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“SPOKEN BY ALL GOD’S HOLY PROPHETS”

Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began (Acts 3:19-21)

In Bible Student circles this is not only a very basic and fundamental Scripture, but one of vital importance in the great outworking of our Heavenly Father’s Divine Plan. It shows the glorious purpose He has for this strife-torn planet and its groaning creation. Along with other scriptures it forms the basis or very foundation of hope for all mankind in the coming age.

What a powerful message this is from God! Had it been presented by say three or four of God’s Holy Prophets, this would surely have stressed the importance of the statement, but it was spoken by the mouth of all God’s Holy Prophets since the world began. How powerful indeed that makes the statement, how it shows the great importance in which our Creator holds this work and His desire to pass the message on to those that have ears to hear. It seems rather ironic that here we have a passage so important that it was spoken by the mouth of all God’s Holy Prophets, yet how few can really understand or appreciate its glorious message.

Some of our Christian friends tell us that our Lord’s return ushers in not the times of restitution of all things, but the destruction of all things. This is a classic instance where Satan has blinded the minds, and has put error for truth, black for white. So as we go along let us look at some of the places where the prophets have spoken of the times of Restitution. But first let us look at the word itself and what is to be restored.

WHAT IS RESTITUTION?

The text is the only place where the word Restitution as a noun occurs, though the related verb occurs eight times in the New Testament. Young’s Concordance gives the meaning of the Greek as a putting down again, restoration. A Greek scholar says it means to restore to its former situation, as restoring a sprained or dislocated limb to its former soundness. The Jewish Historian Josephus uses the word to denote the return of the Jews from their captivity in Babylon and restoration to their state and privileges. Vines Greek Dictionary lists it under restoration (which is the translation in the Revised Version) giving the meaning as “to set in order back again,” “restoration”.

These descriptions are full of meaning. How beautifully they describe the wonderful works to be accomplished during the Times of Restitution. “Back again” for example brings to mind the words of our Master that all in their graves are to come forth, in other words, come back again. Restoration of estates to rightful owners immediately brings to mind Israel’s Jubilee and their restoration to their former estate, a picture of the great work to be accomplished during the times of Restitution. Barnes says that as well as the meaning of restoration the word also has the meaning of consummation, completion or filling up.

We could say that this is a secondary meaning of the word, but again it fits very neatly in place – the times of restitution will be the consummation or completion of God’s program. The ages before Christ saw the completion of Stage 1 – the selection of those we term Ancient Worthies (Hebrews 11) who are to be Princes in all the earth. The close of the Gospel Age will see the completion of Stage 2 – the selection of the Church, Christ’s Bride. Both of these groups will be privileged to have a part in God’s Government in the next age to assist in the great work of Stage 3, which is to be the restoration of Planet Earth and all the willing of mankind.

As stated, this is the only place where the word restitution occurs in the New Testament. Nevertheless we do have a companion verse giving us the words of Jesus in Matt. 19:28 – “And Jesus said unto them, Ver-

ily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel". A different word "Regeneration" is used here but the thought behind it is still the same, and the time period is clearly shown by our Lord's words – "When the Son of Man shall sit in the Throne of His Glory." This links in well with Matt. 25:31, the start of "the parable of the sheep and goats" showing the work of the next age, the thousand year times of restitution period – "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory"

Young's Concordance gives the meaning of the Greek word for regeneration as also meaning recreation, Vines also says that it has the thought of a new birth. Again how well this fits, the times of restitution will be virtually a re-creation; a new birth is also a very appropriate term, as we know the word as used in the Scriptures is synonymous with resurrection, with all of mankind being brought back from the prison house of death. There will be billions of new births during that time.

WHAT IS TO BE RESTORED?

What then is it that is to be restored during the times of restitution? A very brief, comprehensive answer would be – all that was lost in Eden when Father Adam fell into sin. To briefly itemise the various components, the first would be life itself, life everlasting, life that has no end. We put everlasting life first on the list because, without never ending life, anything else that might be restored would have but little value. Further, if life is to be restored, it implies that Adam originally possessed everlasting life before he disobeyed God, and the Scriptures show that to be the case. God said to Adam (Genesis 2:17) – "*But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die*"

This implies that Adam would not die so long as he remained obedient to his Creator. God did not say – you are on trial and if you remain obedient for a certain period of time I will then give you everlasting life. What God really said to Adam was – I have given you everlasting life to enjoy and this life will never be taken from you as long as you remain obedient, but if disobedient it will be taken from you. Young's literal translation Bible renders the verse: "dying thou dost die" suggesting a slow dying process, and just so it was. It took 930 years for Adam's life to come finally to its close. As we know, a day with the Lord is as a thousand years, so just as God had said, Adam died within the same day in which he ate the forbidden fruit.

But God has promised that, following the resurrection of the Lord's people of past ages earlier referred to, all others in their graves are also to come forth, the good and the bad, the just and the unjust, all will be restored to life, the life that Adam originally possessed. This life will be everlasting, but it will be conditional. All must obey the Creator's conditions. He gives the life, so He is entitled to make the conditions. Jesus said to His followers (Matt 5:48) "Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect" This advice will also be applicable to all mankind in the next age; for all who wish to continue living, obedience will still be the test, just as it was with Father Adam. They will receive all the encouragement and help necessary, they will be living under ideal conditions in the glorious home our Loving Creator has provided for His human family, paradise restored.

They will be living in a righteous world where peace, love and happiness will be the norm, just the opposite of conditions prevailing today. Under such a favourable climate we would expect the majority to readily come into line, as we read in the Psalms – "The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion; rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth." (Psa 110: 1-3) Rev.11:17 speaks of the start of this day of power – "We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and vast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned."

LEARNING RIGHTEOUSNESS

This is the time when Jehovah God reigns through His appointed King, the Lord Jesus, who at that time will be sitting in the Throne of His Glory. This is the "times of restitution", it is also the thousand year Judgment day. In this connection let us read Isa. 26:8-10 – "Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for thee; the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee. With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. Let favour be shown to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the. LORD."

These verses sound contradictory, but they are speaking of different classes of people. Verse 10 is speaking of those who are incorrigible and will not reform even when given favour and a full opportunity. For these the life that God had previously given will come to an end. We would expect that only few would fall into this category but death will still be a possibility until the work of the great anti-typical Jubilee is fully completed (on the 50th thousand year day, following the Millennial Day) as Paul said in 1 Cor. 15:24-26, – "*Then cometh*

the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."

The Times of Restitution will also restore the original character which God gave to Adam, as it says in Genesis 1: 26-27 – *"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air; and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them."* We would understand this passage to refer to the character –likeness of God and His Son Jesus Christ. This is the character that will be restored to all who will be accounted worthy to continue living throughout the ages of eternity. As earlier mentioned, they must be perfect as God is perfect.

We saw in Genesis that man was given dominion over the earth and its animals of all kind. This lost dominion will be restored, let us look at Heb. 2:5-9 – *"For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak. But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour; and didst set him over the works of thy hands: Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man."*

This is a quotation from Psalm 8:4-8. We must bear in mind that this passage is speaking of mankind, some have thought that it was speaking of Jesus, The final verse 9 commences with the words "But we see Jesus" showing that a new topic is here being introduced and that the passage had not previously been speaking of Jesus. The all things that are put in subjection under man are all things pertaining to this Planet Earth. The passage says "but now we see not yet all things put under him", the words 'not yet' implying that some time in the future all things will be put under him; that will be when the Times of Restitution have accomplished their work.

Now we see Jesus, He is the one who made it all possible. Without His willing participation in the Divine Plan in giving His life, there could have been no Times of Restitution, no return from the prison house of death for all mankind. As the hymn says "Hallelujah what a Saviour!"

MANKIND'S LOST DOMINION

We have seen that man's lost dominion will be restored to him and that the character-likeness of his Creator originally possessed by Adam will be restored, so it goes without saying that it will be a very different life from that possessed by mankind today. At present, they have but a small measure of what real life will be like; mankind will be restored to perfect health, no more aches and pains or sickness of any kind – *"And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity. (Isaiah 33:24)* There will be no more lame, maimed or cripple, as the beautiful passage in Isaiah 35 says: *"The lame man shall leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing" and so on. (Verse 6)*

In the opening verses in Acts 3 we see the apostle healing a lame man, a picture of the greater work that will take place worldwide in the "Times of Restitution". Peter was not slow to take advantage of the situation, and said in effect that in that future day, the times of restitution, not just one lame man will be restored but all things will be restored. These "all things" include not just earth's inhabitants but the planet itself. Mankind have allowed their God-given home to deteriorate. By chopping down the trees, over cultivating and poor farming practices, they have produced many great desert areas. All these will be restored in that future day, the deserts will be made fruitful, as the scripture says "will blossom as the rose." We can already see the early commencement of this work-, in Israel, Egypt and other places, the desert is slowly being pushed back, orange groves are growing where there was once only sand. This is just the small beginning, it will take time to fully accomplish this work, but there will be plenty of time for God has set aside a thousand years to complete the full work of Restitution.

What a wonderful and exciting time we are privileged to be living in. It is an extremely troublesome time, we know that bloodshed and violence will steadily increase, but we have been taken into our Heavenly Father's confidence and shown His glorious Plan. So for us it is a very exciting time because we can see the small beginnings of the great work that is to follow the time of trouble. This thrills us because it shows the nearness of the Kingdom, there seems no doubt that the younger generation living today may well see its commencement.

This Planet will be made glorious like the garden of Eden worldwide. In Isa. 66:1 the Lord said: "Heaven is my Throne and earth is my footstool" and this links in with Isa 60:13 – *"The glory of Lebanon shall come*

unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious.” This will be a restoration worldwide of that which God originally gave to Adam in Eden – “And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.” (Gen 2:8,9)

We think of our Master’s words to the thief on the cross, “verily I say unto thee today, shalt thou be with me in Paradise” (the comma should be after the word today, not as in the AV) The paradise He referred to would be the restored earth, this is where the thief will be with Jesus. This word Paradise is very interesting, Young’s Concordance gives the meaning as a park or garden ground and we see in our mind’s eye a garden ground all laid out with beautiful trees, the place of God’s feet made glorious. Vine’s Greek dictionary tells us that it comes from the Greek word “paradeisos” and is an oriental word first used by the historian Xenophon denoting the parks of Persian Kings and Nobles, he goes on to say that in the Septuagint (Greek) translation of the Old Testament, this word is used in Genesis 2:8 to translate the word garden, so the verse would read, “And the Lord God planted a paradise eastward in Eden and there He put the man whom He had formed” That is what is to be restored.

RESTITUTION FORESHADOWED

We could say that the very first place where the scriptures foreshadow the Times of Restitution is Gen. 3:15 – “*And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel*” Rather obscure language is used here, but it would be sufficient to give our first parents hope. We note that the serpent picturing Satan would succeed only in bruising the heel of the woman’s seed, a non-fatal injury, but her Seed would bruise the head, a vital part of the body, indicating a fatal injury. We note that it is the seed of the woman, who is the woman? In the first place mother Eve herself, secondly Mary the mother of Jesus, there is also a third woman, Abraham’s wife Sarah who typifies our Covenant, that portion of the Abrahamic Covenant under which the seed is developed. She also pictures the Jerusalem above which the Scripture says is the mother of us all (Gal. 4:26),

The New English Bible says, “*But the Heavenly Jerusalem is the free woman*” she is our mother. Sarah is a composite picture, both of the covenant and also the Heavenly Jerusalem, which means the nation of Spiritual Israel, the true Church. The seed that is to bruise the serpent’s head is primarily Jesus Christ, but it also includes His Bride, as Gal. 3:29 indicates – “*If ye be Christ’s then are ye Abraham’s seed and heirs according to the promise*” – and in Romans 16:20 – “*And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all*” This will be in the next age during the Times of Restitution, we will assist in breaking down all the evil works that Satan has built up, this will culminate in the fulfillment of Gen. 3:15, with the complete destruction of Satan and all evil.

Many Christians find it hard to distinguish between the work of the Gospel Age and of the coming Age, so let us briefly look at just how different the symbolism is for each Age. During the Gospel Age, the Heavenly Father selects the Bride for His Son, He draws them. (John 6:44) During the next age Jesus draws all men unto Himself. (John 12:32) We in this Age are all sons of God with Jesus as our elder Brother, “He is not ashamed to call them Brethren” (Heb 2:11), whereas in the next Age, Jesus is the Father to the world, a position Adam would have held if he had not fallen into sin; Jesus becomes the second Adam, (1 Cor. 15:45) Isaiah. 9:6, describes Jesus as, “*The Father of the Age to come*” (Septuagint translation) so in the next Age Jesus the second Adam is their Father, that makes Christ’s Bride their Mother, the second Eve, pictured by Rebekah, Isaac’s Bride. Her sister said unto her, “*Be thou the Mother of thousands of millions*” (Gen 24:60)

This would have been literally true of Rebekah as for other women in the early days of the earth, but it was only said to Rebekah, so we cannot doubt that a deeper meaning was intended and, indeed, the Church pictured by Rebekah, will be the Mother of all mankind and the second Adam, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father. So here we have a very clear distinction between the Gospel Age, the time for the calling of the Church, the Bride of Christ, and the Millennial Age, the Times of Restitution. The Church is begotten now by God by His Holy Spirit, so in a very real sense He is our Father and we His children. Jesus is to be the Father of the Age to come, through whom with His Bride all nations are to be blessed.

With our Heavenly Father’s help, may we prove faithful and worthy to have a part in the future great Restitution work with our dear Bridegroom and Master. Amen.

“Keep the Door of my Lips”

One great mark of character development is demonstrated by the control of the words of our mouths. How much trouble, discord and disintegration of companies of the Lord’s people has been brought about by word of mouth. The apostle Paul admonishes, “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.” Viewing the apostle’s

statement, we see clearly that this admonition is very applicable to many religious people today. How many there are who do injury to their fellow creatures with their words and use the same tongue in offering praise to God.

There is surely no evil to which God's people are more exposed than the wrongful use of the tongue. With many it is as natural to gossip as it is to breathe; they do it unconsciously, and many are the peculiar methods which the fallen nature will use in its efforts to stifle conscience, and yet maintain the use of this channel, long after it has been driven from evil practices, which are less common, less popular, though more generally recognised as sinful. It will say, I do not mean any harm to anyone, but I must have something to talk about, and nothing is so interesting to friends and neighbours as something which has a gossipy flavour connected with it. Hence it is that the Scriptures instruct us, "Let your conversation be such as becometh saints" and "Let your speech be with grace seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man."

How defective are the reasonings of the fallen nature, when the counsels in righteousness of the Lord's Word are ignored. There is a wide scope for conversation among Christian people on the subject of the riches of God's grace in Christ Jesus expressed in His word, and in these things we have that which not only ministers grace to the hearer, but which also adds grace to the speaker. Such conversation showers blessings on every hand, so far as the new creature is concerned, and assists in deadening the old nature with its evil desires, tastes and appetites.

This is no doubt what the apostle had in mind when he said that the Lord's people should "show forth the praises of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light." A heart filled with the spirit of love, the spirit of God, the spirit of the truth, and overflowing at the mouth, will be sure to overflow that which is within, for "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." A mouth, therefore, which does injury to others, either to fellow members of "the Body of Christ", or to those who are without, indicates an evil heart, and implies that the heart is not pure.

How much we need to hearken to the sentiments of the Psalmist when he beseeches God to "set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth. Keep the door of my lips." (Psalm 141:3) and to the words of the apostle of our Master, "for as He who has called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation." (1 Peter 1:15) While Peter here is referring to every aspect of Christian conduct, it is our lips and words that will convey that first impression.

May our Heavenly Father so bless and guide us, each one, that our speech may be only and always pleasing to Him and edifying to all with whom we have to do, both among our brethren and those around us. May our daily prayer be, "O Lord, open thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth thy praise." (Psalm 51:15)

The Divine Word

Dearer with every passing hour

Is God's sweet Word to me,

To its blest truths as to a tower,

In troubled times I flee!

For while the heavens and earth shall last

Its promises are sure

Yes! when they both are with the past

Its glories shall endure.

The word of Him who cannot lie,

Who by His own will stand.

When the swift whirlwind sweepeth by,

And in the desert land,

Who sendeth out his angel guard

Above his loved ones' way,

And turneth, by his rod of power,

Their darkness into day.

