**THE FUNDAMENTALS: A TESTIMONY TO THE TRUTH**

**VOLUME 4; CHAPTER 27. A PERSONAL TESTIMONY**

BY PHILIP MAURO, ATTORNEY-AT-LAW, NEW YORK CITY

I came to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ on May 24th, 1903, being then in my forty-fifth year. I did not at that time fully understand what had happened to me, and only learned subsequently, through the study of the Scriptures, that, by the grace of God through faith in His Son Jesus Christ, I had been quickened (Eph. 2:5), and had passed from death unto life (John 5:24).

**FORMAL PROFESSION NOT AN ANCHOR FOR THE SOUL**

For many years previous to that time I had been drifting steadily away from even a formal profession of Christ. There was no aspiration in my soul beyond the gratification of self; and all the exertion which I was putting forth had for its sole object the acquisition and accumulation of means for ministering to that gratification through life. I do not except from this category the consideration bestowed upon my family (who would doubtless give me a good character as an indulgent husband and father), for I count these as within the definition of "self."

The things which I valued, such as reputation, the good opinion of men, success in business enterprises and the like, engrossed my time and thought, and beyond these, which were all of a temporal nature, there was no object in view. I can now clearly see that I had unconsciously made money a god to trust in and to bestow my affections upon, and can therefore comprehend the statement of Scripture that covetousness is idolatry.

Whether or not there was an existence beyond the grave was a matter about which I had speculated much but had dismissed it from my thought. Having become a thoroughgoing rationalist (and being no more irrational than the generality of those who assume that self-flattering title) I took the ground that it was possible to believe only what could be made evident to the physical senses, and having rejected the witness of God, and so made Him a liar (1 John 5:9, 10), and having disregarded "the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1), I was perishing for lack of knowledge while passing, in my own estimation and that of others, as a "very well-informed man."

I had become a church-member and communicant at the age of sixteen; had been for many years thereafter quite a regular attendant on church services, and had heard innumerable sermons; yet I was as ignorant as any Hottentot concerning God's one and only way of salvation. Such is the wretched condition of millions of excellent people in this "Christian" land and in this "enlightened" century. The Gospel is hid from them because "the god of this age" hath blinded their minds "lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (2 Cor. 4:4).

**WORLDLY PROSPERITY UNSATISFYING**

"Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again" (John 4:13). Let me add briefly, as touching my material circumstances, that in the practice of my chosen profession (law) I was sufficiently successful to gratify my own ambition and to excite the envy of others; that I was blessed with excellent physical health; and that my domestic relations were all that could be desired. Nothing seemed to be lacking that could insure or contribute to happiness and contentment.

But peace of mind and rest of conscience are not to be found in what the world calls "easy circumstances." Not-withstanding that I had apparently every reason to be well satisfied with my lot, and every opportunity to enjoy the good things of this world, my mental condition was anything but satisfactory. It is hard to picture the state of a mind subject to increasingly frequent and protracted spells of depression, for which there seemed to be no reason or explanation. Certainly I was thoroughly discontented, desperately unhappy, and becoming more and more an easy prey to gloomy thoughts and vague, undefinable apprehensions. No longer could I find mental satisfaction and diversion in the places and things which once supplied them. My gratifications had been largely of an intellectual order, and my mind had been much occupied in efforts to pierce the veil of the material universe, and to discover what, if anything, lay concealed behind it. This quest had carried me into the domains of science, philosophy, occultism, theosophy, etc., etc. All this pursuit had yielded nothing more reliable than conjecture, and had left the inquirer after the truth wearied, baffled and intellectually starved. Life had no meaning, advantage, purpose or justification; and the powers of the much-vaunted human intellect seemed unequal to the solution of the simplest mysteries. The prospect before me was unspeakably dark and forbidding.

**"WHERE IS THE WISE?" (1 COR. 1:20)**

But some remedy against settled despair must be found. So I followed others in the attempt to find distraction in the gaieties, amusements and excitements of a godless, pleasure seeking world, among whom I was as godless as any. Some good people who were interested in me, and who had an inkling of my condition, assured me that what I needed was more "diversion" and "relaxation," and that I was "working too hard," etc. This view of the matter was urged by church members. No one told me the simple truth; namely, that I needed Christ and His salvation. O, the innumerable millions who are stumbling through life, vaguely conscious of a great need, but ignorant of its nature, and having no one to tell them!

