



BY faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. ⁹ By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: ¹⁰ For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. ¹¹ Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised. ¹² Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable. ¹³ These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. ¹⁴ For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. ¹⁵ And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. ¹⁶ But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city. ¹⁷ By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, ¹⁸ Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: ¹⁹ Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure. ²⁰ By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. ²¹ By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and

worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff. 22 By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones. 23 By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment. 24 By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; 25 Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; (Hebrews 11:8-25)

In the coastal regions of the Northwest of North America, the people owe a great debt of gratitude to that great fish which has provided for their food and livelihood over the period of their existence here on earth. Even the newcomer very soon learns to depend upon the beneficence of this sea creature – the SALMON. Though my devotion today is centered on that Northwest culture, the same is true of many different regions of the world such as Norway, Far Eastern Russia, and the Japanese Islands.

In the coastal grandeur of the Pacific Northwest lies British Columbia which is the primitive home of the Kwakiutl Indians. Curiously, these people believe an ancient myth that their tribe was founded by two brothers who survived the great flood. Their ancient village of Quee is situated in an area graced with profound abundance of natural beauty and resources. Hunting and fishing remain a large means of daily subsistence.

The old ceremonies and culture of this native tribe have given way to the superficialities of modern society with its attendant alienation of heritage and the old paths wherein their fathers walked. Alcoholism has replaced family attachments and the former stones of tribal foundation.

But the importance of the salmon has not diminished in the minds of that tribe or, indeed, of the merchantmen who have come to capitalize thereon.

The Kwakiutl tribesmen have come to consider themselves to be “Wy-Kan-Ush-Pum,” or, the SALMON PEOPLE. In some particulars, they are right. Perhaps we all of faith are like the Salmon and should be called the SALMON PEOPLE.

During the days of brutal persecution by Rome of the Christian believers, the symbol of the fish came to be a secret sign of their places of worship. That symbol is found carved into many stone surfaces of ancient Rome, as well as the underground catacombs where they gathered. Most of the Roman officialdom would not deign to seek the living among the dead which the catacombs harbored.

Of all fishes known to me, the salmon best illustrates the life of the Christian soldier who marches under the Ensign of Christ – and that is EVERY true believer in the Lord! Our Lord even compared His elect to fish: *Come after Me, and I will make you become fishers of men.* (Mark 1:17)

To the Christian, the Church is the womb of his faith where he first hears the Word and believes. The world, and all its inherent dangers and travails, is the sea. The rude stream leading back to his First Love is his spawning ground and the place of his home-going. This very closely resembles the life of the salmon fish. The salmon fish sees his first light of day in the pristine streams and lakes of the cold northern regions. They emerge from the gravel of the stream beds to begin their journey downstream through fresh water where many fall victim of prey to a diversity of predators. Two varieties of salmon – the Steelhead and Sockeye – may remain in fresh water to mature. They then migrate to the estuaries where salt and fresh water converge in order to develop a tolerance for salt water. From these estuaries, they migrate into the endless seas where they travel over the next several years for thousands of miles. But they never forget their ancient beginnings. At last, the Lord has put an instinct in their hearts to return to the place of their birth in that very streambed or lake from which they first

emerged so long ago. On the way, they swim upstream at tremendous effort. They jump over dams and risk being eaten by bears, raccoons, and other predators. If one dies in the stream, he floats back to the sea but, amazingly, remains oriented head-first toward his intended destination. They beat themselves viciously on the rocks of the streambeds until they finally reach the very place of their spawning. After depositing their eggs there, they no longer even resemble the beautiful, silver fish of the sea. They are badly disfigured by time, effort, and the grueling pilgrimage back 'home.' They then turn upon their sides and die in the waters.

The believer, too, is born in the pristine waters of innocence from his mother's womb. He begins his pilgrimage of learning at his mother's knee until he arrives at the point where childhood mixes with adulthood (like the fresh water and salty waters of the estuary). He then travels the world with all its varied enticements and dangers. But the Christian never forgets his First Love in the Lord Jesus Christ. Despite all of our challenges and hardships to get to where we are, we do not forget from whence we came: *And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.* (Rev 2:3-4)

I once read the story of a Wall Street tycoon who began as a shoe-shine boy at the corner of Wall Street and Broad. He listened carefully to the comments of the brokers as they conversed while getting their shoes shined. Every penny he could scrape together, he later used to invest on that counsel he had overheard – at first very small, and finally in great sums. One day, an old boyhood friend who had himself become quite successful, saw his old friend shining shoes at the old corner. He stopped and got into the chair. As his old friend, now somewhat stunted with age, began to shine his shoes, he smiled and said, "Well, Robert, I see that you finally have lost it all." "Not really," was the old man's response. "I come here on this same day every year to shine shoes." "And why is that" asked his inquisitor? "It is so that I can remember always from where I came to my present place."

In the winter of our years, the Christian has an instinct to remember from whence he has come, and will evidence a strong desire to return. When I was a very young lad, I asked my mother, "Where did I come from?" She responded, "From God." I have never forgotten that, and now I know that my days are growing fewer, and I have that familiar yearning to return to that pristine Heaven from whence I was ordered by God. My way has become a pilgrimage, not unlike that of Abraham and countless others who have traveled the Old Paths wherein our Fathers walked. I want to get upstream. I now must fight against the currents and breach the dams along the way. I risk being devoured by predators that Satan knowingly places along the way. But one thing the Christian, like the Salmon, never does – he never GIVES UP! He MUST make it back to his early beginnings in innocence and return to the bosom of Abraham. If destroyed along the way, he nevertheless keeps his focus fixed on his heavenly home. *Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in. Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.* (Isaiah 26:2-3)

So, it might be a great honor to be considered the SALMON PEOPLE of GOD for perseverance and memory of our beginnings in Christ.