Whose blessings, promised to the meek,

About their pathway rise,

Like blossoms in a wintry-waste,
 Or stars in storm-tossed skies.
 O, I have proved each word of thine,
 My God, as gold is tried—
 Never to tear or prayer of mine
 Was thy strong help denied.
 I bless thee for each step I've trod
 By the dark waves of woe;
 With faith and peace my feet were shod
 Through the wild flood to go!
 Hast thou not said, "But for a night
 The weeping shall endure
 Joy cometh with the morning light
 O, promise sweet and sure!
 Where is my joy?—to dwell apart,
 From earth's poor bonds set free,
 Hidden, within thy faithful heart,
 To find my all in Thee.
 (Lizzie Baker)

Predestination (Part 2)

FOREKNOWLEDGE

Let us move on to foreknowledge and particularly how it relates to free will.

The main problem relates to individual foreknowledge and in particular its relationship to certain theories of predestination; particularly Calvinistic double predestination. Specifically, if God foreknows the outcome for an individual then the outcome appears to be predestined and hence what room is there for free will? Because of this apparent problem individual foreknowledge has either been denied or sidestepped.

However, without God having foreknowledge of individuals other problems arise:

- (1) absence of individual foreknowledge limits the knowledge of God
- (2) absence of individual foreknowledge limits God's control over His plan.
- (3) absence of individual foreknowledge makes the timing of completion of predestined classes uncertain since classes are composed of individuals.
- (4) this uncertainty of timing would make specific phases of the Plan of God uncertain.

To foreknow and foreknowledge come from related Greek words "proginosko" (v) and "prognosis" (n). The verb primarily means to know ahead of time, but to know something ahead of time does not mean that one has destined it to happen. For example the medical term prognosis which comes from the noun form means to predict and to know the outcome of a disease a patient may have. Knowing this does not mean that the doctor has caused the outcome. On the other hand foreknowledge and the ultimate outcome or destiny are related in that the foreknowledge will tell you the outcome. Applying this to God suggests that if he has ultimate foreknowledge then He knows the ultimate outcome or destiny or His plan. As part of God's Omniscience the outcome must be known. The traditional problem has been whether God's Omniscience relates to individuals and if so, does this make free will not free?

One also notices that the word foreknowledge in the scriptures is only used in relation to God.

Complete foreknowledge an attribute of God

Acts 2:22 "Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man approved of God among you by miracles, wonders, and signs, which God did through Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know —23 Him, being delivered by the determinate will and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken.

1 Peter 1:1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Calatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you and peace be

multiplied.

Of course ultimate and perfect foreknowledge is an attribute that only applies to God.

It is God's foreknowledge that allows his word to accomplish his will and to prosper, as we read in Isaiah 55.

Isa 55:11 So shall my Word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void; but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the things whereto I sent it.

The scriptures tell us that God has foreknowledge in an overall and general sense. We read:

Isa 46:10 declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done; saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.

To be able to declare the end from the beginning God must know not only the overall plan but also the specifics of that plan and not only in terms of contingencies but the actual specifics. Jesus makes this clear in Matthew 24.

Mt 24:36 But of that day and hour knoweth no one, not even the angels of heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only.

FOREKNOWLEDGE: INDIVIDUAL

One also notices that this foreknowledge relates not only to general and specific non-individual aspects but also to individual aspects. We read:

Ac 3:18 But the things which God foreshowed by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ should suffer, he thus fulfilled.

God foreknew that Jesus would be slain from the foundation of the world, as we read in Rev 13:8.

Revelation 13:8 KJV

8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

Revelation 13:8 NIV

8 All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast—all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world.

In fact the very word foreknowledge is used specifically in relation to the death of Jesus after delivery into the hands of those that eventually crucified him

Acts 2:22 Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man approved of God among you by miracles, wonders, and signs, which God did through Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know-

23 Him being delivered by the determinate will and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken

Therefore God's knowledge of individuals and specifically Jesus is a scriptural concept. If Jesus as a human had free will then God's foreknowledge of an individual and freewill cannot be incompatible. In fact Jesus exercised His free will in subjecting his will to the will of God, as God foreknew He would.

That God has perfect foreknowledge concerning individuals is not surprising. We are told that he knows the hearts (intentions) of the children of men

Prov 15:11 Sheol and Abaddon are before Jehovah: How much more then the hearts of the children of men!

Acts 15 8 And God, who knoweth the heart, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Spirit, even as he did unto us;

And that he even sees into the mind

Jer 20 12 But, O Jehovah of hosts, that triest the righteous, that seest the heart and the mind, let me see thy vengeance on them; for unto thee have I revealed my cause.

FOREKNOWLEDGE: THE BALANCE

If God knows our very thoughts and intentions He must know how we will exercise our free will as He did with Jesus, otherwise God could not have known that He would go on and subject himself to the will of God to the point of being slain. This is the only way that free will and foreknowledge can co-exist. In this way God preserves the free will and yet provides opportunities for the individual to work in accordance with God's plan as in the case of Jesus; around whose perfect sacrifice the whole plan of God turns.

Another example of how this foreknowledge of God works is found in the God's dealing with the sons of Rebecca; Esau and Jacob.

In Romans 9:11-15 we read:

Rom 9:11 (for the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, in order that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not by works, but by Him that calleth).

12 it was said unto her, "The elder shall serve the younger."

13 As it is written: "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated."

14 What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with god? God forbid!

15 For He saith to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.

We know that the main point is that God calls according to how he sees fit. And it has nothing to do in the first instance with one’s will or effort. In man’s fallen state there are none righteous no not one, and therefore of ourselves we deserve nothing. Therefore God calls the elect as He sees fit. This is the main lesson.

There are however other interesting aspects to the process. By observing that the call of God is made not on the basis of merit one of course does not mean that God’s call is arbitrary and without sense. God calls according to His foreknowledge of that individual and if that individual has qualities that further His plan then He calls. We note that in the Rom 9 verses God said that the “The elder shall serve the younger” and “Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated”, even before they were born. For God to be able to say this at the time he either decided arbitrarily (if he did not have individual foreknowledge of Esau and Jacob) or for good reasons. Since our God is a God of reason we would say that he must have done so for very good reasons.

FOREKNOWLEDGE: DESPISING THE BIRTHRIGHT

We find the reason in the subsequent record of the events and in particular the fact that Esau did not value his birthright and so he sold it to Jacob for a bowl of pottage. In fact Gen 25 verse 34 tells us that Esau despised his birthright.

Genesis 25:34 Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentils: and he ate and drank, and rose up and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.

And the writer of Hebrews tells us that by so doing Esau was deemed profane.

Hebrews 12:16 lest there be any fornicator or profane person as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.

With this information we can see that the way the situation unfolded made sense. And for God to be able to make such pronouncements before they were even born necessitates God having individual foreknowledge concerning their characters.

There are many other examples of individual foreknowledge one could refer to.

PREDESTINATION

As we have already seen there are many theories on what predestination is. However, if one wants to know how God wanted it to be understood we need to make the scriptures the starting point.

If one searches the KJV for predestination and its variants, we find that it has been used 4 times in the KW. These occur in Rom 8 and Eph 1. They read:

Romans 8:29,30

29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

Ephesians 1:5, 11

5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself according to the good pleasure of his will, 11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:

All these usages derive from the Greek “prooridzo”. Then if one searches the KJV to see if prooridzo has been translated into other English words we get 2 more verses, viz Acts 4:28 and 1 Cor 2:7. In these 2 instances prooridzo is translated determined and ordained.

Acts 4:28 For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.

1 Corinthians 2:7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory:

The essential point to notice is that in none of these 6 verses in which prooridzo is used, is it used in reference to an individual.

Secondly, the word’s meaning according to Strong’s is essentially to determine beforehand.

One might ask in what sense is this determining meant. This appears to be given in the breakdown of prooridzo. Prooridzo is a compound word made up of pro which is a primary preposition meaning before and oridzo which appears to have the basic meaning of a limit or constraint. Putting this together, “determine beforehand” carries the idea of setting a constraint in advance.

Next, one notices that this predestination is used in reference to a group or to an aspect of the plan of God and never to an individual.

When a clear constraint is made, it cannot occur at the point of the exercise of free will or it does not have reference to free will, for free will to be preserved. Here we notice that both occur. The predestination refers to a group characteristic which is not the only possible outcome. Or in other words the individual exercises the free will and either the individual will qualify for the elect class or end up in the great company class or

possibly the second death. Therefore the individual running in the race for the prize of the high calling may fall short and the outcome is not determined as Calvinistic predestination suggests.

PREDESTINATION: ELECT CLASS

This group has been determined to be conformed to the image of his son and thereby they are called brethren with Jesus, being this firstborn of these brethren. The use of the term brethren implies that, like Jesus, who is a special type of son, these brethren are also children of God. This is amplified by Paul in Romans 8:16 and 17

16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God;

17 and if children, then heirs – heirs of God and join heirs with Christ, if so it be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together.

These brethren, are of course the elect of God, and we read in Romans 8:29,30-

29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

Also the reference in Verse 29 to “the firstborn among many brethren” suggests not just the first to be raised from the dead but more specifically the first to be raised from the dead to immortal life, or in other words the first of the first fruits or the first of those of the exanastasis; that is the first of those of the first resurrection.

Verse 30 gives us other characteristics of this predestined class. They have been called and then justified by faith in Jesus. Also like Jesus they are to be glorified. And this fits with that whole class having this special resurrection to immortal life like Jesus.

PREDESTINATION: ONE CALL

Colossians 1:27 To them God would make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

It is also interesting to note that no other class has been predestined in this way. This emphasizes the importance of this class with Jesus as its head. Presumably, this importance is part of the reason why Paul calls the knowledge of this class who have “Christ in you, the hope of glory” as a glorious mystery (or hidden thing)

The fact that no other class is predestined in this way also emphasizes the importance of this call, and that we are not called to the great company class. Therefore this must be our aim. This excludes all thoughts such as “I will settle for the great company class and therefore I do not have to try so hard” or “I know that I will not get into the 144,000”. If we have been called then that call is to that class and that class alone. And if we have been called to that class then it has to be within the grasp of all of us if we give diligence to making our call and election sure.

Therefore the biblical predestination is a divine determination of the characteristics of this elect class.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it appears that there are major flaws in some of the historical views of predestination. These flaws not only create an unscriptural view of God but also undermine the very teaching of the ransom. Free will is an integral part of the similarity man bears to God, also it appears to be one of the reasons God values so much the final human creation; this is one reason he was willing to send his only begotten son to take the place of Adam. This plan was drawn up before the foundation of the world according to his perfect foreknowledge. The plan is set and sure to be fulfilled. It is not unsure and no part is uncertain. Its certainty depends on the absolute foreknowledge of God.

This foreknowledge extends to the individual level without contravening free will. Foreknowledge allows God to call individuals and provide them with the opportunity to free willingly give diligence to make their calling and election sure. This predestined class has an important role to play in the plan of God and the basic quality they need, to qualify is to be conformed to the image of Jesus. The call of God is to this class alone therefore we have the possibility to attain to it if we work out our salvation with fear and trembling and remain faithful.

BE THOU FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH...

As we stand on the threshold of a new millenium let us renew our determination and zeal. Let us remember the first days of our consecration and continue the walk of faith and self sacrifice to the end. Amen. (ES :00/01)

Entered into Rest

Our dear Brother Joseph Benjamin Hiam completed his earthly course on 29 July 2001, after a long life of loving devotion to his wife and family and of faithful service to the Saviour and Lord into whose hands he had early committed his life. The sympathy and prayers of the Lord's people in many parts of Australia and

overseas go out to his dear wife Sister Reta, herself now handicapped, and to the extended family, who will all greatly miss his gentleness and wise counsel.

Bro Joe was born in Traralgon, Victoria, (Gippsland region) on 4 October 1913, one of six children of William and Rachel Hiam. His early years were spent share farming in Gippsland, subsequently he worked in market gardens in Oakleigh (Melbourne suburb), later again as a fitter and turner with a combustion engineering manufacturer. He was a keen gardener and also made many items for the children's home enjoyment. The family testimony to him concludes – "Joe was a gentle, kind and humble man. He would always listen – but never pass judgment. He left a wonderful legacy. He will be lovingly remembered by all."

William and Rachel Hiam and their family all embraced the message of God's love and His plan of salvation for all mankind and Bro Joe met his future wife, Sis Reta, in the Melbourne Bible Class (Sister Reta with her family had come over from Tasmania) and they enjoyed 61 years together of happy and beautiful partnership in every aspect of their lives. They had three children, Philip, Jan and Rosalie, all happily married. Subsequently, they were blessed with 8 grandchildren and 6 great grandchildren.

Bro Joe served as an elder in the Melbourne Bible Class for over 50 years, and as Secretary for much of that time. In recent years, he also provided a guiding hand in the activities of the Berean Bible Institute. He and Sis Reta often extended hospitality in their home to local and overseas visitors. Bro Joe is listed as a speaker in Convention Programs as far back as the late 1930's and he always had a direct and uplifting message to impart. His gentle, sincere and humble witness in his own life and in his service to the brethren has been a blessing to many over the years and he will be greatly missed.

Two favourite hymns were sung at the memorial service:

"I heard the voice of Jesus Say" (BSH 153 – Lynnfield)

"The day Thou gayest, Lord, is ended" (BSH 374 – St Clement)

"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." (Rev 14:13)

Faith Encouraged

"Thy faith hath made thee whole: go in peace." (Luke 8:48.)

No essential element of Christian character is [^]I given greater prominence in the Scriptures than faith. "Without faith it is impossible to please God." In this requirement we see the condescending grace of our Heavenly Father, who, though so far above us, yet, like a tender parent, desires the reciprocal love and implicit confidence of His intelligent creatures. Since Christ is the appointed Agent of God in His dealings with men, whom God bids all men to honor, even as they honor the Father, and since He is the appointed way of access to God, faith in Christ is necessarily a part of our faith in God. Those who believe in Christ believe the testimony which God gave of His son through the prophets and through Christ's own teachings, and the mighty works which God wrought by Him, to the end that men might believe, have a sure and abundant ground for confidence, so that faith might not be mere credulity, but a reasonable thing.

To believe in Jesus in those days, when His mighty works astonished the people, and the beauty of His holiness impressed every beholder, was most reasonable to those of simple hearts, who desired only to know the truth of God and to obey it, and who, therefore, had no cross-grained will or prejudice of their own to oppose it. Nor are the evidences, the foundation of faith in Christ, any less reliable today than they were then. On the contrary, they are still more abundant and strong—a firm foundation that can never be moved. In simple faith, reliance upon the testimony of Christ, the sick woman (to whom the words of Jesus in the text verse were spoken) came to Jesus, so fully assured of His power that she did not wait even to call His attention to herself when the multitudes thronged about Him; "for she said, If I may touch but His clothes, I shall be whole"; and she was instantly healed. Jesus, perceiving her faith, said unto her, "Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace."

This miracle was immediately followed by another, still more wonderful—the raising of the dead to life. Faith had brought an anxious father to Jesus to request the healing of his daughter. But while he was making the request, a messenger came to him saying, "Thy daughter is dead, trouble not the Master." The messenger evidently knew nothing of Jesus' power to raise the dead, and the anxious father would probably have abandoned all hope except for the Lord's reassurance of his faith, "Fear not: believe only, and she shall be made whole."

In the former instance the faith was exercised by the patient; but in this case it was exercised by another on behalf of the patient, who, being dead, had no ability to exercise faith. Yet the faith in the power of Jesus of those who had requested the healing was a very weak faith, and when they saw the child was dead all hope departed. They had considerable faith in Christ, but they did not believe that His power extended to the raising of the dead and were quite incredulous at the suggestion of the Lord's words — "Weep not; she is not dead,

but sleepeth”—knowing that she was dead. As in the case of Lazarus, our Lord here referred to death as a sleep, in view of the fact of the resurrection. The term is similarly applicable to the whole human family in the death that came upon all through Adam; because there shall be an awakening, a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust. The second death, from which there shall be no resurrection, is never called “sleep” in the Bible.

It is worthy of note, that our Lord took with Him the parents and three of His disciples into the chamber of death, that they might witness the awakening. but when they manifested their lack of faith, He put them all out, and then recalled the dead to life, and permitted them afterward to come in and minister to her. Thus, while He rewarded their faith, weak though it was, He reproved them also, and gave them overwhelming evidence of His mighty power. The statement of verse 55, when relieved of the mists of a false theology, is very clear. “And her spirit came again,” simply signifies, “and her breath returned,” and is so rendered in the Diaglott, the Greek word “pneuma,” translated “spirit” in the common version, signifying breath, wind or the spirit or breath of life.

With the reinstituting of the breathing process and the healing of the physical organism came reanimation, restored intelligence, and the dead lived again. Thus the Lord rewarded even the weak faith, and gave them additional and overwhelming evidence to strengthen and establish their faith. The Lord did not expect or desire the people to have faith without good substantial evidence upon which to base it, but He did desire and reward the faith that was exercised to the extent of the evidence. A faith without substantial evidence upon which to base it, is mere credulity, and generally degenerates into gross superstition, unworthy of the intelligence which God has given us.