I have given this description of my unhappy state at some length in the belief that among those who may read it, many will recognize it as a description of the main features of their own condition.

To such I can say with the utmost assurance that there is deliverance for you, full and complete, and that it is not far off, but it is close by. "The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart, that is, the word of faith which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Rom. 10:8, 9).

So completely has that old condition of mental distress and unrest passed away that I would not now be able to even recall and describe it, but for a record which I made within six months of my conversion.

"Who shall deliver me? I thank God through Jesus Christ, our Lord" (Rom. 7:24, 25). One never-to-be-forgotten evening in New York City I strolled out in my usual unhappy frame of mind, intending to seek diversion at the theater. This purpose carried me as far as the lobby of a theater on Broadway, and caused me to take my place in the line of ticket purchasers. But an unseen hand turned me aside, and the next thing that I remember I had wandered far from the theater and my attention was arrested by a very faint sound of singing which came to my ears amid the noises on Eighth Avenue, near Forty-fourth Street. There is no natural explanation of my being attracted by, and of my following up, that sound. Nevertheless, I pushed my way into the building (a very plain, unattractive affair, bearing the sign "Gospel Tabernacle,") whence the sound emanated, and found myself in a prayer meeting. I was not much impressed by the exercises, and in fact was not at all in sympathy with what transpired. What did, however, make an impression upon me was the circumstance that, as I was making my way to the door after the meeting, several persons greeted me with a pleasant word and a shake of the hand, and one inquired about my spiritual state. I went away from that meeting still in complete ignorance of the simple truth that my wretchedness was all due to the fact that I was an unreconciled and unpardoned sinner, and of the greater truth that there was One who had died for my sins, who had reconciled me to God by His blood, and through whom I could obtain forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Again I say that no natural explanation will account for the fact that I was constrained to return to a place so utterly devoid of attractions and so foreign to all my natural tastes and inclinations. The people were not in the social grade to which I had been accustomed, and I would have found nothing at all congenial in their society.

And here I wish to call particular attention to a striking instance of the fact that God's ways are not as our ways, and that the wisdom of man is foolishness with God. I should have supposed that, in order to convince me of the truth of the Bible and of Christianity it would be necessary to employ the best efforts of a faculty of the profoundest theologians, versed in all the arguments of skeptical philosophy, and able to furnish plausible replies to them. But God, in His wisdom, sent me to learn the way of everlasting life from a company of exceedingly plain, humble people, of little education, to whom I regarded myself as immeasurably superior in all the higher branches of knowledge. It is true that these people knew very little of what is taught in colleges and seminaries; but they did have that knowledge which is the highest and most excellent of all, that knowledge for which one of the most scholarly of men of his day was willing to sacrifice all his advantages, counting them but refuse, and to cast away all his brilliant prospects, saying, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord" (Phil. 3:8).

So that my estimate of my own attainments was altogether wrong; and the actual truth was that, in comparison with the simplest of those who had knowledge of Jesus Christ as Savior and who confessed Him as Lord, I was but an ignoramus.

I do not remember how many times I went to these meetings before I yielded to the Spirit's influence, and I do not remember that I was conscious of any benefit from attending the meetings, which, from the ordinary standpoint, would have been pronounced decidedly dull. The crisis in my life came on the evening of May 24th, 1903, when, yielding to an inward prompting which, gentle as it was, yet overpowered all my natural reluctance and repugnance to such an act, I went forward and knelt with a few others at the front of the meeting room. I took the sinner's place, and confessed myself in need of the grace of God. A Christian man (the same who at first asked me about my soul) kneeled by me and called on the Lord Jesus to save me. Of course, the act of publicly kneeling and calling on the name of the Lord is not a necessary part of the process of conversion. There is no specified place or manner in which the gift of eternal life is received. What is necessary, however, is that one should believe God, first as to the fact that he is a sinner and can do nothing for himself; and second, that Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the Eternal Son of God, is the Sin-Bearer for all who believe on Him - "Who was delivered for our offenses, and raised again for our justification" (Rom. 4:25).

