

# A Line of Distinction till Jesus Comes

Pastor Jack Jones

page 1

I want to assure you this morning that Jesus is coming again, and He's coming very soon! That's the Christians' blessed hope! But I can also assure you that He's coming "to receive unto Himself" only those who have become like Him in character, and that must happen before He comes! In **1 John 3:2** it says, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be (what?) like him; for we shall see him as he is." When Jesus comes He's not going to wave a magic wand over us and change our characters, we must already be like Him when He arrives. If we're not like Him when He comes, we will be destroyed, because **Hebrews 12:29** says, "our God is a consuming fire." It's not possible to live in His presence unless all sin has been rooted out of our lives. If we have sin within when Jesus returns, we'll be destroyed. Not very pleasant to think about I know, but true, nonetheless.

And so, developing a Christlike character is the most important thing to be accomplished in this life, because "a character formed according to the divine likeness is the only treasure that we can take from this world to the next." **Christ's Object Lessons, page 332.** We're not taking these old bodies, aren't you thankful? We're going to get new ones! No more aches and pains, no more growing old, no more disease, no more tiredness. Are you looking forward to it? And are you preparing for that great day? If our character is the only thing we're taking from this world to the next, then it follows that it has to be the most important thing, wouldn't you agree?

I would say that most of those who call themselves Christians today don't understand this all-important principle, because the majority believe that since by faith alone we become partakers of the grace of Christ, the kind of character we form has nothing to do with our salvation. But we need more than justification; we must also be sanctified. We need more than forgiveness; we must have holiness of heart and life. And then there are some who believe they must save themselves by their own good works, but either way Satan wins. But despite these false ideas, according to **Revelation 12:17**, God will have a remnant in these last days who will understand that it's a cooperative effort between the human and divine. We choose to submit to the almighty God, and He supplies the power to resist temptation, that's how it works! That's how it worked in Jesus' life. Even He had to develop a perfect character by the things He suffered, according to **Hebrews 5:8, 9**, in order to be our example, and He did it by relying upon a power outside of Himself. He was in perfect submission to His Heavenly Father and thus the Holy Spirit was given to empower Him to victory. And if we follow His example, victory will be ours as well, because it's a formula that cannot fail.

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Would you turn with me for just a minute to **Philippians 4:6, 7**, because there's an important point here. "Be careful (**or anxious**) for nothing (**or about nothing**); but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. (**And what will happen?**) And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall (**do what?**) keep (**or guard**) your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." If we follow this prayer blueprint, our heart and mind will be kept back from sin. By following this kind of prayer, you will be following the example of Jesus, which is another way to help us become like Him, because this is the way He prayed.

So yes, if we follow Christ's example in all things, victory will be ours, because it's a formula that cannot fail; however, it's not an easy formula to follow, why? Because we have this fallen flesh to contend with, and it's not happy unless it's satisfied, and the problem with that is that it's never satisfied. Our fallen flesh is like a bad drug habit. The more we indulge in sin, the more it wants to be indulged, and the deeper we go into a perverted lifestyle. Have you discovered that? And as a result, we can get in a vicious cycle that becomes more and more difficult to stop. And if we don't get a handle on it, we will end up committing the unpardonable sin.

No, to attain perfection of character is not an easy matter, because a Christ-like character is not inherited from our parents or any previous relative, nor does it come to us by accident. A Christ-like character is earned by individual effort through the merits and grace of Christ. You see, even though God gives the power, through faith we must choose to avail ourselves of that power, and as we choose, the character is formed. Hard, stern battles with self will have to be fought, and we'll have to criticize ourselves closely to become Christ-like, and not allow even one unfavorable trait to remain uncorrected if we would be like Him when He comes. Jesus didn't have even one unfavorable trait, and if we would be like Him, the same holds true for us. (**Christ's Object Lessons, page 331**)

You see, we're painting our own portrait by the choices we make; we make ourselves who we are. So, if you don't like yourself, whose fault is it? We can't blame our parents, our siblings, our spouse, or even our circumstances. When we point our finger at someone or something else for our shortcomings, guess what? We have three others pointing back at numeral uno, don't we? If we choose not to overcome sin, then we will not overcome, it's as simple as that! And if we don't think we have to, we won't. The real problem is that human beings are not willing to let go of an unsanctified heart and they're unwillingness to submit to the control of God. Self wants to be in control of self, which is a recipe for failure by the way. And so, no submission, no power; no power, no character formed in righteousness.

