

# “AS THE SMALL RAIN”

by

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## CHAPTER FOUR

### “BECAUSE I LIVE, YE SHALL LIVE ALSO”

(John 14:19)

#### CONTRASTS OF THE CHRIST

IT IS impossible to imagine any contrasts more definite than those which the Scripture makes between what the Lord Jesus Christ was and what He became.

*He was God.* John tells us, “**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God**” (John 1:1). *He became man.* “**For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham**” (Hebrews 2:16). The most high God, the Creator of all things, took upon Himself the form of man, the creature.

*He was the Lord of life.* He “**became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross**” (Philippians 2:8).

*He was the Master and Lord of the universe.* “**By him all things consist**” (Colossians 1:17). But, He who was the Master became the servant. “**The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister**” (Matthew 20:28).

*He was rich.* All the riches of creation were His. John says, “**Thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created**” (Revelation 4:11). But, “**though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich**” (II Corinthians 8:9). He walked the earth without a home or any possessions aside from the garments which He wore.

*He was altogether lovely,* the “**rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys**” (Song of Solomon 2:1), the fairest of ten thousand to the soul. But on the cross He became misshapen and horribly marred. “**His visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men**” (Isaiah 52:14), and Isaiah spoke prophetically of His terrible appearance in the hour of crucifixion when he wrote, “**He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him**” (Isaiah 53:2).

What amazing contrasts! But no more amazing than the contrast of the hatred of sinful man for Him and His love for sinful man.

Because He loved man, Christ became man, laid aside His glory, became poor, suffered death upon the cross. He, the God who loved so greatly the creatures which He made, was rejected and spurned and crucified by the very ones He came to save.

**“Unto you is born this day a Saviour,”**  
Which is Jesus Christ, the wondrous Lord;  
Not a “teacher,” not a “good example,”  
But the Son of God, the Living Word.

No “philosopher,” his fancies weaving,  
Warp of dreams and woof of visions vast,  
Not a “prophet,” peering down the future,  
Not a “scholar,” delving in the past.

**“Unto you is born this day a Saviour.”**  
Shine, O star! and shout, O angel voice!  
Unto you this precious gift is given;  
Sing, O earth! and all ye heavens, rejoice!

Long the world has waited such a Saviour,  
Sunk in sin and torn by fear and doubt;  
Long in darkness groped for truth and wisdom;  
Glory, glory, now the light shines out!

**“Unto you is born this day a Saviour.”**  
Earth’s one hope, the Life, the Truth, the Way;  
Mighty God and glorious Redeemer,  
Jesus Christ the Lord is born today.

— Annie Johnson Flint

## **CORDS OF LOVE**

IT WAS Robert E. Lee who said, “Duty is the sublimest word in the English language.” But though her name may be sublime, Duty’s demands may be harsh and burdensome. “Must” is an unpleasant word. It sometimes speaks of harsh necessity. Jesus Christ said, **“The Son of man must be lifted up”** (John 12:34). God’s Son must be nailed to the cross. Yet there was no drawing back from the obligation, no shirking the necessity.

- He must be lifted up because He loved, and love, eager to save poor sinners, made His death necessary.
- He must die because He loved. His submission to the will of God and His love for men were tangent at the cross.
- Not only in obedience to God’s will, but also impelled by His love for sinners, He must die.

Christ's death fulfilled the prophecies of the Old Testament, but Jesus did not have to die because prophets had foreseen His death. The prophets foretold His death upon the cross because He must die upon the cross. Jesus Christ was as a "**Lamb slain from the foundation of the world**" (Revelation 13:8).

In obedience to the will of the Father and because He loved men and willed to redeem them He must die. He had to die. It was necessary that the Son of Man be lifted up because the Son of Man came into the world to save sinners, and He must go to the cross to do the work of salvation. Because He was God, and God is love, He had to suffer.

He went to the cross willingly. He was bound to the tree not by the nails which impaled Him upon the beam. The God who hid in the earth the iron from which the nails were forged and made the tree of the cross grow from its seed could not have been held by the nails upon the wood against His will. He was bound there by the cords of His own divine love. He gave His life. No man took it from Him (John 10:18).

