



DIAMONDS IN THE ROUGH

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"Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His Name. And they shall be Mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him" - Malachi 3:16, 17.

We learn from this portion of Scripture, that God's devoted saints are called jewels - His jewels. There are seven facts here stated of them: They speak often one to another. The Lord Himself is the subject and basis of their conversation. He hears their words. A book of remembrance is written of them. They think upon His Name. They shall be His jewels in that day of His coming. They shall be spared in that day. But it is especially of these God-fearing folk as jewels, that we would interest you in this article. These shall adorn the Lord and enhance His beauty, even as natural jewels are used by their owners as adornments. Nature is full of sermons, speaking of heavenly things. Some of the choicest parables of our Lord were drawn from nature. Often the commonplace things of life abound in striking examples of this fact. Miracles are all about us if we have eyes to see. Some of the rare and choice objects of earth most desired by mankind, are found in unlikely places; as, for instance, silver, gold, and precious stones.

Geologists inform us of some of these marvelous hidden things which are intensely interesting. Clay, soot, and sand in process of time, by nature's transformation, become priceless jewels. The CLAY so radiates the sun's rays, repelling all other light, that it is transmuted into the blazing resplendent sapphire, dazzling the beholders with its beauty. It seems almost unbelievable that it has evolved from such an ordinary element; but so it is. An estimate of the value of some of these jewels is not possible; and yet they are but common clay, glorified into sparkling beauty, adorning the wealthy of the world. The SAND gives to men another priceless gem. By certain processes of natural chemistry, it arranges itself into fine parallel lines that reflect the green, blue, purple, red, and yellow rays from the sun; and, lo, we have the opal. It may require years of time ere its iridescent changing lights, the very rays of the sun, are visibly enshrined in its heart; but it will develop surely, when once begun. Then there is the SOOT, another of the ordinary, and in this case we might say the ugliest thing on earth - the blackest natural substance, which in successive stages becomes the hardest and later the most brilliant of all jewels. Its inky blackness absorbs the sun's rays and reflects its gorgeous beauty in such a transforming marvelous manner that we call that glorified charcoal a diamond. Nature is the performer of these miracles which are astounding as we meditate upon them. But we are not so intensely interested in nature's magnificent handiwork, though it is wonderful. The point to which we are leading is that if natural alchemy is such a marvelous performer, changing the basest elements of the earth into gorgeous objects of transcendent beauty, why should we marvel at the transformation of the heavenly jewels or doubt that it shall be done? If nature can perform such miracles, how much more wonderful is the work of the Divine Alchemist in the soul of man, transforming the basest metal into gold and the ugly clay and soot into glittering jewels. Through the grace of God the vilest sinner of Adam's race, coal black in his defiled natural state, may be formed into the choicest



heavenly gem.

He may even become the pearl of great price which the heavenly Merchantman came to seek. Every believer is a miracle of grace. Living stones become diamonds, if they let the great Lapidary have His way with them. There is nothing too wonderful to expect when He takes these ordinary objects into His hands. Magdalenes have become matchless jewels, and Sauls have become trophies of triumph. Let us notice the natural process whereby these stones are brought to the perfection of diamonds, and we may learn some spiritual secrets. There are four stages of the lapidarys work.

THE SEPARATING STAGE. The black charcoal is found in its rough and unlovely state, but the diamond merchant knows when he has a prospective jewel in his grasp. He realizes its worth, and also is cognizant of the course necessary to pursue before it is ready for exhibition. He separates it from its surroundings for further examination; and, with others of its kind, it is brought into the jewelers workshop. There the second stage begins. In the spiritual sense, this first stage commences as soon as a person becomes a new creation. By that very fact, he is separated from sinners and taken out from the world, and is brought into the fellowship of the saints. He is in the Divine Alchemists workshop. He does not look like a jewel yet; but, nevertheless, he is a diamond in the rough. No one would ever single him out from his former companions for any great visible change. But, the marvelous Searcher for jewels sees in him a future gem of glory and beauty, which He Himself shall make him by His work of refining and polishing. Many associations and friends are immediately given up. A divine isolation begins. Like Enoch, he quits walking with men and walks with God. As he reads the Scriptures and communes with the Lord, a work is going on in his heart. More and more the change is apparent. Fellowship with God entails separation from everything that He abominates. It is written, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" - II Corinthians 6:17, 18. When a believer yields to the separation, he is eligible for the next degree.