A Christ-like character is the result of self-discipline, of the subjection of the sinful nature to the divine nature; the flesh to the Spirit; the carnal mind to the mind of Christ. The lower nature that's moved by feeling, must be brought into subjection to the higher nature that is moved by principle, and it's principle, as opposed to feeling that I'd like to dwell upon this morning, because our salvation depends upon our acting from principle, serving God from principle, not from feelings, not from impulse. **Testimonies For the Church, volume 1, page 698.**

We cannot allow our emotions to dictate what we do, what we say, or how we believe if we would become like Christ. And so, salvation depends upon acting from principle regardless of how we feel. Now, in a religious sense a principle is defined as "a truth that serves as a rule of action." In other words, a principle is an important point that we are to fix in the mind and then make choices that harmonize with that principle, regardless of feeling. Does that make sense?

In the beginning of the creation of this world, God laid down a major principle of truth, and it's one that nearly all Christians overlook. And because God never changes, we know that the principles of His dealing with men are always the same. **The Great Controversy, page 343.** God's principles never change because God never changes. He's the "same yesterday, today, forever." And so, we can know for certain that this principle we will be discussing today will hold true till the end of time. In other words, God's principles are to be our principles, because His principles are the everlasting truth, proclaimed in righteousness, goodness, mercy, and love. **My Life Today, page 74**

So, what is this principle? Well, the first place it's found is in **Genesis 1:4**, but we'll read **verses 1-5** to get the context. Let's see if you can catch the principle as we read. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, let there be light: and there was light. **(Verse 4)** And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day."

So, what's the principle here? God caused a division to take place between light and darkness, didn't He? In other words, He caused a separation to take place. In fact, if you read through the first chapter of Genesis, you'll discover that there was separation all through creation week. On the first day God divided light from darkness. On the second day He divided the waters that were under the firmament from the waters that were above the firmament. On the third day He divided the water from the land. On the fourth day God said, "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night."

But wait a minute, I thought God already did that on day one? Have you ever thought about that? If God separated light and darkness and day and night on the first day, then why did He create the sun moon, and stars to do the same thing on day four? Well, if you've ever wondered about that, you're not alone. For thousands of years there has been speculation by theologians as to the meaning of this because God didn't explain it. It could be that it was God's presence that made the difference between light and darkness that first day, because **1 John 1:5** says, "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." That means that darkness has to flee when God comes around. But to come to the conclusion that this is what created the division of light and darkness on day one would be speculative as well, because inspiration just doesn't say. If you have light on this question, I'd be glad to hear it, but for now we'll leave it right there.,

Then on the fifth day God separated the species, some were to live in the water, some on the land, and some in the air. On the sixth day God continued His work of separation by bringing forth the living creature **(how?)** after his kind. And of course, His crowning act was the creation of a man and a woman after His own image and likeness, setting us apart from all other creatures. And by the way, God knows the difference between a man and a woman, but those who are walking in darkness today are trying to obliterate the difference that God made at the beginning with their transgender nonsense. Did you think that our society would ever get to this point? It's crazy isn't it? But such is the day in which we live. And then on the seventh day God separated the Sabbath from the six working days and set it apart for holy use.

And so, you can't get away from this principle of separation. It's all through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. You just can't escape it, and yet many people get upset when you bring it up, and we'll find out a little later why that is.

"God saw the light, that it was **(what?)** good!" Looking at this from a spiritual point of view now, if light is good, darkness is what? It's bad or evil. God didn't say that the darkness was "good", He said the light was good. Now please, I'm not saying the dark part of the day is bad in a literal sense, although a lot of evil takes place under the cover of darkness, doesn't it? But in a spiritual sense darkness is evil, and I'd like to develop this principle a little further by reading a few verses.

**Luke 11:34-36**, "The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, **(we're not to be double minded)** thy whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, **(when it's no longer single)** thy body also is full of darkness. Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness. If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light."

**John 8:12**, "Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

In **John 12:35** Jesus said, “While you have light, believe in the light, that you may be the children of light.”

And **1 Thessalonians 5:5**, “You are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.”

In a spiritual context now, why do you suppose God commanded that there be a separation, or a division between light and darkness? Isn't it to show us that the two should not be mixed together? So that everyone could see clearly that there are only two pathways, one being light or truth, and the other being darkness or error? Yes, that's exactly why, and we'll see that clearly as we go along.

Remember what Jesus said? One pathway is straight and narrow and leads to life eternal and few there be that find it, but the other pathway is the broad road that leads to destruction and many there be that go in there at. And so, God has made a clear distinction between light and darkness so we can know exactly what pathway we're walking on. That is, if we really want to know, which will give us the opportunity then, to choose the lighted pathway instead of the dark one where all who take that road will lose their way and end up at a place they don't want to be.