This is the Way

“And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.” Isa. 30:21

How often in the midst of life’s perplexities and trials, have weary hearts felt the need of wise discretion and counsel. The counsel sought, however, is not altogether wise; sometimes it is the counsel of the ungodly and sinners, and sometimes that of the immature and inexperienced, and the results of such counsel are unsatisfactory, and often disastrous, and the way pursued in consequence one of trouble and darkness. Such is the way of the world, for it is not in the power of man to direct his own steps (Jer. 10:23). But not so is the way of the child of God. He has learned where to seek counsel, and the counsel of wisdom is always ready to come to his aid.

The prophet describes it as a voice “behind thee.” It is not a voice before thee of some new theology, or evolution, or spiritism, or Christian Science, or other human philosophy, but it is the old theology with all its blessed doctrines of hopes through Christ our Redeemer and Lord, our Teacher, our Example, and our Leader. It is the voice of the Lord uttered through His inspired prophets and apostles from two to four thousand years ago. It is to this Word of Divine inspiration, then, that the prophet would direct the attention of all those desiring wise counsel; in that Word we hear the voice of God saying, “This is the way, walk ye in it.”

If we have come to the forks of the road, to some crisis in our experience—and know not whether to turn to the right or to the left, we should stop at once and listen to the voice, or, in other words we should turn at once to the Word of the Lord, and, by pondering its precepts, and principles, and its illustrations bearing on the perplexing subject, seek to learn the will of the Lord, asking also the leading of His Spirit, and endeavouring to bring the mind into a loving and submissive and trustful attitude. “This is the way, walk ye in it” will be the plain answer to every such inquiring heart.

These words of the prophet were, however, addressed directly to fleshly Israel, though their application to spiritual Israel is none the less forcible. As applied to them it foretells the return of Divine favour to them when the long season of their chastisement and blindness shall be at an end. Then under the Millennial reign of Christ the blind eyes shall be opened and the deaf ears shall be unstopped, and the voice of the whole inspired Word then made clear to their understanding, will direct them in the right ways of the Lord, for the books (the law, and the prophets, and the New Testament Scriptures) shall be opened, and they shall be judged according to their teaching—Rev. 20:12.

The way then indicated to fleshly Israel and to all the world will be a grand highway of holiness; and the ransomed of the Lord shall go up thereon with songs and everlasting joy on their heads. (Isa. 35:10) and the end of that way will be life, and peace—salvation to the uttermost from sin and death and complete restitution to human perfection. While the way of life will be made very clear to Israel and the world in the age to come, it is made none the less clear now to the children of God, who walk by faith – the true seed of Abraham (Rom. 4:12, 10), to whom pertain the covenant and the exceeding great and precious promises in their largest fulfilment.

It is a way of entire consecration to God, even unto death, which implies the burial of one's own will into the will of God – the presenting of self a living sacrifice. In harmony with these two principles – of faith and consecration – we are taught to walk in newness of life, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit; not as other Gentiles walk in the vanity of their mind, but circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, not by sight, but by faith. Rom. 6:4, 8:1; Eph 4:17, 18; 5:15, 16; 2 Cor. 5, 7.

By faith and consecration we have come into a new life as spiritual sons of God, and yet we have the treasure in earthen vessels, and the new life is only in its embryo condition. Hence the necessity of walking after the spiritual instincts of the new nature and keeping down the stronger impulses of the old nature. This is what it is to walk in newness of life after the Spirit, and not after the flesh. To walk after the flesh is to pursue its hopes, aims, ambitions, and since the flesh and the spirit are at war one with the other, it is impossible to maintain the life of both. Therefore it is written, “If ye (spirit-begotten ones) live after the flesh ye shall die; but if ye, through the Spirit, do mortify (put to death) the deeds of the body, ye shall live. Rom. 8:13.

While the Word of the Lord speaks thus on general principles as to the way in which we should walk, we are also bidden to come with all the minor affairs of life, to inquire of these Divine oracles. If we know not whether to turn to the right or to the left, we come and find the promise, “Commit thy way unto the Lord, and He will direct thy steps.” Or, if heavy laden, we find the promise, “Come unto Me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Then the voice behind brings comfort, peace, and rest in the midst of all life's care and trials if we walk in obedience to its principles and precepts. “And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy and upon the Israel of God.”

“With a Pure Heart Fervently

“Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit” unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently; being begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever.”-1 Pet. 1:22, 23.

“Love is the fulfilling of the law” of God, and God Himself is love. So all creatures in His likeness, whether human or angelic, have this same chief characteristic. Love presides and rules in their hearts, always exercising itself in ministries of kindness and benevolence. Its most refined and exalted impulses are necessarily toward the fountain of all goodness and grace and glory, but in sympathetic solicitude it reaches out to help and lift up the degraded and vile, while with tender and fervent appreciation it regards the fellowship of all kindred minds.

Thus, God-like love maybe viewed in its three aspects—first, the love of reverence, which is centered in God, whose supreme goodness calls it forth; second, the love of fellowship or affinity for all those actuated by the same sentiments; and, third, the love of pity and sympathy toward all those who have fallen below the standard of moral excellence, or who suffer in any way. While we love God with supreme reverence, surpassing the love of self or of our fellow-men, He also graciously condescends to take us into fellowship with Himself; and all such are co-workers together with Him in benevolent kindness for the lifting up of the fallen, whom God so loved that He gave His only begotten Son to redeem them and then highly exalted Him and gave Him all power in heaven and on earth to restore them.—John 3:16; Phil. 2:8-11; Matt. 28:18.

As members of the fallen race we do not inherit this God-like quality of love. It is only in obedience to divinely revealed truth that we acquire it, being purified thereby from the downward and selfish tendencies of our fallen nature. In other words, as the Apostle here expresses it, by the incorruptible seed of divine truth, which liveth and abideth forever, we are begotten again and have become new creatures in Christ, so that now as new creatures we partake of the new, loving, glorious nature imparted through the Word of truth.

Yet, since we still have this new treasure in the old, marred, earthen vessel (2 Cor. 4:7), we need to take heed lest we lose it, and lest the old selfish nature of the earthen vessel again rise up and reassert itself. Consequently we must be diligent in the exercise and cultivation of the powers of the new nature, that it may thereby develop strength sufficient to ever keep the old nature under full control, so that none of its evil propensities may rise and gain the mastery. Therefore, “See that ye love one another with a pure heart (with disinterested benevolence) fervently.”

The language here is addressed not merely to babes in Christ—though it is wholesome counsel to them also—but to those of some degree of advancement, to such as have purified their souls unto unfeigned (not merely professed) love of the brethren. Let all such cultivate this grace more and more, that the whole body of Christ may be firmly knit together in love.

The tendency of all divine truth is to purify the heart. “He that hath this hope (the hope that the truth alone inspires) in him, purifieth himself.” Righteousness and the hope of the rewards of righteousness through Christ, are the legitimate effects of the truth upon the heart that truly receives it. But where it is only received into the head, and is resisted in the heart, it only deepens the dye of sin by hardening the heart, thus bringing additional

condemnation, and a fearful looking for of judgment.

This purifying of the heart by the truth is both an instantaneous and a gradual work. When anyone is truly converted to God, there is necessarily a purifying of the heart (the will, the intentions)—a full turning away from sin and evil, and an unreserved surrender of the whole being to God. But as the constant tendency of the old, sinful nature is to re-assert itself, the purifying influences of the truth must be continually applied that the heart may be kept pure and acceptable with God. But let none make the mistake of presuming that the pure in heart are necessarily free from all imperfections. As long as we have this treasure in the earthen vessel we shall be conscious of its imperfections; yet if the heart, the will, the intentions, be pure, holy and true and loyal to God as the mariner's needle to the pole, we are pure in heart, holy and acceptable with God through faith in Christ Jesus, whose imputed righteousness fully supplements all the imperfections of our earthen vessels.

We notice also that this special love of fellowship, to which the Apostle here refers, is not to be exercised toward the world—to whom belongs only the love of pity and sympathy, nor toward Satan or any of the wilful enemies of the Lord and His cause, against whom true love and loyalty to God ever arrays us in vigilant and determined opposition—but toward the brethren—toward them of like previous faith and hope, and of one mind with us, and the Lord. Fervent love, the love of true brotherly fellowship, should indeed exist among all such. They should be in fullest sympathy and cooperation. They should bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ; they should in honour prefer one another, and in love each esteem the other better than self. They should love as brethren, be pitiful, courteous, kind, gentle, true and loyal. As Jesus said, "Love one another as I have loved you."—John 13:34.

May the love of Christ more and more abound among His people, until the whole body of the Anointed, knit together in love and made all glorious within by its purifying power, is "made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light."



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While it is our intention that these columns be used for teachings strictly in accord with the Lord's Word, we cannot accept responsibility for every expression used, either in the correspondence or in the sermons reported.

“THE MIGHTY HAND OF GOD”

“Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time.” 1 Peter 5:6.

The hand is one of the most remarkable members of our body. Its capacity ranges from actions requiring the most highly trained skill imaginable down to the most menial of tasks, from the carrying through of delicate operations upon the human body, and the performance of scientific experiments, to the playing of musical instruments in a way that exhibits brilliance in the use of both fingers and hands. Hence the hand is often used as a symbol of power or ability to perform. To show one's hand has come to mean the manifestation of a person's skill or power in a certain way. The hand is also used in the Scriptures as a symbol of power to perform in many ways.

In harmony with this, we read of God's hand being active in the works of creation. Isa. 45:12 says, – “I have made the earth and created man upon it. I, even my hands have stretched out the heavens and all their host have I commanded.” The whole creation is His care; Jehovah our God is the great Emperor of the whole universe, and His wisdom, power, goodness and benevolence are abundantly equal to all the responsibilities of so exalted an office. The human mind staggers in its efforts to comprehend the mental resources of a Being who is able to assume and to bear such responsibility.

Think for a moment of the memory that never fails, the judgment that never errs, of the wisdom that plans for eternity, without the possibility of failure, and that times His plans with unerring precision for the ages to come; of the power and skill which can harness even every opposing element, animate and inanimate, and make them all work together for the accomplishment of His grand designs, whose eye never sleeps, whose ear is ever open and who is ever mindful of all the necessities, and active in all the interests of His broad domains.

The Psalmist has well said in considering the immensity of God's hand over all His works, – “Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, it is high, I cannot attain unto it”, Psa. 139:6. In line with this, we read of the Lord's powerful hand working for His typical people Israel and His gracious providences on their behalf. These things, Paul tells us, have been recorded for our admonition on whom the ends of the ages have come. (1 Cor. 10:11) If God's hand did so much for them, His typical people, how much more will His hand be manifested to assist those who have entered into a covenant of sacrifice to follow in the steps of Jesus, in the hope of sharing with Him and assisting in the great work of His coming kingdom. As spiritual Israel, the Lord's people can take the words of the Psalmist to themselves – “Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation, and thy right hand hath held me up, and thy gentleness hath made me great.” (Psalm 18:35)

In Jesus we have the perfect example of humbling oneself under God's mighty hand. He left His Father's rich estate and humbled Himself in human form. He humbled Himself still further and became obedient even unto the death of the cross. It was because of His humbling of Himself in this way that God has highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name. (Phil. 2:8,9) To have a humble mind and heart, we must therefore keep the lifeline of communion with God continually open and certainly in prayer there are reservoirs of power beyond our capacity of reasoning. James wrote that the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. (James 5:16) Prayer is the expression of our soul, our spirit, our very being; through prayer we claim the promises of God, and they become veritable realities in our lives.

All of God's consecrated people who possess and properly exercise true humbleness, are used by Him as channels of grace and peace to others. Imbued with His love and peace, they are shining lights wherever they go in this dark world of sin. Where there is wrong, these will reflect and demonstrate the spirit of forgiveness

and tolerance. Where there is error, they endeavour to present truth with grace and humbleness. Where there is despair, they will reflect confidence and hope. In humbling ourselves they would seek to comfort rather than be comforted. These will try to understand others rather than to be understood by them; they will forget self, that they may be remembered and found in Christ. They will delight in forgiving, knowing the joy of being forgiven by their Heavenly Father.

Thus in the doing of these things, they find they are doing their Father's will, and keeping their Master's words when He said, "This is my commandment that ye love one another as I have loved you", (John 15:12) God has also promised to dwell with those whose hearts are in this humble condition. He says in Isa.57:15, – "Thus saith the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy, I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite one." This, then, tells us that God also is ready to condescend to dwell with those whose hearts have been so prepared to receive Him, whose chief desire is to know and to do His will. He dwells with them through His Spirit, His Word helping to revive them when they become faint and weary by the way, for guiding them and lifting them up are His powerful everlasting hands.

The Psalmist tells us to "commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in him and he shall bring it to pass. Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for him". (Psa. 37:5-7). We must not be cast down nor allow our faith to falter when the test of patient endurance is applied, while the outward peace and quietness which we crave tarry long. Outward peace and calm are not always the conditions best suited to our needs as new creatures, and we would not desire conditions in which the precious fruits of the spirit would not grow and develop in us. "Therefore, beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you, but rather rejoice", 1 Pet. 4:12. Because whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth, Heb.12:6. Thus the Lord is chipping away the dross and the things not in, accord with His purpose for us, and with His skilful hands will make us unto the delineation of our Head and Master, the perfect chief corner stone in the temple of our God.

Our Heavenly Father furthermore will with every testing, if it becomes too great for us, provide a way of escape. When we find ourselves in difficulty we can say, "The Heavenly Father is permitting this trial and the Lord Jesus will help me", and we can rejoice that we will not be allowed to be overthrown, for He has promised that all things shall work out for our good because we seek to know Him more and to do His will. Therefore, however dark the way may become, however severe the storm may rage about us, our Father's hands are always there to console and to lift us up again, so that we are never in despair, though cast down for a while. As He assures us (Psa.91:11) – "He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways."

Precious indeed are the Lord's promises to us that He will accomplish all that He has said in His Word, but it is necessary to have faith along every line. Without faith, we would not have the courage to go on, and if we did not have faith in His ability to help us in all our hours of need, where would be the source of our help? As Paul says (1 Thes. 5:24) "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it." A son humbles himself under his father's hand when he renders obedience to his father's wishes, even when he might feel at times this curtailed his own liberties in certain directions, and limited him in many of his natural desires.

Let our attitude be the same toward our Heavenly Father, whatever the cost, whatever the sacrifice, for in doing this we shall be following our Redeemer, who continually humbled Himself under His Father's hand, becoming obedient even unto the death of the cross, wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name." In thus following Jesus, we shall find that our Heavenly Father's mighty hand continually upholds and sustains us, doing for us exceeding abundantly above, all that we ask or think. – Eph.3:20.

The Importance of the Call of the Church

Young's Concordance gives the meaning of "church" as – that which is called out (Greek *ekklesia*). John 6:44 says, "No man can come to me, except the Father who hath sent me draw him". So we see that each one needs to be drawn. In this 6th chapter of John, there are recorded some sayings of Jesus that many of His followers found hard to understand. In verses 65-69, we read that Jesus, who knew their thoughts, said "no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father". Then Jesus said to the twelve, "Will ye also go away?", to which Simon Peter answered, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life, and we believe and are sure that Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God."

Turning to Matt 16:13-18, we read, "When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am? And they said, Some say that Thou art John the Baptist, some Elias, and others Jeremias or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon BarJona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Hell is the condition of death, and Christ would have the power to

prevail against it and eventually give them eternal life, even immortality. (1 Cor 53:55)

In 1 Tim 3:15, the church is described as “the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth”. The margin has for ground the word “*stay*”. It is the pillar and stay of the truth. What an Honour! How we need to keep clear of the seeds of tares that the enemy sows. In Heb 12:23, it is described as the “church of the firstborn, who are written (or enrolled) in heaven.” What an honour, what a privilege, this is; what a necessity to become an overcomer, so that He may give the rewards promised to such in Rev 2 and 3! “Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Cor 15:57)

Who are the ones God is calling to this position? 1 Cor 1:26 states “For ye see your calling brethren,” (the diaglott has ‘*invitation*’ for calling), ye see your ‘invitation’ brethren. The Living Bible has, “Notice among yourselves, dear brothers, that few of you who follow Christ have big names or power or wealth. Instead, God has deliberately chosen to use ideas the world considers foolish and of little worth, in order to shame those people considered by the world as wise and great. He has chosen a plan despised by the world, counted as nothing at all, and used it to bring down to nothing, those the world considers great, so that no one anywhere can ever brag in the presence of God”. Jesus first called or invited those that God had given Him out of the nation of Israel. Israel was the only nation God dealt with in olden times. “You only have I known of all the families of the earth”... (Amos 3:2)

For a time the call was confined to the ones with hearing ears out of the people of Israel. But because they were not as interested and faithful and obedient as they could have been, Jesus said, “Your house is left unto you desolate”. “He came unto his own and His own received him not”. So three and half years after Jesus’ death and resurrection, the call went to the first Gentile, Cornelius, “a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway”. The record of this is in Acts 10. There was much discussion and dissension over taking the Gospel to the Gentiles, and what of the Jewish law needed to go to the Gentiles, so that a conference was held to decide these matters as recorded in Acts 15.

