



"MORNING STAR"

SOUTHERN MISSIONARY STEAMER.

Vicksburg, Miss., Feb. 3, 1895.

Dear Brother Freeman,--

I have your very welcome letter of Jan. 29, and will reply to it at once. When Bro. Perkins wrote some time ago that the church had met and chosen you as pastor for another year I was very glad, for I felt that it left you in position to do much good. But I see that the enemy of all souls has been on your track. Well, I knew he would be in one way or another. His kingdom is in danger, and of course he will resent it, and will do all in his power to destroy any good work that he can. I am very thankful that I had the opportunity of telling the truth to some while I was there, and that there are a few who will receive it and be firm to it. I was also very glad to know from your letter that you had finally taken your stand firmly on God's Sabbath. There is one lesson we have all got to learn. When God speaks he means it. Our circumstances and conditions are all changed by sin. But this fact does not change our relation to God. Our circumstances have nothing to do with our obedience to God's law. Our changed circumstances was what brought Christ from heaven to die for us. If our changed circumstances could have changed our duty and relation to God, then his will would have changed accordingly. And if his will could have changed, then his government would have changed to meet us in our changed, sinful condition after the fall. Then, if this could have been done, man would have been all right, and there would have been no possible necessity or excuse for Christ to come to this earth and live for us, and suffer for us, and die for us. But as God could not change, and his government could not change, and his law could not change, then the only thing that ~~can~~ could be done was for man to change from his bad circumstances, and from his sin and from breaking the law of God, and for him to come back to God. But man could not do this, and so the only way was for Christ to come to this earth and die for him, and live for him, and by living for him show him how it was possible for man to come back to God. The very fact that Christ did die for us is all the proof we need that God could not change, and his law could not change, but that man MUST CHANGE from his present circumstances and conditions, no matter how difficult this might be, and come square to God's way, and the full obedience to him, and the obeying of his law. Christ did not come to do away with the necessity for us to do this, but simply that a way might be opened by which it is possible for us to do it. Then let us not for one moment harbor the

thought that the way is smooth or easy, or that we can avoid or disregard one of God's commands because the observance of them makes life difficult and full of trouble. These difficulties and troubles are the sure result of sin, and we cannot swerve one hair's breadth from the line God has marked out for us on account of them. Of course the devil will make the way difficult. He has been preparing for just this time for hundreds of years. And he will make it more and more difficult as we near the end of all things. Those who are finally faithful are said to come up "through great tribulations." Will God release you, or any one else because you do not like to bear these tribulations? The way is not easy,--the road is not broad and smooth and nice to travel. Jesus said,--"Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life and FEW THERE BE THAT FIND IT." S-t-r-a-i-t- notice the spelling of that word,--It does not mean simply that it is not crooked,--It does not mean that at all. S-t-r-a-i-t means difficult, and the lesson is that they who enter will be brought into straits and difficulties. And the only hope we have when we enter it is that Jesus will go "with you all the way." I ask you to read Matthew 10, from the 16th verse through the rest of the chapter. This tells us the whole story of what must be met by those who take up the cross and follow Jesus.

And here is where I have had difficulty in the past. The angels proclaimed to the shepherds, "Peace on earth, good will toward men," when Christ was born. And yet Christ says, "I came not to send peace but a sword." How do we harmonize these two statements? The acceptance of the gospel of Jesus Christ does bring peace. Every child of God knows this. And if all would accept the "glad tidings of great joy" which the angels proclaimed to the shepherds, there would have been peace on the earth, and "good will toward men." But the devil would not have it so, and he incites wicked men to refuse the offers of the mercy of Jesus Christ, and pursue their own wicked way. And wickedness always brings trouble. It brings it in the family,---One accepts Christ and undertakes to obey God's law, and the result is that those who do not accept him become infuriated by the devil and turn against the one who has accepted him, and the peace and harmony of the family is broken up. It does not always bring this inharmony in the family, but it often does.---Now, what shall the servant of Christ do? He knows that his accepting of the obligations that come to him for obeying God will destroy the harmony of that family; but shall he swerve from duty on account of it? "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me." That is plain, isn't it? Well, the laws of the land are becoming such that persecution is again arising against those who are keeping "the commandments of God." And this will grow worse and not better. "And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child; and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death." When this stares us in the face shall we say, It is too much, God does not want me to go through all that? Christ spoke right on this point,--"He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."