ shall take His rightful place, and this sin-scarred, blood-drenched earth shall respond to the holy commands of the King. Earnestly we pray:

Come, blessed Lord, bid every shore
And answering island sing
The praises of Thy royal name,
And own Thee as their King.

Jesus—the whole creation groans:
The air, the earth, the sea,
In unison with all our hearts,
And calls aloud for Thee.

A CONFIDENT ASPIRATION

Thoughts of the Redeemer were, to Job, a constantly purifying hope; and this experience is shared by every true child of God. One's reactions to the smallest trivialities of everyday life are influenced by this realization: At any moment, I may be in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, "whom I shall see for myself." What holy joy this fact imparts!

I know a home where there was great excitement. Such a house-cleaning as that place was given! Such buying of supplies for the kitchen and for the wardrobe! Such radiant joy on all faces!

What was the reason for all this? A soldier-son was coming home on furlough.

My friends, heaven's dearest Son is coming back to earth, not just "on furlough," but to reign forever. Thoughts of His nearness should purify and gladden every moment of our lives. Perhaps, even before we shall have opportunity to sing together once more that glorious Easter hymn,

Up from the grave He arose,
With a mighty triumph o'er His foes,

His victory shall be complete, and He Himself shall appear. In heart and life, are we readying ourselves to welcome our wonderful Redeemer?