Saul who persecuted the early church was converted on the road to Damascus, and, as Paul, became a chosen vessel to bear Jesus’ name before Gentiles, Kings and the children of Israel. “I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name’s sake”. This same Paul reminded the believers in Ephesus of the privileged position they had come into. “Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision, That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us.” (Eph 2:11-14). So now the Gentiles can be part of this “called out” class.

The Church is described in many ways to show its relationship to its Head the Lord Jesus and to its Father, the Almighty God. In John Chapter 15 Jesus says he is the true vine and his followers are the branches that need to have the sap (ie the Spirit of Truth) abiding in them so that they bring forth fruit, otherwise the Father who is the husbandman will take them away, and even those who bear fruit he will prune so that they will bring forth more fruit. In 1Cor Ch 12, they are described as like the members of a human body, with Christ as the Head. “For as the body is one and hath many members, and all the members of that one body being many, are one body, so also is Christ.” (Vs 12). “But God now hath set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him” Verse 21 states therefore “the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.” All need to work harmoniously together, from the most prominent to the most insignificant. “Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.” (Vs 27)

The members are spoken of in James 1:18 as a kind of first fruits of His creatures who were begotten by the word of truth. “Therefore if any man be in Christ he is a new creature: old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself in Jesus Christ; and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation.” “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ”... 2Cor 5:17, 18, 20. To be a good ambassador one needs to be well trained in the knowledge and spirit of God and His plan and Christ’s method of accomplishing it. “Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end (margin has perfectly) for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ: As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation: Because it is written, Be ye holy: for I am holy.” (1Pet.1:13-16)

Paul in his letter to the Colossians, said in Ch 3: 12-15, “Put on therefore as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering. Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity (or love), which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.” Paul also wrote to the brethren in Phil 2:12, 13 “Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which

worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” Yes, it/God’s good pleasure that He works in this called or invited class of individuals to do His will. Peter tells us the believers are a “chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that should show forth the praises or virtues of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light”. (1Peter2:9)

The writer to the Hebrews in Ch3:1 says “Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus:...” In Chapter 5:1-5, there is more about this High Priest. A High Priest taken from among men in Israel of old might offer both gifts and sacrifices. No man could take this honour unto himself, but he that was called of God as was Aaron. So also Christ glorified not himself to be made a High Priest; But he that said unto him, ‘Thou art my Son, today have I begotten thee.’ This last part is from Ps 2:7, and is used in Act 13:33, when referring to God raising Christ from the dead, and continues in Heb 5:6 – “Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec.” Verses 8,9 – “Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him; Called of God a high priest after the order of Melchisedec.” So Christ offered the perfect gift of himself in sacrifice, and according to God’s Plan could offer himself as a covering to those who would sacrifice and walk in His steps in obedience.

Back in Heb:3, it says “And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after: But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.” This house is spoken of in Isa 49:8, “Thus said the Lord, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee.” This portion is quoted by Paul in 2 Cor 6:2 – “For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time: behold now is the day of salvation.” Isa 49:8 continues, “and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages:” The margin has ‘to raise up the earth’. What a desolate heritage condition the world is in now! How it will need Christ and His Church even more by the time this age ends.

Eph 1:18 speaks of the riches of the glory of God’s inheritance in the saints, and the need for the eyes of understanding being enlightened by the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God. It may be asked, How could God inherit anything in the Saints, as He is all powerful and all wise and is the creator of heaven and earth? But in the overcoming saints, He has a ‘house of sons’ who have been tested in very trying and exacting conditions and have learned obedience and a love for righteousness and a hatred for iniquity, as the Lord Jesus did, and He is not ashamed to call them brethren. Ps 87:5,6 reads, “And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her; and the highest himself shall establish her. The Lord shall count, when he writeth up the people, that this man was born there. Selah.” Verse 2 – “The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.” So at this present time He is developing these heirs, children of His, joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together.” (Rom 8:17)

In Matthew Ch 16 Jesus said that ‘He would build His church’. Do we have any indication, any date, when it will be finished? If a great high skyscraper is being built, or a railway across a continent, or a great ocean liner is being constructed, the builders expect to finish at some approximate time, they don’t expect to go on building indefinitely. We read earlier how many in Israel did not have ears to hear, so that the call or invitation went to the Gentiles but how obedient have they been? After the pure seed of the Kingdom was sown, the enemy would come in and sow tares or imitation wheat, so there has been a large crop of tares and comparatively few wheat throughout most of the age.

Daniel Ch 12. tells about a great time of trouble “such as never was since there was a nation and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book and many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake.” Daniel wanted to know when these things would be, but was told they were sealed to the time of the end, and that he would then “stand in his lot.” “Many shall be purified and made white and tried.” The wicked would not understand, but the wise would understand. Jesus also spoke of a great tribulation such as never was since the beginning of the world, nor ever shall be, but that these days will be shortened. (Matt 24:21,22). Jesus also spoke of a night coming in which no man can work. (John 9:4).

Rev. 7 contains some interesting verses. This chapter is fitted in between the opening of the sixth seal. (Chapter six, verse 12) and the opening of the seventh or final seal: (Chapter eight verse one). Verses one to three of Chapter seven read: “And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.” This shows that the winds were ready to blow, but the servants were not all sealed. Perhaps many had not been as faithful as they could have been or the number would have been sealed by then.

Peter speaks in 2 Pet 3:12 of looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God in which the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved and the elements melt. Other translations are interesting – Today’s English Version has – “Do your best to make it come soon.” Rev 3:11 reads – “Behold I come quickly, hold

fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown”, while in Rev 22:20 we read – “Surely, I come quickly, Amen. Even so come, Lord Jesus.

How long will the church last when it is completed, when all are sealed? The members are promised eternal life, even immortality. Eph 2:6,7 reads – “(God) has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus”. The New International Version has “the incomparable riches of His grace”. What favour, what kindness, is here shown! Paul sums up in Eph 3:19-21 – “that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God — according to His power that is at work within us. — Unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.”

In summary, we can see just how important is the call of the Church. It is called by God through Christ, who was also called to be its Head. It is tested through very severe trials and only the overcomers can God have in His family. These are they who have been proved to love righteousness and hate iniquity, these are saints and are His inheritance. These are to receive immortality, and God will demonstrate through the ages to come the exceeding greatness of His grace to them. What great incentive to make our calling and election sure! (HG:00/01)

What Would Jesus say?

Have we ever stopped to really think seriously I just how the Saviour would view matters and what He would say to us were He visibly to appear in our midst in these times? Some have said, “Oh! how I wish the Master would visit us as He did those disciples long ago; how I wish I might consult Him with regard to many questions that have so troubled me; I am sure, if the Master were right in our midst, we could soon have the burning, vexing problems and issues that have disturbed us in these recent years quickly settled.” But, brethren, is there any question, problem or difficulty before us today that the Master has not already answered in one or another of His many sayings when He was here long ago? Has He not through the spirit in the Apostolic messages dealt with all the present issues?

But still someone says, “If He were here I would like to ask Him who has charge of His Church today, and whom He has put over His people to control and direct them with power and authority.” How would Jesus reply to this question? I believe that we already have His answer to that question — My dear disciples, I have never vacated the position which the Father gave to Me in the beginning of the Age. As I then said, “One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren,” so now I say that I alone have charge of My Church, and I have never delegated authority to any man or company of men to rule over the Church or to interfere with the individual liberty of each member.

Another might ask: Master, tell us what great movement or work have you authorised your people to carry on in the earth today; what great pronouncement is there to be made in fulfilment of your will? Again we may be sure the Lord would answer in harmony with what He established as the mission of the Church when it was instituted, and that answer would be: I have not authorised any great movement or any great work to be achieved during this dispensation, for “My Kingdom is not of this world.” I remind you that in the beginning of the Age I said that My people would be scattered here and there throughout the earth. I never authorised My disciples to organise any great and wonderful work while yet in their earthly pilgrimage. Was not this the sum of the teachings of Christ and the Apostle with regard to what was authorised or expected of the faithful Church all along through the centuries until her glorification?

Another question might be: Master, will you not tell us just who and where your people are to be found in the earth today so that we may be numbered among them and thus enjoy fellowship with the true saints? We believe the Lord would answer, saying, “My followers are those who do the will of My Father in heaven; they are those who possess My spirit; they are such as are consecrated—surrendered—to My will; they are those who deny themselves and have taken up their cross to follow Me; in fact, whoever will do the will of My Father the same is My Brother, My Sister, My Mother.” And, dear brethren, should not this reply of the Master be satisfactory to us? Do we not really love all who love the Lord Jesus and possess His spirit? As many as are led by the spirit of God they are the children of God.

All our perplexities of today can be settled if we properly take them to the Lord and enquire what the spirit has long ago said unto the Church.

(1930 Convention Report)

How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord, Is laid for your faith in His excellent word! What more can He say than to you He hath said? You, who unto Jesus for refuge have fled.

(G. Keith)

Discord Precedes Harmony

It seems to me the trials and the temptations of this life are all making us fit for the life to come—building up a character for eternity. You have been in a piano factory; did you ever go there for the sake of music? Go into the tuning room and you will say, “My dear sir, this is a dreadful place to be in; I cannot bear it; I thought

you made music here.” They say, “No; we do not produce music here; we make the instruments and tune them here, and in the process much discord is forthcoming.” Such is the church of God on earth. The Lord makes the instruments down here, and, tunes them, and a great deal of discord is perceptible, but it is all necessary to prepare us for the everlasting harmonies up yonder.—Spurgeon.

Steadfast, Immovable

The old Lollards were called “Holdfasts,” not only because of their firmness under persecution, but of their strong grasp of the truth. Coleridge said, with a practical aptness unusual with him: “What does not withstand has no standing ground.” “Hold fast, then, the form of sound words, in faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus.” Be modest, unostentatious in all that is your own, willing to concede everything you have a right to yield, but be scrupulous and immovable about all that is Christ’s.

Watching and Praying

I am watching for the answers to
the prayers which I have made,
I am eagerly expecting all the
things for which I’ve prayed
But I know if they appear not in the
forms I thought they would,
It is just that He is planning for me
something extra good.
Yes, I’m certain, and I trust Him,
He has heard and He will give;
Let me then “pray without ceasing,”
And in “watching” every live.
Anon.

Predestination (Part 1)

Predestination, and the associated concepts of foreknowledge and free will are scriptural concepts. They are important concepts that determine not only how a believer views such divine attributes as power, wisdom, justice and love; as well as how they balance with one another, but also they reflect on and affect the doctrine of the ransom.

The aim is to explore some of the historical concepts of predestination and their consequences, then to focus more on the biblical use of the term and the associated concepts of free will and foreknowledge and in particular to look at whether the scriptures apply predestination and foreknowledge to the individual and/or groups.

These thoughts are expressed explicitly as thoughts for consideration and not as inflexible dogma.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

According to the Encyclopedia Britannica there are three types of predestination doctrine, with many variations.

One theory (associated with Semi-Pelagianism, some forms of nominalism, and Arminianism) makes foreknowledge the ground of predestination and teaches that God predestined to salvation those whose future faith and merits He foreknew.

At the opposite extreme is the doctrine of double predestination, commonly identified with John Calvin but more correctly associated with Synod of Dort, and appearing also in some of the writings of Augustine and Martin Luther and in the thought of the Jansenists. According to this doctrine, God has determined from eternity whom He will save and whom He will damn, regardless of their faith, love, or merit, or lack thereof.

A third doctrine was set forth in other writings of Augustine and Luther, in the decrees of the second Council of Orange (529) and in the thought of Thomas Aquinas. It ascribes the salvation of man to the unmerited grace of God and thus to predestination, but it attributes divine reprobation to man’s sin and guilt.

Time does not permit examination of these theories in detail and Br Russell has written about and clarified their deficiencies, particularly of the Calvinistic and Wesleyan views of predestination. Most of the theories are underpinned by the doctrine of the immortality of the soul and therefore intrinsically flawed. Also, they do not distinguish between the salvation of the elect and the salvation of the world in general.

The common view of the meaning of the word predestination comes largely from these theories, particularly the Calvinistic view. Specifically, that predestination refers to a fixed destiny that occurs irrespective of the will (free will) and action of an individual, having been determined beforehand by God.

To look specifically at the biblical view of predestination we need to clarify the concepts of free will and foreknowledge.

FREE WILL

Free will is denied by those who espouse any of the various forms of determinism. Determinism is a philosophical theory that all events, including moral choices, are completely determined by previously existing causes that preclude free will and the possibility that humans could have acted otherwise.

Arguments for free will are based on: the subjective experience of freedom, on sentiments of guilt, on scriptural evidence, and on the universal supposition of responsibility for personal actions that underlies the concepts of law, reward, punishment, and incentive.

When God made man in his image, free will was an integral part of that image and likeness. This is the distinguishing characteristic between a deterministic robot and man. The concept of free will is fundamental to the value that God placed on the worth of the human creation in its final perfect form. At present this human creation is a work in progress. The value of this human race is underscored by the sending of His only begotten Son Jesus as the ransom sacrifice.

Free will in humans is usually used in the sense of: the power or capacity to choose among alternatives or to act in certain situations independently of natural, social, or divine restraints.

Free Will: Disobedience

Genesis 2:16 *And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:*

Genesis 2:17 *But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.*

Genesis 3:6 *And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.*

Free will, in itself, implies nothing about whether the individual is informed or aware of the consequences of a particular free will choice. Adam was not deceived but exercised his free will in disobeying God. His knowledge of good and evil was deficient but this did not preclude a free will. Punishment only has meaning if there is a free will choice. And of course Adam and Eve began to die as a result. We notice that for humanity as well as for Adam this same free will will again be exercised in the kingdom but this time having some acquaintance with the knowledge of good and evil.

Free Will: Obedience

Rev 22:17 *And the spirit and the bride say, Come. And he that heareth, let him say, Come. And he that is athirst, let him come: he that will, let him take the water of life freely.*

So it appears that free will does not imply of itself that it has to be informed.

Also, true free will is not constrained, which means that the free will choice is not necessarily a good one. And again this is attested to by the free will choice of Adam which plunged the human race into darkness and death.

Free Will: True Choice

Deuteronomy 30:19 *I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live:*

Therefore a free will choice must contain the possibility of either choosing the good or the bad. There would be no point in God placing an apparent choice to man if true free will did not exist.

FREE WILL: PERSONAL EFFORT

2 Peter 1:10 *Therefore brethren, give diligence all the more to make your calling and election sure, for if ye do these things ye shall never fall.*

Philippians 2:12 *Therefore my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.*

If there was no free will then encouraging statements made to the elect of God concerning personal effort such as “make your calling and election sure, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling...” would be empty and devoid of any real meaning.

Once God has called and imparted His grace the individual needs to apply oneself and to give diligence to this, otherwise the desired place will be lost. Peter shows that without that diligence our calling and election is not sure.

Free Will: The Prize

1 Cor 9:24,27: *“Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.”*

Also, it would not be called a race if one did not exercise one’s free will to obey and become disciplined and focused on the path laid out by our Lord. This requires one’s free will to decide to take control and subject

oneself to the will of God.

This ability to freely choose without constraints is what makes an individual responsible for that choice and deserving of reward or punishment. One cannot hold responsible an individual if he or she had no choice. It would be unfair to pass on the punishment of death on Adam and the human race in his loins if he had no free will.

Free Will: Personal Responsibility

James 1:13 *Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempteth no man:*

14 *but each man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed.*

James makes this individual responsibility plain when he shows that those things (viz temptations) that lead man astray have their origins within oneself. And with this comes the responsibility for following them.

Free Will: The Fallen Nature

Some have argued that true free will does not exist since man's fallen state precludes doing what is good. In fact it appears that Paul says as much in Rom 7 verses 18 and 19.

18 For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it.

19 For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do.

The problem with this argument is that this pertains to the carrying out of the will and not to the will itself. Paul continues:

20 Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin which dwells within me.