I did not know the nature of what was happening, for I did not believe in sudden conversions. I supposed that a change of nature, if it occurred at all, must be very gradual - an "evolution," in fact. But my ignorance of the process did not stand in the way of the mighty power of God, acting in grace, to quicken me into new life (Eph. 1:19; 2:5). I called upon the name of the Lord, with a deep conviction of sin in my heart, and that was enough.

**"IF ANY MAN BE IN CHRIST, HE IS A NEW CREATURE"**

In the years that have elapsed I have come to a better understanding of the tremendous change which took place that night - though only in eternity will I fully comprehend it. Certainly it was life from the dead. Spiritual things from that moment became realities, and took a place in my thought and consciousness. The things that once had a hold upon me began to lose their attraction. I soon learned by a happy experience that if a man be in Christ, there is a new creation - an entirely new environment - that old things have passed away, and all things have become new; and that all things are of God (2 Cor. 5:17, 18). In a very short time the habits of my life, as well as the occupations of my heart and mind, underwent a great change. The habit of daily Bible reading, and of morning and evening prayer, was immediately established. Often previously I had tried to pray, as I felt the pressure of misery and distress of mind; and innumerable times both publicly and privately, I had "said my prayers;" but it was not praying, for I was in unbelief. I did not believe the Word of God, but criticized and rejected it. I did not believe in the virgin birth of our Lord, nor in His vicarious death, nor in His physical resurrection. The doctrine of His blood-shedding for the sins of others, and of His being made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor. 5:21) I regarded as unphilosophical and unworthy of belief. The only God I knew was the god of materialism, a creature of man's vain imagination. I had no knowledge of "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

**DOUBTS AND DIFFICULTIES SWEPT AWAY**

Perhaps the most wonderful change which was manifest to my consciousness, when my mind began to resume its normal activity and to inquire into what had happened, was this, that all my doubts, questionings, skepticism and criticism concerning God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, concerning the full inspiration accuracy and authority of the Holy Scriptures as the incorruptible Word of God, concerning the sufficiency of Christ's atonement to settle the question of sin, and to provide a ground upon which God could, in perfect righteousness, forgive and justify a sinner, and concerning an assured salvation and perfect acceptance in Christ, were swept away completely. From that day to this I have never been troubled by doubts of God and His Word.

**"IF THOU SHALT BELIEVE IN THINE HEART"**

This experience is to me, and will be to anyone who reflects upon it, very wonderful and impressive. I had no notion at all that intellectual difficulties and questionings could be removed in any way except by being answered, one by one, to the intellectual satisfaction of the person in whose mind they existed. But my doubts and difficulties were not met in that way. They were simply removed when I believed on the Crucified One, and accepted Him as the Christ of God, and as my personal Savior.

The explanation of this is that the seat of unbelief is not in the head, but in the heart (Rom. 10:9). It is the will that is wrong; and the bristling array of doubts and difficulties which spring up in the mind are mere disguises and pretexts supplied by the enemy of souls, behind which the unbelieving heart tries to shelter itself and to justify its unbelief.

This is the explanation of those words of our Lord, who knew what was in man, "Ye will not come to Me that ye might have life" (John 5:40).

It is man's unbroken and unyielded will that prevents him from coming to the Fountain of eternal life and receiving that unspeakable gift of God. And this, too, is why it is written, "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness" (Rom. 10:9). The natural mind is the congenial breeding place of doubts and questionings, and (as it deems these to be of great importance) it supposes that these must be dealt with seriatim. The natural man knows nothing about being "transformed by the renewing of the mind" (Rom. 12:2), and he "receives not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:14). But when the heart, the center of man's being, that inmost place to which God alone has access, is persuaded, the whole man is changed, and the mind likewise renewed and purged of its pestilential brood of doubts and reasonings.

Therefore, what had previously held me back from accepting the salvation that is freely offered through Christ Jesus was not the brood of doubts and reasonings with which my head teemed. In supposing that the difficulty lay there I was miserably deceived, as are myriads of others "in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should dawn upon them" (2 Cor. 4:4, R.V.). God took no notice at all of the questionings of my puny mind, which seemed to me very formidable and worthy of the most respectful consideration. He dealt with them according to His own sovereign will and removed them in a moment. This was not difficult at all to Him who "taketh up the isles as a very little thing."