Now, I want you to image that there's a line of distinction right down the middle of the room you're sitting in. On the right we have the children of light, and on the left the children of darkness. On the right we have righteousness, on the left unrighteousness. Saints on the right, sinners on the left. And we could go right on down the list. Obedience, disobedience. Christ's church, the synagogue of Satan. The Godly, the ungodly. Truth, error. Wise virgins, foolish virgins. Commandment keepers, commandment breakers. The converted, the unconverted. Clean, unclean. Believers, unbelievers. Followers of God, followers of the devil. Wheat, tares. Sheep, goats. The precious, the vile. The heavenly, the worldly. Saving faith, presumption. Apostasy and rebellion on one side, loyalty to God and His truth on the other. The fearful, the fearless. The commandments of God, the commandments of men. Liberty and freedom from sin, or bondage and captivity to sin. Purity, impurity. A firm Foundation built upon the Rock, or a foundation built upon shifting sand. A thus saith the Lord, or a thus saith man. True Protestantism, or the ecumenical movement. The faith of our pioneers as guided by the Spirit of Prophecy, or the new theology and books of a new order. The Holy Spirit, or unholy influence.

Now, maybe you can think of some other terms that describe these two groups, but I think we get the point. There's a line of distinction between the two camps, and according to **2 Corinthians 6:14-18** the condition of being received into God's family is to come out from the world and separate from its contaminating influence. It's to separate from everything on the dark side of the line because everything on the dark side is polluted and defiled by Satan.

Do you remember when the plagues fell on Egypt? The fourth plague was swarms of flies, and I want you to notice what it says in **Exodus 8:21-23**, “And the LORD said unto Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh; lo, he cometh forth to the water; and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Let my people go, that they may serve me. Else, if thou wilt not let my people go, behold, I will send swarms of flies upon thee, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people, and into thy houses: and the houses of the Egyptians shall be full of swarms of flies, and also the ground whereon they are. And I will sever in that day the land of Goshen, in which my people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there; to the end thou mayest know that I am the LORD in the midst of the earth. And I will put a division between my people and thy people: tomorrow shall this sign be.” And this division has been playing out again and again for many centuries now and will continue to do so as long as there is light and darkness.

Since we're already in Exodus, notice what it says in **chapter 10:21-23**. This is referring to the ninth plague. “And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even darkness which may be felt. And Moses stretched forth his hand toward heaven; and there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days: They saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days: but all the children of Israel had (what?) light in their dwellings.”

Also, **Exodus 11:6, 7** speaking of the tenth plague it says, “And there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there was none like it, nor shall be like it any more. But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast: that ye may know how that the LORD doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel.” And friends, God would have there be a difference between the world and modern Israel, or the church, today.

There’s much evidence in the Bible that Jesus was the God of the Old Testament, which we’re not going to go into today, but we have Him stating this same principle in the New Testament as well, because as we’ve already noticed, God doesn’t change. In **Luke 12:51** Jesus said, “Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather **(what?)** division.”

I hate to tell you this friend, but separation is going to be with us as a divine principle until the very end. I know many of you are meeting in small groups and in some cases all alone because you know it’s not safe to meet with those who are imbibing errors that are deadly poison to the soul. But just remember this, it’s better to be alone than to be influenced by those who are walking in darkness, because if we knowingly go where error is being taught just so we can have others to meet with, God will not keep us from being deceived. **Early Writings, pages 204, 205**

I don’t know about your situation, but I have close relatives that I wish I could attend church with, but I can’t, because my house is divided. Friends, we dare not go to a church where the leadership is walking in darkness and where the members follow, why? Because we would soon be walking in darkness with them, that’s how it works. So don’t mourn the fact that you’re not able to worship with a larger group of people, because the end result of going to the wrong place may very well be the loss of your soul. Besides, didn’t Jesus say, “For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.” It may seem like you’re worshipping all alone, but Jesus and the heavenly host are there with you. That’s Jesus’ promise. Never forget it; where Christ is, even among the humble few, this is His church, for its His presence alone that can constitute a church. **Upward Look, page 315**

As you read the Bible you will discover that it was Christ’s mission while here on earth to separate the pure truths of God’s word from the rubbish of custom and tradition, because light and darkness simply cannot harmonize. Between truth and error there is an irrepressible conflict, and to uphold and defend the one is to attack and overthrow the other. **Spirit of Prophecy, volume 4, page 101**

I know of those who are financially supporting a certain ministry on the right side of the line but attending meetings on the left side! Now, how much sense does that make? What are they doing when they do this? They’re supporting the light, while sitting in darkness. By their physical presence over on the one side, they are upholding and defending the one to the detriment of the other, and by their monetary support on the other side they are upholding and defending the one to the detriment of the other as well. And so, their efforts are canceling each other out, and after all is said and done, guess what? God counts them on Satan’s side, because they have not maintained that irrepressible conflict between light and darkness that must exist. I know this may be a hard pill for some to swallow, but it’s true nonetheless, and I dare not sugar coat it.