Therefore the freedom of the will is intact, even in man's fallen state. The great blessing of the new creature is that through the merit of our Saviour, God deals with us on the basis of our wills and not on the carrying out of what will, which is beset by the problems of the fallen nature.

Free Will: The Ransom

Another important aspect to free will is shown by the value of Jesus laying down his humanity *as a sacrifice*. If Jesus had not exercised his free will in doing so, then this could not be seen as a sacrifice. A sacrifice is truly such only when one gives up something; in the case of Jesus a perfect human everlasting life. If Jesus had no choice and was destined in the deterministic sense then it could not have been a sacrifice since there would have been no other alternative for Him to give up. So if Jesus had no choice then the value of the ransom would necessarily be undermined. This shows how important a true free will really is.

(To be Continued)

They Had Been With Jesus

How much is told respecting Peter and John, I land what their opponents thought of them, in the words of Acts 4:13 – “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus.”

One of the remarkable things connected with an understanding of the Plan of God is its effect upon those who receive it – its transforming effect, its renewing effect. As the Lord knew and foretold, the Gospel message has not in general appealed specially to the rich, the great or the learned; these feel themselves above the Master's teachings, and are comparatively satisfied with their conditions.

The Gospel message takes hold chiefly upon those less favoured in this present life, and this is true as well of the special features of truth as of the general features of the Gospel message. In every case, however, the marked effect of the Gospel of Christ is manifested where it is received into a good and honest heart. It lifts up. It gives courage instead of fear. It gives hope instead of despondency. It gives an aim and purpose in life instead of futility. It cultivates the will and manifests itself in the open expression of the eye, the alertness of the step, the increased deftness of the hand, and the loosing of the tongue to speak of the Lord and His grace.

It is well with us, as with the apostles, that those about us should note that we have the courage of our convictions; that we fear the Lord only; that our highest aim is to give out the good tidings of great joy to all who have the hearing ear. But here we need to note more particularly the importance of the second feature of the verse, namely that “they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus” – that they were His disciples, learners in His school. This is truly the important thing for us – to learn of Jesus, to become like Him.

It is right that we should give due weight to doctrinal knowledge of the Divine character and plan, as set forth in the Word of God. But while emphasising this and its absolute necessity to our growth in grace, how important that all the Lord's followers keep in mind those features of the Master's teachings which constitute more particularly His spirit, His disposition. The sum of these is LOVE. Of our Heavenly Father it is declared

that “God is love”, so also love is the special characteristic of our Redeemer, who was the image, the very reflection of the Father.

The analysis of love, as given by the apostle Paul, may be understood to be an analysis of the Divine character as exemplified in our Lord Jesus— meekness, gentleness, patience, longsuffering, brotherly-kindness, love, And since all His followers are invited to become disciples or learners, under Him as their Teacher, it follows that all who truly learn of Him will gradually attain to these same elements of His character.

How better could we proclaim our relationship to Him? How better could we recommend to others the School of Christ? How better could we show forth the praises of our Master than by living out His example, representing His character before others. Surely, this is the significance of His injunction, “Let your light so shine before men that they, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father who is in heaven.” It is proper indeed that we let our doctrines shine out before men, but it is specially important that we let the character of Christ shine out. It is also important that the doctrines and the character correspond and co-attest to each Other.

We remember our Lord’s words, “By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another.” This was His new commandment that we should love one another as He has loved us – with a pure, unselfish love, which thinks no evil, does not vaunt self, is not easily offended, does not seek its own – the love which lays down time, energy and even life itself for the brethren.

We may never become entirely satisfactory to ourselves in thought, word and deed while still in the flesh, and we may never, therefore, be entirely satisfactory to others; but we can, we should, we must, and by the grace of God let us each resolve that we will, attain to all of this, so far as our hearts are concerned. Nothing short of this will be satisfactory to our Lord, to whom we are “betrothed” as members of the chaste, virgin church. If we fail to come up to this reasonable, possible standard, we will fail to make our calling and election sure to a place in the Bride company.

But if we do these things, if at heart we are at this standard, if we are daily seeking to live it to the best of our ability, the heavenly Bridegroom will rejoice to own us as His elect. How much indeed depends upon our learning this lesson! “If you know these things, happy are you if you do them.” (John 13:17)

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“Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure, for if you do these things, you shall never fall; for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,” (2 Peter 1:10,11)

Oneness in Christ

“ALL ONE IN CHRIST JESUS”

These words of the apostle Paul could well be the banner for every gathering of Christian people for they are both a reminder and a challenge to all who enter the family of God or the house of God that who they are and their backgrounds or standings in human terms are no longer relevant. All who enter do so solely as brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus.

Beautiful and scriptural as these sentiments are, there is an even greater and deeper oneness for which our Saviour prayed in the lovely words recorded for us in John 17. The oneness of “all one in Christ Jesus” is the established reality of Christian faith, the oneness for which Jesus prayed is his will for each one of his disciples – “that they may be one, even as we (Father and Son) are one”.

The scriptures give us much instruction and encouragement about the development of this oneness, this unanimity of love for the one Lord, for His word, His service, His people. And from these, we learn that the only sure foundation for such oneness is the personal abiding in Christ of each one of his followers. For the Saviour’s will is that “they may all be one, as Thou Father art in me and I in Thee that they may be one in us”.

The reality of oneness in Christ Jesus already established in God’s purposes, the development of the spirit of oneness which is our Master’s will for us all, and the only foundation for oneness – let us briefly consider together these aspects of Christian unity.

THE REALITY OF ONENESS

The full text from which the words “all one in Christ Jesus” are taken is found in Gal. 3:26-29:

“For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, for as many of you as have been baptised into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ’s then are ye Abraham’s seed and heirs

according to the promise”.

All are children of God, all have put on Christ, all have the same inheritance, all are one in Christ.

This statement of the apostle has been true in every century but how revolutionary it must have sounded to his hearers in the context of the extreme national, social and sexual divisions of Paul's day. In today's western society, at least, these have been broken down in considerable measure, but for whatever reason there can never be first and second class Christians, nor can there be any room for the sectarian spirit. We rightly respect those specially blessed by God with gifts and talents for service but as each one appears before God, he or she has only one standing – a sinner saved by grace – all one in Christ.

On more than one occasion, Jesus had to give the disciples the illustration of the childlike character, and even in the shadow of the coming cross, he had to reprove them for self-seeking. “One is your Master”, he told them, “even Christ, all ye are brethren. He that is greatest among you shall be your servant” Matt. 23:8,11. All are brothers and sisters in Him, and all are equally precious in the sight of Him who has called them with the one high and holy calling in Christ.

Particularly at the Memorial season, we are reminded of the oneness of the Lord's people, as we read – “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread” 1 Cor. 10:16,17. What a depth, what a privilege of oneness with each other and with our Head are presented to us in these words.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF ONENESS

Going on from the existing oneness of the body of Christ, made up of all his faithful followers, and the worth of each member of that body, let us hear again the words of our Master, shortly before the end of his earthly ministry.

“Neither pray I for these alone but for them also who shall believe on me through their word, that they may all be one, as thou Father art in me and I in Thee, that they may be one in us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me. And the glory which Thou gavest me, I have given them that they may be one, even as we are one. I in them and Thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one” John 17:20-23.

What a standard of oneness the Lord prayed for! One even as the Father and the Son are one! Furthermore, the oneness prayed for is a oneness “in us” – in the Father and the Son. And if this be so, then we should surely be looking for character development and emergence of a family likeness, not only to one another but more importantly to our Lord and to our Father in heaven. “He who has seen me has seen the Father” – Jesus told Philip; how much of our Master do others see in us? Is the family likeness there, is it developing? Do others take knowledge of us, as they did of Peter and John, that we have been with Jesus? These are questions we may all well consider.

It is easy to equate oneness with uniformity, that is, uniformity of understanding, uniformity of practice, even in earlier days uniformity of dress and demeanour among Christian people. In all these things, reverence and respect for others are most important, but they are not criteria of oneness in Christ. These are to be found in Paul's words:

“I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long suffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one spirit, even as ye are called in the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all and in you all.” Eph.4: 1-6

THE PRESERVATION OF ONENESS

We note that the Christian's endeavour is not required for the establishment of the unity of the spirit, but to hold it fast, to preserve what God has already ordained. Paul's earnest plea for maintenance of this Christian unity, as here expressed, embraces two essentials for true oneness and we might sum them up as mutual considerateness and mutual conviction. The first needs continuing cultivation, the second constant calling to mind. Failure to attend to both aspects has been probably the greatest cause of the world's condemnation of those who name the name of Christ. And the adversary is still active in the area of personal relationships between Christians and the need for vigilance is just as great today as it has ever been.

“With lowliness, meekness, long-suffering, forbearance, in the bond of peace” – these qualities alone can ensure any degree of oneness, harmony and united effort in any sphere of human activity – political, social or religious. Our news media furnish us with frequent examples of how promotion of self-image and self-interest can lead to disintegration of associations of people, even although all involved profess to have common ideals and aims. These alone, however, are clearly not enough for real unity, where mutual respect and concern for others are forgotten.

“Fulfil ye my Joy, that ye be like minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things but every man also on the things of others” Phil.2:2-4

“Be like minded” – does this imply that all will hold exactly the same view on every subject? No, the like mind which is needed in each one is that described in the next verse – “let this mind be in you, that was also in Christ Jesus”. This is the mind of humility, obedience and self-sacrifice.

“The same love, one accord, one mind” – these take our thoughts back to the oneness of the Father and the Son. The full extent of that divine oneness is well beyond human comprehension, but we see it expressed in the perfect loving obedience of Jesus to do His Father’s will and to further His purposes even at the cost of his own life. And we see it displayed in the manifesting forth by Jesus to all with eyes to see and hearts to appreciate something of the character of the Almighty, who is also the one God and Father of all who come to Him by faith.

And these should be the characteristics of every child of God, as he or she seeks to show forth by word and deed the praises of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvellous light. To concentrate all our endeavours along such lines will surely contribute to greater unity of the spirit among all the Lord’s people. There will always be differences of background, of understanding of details of God’s plans and purposes, of personal ways of expression, and so on, but these can safely be left in the Father’s hand, until that day dawns when we shall all know even as now we are known of God.

THE FOUNDATION OF ONENESS

Those precious things which are shared by all who truly love God and are trusting Jesus as Saviour and Lord are in reality so much greater than those which are too frequently allowed to divide His people and sever fellowship. “One body, one spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father” – seven unshakeable things – a seven-fold foundation which should be more than enough as a basis for mutual heartfelt love and respect and co-operation among all the Lord’s dear ones.

One writer has said – “we shall never be of one mind” in the sense of all holding the same opinions, but we may all be of one mind when beneath diversities of opinion, expression and view, we are animated by a common devotion to Christ, a common loyalty to the great underlying facts of redemption, and a common love to all who ‘hold the Head’, though they may differ from us in an infinite variety of minor considerations.” Here, the hard core of those things that unite Christians is clearly identified.

1. Common devotion to Christ;
2. Common loyalty to the gospel;
3. Common love to all who are Christ’s.

Another has presented the thought of unity in diversity as follows – “In the church there is room for an infinite variety. Each brings his or her own contribution and we must gather with all the saints, if we would comprehend the length and breadth and depth and height of the love of Christ. You cannot see the whole sky, the whole mountain, the whole broad ocean, nor can I. But I will tell you what I have seen, tasted and handled of the word of life, and you shall tell me what you have experienced. Thus our spirits shall have fellowship one with another. There will be a mutual exchange in commodities, as we report our discoveries of the unsearchable riches of Christ. For none has exactly the same viewpoint as another has, and none exactly the same (way of expression). So, be yourself –make your own discoveries of the manifold grace of Christ.”

Following the apostle’s words in Eph.4:1-6, he goes on to say that to every one of us is given grace to help in the upbuilding of the body of Christ. There are particular gifts to some, but grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ is provided for all. And what is the ultimate objective? Verse 13 tells us beautifully – “till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the fulness of the stature of Christ. At the end of the way, the oneness of spirit, the co-operative service of each member of the one body will blossom in full and complete understanding, in perfect oneness, in full reality.

THE NATURE OF ONENESS

Looking again at our Lord’s words in John 17:22, we read:

“And the glory which Thou gavest me I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one”.

This is, as it were, God’s viewpoint of the church of this gospel age – one holy temple in the Lord, being built up on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone (Eph 2:20,21). And again:

“Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His.” 2 Tim.2:19.

He knows personally all who make up that one body, that holy temple.

The spirit of love, meekness and service to all the Lord’s people is clearly so very important for it is the divine arrangement that there be one body. It was for this oneness that Jesus prayed earnestly and in harmony

with which he addressed his disciples right down the age:

“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” John 13:34,35.

Wherever there has been disunity among the Lord’s people, it would be safe to say that this spirit of “love as I have loved you” has been conspicuous by its absence.

THE BOND OF ONENESS

There is then already a oneness of standing and calling between all Christ’s followers and in God’s sight. Further, there is also a need for constant development of the oneness of the spirit, of mutual love, loyalty, purpose and considerateness, among all his brethren in keeping with his will for us. What is it then that alone will assure such oneness? The oneness of standing and call is “in Christ:”. The oneness for which Jesus prayed is that they might be one “in us”. Here surely is the key – abiding “in Him”, and He in us. For just as there can be no fruitage unless we abide in Him as in the illustration of the vine and the branches, so there can be no oneness either.

The writer earlier quoted on unity in diversity has further commented:

“Christ is the bond of unity to the church –Christ in each individual and each individual in Christ. Let us never forget that gracious reciprocity. The sponge must be in the ocean and the ocean in the sponge. Each believer is written in the Lamb’s book of life by the same fingers. Each of us has been grafted into the true vine, though in different places. Each of us has some function in the mystical body. We were in Him when He died and rose and entered His Father’s presence. In Him we have access into this grace wherein we stand.

The gift of Christ, on the other hand, has been made to each one of us, that he might realise himself through all the experiences of his members. As of old it required four gospels to reveal to mankind what Jesus Christ was, so all believers are required to set forth and exemplify to the world all the excelling glories of our Emmanuel. It is for this reason that we are told that the church ‘is His body the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.’ Eph.1:23.”

The illustration has been given that just as the nearer the spokes of a wheel get to the axle, the nearer each gets to the others, so with Christians –the closer each draws to Christ, the closer will all be drawn to each other. This is the all-important requirement and the only foundation for true unity – abiding in Christ. We need to look upon Him first and always, and upon others for what of Christ we may see in them. We need to be as kind to others who may sometimes upset or disappoint us as we know in our hearts we need them to be to us.

THE CHALLENGE OF ONENESS

To realise the true oneness, even now despite human frailties, of all who are “in Christ Jesus” is a rich blessing and a treasure of our faith. It will serve to extend the horizons of our love for God and of our appreciation of the wideness of His mercy. We will never know most of His dear ones in this life, but what a privilege we have to open our hearts to them and to pray for them, known or unknown to us. What a challenge, is ours to develop in our hearts and lives that spirit of oneness which is like to that of our Father and His dear Son. Truly “the fellowship of kindred minds is like to that above” when it is centred in Christ.

Let us treasure the privilege of being called by God to membership in that one body of Christ, let us rejoice with all who are truly His in that one great hope of our calling, let us endeavour always, in love and understanding for others, to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. For this is our Master’s will for us here and now; its fulness we will know when we see Him face to face.



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While it is our intention that these columns be used for teachings strictly in accord with the Lord's Word, we cannot accept responsibility for every expression used, either in the correspondence or in the sermons reported.

CRUCIFIED & RISEN

"Jesus our Lord..... Who was delivered for our offences and was raised again for our justification" Rom. 4:25.

"IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME"

At this time of the year, our thoughts turn particularly to those momentous events in Jerusalem nearly 2000 years ago.

There it was that our dear Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, He who was holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners was cruelly put to death upon a Roman cross. There He suffered and died, "the just for the unjust"; there all the various types and prophecies of the Old Testament found their fulfilment in that One whom John the Baptist had earlier announced as "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world".

So at this season, in remembrance of Him, Jesus our Saviour and Lord, we keep that simple Memorial service which He Himself instituted in that upper room, so long ago. We see again in the elements the giving of His life, the shedding of His blood, ultimately for the blessing of all mankind, but here and now for all those who have ears to hear His loving "follow me." Again we take to ourselves the merit of His blood and feast on Him who is the Bread of Life. We recall our privilege of following in His footsteps, to be dead with Him, of fellowship with Him in lives of obedience and sacrifice, and we renew our vows of consecration to His service.