Hence the stupendous change, whereby one dead in trespasses and sins is quickened together with Christ (Eph. 2:5), is not accomplished through any process of reasoning, nor is it the outcome of any process of development. It is the immediate and mighty work of God - "the working of His mighty power which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places" (Eph. 1:19, 20); and it is a work which is done instantly in them that believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

I should, of course, be wholly at a loss to interpret this experience but for the Scriptures; and thereby the Divine authorship of these is further confirmed. In the light of the Scriptures it is easy to see that what had occurred was an in-wrought conviction produced by the Holy Spirit, the One now ministering in the world, testifying of a risen, ascended and glorified Christ, at the right hand of God, and convicting of sin, of righteousness and of judgment.

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee; because he trusteth in Thee" (Isa. 26:3). Another marked result of believing "the witness of God which He hath testified of His Son" (1 John 5:9) has been the complete deliverance from the spells of mental depression, which were rapidly developing into a state of settled melancholia, or what is called "nervous prostration," from which so many are suffering in these, times of high pressure, and concerning the cause of which they are totally ignorant. The mind cannot be kept in perfect peace that is "stayed" upon material and perishing things. It is manifestly a satisfactory and sufficient explanation of peace of mind that it is "stayed" upon the unchangeable God. This deliverance from mental depression was not immediate, for I did not learn at once to stay my mind on Him; but the change began immediately and progressed until settled peace became the normal mental condition.

I have learned, in a word, that the redemption that is in Christ Jesus covers and meets all the consequences of sin whether manifested in soul, or mind, or body. Our salvation is of the Lord and is for the whole man, "spirit, soul and body."

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts 16:31). Within two months from the event related above (which, by the way, through timidity and fear of comment and ridicule I tried to keep as much as possible to myself) I was put in a position where I was compelled to open my lips to a beloved member of my own family, suffering as I could plainly see, from what had formerly oppressed me, and to preach Christ for the first time. What effort the delivery of this sermon cost me cannot be described. It consisted of these words: "What you need is the Lord Jesus Christ;" and after their utterance the preacher had not another word to say, and the only visible result was a very awkward and constrained silence. Yet this simple, clumsily given testimony, together with some verses of Scripture read at random, were used by the Spirit of God to quicken another dead soul. There were yet two more of the household to be brought to a knowledge of Christ, but it was not long before these likewise, and without any pressure from us, accepted Christ, and were translated out of darkness into His marvelous light.

"The path of the righteous is as the dawning light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Prov. 4:18, R.V.). It was a great and wonderful surprise to us to find that there was such a thing as an assurance of salvation, with immediate and unmistakable blessings given to believers as an earnest and first-fruits of the inheritance of the saints. All our previous theological instruction had been to the effect that if one lived "a good Christian life" (which many deluded souls are trying to do before they have got it) he might possibly be saved hereafter, but that there was no certainty for anybody until the "day of judgment."

But even greater surprises awaited us. Blessed as it is to know upon the evidence of Christ's own statement, prefaced by His "Verily, verily, I say unto you," that He who hears His Word and believes on Him who sent Him has everlasting life and shall not come into judgment, but is passed from death unto life (John 5:24), there was much more to follow. God's goodness toward us did not stop at revealing the truth as to our acceptance in Christ and our consequent eternal security. He led us to see that it was our duty and privilege to take at once the place of rejection with Christ, who has been cast out of this age and all of its affairs and enterprises, the rulers (or leaders) of this age having crucified the Lord of Glory (1 Cor. 2:8). He showed us that Christ had given Himself for our sins for the express purpose "that He might deliver us from this present evil age" (Gal. 1:4); and that His will for the redeemed of this age is that they should go forth "unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach" (Heb. 13:13).