Thy habitation is eternity,  
Oh, high and holy One, who fillest space,  
Yet Thou didst deign to leave Thine own abode  
And make with sinful man Thy dwelling place.  
Thou, everlasting Father, Prince of Peace,  
To fleeting days and constant strife came down.

And Thou didst walk with men and share their toil,  
And feel their weariness and shed their tears;  
Thou, mighty Counsellor, didst speak Thy words  
Of heaven's wisdom unto foolish ears;  
And Thou wast patient with their ignorance,  
Their stubbornness, their pride, their unbelief;  
Thou who art Life didst yield Thyself to death,  
Thou, pure and sinless, hung beside a thief.

— Annie Johnson Flint

## **GOD OR NOT GOOD**

UPON what charge was Jesus Christ sentenced to death; for what crime was He crucified? The answer is quite plainly stated in the Gospels; for making Himself equal with God, for claiming to be the Son of God.

The Jewish priests and the leaders of the people hated Christ because of His influence over the common people. They were jealous of His popularity. Their antagonism against Him was aroused because His holy eyes detected the hypocrisy of their own evil hearts and in words of truth and power He denounced them.

They were determined to get rid of Him and in a trial which was one long mockery, He whose death they had predetermined upon was sentenced to die.

Either Jesus Christ is the Son of God or He was a fraud and an impostor and a blasphemer. The charges against Him were true. He had claimed to be God's Son. He identified Himself with the great God of eternity when He took to Himself the Name of the great eternal I AM, saying, "**Before Abraham was, I am**" (John 8:58).

Seated at the well of Samaria and talking to the woman of Sychar about the Messiah that was to come, He declared, "**I that speak unto thee am he**" (John 4:26). Asked by the high priest at the trial, "**I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God**" (Matthew 26:63), Christ answered, "**Thou hast said,**" meaning, "*As thou hast said, I am.*"

We are faced with this alternative: either Jesus Christ is God's Son or He was a blasphemer and a man who claimed to be that which He was not. No one can say logically that Jesus was a good man and nothing more. Either He is more than a good man—the God He claimed to be—or He was a deceiver and a wicked man.

My dear Redeemer, and my Lord,  
I read my duty in Thy Word;  
But in Thy life the law appears,  
Drawn out in living characters.

Such was Thy truth, and such Thy zeal,  
Such deference to Thy Father's will,  
Such love, and meekness so divine,  
I would transcribe and make them mine.

Cold mountains and the midnight air  
Witnessed the fervor of Thy pray'r;  
The desert Thy temptations knew,  
Thy conflict and Thy victory, too.

Be Thou my pattern; make me bear  
More of Thy gracious image here;  
Then God, the Judge, shall own my name  
Among the followers of the Lamb.

— Isaac Watts

## **KING OF KINGS**

"**JESUS of Nazareth the king of the Jews.**" This title written by Pilate was nailed to the cross upon which Christ died. Pilate, evidently angered at the insistence of the Jewish leaders upon the death of Christ, and possibly ashamed of his own weakness in giving way to them, in the words

of the inscription jested at the Jews. The leaders of the people sent back a request to Pilate that the title be altered to read, “**He said, I am King of the Jews**” (John 19:21), and Pilate in his abrupt and angry reply, “**What I have written I have written,**” betrayed his motive in setting up the inscription above the head of the Crucified. He implied by his words, “**Behold this poor creature. He is a king, and over what a poor people does he reign!**” As the reed placed in His hand was a mock scepter, as the crown of thorns upon His brow was a mock diadem, so Pilate by the inscription made the cross a mock throne.

Judah rejected her King but nowhere was He more kingly than upon the cross, and because He hung there in agony He shall someday sit upon the throne of David. He who endured the cross, despising the shame, shall reign over all nations. The brow crowned with thorns shall wear a diadem. The hand that held the reed and was nailed upon a cross shall grip a rod of iron and a scepter of power. Pilate wrote more truthfully than he knew that day.