"For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show forth the Lord's death, till He come," 1 Cor. 11:26. May each dear child of God be richly blessed as once again we heed His loving words. "This do in remembrance of me."

"HE IS RISEN"

But how thankful we are that the story does not end at the cross. Praise God, we serve a risen Saviour, and once more we can rejoice as we read the words of the angelic messengers to the two Marys who had gone so early on the first day of the week to the tomb where Jesus had been laid. "He is not here, He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay, and go quickly, and tell His disciples." Matt. 28:6,7. The account goes on to tell that the two women departed quickly with fear (awe) and great joy and ran to tell the disciples. What joyous, awesome news indeed!

The resurrection of Jesus is truly the key to all the hopes of the Lord's people, as so beautifully reasoned out by the apostle Paul in the great resurrection Chapter 1 Cor. 15. Our Lord's own words to His disciples, in His tender last-night discourses recorded by John, might well be thought of as a "text" for the apostle's masterly exposition. "Yet a little while and the world seeth me no more, but ye see me; *because I live, ye shall live also.*" John 14:19.

The well-attested fact of Christ's resurrection is, furthermore, the assurance of the resurrection in due time and order of all mankind; firstly, the faithful followers of Jesus of this age in the "first" resurrection (Rev. 20:6), then the faithful servants of God of old times in that "better" resurrection, for which they looked (Heb. 11:35), and, finally, the remainder of mankind in the resurrection to judgement. (John 5:29.)

Well may we marvel at the fullness and the comprehensiveness of God's love and wisdom, as seen in His plans and guaranteed by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgements and His ways past finding out!" Rom. 11:33

"Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept." (1 Cor. 15:20)

He is risen – Hallelujah!

“Children of Promise”

“Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.” (Gal 4:28)

“Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children, but in Isaac shall thy seed be called; that is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.” (Rom 9:7,8)

“The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.” (Acts 2:39)

There is surely something very special in being a child of promise. Every new child is a precious gift of God, but in the topic text in Gal 4:28 the apostle is making an analogy between those of this gospel age who have been called by God to be followers of His dear Son on the one hand and on the other hand Isaac, who was in a very special way a child of promise and a promised child. Paul had previously discussed and contrasted the dispensations of law and of grace, as represented in Ishmael, son of the bondwoman, and Isaac, the son of the free woman.

Before we proceed to look at the implications of this description – “children of promise” – let us consider the promise of a seed of blessing which God gave to Abraham, that grand old man of faith, indeed the father of the faithful, as he is elsewhere called. (Originally, his name was Abram and his wife’s Sarai, but both were later changed by God to reflect the promise.) In Gen 12:1-3, we read of God’s great promise of blessing, not only to Abraham himself, but through him and his descendants, culminating in the words so precious to students of God’s Word – “in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.” We refer to these words so very often, for the promise they contain is a foundation feature of God’s plan to cater for the restoration and the blessing of all His creation. Nor is its relationship to our Saviour and the Church widely recognized by many Christian people.

The promise was later repeated to Abraham and it was made clear that the blessing foretold was to come through his seed, i.e. a direct descendant. However, Abraham and his wife Sarah were already of advanced age and had no heir. We read in Gen 15 how Abraham reasoned with God along the lines that his steward might become his heir. God had just reassured Abraham in the words “I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward”, truly an all-embracing guarantee, but the problem of the heir still remained. “And Abraham said, Lord God, what wilt Thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus? And Abraham said, Behold, to me Thou hast given no seed, and lo, one born in my house is mine heir.” (Gen 15:2,3) It is evident that Eliezer was a very fine and trustworthy man; he had been born in Abraham’s house and by the usage of the time could have been made his heir.

THE HEIR

But this was not God’s way and we, like Abraham, need to wait upon our Heavenly Father for His way and His wisdom, not our own however seemingly good and well meant. So in Gen 15:4, we read God’s response to Abraham “The word of the Lord came unto him (Abraham), saying, This shall not be thine heir, but he that shall come out of thy own bowels shall be thine heir.” Only a direct descendant would suffice, however impossible that seemed at the time. But time went on and the two remained childless, leading Sarah to propose that Abraham take her maid or bondservant to wife and in due time, Ishmael was born. Although God gave his mother, Hagar, assurances regarding her son, in God’s wisdom and purposes he was not to be the heir and when Abraham was 99 years old, God renewed His covenant of promise with Abraham and further promised that Sarah would bear a son and would be a mother of nations.

“And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed, and thou shalt call his name Isaac, and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant and with his seed after him.” (Gen 17:19) Further on, we read of the fulfillment of these words in Gen 21:1-3 – “And the Lord visited Sarah as He had said, and the Lord did unto Sarah as He had spoken. For Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time which God had spoken to him. And Abraham called the name of his son that was born unto him, whom Sarah bore to him, Isaac.” Here indeed, was the immediate fulfillment, at long last, of the promise. Many years had evidently passed since the original promise was given to Abraham, but in due time, God’s time, the “child of promise” was born, that child through whose descent the greater, ultimate seed of promise, our Lord, would eventually come.

But Abraham’s testing was not yet over and in Gen 22, we read how God instructed him to offer up his only son of promise for whom he and Sarah had so long waited. What a test this would be in any circumstances, but in this case how much more so! How trustingly Abraham responded we well know, how also a substitute was at the last moment provided in place of Isaac. In this incident, we see also the trustfulness of Isaac, as with a heavy hearted father he made his way to Mt Moriah. But apart from the testing of Abraham’s faith, what a clear fore-glimpse of the offering up of God’s own dearly beloved and only Son to be the Saviour of

the world. Paul tells us that God preached before the gospel to Abraham in the giving of the promise of blessing, here He prefigures to him the means by which the blessing will come. How much of the outworking of God's plan is seen indeed in his dealings with this faithful old patriarch.

THE BRIDE

Later on, the time came for a bride to be found for Isaac, the son of promise, and the mission of Abraham's chief servant back to his master's own country and kindred for this task is recounted in Gen 24. In this account, it is not difficult to see a foreshadowing of the calling of the bride for the greater Isaac, our Lord Jesus Christ. We see the great care and faithfulness of the servant in carrying out his mission. Many gifts were brought and presented to the damsel to whom God lead the servant and to her family. No doubt, the good character of Isaac was also well presented but it is notable that Rebekah was given the final decision to go with the servant or not. Her willingness to go to meet her future husband is notable; she had heard of his character and qualities and was ready, even though she had not yet seen him, to become his wife. How this reminds us of Peter's words – "Whom (Jesus Christ) having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." (1 Pet 1:8)

The account concludes with her first glimpse of Isaac as he meditated in the field at eventide. Subsequently, "Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife, and he loved her." How pictorial this is of our Lord and His chosen bride. Not only was Isaac the appointed seed of promise, but his bride was also to be specially selected. Through this pair, the line descended until we come to the greater Isaac, the ultimate seed of the promise to father Abraham. Paul explains in Gal 3:16 – "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He said not, And to seeds, as of many, but as of one; And to thy seed, which is Christ." Further on, the apostle brings in the intimate association of the church of this gospel age in the fulfillment of the promise of blessing – "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus... and if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Gal 3:26-29)

Here the apostle speaks of the Lord's people as "heirs according to the promise", leading us into our text verse in Gal 4:28 – "Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise." The apostle furthermore speaks down the age to all who have heard the call to follow Jesus. Elsewhere, these are spoken of as being "in Christ", surely a most intimate relationship. It is abundantly clear that the church and its call is no "ad hoc" arrangement, but part of a great master plan going back at least as far as God's promise to Abraham so long ago. But Paul tells us that in fact it was predetermined even before that. Speaking of the church, he says – "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as He has chosen us in Him (i.e. Christ) before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself (i.e. God), according to the good pleasure of His will." (Eph 1:3-5)

Here we see that it was God's long range plan and desire that there be a people for His name and for His purposes and that these were to be to the praise of His glorious grace, to which end He has made all such accepted not in their own righteousness, but in the "beloved". In parallel with this long term provision for the calling out of the church and surpassing it in glory is the provision of the Lamb of God, "slain from the foundation of the world" as we read in Rev 13:8. Peter also tells us of this preplanning – "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things... but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, who verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last days for you." (1 Pet 1:18-20) These two provisions find their focus in the promise to Abraham "in thee and in thy seed" as elucidated by Paul in Gal 3, already referred to.

THE MYSTERY

Paul also speaks of this calling out of a people for God's name as part of the mystery, or secret, of Christ "which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit, that the gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel." Paul goes on to explain that the call of the church to be the holy bride for God's dear Son is an exhibition of His manifold wisdom, His multifaceted wisdom, and is part of His eternal purpose in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Eph 3:5-11) The words "eternal purpose" in verse 11 are sometimes translated as "a plan of ages" and in this form have entered Bible Student usage. It points to the progressive nature of God's purposes but we need to remember that it is also an "eternal" purpose, conceived in the mind of a loving God, preached before to Abraham, centred in Jesus Christ and involving not only those who are children of promise but eventually to bless and uplift all mankind.

Returning to Isaac, we see in his life story many pointers as to the final fulfillment of the promise to his father Abraham. We see the long delayed -arrival of the foretold son and heir of promise, that he must be of free birth and that the selection of a fit bride for him was most important. In the greatest of all tests of Abraham's faith, we see God foreshadowing to him, in the offering up of Isaac, how the promise of blessing would ultimately be accomplished. Abraham's faith having been proved, Isaac was, of course, reprieved but the greater Isaac, the ultimate seed of promise had to go all the way to the cross, that He might be the

satisfaction for the sins of the church of this age and of all mankind in due time.

Apart from the great faith of Abraham, we see the willing obedience, even apparently unto death of the younger man, Isaac. We note his quiet patience as he awaits the return of his father's steward with the chosen bride. In turn, we see the willingness of Rebekah to go with the steward's party back to her future husband, her first glimpse of him and her becoming his wife. So much of this is reflected in the experience of the Lord's people of this gospel age, the age of the high calling of God in Christ. How fitting are the apostle's words using the analogy of husband and wife – "Husbands, love your wives even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish." (Eph 5:25-27)

Psalms 45 presents a similar picture of the bridal preparation and entry in to her husband, the king. Many other scriptures have much precious material on this aspect and others of the high calling and its importance in the purposes of God, but keeping the lives of Isaac and Rebekah in mind, there are several points that particularly merit our attention. Just as a seed for Abraham and Sarah was foretold long before the event, so natural Israel and indeed all mankind had to wait long centuries for the coming of the greater Isaac. Heb 9:26 tells us – "Nor yet that He (Christ) should offer Himself often... for then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world, but now once in the end of the age hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." At the end of the year, we specially remember the birth of our dear Saviour, and in Gal 3:16, Paul explains that He is that promised seed of blessing, promised to Abraham so long ago.

THE CALL

We have already seen that the church, the chosen bride of Christ, was no afterthought to God's plan. Just as a considerable and well equipped entourage set off to seek out a bride for Isaac, being directed by Abraham to go direct to his own country of origin and to his own kindred, there to find the suitable maiden, so God has His own criteria for those whom He calls to be members of the Bride. We see this in John 6:44 – "No one can come to me (Christ), except the Father who hath sent me draw him." These His wisdom has foreknown and predestined and we see something of the criteria in our Lord's and the apostles' words, such as the beatitudes in Matt 5:3-11, and Paul's summation in 1 Cor 1:26,27 – "Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called, but God hath chosen the foolish things,... the weak things,... and base things of the world, and things which are despised,... and things which are not,... that no flesh should glory in His presence." Of His first such followers, our Lord said "Thine they were and Thou gavest them me, and they have kept Thy word."

Returning to Paul's words in Gal 3, we have already noted that our Lord Jesus Christ is clearly identified as the long promised seed of Abraham through whom the promise is to be fulfilled and that those who come into Christ are to be associated with Him in that grand work. So we see how these can truly be called "children of promise" as was Isaac. These are mostly not children of Abraham by natural descent as we read in John 1:11-13 – "He (Jesus) came unto His own, but His own received Him not; but as many as received Him gave Him power to become the sons of God, who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." The apostle speaks of these as new creatures in Christ, a new creation, "children of promise."

In what way, then, would we say that the Lord's people of this age are "children of promise"? The passages in Gal 3 and John 1 already considered state clearly that these, as footstep followers of Jesus Christ, who is the ultimate fulfillment of the promise of a seed, are privileged by faith to be also children of Abraham. As such, they have part and inheritance in the promised work of blessing of all mankind in due course. Rom 8:16,17 tells us that "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together." The provision of God's plan was one of the divine mysteries or secrets not clearly made known until after our Lord's death and resurrection but we can see now in the light of God's Word that it was always in His mind as part of the Abrahamic promise.

THE PRIVILEGE

What a humbling privilege it is even now and will be for all those whom our Heavenly Father finds faithful in this life of preparation and training! "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I overcame and am set down with my Father in His throne." (Rev 3:21) How great are its present blessings, how important the trials and refining processes which God allows for our growth in grace and understanding! It is written of our Saviour that "He learned obedience by the things which He suffered" and that through His experiences, being made like unto His brethren, He can be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God. As children of promise, joint heirs with Him, we need to learn the same lessons in preparation for that "greater work above" which one of our hymns refers to.

Lest we be carried away with the grandeur of this call, the apostle makes it clear that it is only in Christ, by faith, that we become children of promise; it is only in Christ, by faith, that we are counted as Abraham's

seed and heirs according to that promise. The fact of this favoured position is discussed by Paul in Rom 9:7-9 which read – “Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children, but in Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted for the seed; for this is the word of promise, at this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son.” The words “in Isaac shall thy seed be called” are quoted from Gen 21:12, and it is only in the greater Isaac, our Lord Jesus Christ, that we are accepted in God’s sight. It is only if we belong to Christ, if we are truly His, that we are Abraham’s seed and heirs of the promise. “In Christ” – this is the theme of the Ephesian epistle and our only sure foundation.

But is this all? God foreknew and provided that there be a bride chosen to share with His dear Son in the fulfillment of the promise and this call of the bride has been going on for nearly 2000 years. Indeed, the invitation to accept Jesus as Saviour and resolve to follow in His steps of obedience and faithfulness is still open for those with ears to hear and hearts to obey. There is a cost, but not one that compares in any way with what He calls us to, in present joy and future service. Of our Lord it is written that “for the joy that was set before Him (He) endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Heb 12:2)

THE PROSPECT

So too it is for His followers, the children of promise; the joy set before them is not only to see Him as He is and be made like Him, but to be used along with Him and subject to Him in the great blessing work promised to father Abraham so long ago. For this work, they are called and chosen and are to be found faithful. In this work of the coming age, Abraham himself and the other faithful heroes of Heb 11 will surely have a part, but the Lord’s people of this age are to be a “chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that (they) should show forth the praises of Him who hath called (them) out of darkness into His marvellous light.” (1 Pet 2:9) In that age to come, they will not be called to sacrifice but to rule and bless all mankind under their great King of Kings and High Priest, after the order of Melchisedec.

In 1 Cor 6:2, we read that the saints, the children of promise, are to judge the world. We recall that the role of the judges in Israel was much to do with instruction and guidance and Isaiah assures us that “when Thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world shall learn righteousness.” (Isa 26:9) The New Testament confirms this role of the Church, but for much of the detail, we need to refer to the Old Testament prophets. Peter declares that all of these spoke of times of restitution or restoration which would follow the return of our Lord. The program is set out for us in that very familiar passage in Acts 15:14-18, the first step being the calling out of a people for God’s name and the final outcome the residue of mankind being blessed as they seek after the Lord.

In such manner, the orderly procession of God’s plans and purposes as first clearly spoken to Abraham – “in thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed” – is to be carried out, and the Lord’s people, “Children of promise” like Isaac, are to have a privileged part with their dear Lord and the faithful ones of old times in that work of blessing.

IMPORTANCE OF THE HIGH CALLING

When we think of the favour extended to frail men and women of this age in the calling of God to be His sons and daughters by Christ Jesus, when we recognise how blessed we are even here and now, when we acknowledge how much greater will be the privilege of service and blessing to others in the age to come; how earnestly we need to consider the apostle’s words – “I beseech you that you walk worthy of the calling wherewith you are called.” May your resolve and mine for this and each new year be “by Thy grace we will!”

Amen

I am the True Vine

The discourse recorded in John 15:1-11 was spoken by Jesus on the night in which he instituted the memorial of his death. It may have been told to his disciples in the Upper Room or on the way to the Mount of Olives. In it we have brought before our minds the husbandman, the vine, the branches and the fruit. This is a good illustration, as any orchard or vineyard first needs a good husbandman to direct the work, so that the most profit can be gained from a ripe crop of fruit. Jesus says that His Father is the husbandman. Here we understand that our Heavenly Father is the one who has the care and interest of all His people who are called to be His children, during this present age.