The camp is, superficially at least, an attractive place, full of gaiety and revelry, with every possible device to delight the eye and gratify the mind of the flesh. By keeping the bright things as much as possible in evidence, and pushing the wretchedness, suffering and misery into the background, the camp manages to keep up appearances, particularly as its occupants are quite willing to be deceived, and are pretty well agreed that it is the duty of every dweller therein to be an "optimist." Having led the Christ of God outside the gate, and put Him to death, the leaders of this "present evil age" have devoted their great talents and energies, under the superb direction and management of the "god of this age," to the one object of making such "progress," and developing such a glorious "civilization," as will demonstrate that the world has no need of Christ. In carrying out this great undertaking the "leaders of this age" are sufficiently astute to provide a place inside the camp even for those "who profess and call themselves Christians," making them welcome in the world, and even giving them positions of prominence therein, upon the single easy condition that they will accept the age's gospel of progress, and subscribe heartily to the doctrine that "the world is getting better every day." This condition the aforesaid "Christians" are for the greater part quite ready, not only to accept, but even to make it an article of religion, changing the Scriptures so far as necessary to that end.

**"YE ARE COMPLETE IN HIM" (COL. 2:10)**

The Lord has further shown us that, so far from finding it a deprivation to withdraw ourselves from the pursuits and amusements of the camp and from its godless mirth, which is as the crackling of dry thorns under a pot, we have in fact gained unspeakably thereby. The new interests which now occupy us (having to do with Him in whose presence is fullness of joy, and at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore,) are far more satisfying, and contribute far more real gratification than all the things in which, for want of knowledge of something better, we used to be interested, and in the pursuit of which we spent our time and money. It seems, humanly speaking, impossible to make our friends and associates in the old life understand that we have not suffered any deprivations whatever. "Having the understanding darkened," they can only see the worthless things which we have cast aside, and can take no cognizance of the riches of grace and glory which the believer in Christ has, "in whom it hath pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell" (Col. 1:19). It is as if a beggar were given, through kingly munificence, a suit of rich apparel, and should hasten to put it on, joyfully casting aside the rags with which he was previously clad, and some onlookers, likewise clad in dingy garments, should be able to see only the discarded rags, and should thereupon hasten away clasping their own rags tightly around them for fear a like experience might befall them.

**"IF I GO, I WILL COME AGAIN" (JOHN 14:3)**

The Lord has also enabled us to look beyond "this present evil age," of which Satan is the god, to the age that is soon to come, in which Christ will return to earth, and all His redeemed with Him, as prophesied since Enoch's time (Jude 14; Rev. 19:11-16, etc.), and "to the times of restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:21).

But, more than that, we have been led to look, not for earthly happiness or for bliss after death, but for that event, which is nearer still, and which it is the privilege of the believer to expect at any moment, when the Lord Himself shall call upon His own to meet Him in the air (1 Thess. 4:16, 17; 1 Cor. 15:51, 52). And so the grace of God, which brings salvation, hath appeared, "teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us" (Titus 2:11-14).

This is not the teaching of the wisdom of this age, nor of the leaders of this age; nor is it the teaching of those professed ministers of Christ who have accepted the gospel of this age - the gospel of its progress and betterment; but it is the teaching of "the grace of God" and of the Word of God, and we have accepted and rejoice in it.

"Yea, and all that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." It would not be a truthful representation of the matter to make it appear that there have been no unpleasant experiences attending and resulting from this departure from our old ways and entering upon "the one true and living way." There has been, of course, much adverse comment, much irritation, much hostility aroused, we have heard many references to "self-righteousness," "fanaticism," and the like. To desert the ways of the world is, of course, to condemn those ways; and they who are walking in them cannot be expected to take it kindly. They turn away exclaiming, " 'Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?' (2 Kings 5:12). Then why this narrow-mindedness and bigotry?" And, as might also be expected, the greatest resentment of our conduct has been aroused in those who, while professing to belong to Christ, are casting their lot indiscriminately with them who openly reject Him.

This, of course, we can endure patiently, because He said, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you" (John 15:18); and the more so, because we know that those who cherish and display such feelings do it in ignorance of the truth. We remember that we were, and not so very long ago, in precisely the same darkness, and that it required the power and grace of God to let the light into our darkened minds. We know, too, that we can help these precious souls for whom Christ died, only by maintaining our separated path, and by praying that the scales may fall from their eyes also, that they may see what is the true "course of this world" (Eph. 2:2), of which its leaders are so boastful, and where it will inevitably carry them who pursue it to the end; and above all may see that there is eternal life only in Christ and through faith in His atoning sacrifice and in His resurrection from among the dead (Rom. 10:9; Acts 17:3; Rom. 4:24, 25; 1 Cor. 15:1-4 and 13, 19, etc.).

"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36).