THE CUTTING STAGE. On the exterior of the prospective diamond, there is much excess that must be taken away. When this is done, it appears as a sacrifice of material; but it is not really so. The taking off of the unsightly outer part of the stone enhances its value. It then begins to look like a diamond. Herein is the manner of the cutting. The lapidary gets two diamonds together in the rough, and embeds them in a melted alloy in separate holders. The portion to be cut off is left exposed. Then, firmly gripping the holders as handles, he rubs the diamonds the one against the other until a facet is produced. A diamond is so hard, that only another diamond can cut it. But after the result is achieved, and the alloy is melted, the stone is again set in the holder for the grinding of another surface. The process is repeated many times for each stone, until it is ready for the next stage of which the expert cutter is the judge. In all of this procedure, we have some pregnant precious lessons for the saints. God takes us up in His hand, after we have been separated from the world, and begins His work. He spares nothing of the flesh. He strips us of all excess rubbish that is a part of us, even that wherein we trusted. In our blindness, we esteemed as precious and essential much that was unsightly and ugly, hiding the true beauty and brilliancy of His stones. Therefore, the heavenly Lapidary the expert Workman, allows saints to cut one another. He actually uses them for this very



purpose; often joining together a couple in wedlock, business, or in the assembly, that one may do the cutting on the other. The more we love, the deeper the cutting. Sometimes one takes all the rough edges off the other, rounding the diamond off smoothly, while he himself is not touched. A certain man who was persecuting and thereby cutting his wife and hurting her deeply but, nevertheless, making her thus to shine, said, "You must hate me." She gently replied, "Oh, no! You keep me on my knees."

It seems, in some cases, a waste of much good material in the natural; but the Lord knows best. He makes no mistakes. Though we cry, "Ouch," over and over, He does not let go of us. He wants perfect jewels, and insists on the cutting, regardless of our feelings in the matter; and, we must yield, if we have purposed in our hearts to be all that He has planned us to be. There must be cooperation. The Lord will give us time to count the cost. But, after we have decided to let Him have His way with us, there is no going back on the agreement. He holds us to that purpose. We may wiggle and wriggle and endeavor to get loose of His grasp; but it is no use. We must surrender our will to His, and let Him decide as to the amount of cutting that is necessary. It is no use to squirm and cry and insist that we have had as much as we can stand; for He is the Judge and knows all that we can bear. He will not let the shaving exceed the necessary limit; neither will He let go of us until we are ready for the next stage. The more quickly we yield to His will in the stripping, the more of our unsightly self we let Him deliver us from, the happier we will be. He can make us humble. He will cut and trim off here and there, and it will hurt us deeply. But when He is through, He will have the true gem in His Master-Hand; and that glittering stone will reflect His own glory, the glory shining in the face of Jesus Christ.

Many times saints blame the other diamond that the Lord uses to cut them. They do not see the Workman back of the instrument for the development of His jewels. He desires the best; therefore, He puts His most painstaking work on those who have yielded for the greatest place. They suffer far more than ordinary Christians, even as the rarest stones in the natural receive the deepest cutting. The more valuable they are, the more work put upon them. When the lapidary is convinced that the stones are cut sufficiently on all the surfaces, he throws them into the fire to melt the alloy and release the diamonds. But that does not hurt the real stones in the natural, nor in the spiritual. It is written, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee" - Isaiah 43:2. The Hebrew boys in the furnace of fire are an illustration of this victory. They only had their trappings of bondage burned away; they were visible as real diamonds, even as the stones in the natural. It is the fiery trial which tests the metal. That which is false and spurious is evident, and is cast away. Only the real stands the fire. Many times, the diamonds are put again into holders. Corners are found that need cutting, and the process is repeated. The grinding of the surface is nerve-racking; nevertheless, it is necessary, or the Lord would not allow it to continue. To live with other Christians in certain environments appears torture; but we get into these places and cannot release ourselves. We are cut and cut again, and we pray, "O Lord, get me out of this place. I can never have the victory until You deliver me." Often we endeavor to get out, and apparently succeed for a time; but, "he who fights and runs away, will live to fight another day." That is a worldly slogan; but it is fitting in a spiritual sense also.