ABIDING

Jesus also says (v1) that He is the vine, the main trunk of the tree, and no life can flow out to the branches of a tree without this means of supply. So Jesus is the source of supply or the means by which the church, branches in the vine, are fed and nourished. This teaches us a lesson that is evident right through the New Testament, that God is the Father of the Church. Jesus further explained that “no man can come to Him except the Father which sent me draw him.” (John 6:44). After being drawn to Jesus we can only become children of God our Father through accepting Jesus as our Saviour as Paul writes, “being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Rom 5:1)

The branches of the vine can only maintain life if they receive the source of life, and this is illustrated by the sap which flows or is drawn from the nourishment in the earth by the roots through the main vine to the branches and eventually to the fruit. The sap represents the Holy Spirit of God which must flow through Jesus to every member of the Church. Thus we become children of God, as we read in Rom. 8:14 "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God they are the Sons of God". So Jesus says in Verse 2, "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away." The Lord wishes to see some progress being made after we are called to be branches in the vine. This is also made clear to us in the parable of the Sower in Luke 8:4-15. Some of the seed fell on unproductive ground and did not bring forth fruit to perfection. But the seed which fell on good ground pictures they who have an honest and good heart and having heard the word bring forth fruit with patience.

PRUNING

Jesus further tells us in Verse 2, that each branch that brings forth fruit needs pruning if it is going to bear more fruit. This is done by the husbandman –the one that has the care of the vineyard. He nurtures it, trims it, keeps it clean and has a deep interest in its growth, and ultimately in its quality of fruit. So our Heavenly Father has this same interest in us, His children. The pruning hand of our Father is shown in the lives of His children by the various experiences of life that are designed to draw us nearer to Him, and to depend entirely on the vine, our Lord Jesus. Jesus knew that within a few hours his disciples would go through a very harrowing experience. The Shepherd would be smitten and the sheep scattered.

The value of these illustrations of Jesus would be of greater assistance to his disciples after Pentecost. John 14:20 reads, "at that day, ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." John 14:29 – "And now I have told you before it come to pass, that when it is come to pass ye might believe." No doubt then the Apostles would see the Father's hand in their experiences after Pentecost, when they were dealt with so severely because of the hatred of the Jewish faction who took the life of Jesus.

It has been the same for all the Lord's people right down the Gospel age as the Apostle Paul says in Heb. 12:5-7, "My son despise not the chastening of the Lord nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" So our Father purifies all His children so that they may be more useful to Him. He takes away things that hinder their usefulness and makes them more useful in motive and life.

Verse 4 continues "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me." This verse speaks of being united in Jesus. The Apostle Paul says in 1 Cor 12:12, "For as the body is one and hath many members and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ." There we see the same thought –that we are individuals but united through Christ. This is brought to our attention in other Scriptures. Eph. 2:19-20 reads, "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God: and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone:"

FRUITAGE

"For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matt. 18:20) All these Scriptures point out that we are entirely dependant on the need to abide in Jesus. No fruit can be borne unless we continue to have the spirit of Jesus in our hearts. Whenever we meet together with members of the true vine, we do so because of Jesus' love for us and our love for Him. 2 Cor 5:14 says "For the love of Christ constraineth us;" ie – holds us together. Thus we find that by meeting together with the Lord's people we are assisted in the development of fruit. Verse 5 reads, "I am the vine ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me you can do nothing." We notice here that much fruit is the product of our abiding in Christ and Christ in us. If this be so, fruit is certain.

To quote from another writer – "Have you ever noticed the difference in Christian life between work and fruit? A machine can do work: only life can bear fruit. A law can compel work: only love can spontaneously bring forth fruit. Work implies effort and labour: – the essential idea of fruit is that it is the silent, natural, restful produce of our inner life. The gardener may labour to give his fruit tree the digging, the watering, the manuring, dressing and pruning it needs; but he can do nothing to produce the fruit. So in the Christian life – the fruit of the Spirit is "Love, joy, peace." The healthy life bears much fruit. The connection between work and fruit is perhaps best seen in the expression, "fruitful in every good work." (Col 1:10)

It is only when good works come as the fruit of the indwelling spirit that they are acceptable to God. Under the compulsion of law and conscience, or the influence of inclination and zeal, people may be most diligent in good works, and yet find that they have but little spiritual result.

There can be no reason but this – their works are human efforts, instead of being the fruit of the Spirit, the restful, natural outcome of the Holy Spirit operating within us."

Fruit takes time to grow and so does the fruit of the Spirit. First of all there is the flower, then the tiny fruit begins to grow. Then the fruit is green and sour, but all through the growing season it is necessary to abide in the vine until the ripe fruit is developed to the satisfaction of the husbandman.

In our passage, Verse 7 suggests the need of prayer, and again we are reminded that we are dependent on the vine. We cannot make progress in the Christian way, in our own strength. So we must continually ask for a supply of the Holy Spirit so that we may develop continually the fruits of the Spirit. We also note that Jesus said "If my words abide in you." It is not only necessary that we seek divine grace by keeping contact with our Heavenly Father in prayer, but that we take note of what God's will is for us, through His word of truth. Those who abide in Christ do not do their own will. Jesus said that he sought always to do the will of his Father and those who abide in Christ must likewise do the Father's will.

Psalms 40 is a prophecy of our Lord Jesus. Verse 6 says that God was not depending on the sacrifice of animals to take away sin, but it would be found in the sacrifice of Jesus. Verse 7 says, "Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart." This is confirmed in Heb 10:5-10, where Paul refers this Psalm directly to Jesus and in verse 10, Paul says that we, the Church, are sanctified by doing the Father's will, as Jesus did, laying our sacrifice on the altar along with our Lord's. We present our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God.

We get a further idea of the importance of the words of Jesus abiding in us from our Lord's prayer in John 17: 14-17 – indeed this prayer of Jesus to his Father shows us the importance of prayer and communion with Him. Reading from Verse 14, "I have given them thy word: and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."

"MUCH FRUIT"

John 15 continues in Verse 8 – "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples." Here we see the outcome of the abiding in the vine, of abiding in Christ i.e. the fruitage – much fruit; that glorifies the Father, that honours the Father. Here we should note 1 Pet 4:11, which says, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth; that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever". It is good to remind ourselves of the importance of the words – let him do it as of the ability which God giveth.

This is a reminder again of our need for humility; not attempting anything in our own strength, but depending on our abiding in the true vine. If this is so, "so shall ye be my disciples" (So shall we honour God) Verse 9 continues, "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love", i.e. abide in my love. This verse is heart searching! Can we really comprehend the Father's love for our Lord Jesus? We can in some way by realizing that it was because of his obedience to the Father that his love was shown to him in such great measure.

What a wonderful thought this is that Jesus has toward us the same kind of love that the Father has toward him. It is only by faith that we can grasp this thought and maintain this standing with Jesus. As his disciples we will desire to continue in his love always, endeavouring to look to him as our exemplar in obedience to his Father's will, for it was our Lord's obedience to His Father that showed his love for Him. 1 John 5:3 says, "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" – not irksome, not difficult to keep, if in our hearts the desire is to serve Him.

Verse 11, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." The things Jesus refers to here are the lessons from the vine and the branches. If these things remain or abide in you, my joy will abide in you and your joy will be complete. As mentioned earlier the Apostles would experience the full benefit of this parable after Pentecost, when they would be filled with the Holy Spirit. "And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." (John 16:22)

Paul records in Heb 12:2, that it was because of the joy that was set before Him that Jesus endured the cross, despising the shame and is now set down at the right hand of the throne of God. This same joy was experienced by the Apostles after Pentecost, when they went forward with the gospel to all who could hear the message. And so it has been with all the followers of Jesus. The telling of the Gospel brings joy to our hearts just as it did to the Lord and His Apostles. (JBH)

"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, He may give it you. These things I command you, that ye love another. (John 15:16,17)

Convention Reflections — Melbourne — New Year 2000/1

The Melbourne Convention provided those able to attend with much spiritual food and warm fellowship with others of like mind. It was an excellent way to start a new year, a new millennium by our calendar, which will bring many challenges for all of us, from the youngest in years or length of time following our Lord, to those who have been in the "way" for many decades. We were blessed to have Bro. Bob and Sis. Deanna Gorecki, also Sis Nancy Brown, from USA and Sis Joanna Gowryluk from Canada with us.

We went on an interesting journey over the three days of convention. We considered the Lord's people as Children of Promise and the many promises to Abraham's seed given to them. We were then taken through the Iron Gate into the prison where Peter was held and noted the lessons we can learn from his experience and those of his brethren and God's workings in His people's lives. We looked at the meaning of Humility in the Bible and how it should develop in our character. With Predestination, we saw how God deals with many different people to fulfil His plans for mankind, without taking away their free will.

We looked into the four great attributes of God's character – Power, Wisdom, Justice and Love – and how all these had to meet if God's plan for the salvation of mankind was to come about and how all these attributes were demonstrated in His beloved son, our Saviour. Along with the addresses and studies, we received messages from brothers and sisters from interstate and overseas and were able to join in praising our Heavenly Father in many of the hymns we have come to love as well as some that we are not so familiar with.

We looked at the Importance of the Call of the Church and its work now and in the future. We were told to go for Gold, and how the Christian walk is likened to the ancient Grecian games. Then we had a history lesson on Jerusalem, the City of Peace, after which we looked into "Her" Perfect Work, the fact that faith, hope and works are intertwined as requirements for Church members. At this time of year, the Christian world looks to Bethlehem and the birth of our Lord without realising its full significance and how it fits in with God's plan to provide a Saviour for all mankind.

We participated in two Bible studies. We saw the warning given to the Thessalonians about the problems that lay ahead during the day of preparation and the need for us all to arm ourselves by putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. We took a journey with the Shepherd King David and saw how he viewed Jehovah as the Great Shepherd who leads on the narrow way, not always through green pastures but at times through the valley of the shadow of death.

New Year's Eve was spent with the Polish brethren and we were reminded in song and prose from the children of what blessings our Heavenly Father has bestowed upon us. It has been said that "we do not always get what we want, but our Heavenly Father gives us what we need!" We were lead (by Bro Bob) through a reflective look over the end of the millennium and the need to consider how we have served our Heavenly Father.

We took time to look at the promises of restitution spoken of by all God's holy prophets, then we took a building course on the building of God's temple and how we are to be parts of that holy temple. A reminder was given of the need for a spirit towards others of forgiving and forgetting, even as God has for Christ's sake forgiven us. The Convention closed with the singing of "Blest be the Tie that Binds: and "Lord, Dismiss us with Thy Blessing" and a final prayer.

The Glory of God

The personal glory of the Creator is quite beyond the ability of the human mind to comprehend. However, we can understand to some extent the glorious virtues of his character. We might say that God's infinite wisdom, his unyielding justice, his boundless love, and his almighty power, being in perfect balance as they are, together reveal his glory.

Enlightened Christians can now comprehend God's glory through an understanding of his plan for the redemption and recovery of the human race from death. But the world in general does not possess this knowledge and therefore does not now "see" the glory of God. The understanding which will enable the world of mankind to comprehend the glory of God's character will be given during the thousand-year reign of Christ. Then the knowledge of the Lord will fill the earth, and as a result "all flesh" will discern the glory of God. Isaiah wrote, "The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." - Isa. 40:5

The whole world will then know of God's justice as represented in the divine penalty for sin. They will know how divine wisdom found the way whereby God could be just, yet release the condemned world from death. Paul explained it this way: "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." - Rom. 3:23-26

During the millennial reign of Christ the world will learn that it was divine love that provided the Redeemer, who himself lovingly died for their sins. The world will also then discern - even better than we are able to comprehend at the present time - the miracle-working power of God; for they will see it demonstrated in the resurrection of the dead. Since all the dead from every part of the earth eventually are to be awakened from death, the glory of God will indeed then fill the earth. - Acts 24:15

The glory of God was reflected to a limited degree in our first parents, whom he created in his image, crowned with glory and honour. (Gen. 1:27; Ps.8:4,5) As a result of the reign of sin and death man has lost

much of his original perfection, although there are many degrees of the divine qualities of justice, sympathy, and love to be found in many persons even now.

During the Gospel Age God has been inviting a small company of people to come out from the world, offering them the privilege of striving, through the exercise of faith, for a change of nature, from the human to the divine. (2 Pet. 1:4) Those who, in the resurrection, reach this high position will attain also unto the divine glory.

All who do not attain to spiritual glory in the resurrection will have the opportunity of being restored to human perfection. And think what a change that will be! It will be a progressive return to holiness, or perfection, which the Bible likens to travelling over a “highway.” (Isa. 35:8)

It is the return road from death which Isaiah described when he wrote, “The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.” - Isa. 35:10

All mankind who have been ransomed by Jesus will return from the sleep of the death. If they then accept the provisions of divine love through Christ, and obey the laws of his kingdom, they will obtain eternal joy and gladness; and sorrow, sickness, and death will be no more. - Rev. 21:4

The Bible assures us that then all will acclaim the glory of God, and the glory of his beloved Son, Christ Jesus, the “Lamb” which was slain to take away the sin of the world. (John 1:29) The people will then sing that inspiring song recorded in Revelation 15:3,4: “Great and wonderful are thy deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are thy ways, O King of the ages! Who shall not fear and glorify thy name, O Lord? For thou alone art holy. All nations shall come and worship thee, for thy judgements have been revealed.”

- Revised Standard Version

(From The Dawn)

Thy Word is True

(PSA. 119:160)

The history of the Bible, with all its striking facts, furnishes a broad tributary stream to swell the tide of evidence. The history of its composition, the history of its preservation; the history of its translation from tongue to tongue; the history of its circulation throughout earth's wide domain - in a word, its entire history “surpassing fable, and yet true” - forms a powerful argument in defence of its divine origin.

Rest in the Lord

(PSA. 37:7)

Stay still in the hand of the Potter,
Lie low 'neath His wonderful touch.
He shapeth and mouldeth in mercy
The clay that He loveth so much.
Surrender thyself to His working
The curve and the hollow He wills,
Nor shrink from the pain and the pressure
For the vessel He fashions, He fills!

Watch & Pray

Mark 13:33 Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is (KJV)

It is interesting to note that the passage from ‘which the text is taken was spoken by Jesus to four of the Apostles as we are told in Mark 13:3 “And as he sat upon the Mount of Olives over against the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately,” This was one of Jesus’ last sermons before his death. The setting was that of the disciples admiring the temple and our Lord remarking in Mark 13:2. “Seest thou these great buildings? There shall not be left one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down”.

Our Lord's sermon to the four disciples covered the following aspects:

1. The rise of deceivers (vv 5,6)
2. The wars of the nations (vv 7,8)
3. The persecution of Christians (vv9-13)
4. The destruction of Jerusalem (vv 14-23)
5. The end of the world (age) (vv 24-27)

At the end of the sermon our Lord gave some general intimation concerning the timing of these events (vv. 28-32) as well as some practical suggestions for us on how we are to conduct ourselves and how to prepare for these happenings. (vv 33-37) The intention is to deal with the admonitions and lessons of these final five verses.

TAKE HEED

Mark 13:33-37 *“Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock crowing, or in the morning: Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch”*.

It is interesting to note that the words “take heed” appear four times during the sermon.

1. Lest anyone deceive you (v5)
2. To yourselves, what you say and do (v9)
3. To what I have told you (v23)
4. To watch and pray (v33)

The words ‘take heed’ came from the Greek word **blepo-991**, which has the meaning of

1. To see, to discern (used of the bodily eye), to discover by use, to know by experience
2. Metaphorically, to see with the mind’s eye
 - To have the power of understanding
 - To discern mentally
 - To turn the thoughts or direct the mind to a thing, to consider,
 - To contemplate, to look at, to weigh carefully, to examine

Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words gives us the following explanation “to look,” see, usually implying more especially an intent, earnest contemplation.

The urging of our Lord to “take heed” means that we have to earnestly contemplate and learn from our experiences of life, not to become complacent or indifferent to the signs that are around us. This is quite often easier said than done as we all lead very busy lives and each year seems to go faster than the one before. We can easily become distracted and miss important signs that are around us. We can become so absorbed in day to day life that we do not take time to contemplate God’s time clock.

WATCH

We are told in verse 33 to ‘watch’. The word in the Greek had a greater meaning than the English word ‘to watch’. The word is *agrupneo* 69, “to be sleepless” (from *agreuo*, “to chase,” and *hupnos*, “sleep”), and is used metaphorically, “to be watchful,” as in Eph 6:17-18 “And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: with all prayer and supplication praying at all seasons in the Spirit, and watching thereunto in all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.” The word expresses not mere wakefulness, but the “watchfulness” of those who are intent upon a thing.