He is the King of the Jews, but the inscription was incomplete. God’s full inscription will be written on His vesture and His thigh when He comes again in power to rule not Judah alone, but all the nations of the world as “**King of kings, and Lord of lords**” (Revelation 19:16).

My God, I love Thee, not because  
I hope for heaven thereby,  
Nor yet because, if I love not,  
I must forever die.

Thou, O my Jesus, Thou didst me  
Upon the cross embrace:  
For me didst bear the nails, and spear,  
And manifold disgrace.

Then why, O blessed Jesus Christ,  
Should I not love Thee well?  
Not for the hope of winning heaven,  
Nor of escaping hell;

Not with the hope of gaining aught,  
Not seeking a reward;  
But as Thyself hast loved me,  
O ever-loving Lord!

So would I love Thee, dearest Lord,  
And in Thy praise will sing;  
Solely because Thou art my God,  
And my eternal King.

— Francis Xavier

## PERFECT OBEDIENCE

IT SEEMS strange to think of a God who is all powerful being compelled to do any certain thing. Yet the omnipotent God is by reason of His own righteousness compelled to a certain course. **“Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”** (Genesis 18:25).

- Because God is infinitely good, He cannot do evil.
- Because He is wholly righteous, God must be just.
- Because He promises, He must perform.

Jesus Christ, God’s Son, as He moved among men on several occasions, said, **“I must.”** Incarnate Deity was bound by His own perfection to do the perfect will of the Father.

Coming into Jericho one day, Jesus stopped under a sycamore tree, into which a man, **“little of stature,”** had climbed so that he might see Him over the heads of the crowd gathered around Him. Looking up, Jesus said, **“Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house”** (Luke 19:5).

Why must He? Because it was the will of the Father that Zacchaeus be saved. Jesus Christ had come into the world to save sinners. He was on His way to the cross to die for a lost world. His face was set like flint to go up to Jerusalem to die, but that day for a little while He must dine with Zacchaeus, so that Zacchaeus might feast with Him in glory.

There is no way to measure obedience.

Obedience must hold in small things as well as in great or the perfection of obedience is shattered. God’s truth is consistent in small matters as in great ones. Duty demands obedience in little tasks as well as in great deeds. Nothing is too trivial to be brought under the dominion of God’s will. The obedient man knows that God not only orders the course of his whole life, but that each step is also definitely planned and directed (Psalm 37:23).

Jesus Christ exclaimed, **“My meat is to do the will of him that sent me”** (John 4:34). Because the Father willed it, He said that day in Jericho, **“Zacchaeus . . . I must abide at thy house.”**

When mother-love makes all things bright,  
When joy comes with the morning light,  
When children gather round their tree,  
Thou Christmas Babe,  
We sing of Thee!

When manhood’s brows are bent in thought,  
To learn what men of old have taught,  
When eager hands seek wisdom’s key,  
Wise Temple Child,  
We learn of Thee!

When doubts assail and perils fright,  
When, groping blindly in the night,  
We strive to read life's mystery,  
Man of the Mount,  
We turn to Thee!

When shadows of the valley fall  
When sin and death the soul appall,  
One light we through the darkness see,  
Christ on the Cross,  
We cry to Thee!

And when the world shall pass away,  
And dawns at length the perfect day,  
In glory shall our souls made free,  
Thou God enthroned,  
Then worship Thee!

— Tudor Jenks

## REMEMBERING OTHERS

THE character of our Lord Jesus Christ is nowhere more perfectly demonstrated than on the cross. He who died for sinners did not even in suffering on Calvary forget His own. He made provision for His mother and His friend, and what a tender provision it was! He had nothing on earth to give them. He died without property or possession.

- Though He made all things, He had no lands to leave.
- Though He, in creation, had hidden the gold in the hills, He died without money.

Even His robe had been taken from Him and the soldiers were casting lots for it in the shadow of the cross. He had nothing of material value to leave to His mother and not even a keepsake to bequeath to His friend, so He gave them to each other—to the heartbroken mother, a son, upon whom the affection of a mother's heart could be lavished; to John, a mother, whose heart was capable of all the devotion a mother possesses.