Witness Jonah. Though in his case it was more in his call to service, yet the principle is



the same. When God begins something, He finishes it. His handiwork is perfect. Elijah, the dear faithful servant of the Lord, ran away apparently from another impending trial; but that was not the real cause of his discouragement. He was bewildered at the turn of events. He had brought the rain, after a strenuous time of testing and prayer. In answer to his faith the heavens were opened, and he expected a revival. It was for this that he had made supplication; therefore, he was sure it was coming. For this he had suffered seven years; and now the result was disappointing. Jezebel swears to take his life. Neither she nor Ahab were repentant, and Elijah wanted to die. He was through, he felt. His dream of his beloved people Israel's return to Jehovah, was fading away. What was the use of carrying on? Life was over for him. He had no spirit left. He fell under a juniper tree, and wished it was all over. But God was not through with Elijah. He had taken him up in His hands. He was one of His jewels. He was loyal and true; no counterfeit or spurious gem was he. Jehovah was the Workman, the Master. He might allow His servant to be disillusioned and discouraged here; but he would not be disappointed in eternity. He would be all that the Lord had purposed him to be one of the rarest and most beautiful of His jewels, adorning Him for the ages. He and all His precious stones must abide in His hand and let Him finish His work. See what He had purposed for His servant. Elijah would have missed that translation ride to glory, if the Master had let him have his own way. Throughout eternity, the saints will praise the heavenly Lapidary that he would not let them choose their own way, but that He chose for them.

THE RUBBING STAGE. After the lapidary has finished the cutting, the stones being in a satisfactory condition according to his mind, he begins the third step. It is the polishing stage, without which the stone would lack the luster and brilliancy which is its chief charm. The resplendent rays of light - blue, white, dazzling beams - are enhanced by this process. It would seem that the cutting would be enough to glorify that diamond; but the Workman knows His business. He desires more beauty to be seen in some jewels than in others. The filing must go on. If that stone could speak, it might object some; but the work would continue until the lapidary was fully satisfied. In this stage, the stone is taken in one hand and the file in the other; and putting the stone close to his ear, the craftsman scrapes the file across the cuttings which have been made. He realizes exactly how much pressure to put upon it; and, as the diamond is harder than the file, it can stand it and not break. The sound tells the story. He knows by it, how near to perfection the stone is, how Pure a diamond he has in his grasp. Looking at this stage from the spiritual plane, we learn precious lessons of vital import to our Christian growth, perfection, and beauty. God will draw the file of affliction across our lives; and the sound He hears determines His further work in our lives. It declares how near we are like the Christ, the standard Gem. If our character spiritually is fully formed, the sound will declare it. If there is an "ouch" heard occasionally, a whimper of self-pity, a groan of despair, a murmur of resentment, the work is not finished.

There were two pure and apparently perfect gems in the Philippi prison. With backs bleeding and feet bound in stocks, they were heard praying and praising God at midnight. The response to God's filing was the sweetest of music in His ears. They were two heavenly jewels; and the Divine Lapidary was well pleased with His work.