**Genesis 3:15** is clear, God has put enmity **(that is hatred. Do you hate evil, sin, darkness? Examine your own heart)** God has put enmity between the serpent and the woman, or the church, and between her seed and his seed. That means that the line of distinction must be clearly marked between the obedient and the disobedient, and an open and avowed warfare between the church and the serpent, between her seed and his seed. **Signs of the Times, May 27, 1913**

Just as there are two separate armies in this spiritual warfare we’re all involved in, so there are two battle plans. God’s battle plan is to save His people by dividing the light from the darkness, and Satan’s battle plan is to unite the two camps. Have you ever thought of it that way? What happens if Satan is allowed to cross over the line of distinction? The warfare ceases, doesn’t it? Peace begins to reign between the two camps, people fall into a sleepy Laodicean condition, and Satan wins the battle. But Christ’s church is supposed to be the church militant. We are to be at war with sin and darkness! When we become the church triumphant, then we will be the church at peace, but until then, we must wrestle

against spiritual wickedness in high places brothers and sisters; we must maintain that irrepressible conflict between the two camps.

If Satan is allowed to blur the line of distinction that we've been talking about this morning, then light and darkness would mix together, wouldn't they? Did you know that this was Satan's strategy right from the beginning of the creation of mankind? He chose to perch on the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, or we could say, the tree of light and darkness. And you know, that's what Babylon is all about. It's not complicated! Babylon is all about confusion by mixing light and darkness. And what does it say in **Revelation 18:4**? "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." If the two camps are mixed, there would no longer be two camps, but one, and this is how Satan wins.

Friends, we need to realize that Satan is a powerful general. He had long experience in the heavenly courts before he was cast out, and he knows how to mingle right sentiments and principles with evil. That's how he deceives people. He seeks to obliterate the line of demarcation between believers and unbelievers. **Review and Herald, June 4, 1901**

Yes, it's Satan's work to mingle evil with good by removing the distinction between the two, but Christ would have a church that labors to separate the evil from the good. **Bible Commentary, volume 7, page 958**

So again, Satan is attacking and trying to erase the line of distinction, but Christ's church is to labor to build it up. Our job is to keep the line between the two camps distinct.

Now, as far as light and darkness are concerned, there are three main principles that God would have us to understand. #1 Light and darkness, or truth and error, have to do with doctrine, or the things we believe. #2 Obedience and disobedience, or righteousness and unrighteousness, have to do with character development. And #3, Remaining pure and clean and godly has to do with our connection to others, be they churches, organizations, or even individuals who refuse to free themselves from falsehood. And these three principles affect every aspect of our lives. Our beliefs, our actions, and our associations, and if we want to be completely on Christ's side of the line, we must be separate from everything on Satan's side. Does that make sense? We must be free from false and fanatical doctrines, free from known sin in our character and life, and free from apostate and rebellious churches and organizations, because Christ and the devil have absolutely nothing in common. In fact, that's what Jesus said to His disciples in **John 14:30**. He said, "Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me."

Now, if Christ has nothing in common with Satan, and we belong to Christ, then it follows that we can have nothing in common with Satan either, and the prince of this world can have nothing in us. The line of distinction must have no faded-out sections or breaks in it, or we will be defiled by the devil's camp, and thus, our connection to Christ will be broken.

Now that doesn't mean we are to be like the Pharisees and wrap our robes of self-righteous around us for fear we might touch a sinner. No! We are Christ's witnesses. We have no choice but to live in the world, but we are not to be of the world.

**James 4:4** says, "friendship of the world is enmity with God; and who ever will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." How can it be any clearer! As followers of Christ, we are to separate ourselves from sinners and choose their society only when there is opportunity to do them good. We cannot be too decided in shunning the company of those who exert an influence to draw us away from God. While we pray, "Lead us not into temptation," we are to shun temptation, so far as possible. **Patriarchs and Prophets, pages 458, 459**

Now, I know there are some who might be tempted to think that this line of distinction is just made up; that God is not really that particular; that it's not God who drew this line, but man. Did God draw the line, or is it a figment of my imagination? As we've already seen, the eternal God is the One who has drawn

the line of distinction between saints and sinners, the converted and the unconverted. The two classes do not blend into each other imperceptibly, like the colors of the rainbow. They are to be as distinct as midday and midnight. **Testimonies to Ministers, page 87**

Earlier I mentioned **2 Corinthians 6:14-18**, but we didn't read it. However, I'd like to do that before we close, because it's very powerful. The apostle Paul hits it from just about every angle, and he says, in just a few words, what I've been trying to say for the last hour. Paul, writing by inspiration of the Holy Spirit says, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial (**that is the wicked**)? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 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."