His divine compassion showed itself in His prayer for those who crucified Him. “**Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do**” (Luke 23:34). His enemies, His tormentors, His persecutors came within the embrace of His divine compassion in the prayer.

It was not until He had made provision for His loved ones and prayed for His enemies that He thought of Himself. Then He cried, “**I thirst**” (John 19:28). Only thus does He give voice to the suffering of the flesh. “**As a sheep before her shearers is dumb**” (Isaiah 53:7), so He through the trial and the agony of the past hours had opened not His mouth in complaint or protest. The incarnate God gave only this brief cry to indicate the awful suffering of His flesh.

Was there ever anguish like His anguish? Yet was there ever one who died thus? His deity was so apparent as He died that the centurion in charge of the crucifixion was compelled to cry out, **“Truly this man was the Son of God”** (Mark 15:39).

O love divine, that stoop'd to share  
Our sharpest pang, our bitt' rest tear,  
On Thee we cast each earth-born care,  
We smile at pain while Thou art near.

Tho' long the weary way we tread,  
And sorrow crown each ling' ring year,  
No path we shun, no darkness dread,  
Our hearts still whisp'ring, “Thou art near.”

When drooping pleasure turns to grief,  
And trembling faith is chang'd to fear,  
The murm'ring wind, the quiv'ring leaf,  
Shall softly tell us Thou art near.

On Thee we fling our burd'ning woe,  
O love divine, forever dear,  
Content to suffer, while we know,  
Living and dying, Thou art near.

— Oliver W. Holmes

### **“IF’S” AND “BUT”**

IF CHRIST be not risen from the dead, we can put no faith in the Bible as the true Word of God. If He be not risen, then Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are all dealers in falsehood, and Paul is a deceiver and not to be trusted, for all these **“have testified of God that he raised up Christ”** (I Corinthians 15:15).

If Christ be not risen from the dead, the preaching of the apostles was vain and empty, founded on a quicksand of deceit or misunderstanding.

If Christ be not risen from the dead, all those who have preached the Christian doctrine of the resurrection in the succeeding nineteen centuries have been deluded. They have dreamed idle dreams without foundation, and spoken words of empty beauty void of truth.

If Christ be not risen from the dead, then all the dead of all the centuries sleep a soundless sleep from which there is no awakening. The night of death will never be shattered by the dawn of the resurrection day. They have been deceived by a mirage without substance who lie down to die looking forward to a resurrection from the dead.

If Christ be not risen from the dead, no man can stand in God's sight freed from sin and a possessor of eternal life. If He be not the Lord of life returned alive from the tomb, He is a mere man, dust these many generations and unable to impart life to the dusty dead of time.

**“But now is Christ risen”** (I Corinthians 15:20).

There can be no doubt of that glorious fact. The reliable witnesses who saw Him after His resurrection, to whom He talked, who touched Him, who accepted food from His hand and ate it, give indisputable evidence that He is risen. The power of His resurrection life imparted to the lives of trusting thousands through all the years since that Easter Day attests His resurrection. **“Now is Christ risen,”** and from His lips sounds the promise of resurrection to all who die in Him. To all His own, sleeping beneath the green of earth's valleys, the snows of its hillsides or the gray waves of its oceans, He speaks, **“Because I live, ye shall live also”** (John 14:19).

I know that my Redeemer lives;  
What joy the blest assurance gives!  
He lives, He lives, who once was dead;  
He lives, my everlasting Head!

He lives, to bless me with His love;  
He lives, to plead for me above;  
He lives, my hungry soul to feed;  
He lives, to help in time of need.

He lives, to grant me daily breath;  
He lives, and I shall conquer death;  
He lives, my mansion to prepare;  
He lives, to bring me safely there.

He lives, all glory to His Name;  
He lives, my Saviour, still the same;  
What joy the blest assurance gives,  
I know that my Redeemer lives!

— Samuel Medley

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