Paul had been called to minister to the Gentiles the Gospel of God's grace, and to appear before kings and governors of the earth. And, lo, he is cast into jail in the first European



city he visits. He could have reasonably said, "Perhaps God has not called me to preach. Here I am in prison, when I ought to be out preaching this marvelous message of love to thousands. What is the matter anyway? I do not understand God's ways. This is very strange." No, he did not so foolishly reason nor argue. At midnight, speaking of the darkest hour, he and Silas are found rejoicing and praising God for bleeding backs and numbed and aching limbs. They turned that jail into a glorious house of worship, and later souls were saved. God had drawn His file over their lives, in the most strenuous way; and it proved that the gems were of the finest quality. He was listening close. His polishing must be perfect, for they were special treasures. The Apostle Paul went through more filing, more rubbing, more polishing. That was not the end. We read of the process which continued for years - II Corinthians 11:12. Paul was tested in every conceivable way. He suffered famine. He was persecuted often, from not only sinners but also from false brethren. He was beaten with stripes. Days and nights he spent in the deep, apparently forgotten of God and man. He spent years in prison in Rome. Imagine such filing, to a sensitive spiritual soul like Paul's! It was anguish unspeakable; but you listen in vain for any complaint. He writes to the Philippians where he first landed in jail from his later prison in Rome, "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need" - Philippians 4:12. He had learned, being instructed by the file in the hand of the Master, to praise God in every circumstance of his life. Years of rubbing and chiseling are counted as a little moment, in view of the great eternal values that are before him. The Lord, the Master Lapidary, can find no rasping sound in that priceless jewel. From his barren lonely cell in Rome, his words are triumphant and victorious, "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice" - Philippians 4:4. That was written at the very moment that the Workman was drawing His file across that wondrous gem in apparently a most cruel way. He executed the best and most perfect work on that stone. It was the choicest gem of this age found without a flaw. He has a permanent and precious setting for this jewel. The stone must get this setting, or its beauty and brilliancy are not seen to perfection.

THE SETTING STAGE. After the lapidary has separated the stone, put it into facets of beauty, polished and rubbed until it is dazzling and resplendent, he mounts it in a superb setting suitable for a jewel of its price and purpose. This is generally conceded to be its permanent place; though it might be and often is removed, because of circumstances or the desire of the owner. But, in the spiritual, it is not so. The setting of Jehovah's jewels is eternal. There is nevermore a change. The Lord went to prepare abiding places for His precious stones. He has bestowed much labor upon them before they reach their eternal place. Their mounting in glory, from which not one of these precious stones will ever be removed, must be every whit in harmony with what they have become by the different processes through which they have passed.

The heavenly Lapidary has prepared rare and lovely mountings and beautiful settings, for these matchless gems which here allowed Him to work in their lives. These are not ordinary stones, but extraordinary ones. Not every Christian can be so designated. The majority will not stand the testing, the suffering, the separation, the cutting, the rasping file, the polishing - these are too rough and hard for their sensitive nerves. They are too delicate for the strenuous workmanship required. They want an easy way. Hence, the



heavenly Alchemist cannot transform them into the perfection that others achieve, because they refuse. These jewels will not be seen upon the crown which will adorn the head of the great Ruler of the realm of the universe - heaven and earth.

Remember, these jewels will reflect the beauty of Jesus. They will be lifted up to their exalted places, not for their great doings nor for their medals for good behavior, but because they shine in brilliancy like Himself. They yielded to the great Lapidary, who knew how to work and transform living stones into glorious gems like unto the Star of the morning. This is the Sun of Righteousness, who shall arise with healing in His wings and lighten the world and dispel the night of sorrow and gloom with His beaming rays of light. He will brighten the world. The natural sun will hide away, as it were, in His Presence. His precious jewels will all have been gathered - great and small radiant luminaries; they will glisten and gleam, adorning His Person, and will be exhibited wherever He is seen. Wondrous prospect! Wondrous privilege to let Him make them all that He has planned that they shall be in that coming Day of Glory. Words are feeble to express all that we see in the future for His jewels. It is too wonderful for us.

His grace is sufficient, no one can exhaust it;
Be strong in that grace abundant and true,
Draw largely, continually out of His fullness;
His grace shall be always sufficient for you.
Those who bless God in their trials
Will be blest by God through their trials.
As long as I keep my face toward the light,
The shadows will fall behind me.