You can read about this same principle in **1 Corinthians 6** as well. In fact, let's do that, shall we? **1 Corinthians 6:15, 16**, "Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ (**shall I take my body**), and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. (**You see, by attending a harlot church, you are joined to that harlot church! That's what it says!**) What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh."

It's absolutely undeniable that the God of heaven is the One that established this principle of division on the first day of creation week when He divided the light from the darkness. And yes, God Himself has drawn this line of distinction, but many of the professed followers of Christ are determined to erase it and to maintain concord between Christ and Belial. But God is the One who has made this separation, and He will have it exist. **Review and Herald, January 8, 1884**

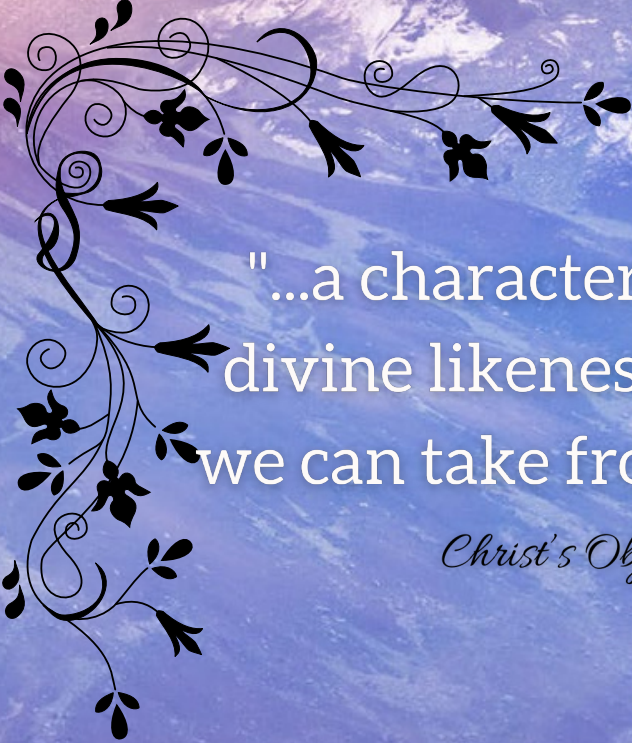
We're supposed to be like plants in the garden of the Lord, the more visible the line of distinction between the flowers of God and the briars and thorns of Satan's planting, the more the Lord is glorified. (**Are you listening?**) The more visible the line of demarcation, the more the Lord is glorified. **Spalding and Megan, page 229** Why would this be true? Because the clearer the distinction, the more like Jesus you will be, and the more perfect example you will be for others to follow, if they will, but don't be discouraged if they don't, because even Jesus didn't have 100% success in His witnessing efforts either. He was the perfect example, but not all would accept Him as Lord and Saviour. In fact, it was the few, and the same is true today.

At the beginning of our study, I told you that the principle of separation, or the dividing of light and darkness, was all through the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation. Turn with me now please to our closing text and I'll show you that this is true. **Revelation 20:9**, "And they (**all the wicked at the end of the 1000 years spoken of in verses 5-10**) And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them." That's hell fire! Which means it's not burning today. All the wicked will burn up together and they will be no more forever, and when they are burned to ashes, the fire will go out, because ashes don't burn. The wicked will be as though they had never been. That's what everyone who rejects the sacrifice of Jesus in their behalf has to look forward to, but I'd rather live on the earth made new for all eternity, wouldn't you?

Have you ever thought of the walls of the New Jerusalem as being walls of separation? That's what they are! Those in this life who have acted from divine principle and have formed their characters in righteousness, will be safe on the inside. While those on the outside, who have followed their fallen flesh and acted from feelings and impulse, will have formed their characters in unrighteousness and will be destroyed.

What group do you want to be in? Your salvation depends upon your acting from principle, serving God from principle, not from feelings, not from impulse. **Testimonies for the Church, volume 1, page 698**

**Proverbs 16:25** says, "There is a way that seems right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." And unfortunately, the majority of people have, and are, and will, follow their own way, which ends in eternal death. Don't let it be you! Stay on the right side of the line until the very end, and you will be safe.



"...a character formed according to the divine likeness is the only treasure that we can take from this world to the next."

*Christ's Object Lessons, page 332*