The best experience of the meaning of the word that most of us have had of ‘to be sleepless’ is the first night that we stay in a strange place. We are alert to every different sound, movement and smell around us. It is all new to us, so our awareness is heightened, we are on guard, noticing every sound and change of light around us, nothing escapes our notice but after a few nights we get used to the sounds and movements and let down our guard and relax. However our Lord has instructed us in this passage that we are to be watchful with intent, looking for the signs of His presence and the time of the end.

The example in Ephesians brings out the thought of soldiers on watch. They are on guard defending the rest of the troops while they sleep. They must be alert to notice any noise or movement that may mean an attack is imminent. To fall asleep on duty during Roman times often meant severe punishment or, even death to the soldier who was on duty. We too should be like soldiers on watch, with everything that we need with us. This includes:-

- The helmet of salvation, or hope, which has salvation for its object; the helmet secures the head. Such a good hope of salvation is well founded and well built on intellectual knowledge based not upon things that are seen, but upon things that are unseen. We have to accept Christ’s atoning work, realising that by ourselves we can do nothing. One has commented that the helmet was so that we could not get a swelled head.
- The sword of the Spirit which is the word of God. The sword is a very necessary and useful part of a soldier’s equipment. But like a good soldier we must practice with our weapon, the word of God, until we have a good knowledge of it and of how we can use it to defend ourselves. Scripture-arguments are the most powerful arguments to repel temptation. Christ himself resisted each of Satan’s temptations with the words, “It is written”, (Mt. 4:4,7,10). The Psalmist wrote in Ps 119:11 “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee”. So we can see the importance of the sword of the spirit.
- Fellowship with the Brethren. It is much easier to watch if we have others with us helping us to watch. The fellowship of the Brethren helps us during the hard times, we are able to encourage each other. It is said that ‘the more eyes watching the more you will see’. As we are told in Heb 10:22-25 “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our

bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”

Each of us will notice different things, and by combining our observations we can gain a clearer picture of the signs of the times. All of us have our strong points where we are able to encourage other brethren, and we all have our weak points where we need the help of other brethren. The Bible and the various other helps that we have are like the manual issued to soldiers, giving us an insight into God’s plan and indicating the signs that give us clues to where we are on the plan of the ages.

PRAY

With the command to watch also comes the command to pray. We constantly need to be in contact with our Heavenly Father as it is from this source that we gain strength to go on this Journey in the Narrow Way. It is only with the guidance of the Holy Spirit sent from the Heavenly Father that we will be able to understand the scriptures. We use prayer when we are down and need encouragement to continue, we need prayer when we do not know how to help others who are going through difficult times, and of course we use prayer to praise and honour our Heavenly Father, as well as to thank Him for the many blessings that we receive. However in this verse the prayer is special. It is the prayer we need to gain the strength to watch, to be on our guard. Watching can be very lonely and we can easily be discouraged by the length of time we are watching when nothing seems to be happening, and so we have to go to our Heavenly Father in prayer for the strength to continue on in the narrow way.

The last part of our verse gives emphasis to the reason for watching and praying ‘for ye know not when the time is’ as we are told in verse 32 ‘But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.’ Our Heavenly Father had good reasons not to announce this date to us. If the date were known to us, then Satan who also knew the scriptures would also know. Can we imagine the effect of knowing that the date was 2000 years hence would have had on the first of the followers of our Lord? 2000 years would have been unimaginable to them; it may have so disheartened them that they may have fallen away. The watching and the setting of dates have often acted as a sieve in separating the faithful especially during the last 130 years.

No doubt, our Lord knew the date after He ascended to heaven to sit on the right hand of the Father, and we have been given signs to indicate that that day is not far from us. For some of us, if we knew the exact date, we might be tempted to put off walking in the narrow way. We could feel we had time for other pleasures, other distractions, and with time on our hands could wait to start the journey. We have examples in every day life where when we know the date of certain events we tend to put off preparing for exams or study or talks to the last minute sure that we have time, but how often are we caught out with insufficient time to properly finish the task. This walk of faith needs only to know that “God knows the date” and has it all in hand, this is but one of the tests that God has given us.

Our Lord in the next few verses uses a parable or story that was familiar to the disciples to explain the meaning of the information and instructions he had left them Mark 13:34-37 “For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning, lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping.”

Our Master has gone away, and left us something in trust, in charge, which we must give account of at His return. He is as a man taking a far journey; for He is to be away a great while, He has left His house on earth, and left His servants in their offices, given authority to some, who are to be overseers, and work to others, who are to be labourers. And when He took His last leave, He appointed the porter to watch, to be sure to be ready to open to Him at His return; and in the meantime to take care to whom he opened his gates, not to thieves and robbers, but only to his Master’s friends and servants.

The Porter was a keeper of the door. This person guarded the entrance to a city, public building, the temple, rich man’s house or the sheepfold as we are told in the story of the Good Shepherd in John 10:2-3 “But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out”. A guard was stationed at any entrance through which someone unwanted might enter, especially at night. This must have been a lowly job because of the contrast implied in Psalm 84:10; “For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness”. The “doorkeeper” is the opposite of the most luxurious and favourable position. Porters were also called gatekeepers.

Thus our Lord Jesus, when he ascended on high left something for all his servants to do, expecting they should all do him service in his absence, and be ready to receive him at his return. All are appointed to work, to watch and to pray. We ought to be always upon our watch, in expectation of His return, Mark 13:35. Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning”: Our Lord will come, and will come as the Master of the house, to take

account of His servants, of their work, and of the progress they have made.

PREPARED

We know not when He will come for each one of us; and He has very wisely kept us in uncertainty, that we might all be always ready. We know not when He will come, just at what precise time the Master of the house perhaps will come – at even, at nine at night; or it may be at midnight, or at cockcrow, at three in the morning, or perhaps not until six. Our present life is a night, a dark night, compared with the life everlasting that has been promised to those who are faithful; we know not in which watch of the night our Master will come, whether in the days of youth, or middle age, or old age.

Our great care must be, that, whenever our Lord comes, He shall not find us sleeping, secure in ourselves, off our guard, indulging ourselves in ease and sloth, mindless of our work and duty, and thoughtless of our Lord's coming, ready to say, He will not come yet, and be unprepared to meet him. The parable of the wise and foolish virgins is an example of not being prepared for the long wait and not ready when the Master arrives.

He will indeed come suddenly and it will be a great surprise and terror to those that are careless, and asleep, it will come upon them as a thief in the night. Paul exhorts us in 1Thes5:2-6; “for yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober”. As children of light we may not know the exact hour, but we should be aware of the signs of the times and ever more watchful for our Master.

In Verse 37 we are told “And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch”. Our Lord repeats the point again that we are to watch or be prepared, having completed all the tasks set for us, knowing what our Lord wants of us, so that we can be ready as Peter tells us in 2 Pet 3:12-14 “Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless”.

Is this watching worth the trouble, the effort that it takes? Yes, as Paul speaking to the Corinthians tells us in 1 Cor 2:9 “But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him”. The Psalmist tells us in Ps 31:19 “Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men! We have the promise “that he will never leave us or forsake us” and that our Lord “has gone to prepare a place for us” Paul further on in 1 Cor 2:10 tells us that “God hath revealed them (the things which He has prepared) unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God”.

Although we do not have all the details of what our Heavenly Father has in store for us, we know that it will be beyond our wildest imagination, the waiting will have been worthwhile when we hear “Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord” (:00/01).



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A NEW YEAR MEDITATION

At the beginning of another year it is appropriate that we should remember the Psalmist's words, "So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." — Ps. 90: 12. It is a time to take stock, to consider the gains and losses, to accept and remember the lessons of past experiences and to make plans for the future. Before plans can be formulated there must be a clear objective, a definite purpose in view. Then there must be a proper valuation of the ways and means at one's disposal, and in order to secure success and satisfaction there will need to be a steady application, a diligent pursuing, with unflagging earnestness and zeal, toward the purpose desired.

Christians, from the commencement of their lives as new creatures in Christ, determine their course. They determine that henceforth "for me to live is Christ" and that they will devotedly seek God's will only. They recognise that the Divine will for them is their "sanctification," or in other words that such a transformation of mind and heart shall be, wrought in them that they will be drawn away from and become out of conformity with this world, and on the contrary be drawn more and more towards heavenly things and transformed in character into the image of God's dear Son.

While the New Testament so plainly states the matter, it is astonishing how few there be that walk the narrow way in the same manner as the Master, or as Paul or the Apostles followed Christ. With many who have started the Christian way in all earnestness and with clear perception of the separateness from the world that is indicated in the teachings of Christ, the seductive influences of the world, the flesh and the Adversary have in time, sometimes a very short time, dulled their perceptions and induced a compromising attitude, permitting associations and indulgences which at the first would have been avoided. Zeal has eased off, love for the Lord and His people and His cause has cooled, hope has been less sure, and faith weakened.

It is well for all seeking to make their calling and election sure to take stock in this way, and consider whether they have been growing in knowledge and in grace, or whether indeed they have been losing ground. In this day of rush and turmoil and excitement of pleasures and thrills of new accomplishments, it is so easy to find the mind so taken up with the things of time and sense that the quiet moments for study and contemplation of the higher things of God are almost unconsciously being neglected, and once the drift commences it may soon drift on, further and further, and require the more effort to check the course and make a new start.

Experience as well as the Divine word agree that "He Who has begun the good work in us" will not quickly forsake those whom He has called. He is faithful that promised grace and strength for every need. "Faithful is He that calleth you who also will do it." Some way or other, experiences come which pull us up or bring to our attention our slackness or error, or it may be by the recurring of a New Year that we begin to consider how much we are progressing, or how much we may have slipped and gone back. It is well that such times do come, and that we look back and trace once again just what things have been helpful to us in our Christian endeavours, or what associations or experiences, what friendships or influences or fellowships, have helped or hindered us.

There are things to forget and things to remember. While we are not to look back like Lot's wife to the things that used to please self, we are not to forget experiences which have taught us valuable lessons, but remembering the lessons of the day by day life, year in and year out, we are to press along toward the mark looking forward—reaching toward those things which are before. "Whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same things." (Phil. 3: 16), i.e. those things that have enabled us to make progress hitherto, and let us avoid the things which have, on the contrary, been hindrances.

It is here that the necessary valuation of things comes in. If we find that certain associations or friendships or

certain business conditions seem rather to “quench the spirit,” it would be “applying our hearts unto wisdom” as far as may be possible to avoid such contact, and, on the contrary, to seek to encourage such friendships and associations, or such studies or reading matter as seem to lift us heavenwards. While we may realise that if left to ourselves we could never gain the required, the predestined character to receive the full reward, yet we learn more and more to truly value the Divine aids. He Who has promised is able to perfect what He has begun, and to bring us unto Himself. “Him that is able to keep us from falling and to present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.”

He has given us His word to enlighten, to comfort, to strengthen us and enable us to meet the tempting of the Adversary with, “It is written,” as did the Captain of our Salvation. He has provided us with the robe of righteousness, with the appropriation of the sweet incense of the Saviour’s perfect life and with His advocacy that we may, having received also the spirit of adoption, come with confidence to the throne of grace that we may find mercy and grace to help in time of need. (Heb. 4: 16). A proper valuation of ways and means leads us to take courage and to go forward confidently for “If God be for us who then can be against us.”

The chief purpose of the Christian life is then clearly understood to be that we add grace to faith, and grace to grace, until we may be perfected in the character likeness of Jesus. How deplorable it is when we hear some express sentiments which would indicate that they are endeavouring to grow into His likeness, to be like Him, to do as He would do, to think and speak as He would, while their actions and words are often out of accord with such profession, both in their dealings with the world and in their conduct in the fellowship, and in the business of the Church. It is not for us to judge one another, but it is for us each to judge ourselves and see that our words and thoughts and doings are not such as to bring dishonour to the name we love. None of us is perfect, but our general conduct should be such that people may take note of us that we have higher standards of life and kinder spirit, and a truer life than others, “indeed, that we have been with Jesus and learned of Him.”

It is worse than useless for us to preach Christ if we do not strive to live as Christ lived. It must be with us as with Paul, “For me to live is Christ.” “That we may apply our hearts unto wisdom,” seems to be the principal thing from the Psalmist’s viewpoint. “The reverence of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,” and without that heavenly wisdom which we are assured God is ready to give to those who ask, we shall never be able to fill our days to His praise. To apply our hearts unto wisdom will be to endeavour to perceive the Divine will and purpose, and to conform to it, and thus to see things from the Divine viewpoint of justice, righteousness, love, kindness and power, for with God nothing is impossible.

So may the New Year find us with hearts pure and determined to spend our days to good purpose and to make this year with all that it may bring us a year of progress spent to God’s glory. He is able to do for us far more than we can ask or think. He is able to keep that which we have committed unto Him against that day. What good reasons we have as we consider our ways and means for going forward courageously, full of hope and confidence, for “all things shall work together for good to them that love God and are the called according to His purpose.”

IMPLICIT TRUST

(A NEW YEAR PRAYER)

Can I trust Thee for all my needs, dear Lord,
Through the length of the opening year;
And wherever its pathway leads, dear Lord,
Need I ever doubt or fear?

My needs are so many and great, dear Lord,
I stumble, and slip, and fall;
If for fleshly assurance I wait, dear Lord,
I shall never find rest at all.

I need wisdom to walk in the light, dear Lord,
And strength both to will and to do;
And courage to stand for the right, dear Lord,
With patient endurance too.

When clouds overshadow my way, dear Lord
And Thy face I’m unable to see;
I need faith to permit me to say—”Dear Lord,
You know what is best for me.”

But Thy promise is rich and large, dear Lord,
Thy storehouse is boundless too;
Will “my need” be too heavy a charge, dear Lord,
For One who is “Faithful and True”?

Has there aught of Thy word e’er failed, dear Lord,
In Thy way with me hitherto;
And has not Thy grace availed, dear Lord,
When nothing else would do?

Then bring to Thee all my needs, dear Lord,
Through the length of this new born year;
And wherever its pathway leads, dear Lord,
I’ll have never a doubt or fear

And whatever it holds in store, dear Lord,
(A secret known only to Thee)

I shall clasp Thy hand once more, dear Lord,

“Whence Cometh My Help”

“I will lift up my eyes to the hills –from whence cometh my help?” Psalm 121:1

One of our Lord’s messages of special application and comfort in these days is found in Luke 21:28 – *“When these things become to come to pass, then look up and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh.”* The things to which He referred, signs in the heavens and on earth, distress, fear and so on, are very evident in our world today and so Jesus’ words are particularly fitting for our time when world events of recent years and still today are unprecedented and to those who think about them very frightening.

If we were to let our minds dwell only on such things, we should certainly be living in a state of constant gloom and despair. There is a need for all of us to be aware of what is going on in the world, if we are to become understanding and compassionate towards others here and now and to be prepared for greater work in the kingdom. But more importantly, there is and always has been a need to look up, to lift up not only our heads but our eyes and our hearts, so that we may recognise just what God is doing and see present world distress in the context of His eternal purposes.

To keep our eyes downcast is to see only the dusty pavement, the bustling crowds, the busy traffic of life. To lift up our eyes physically and spiritually will show us the wonders of our Heavenly Father in the trees, the hills, the clouds, indeed in all the masterpieces of the Creator and His grand design. These are the permanencies in our insecure world and no doubt something of the abiding presence of the hills of Palestine was in the Psalmist’s mind when he composed the lovely 121st psalm, from which the text is taken – *“I will lift up my eyes to the hills; from whence cometh my help?”*

DAVID’S EXPERIENCE

Perhaps his words flow out of his own lonely experiences as a shepherd boy in Israel, when at the close of day, with his sheep settled for the night, he was able to reflect upon the unchangeableness and providential care of the God of Israel for the nation and for himself. More probably, the psalm may be the product of his experiences as a fugitive from the anger of Saul. His life was in danger, privation was his regular portion and so he looked for some assurance of help and security. For all of us, as for David, life itself is a transient scene; the only rock foundations of certainty and permanence are our Heavenly Father and His eternal plans.

Whether the first verse of the psalm should be read as a statement or, at least in part, as a question is not agreed on by translators. Certainly, the Psalmist, as can be seen from the succeeding verses, is not suggesting that his help comes literally from the hills. But he seems to be letting his thoughts travel from the everlasting hills around him to the abiding help and care of Jehovah. In Psalm 125:2, David again takes up this theme – *“As the mountains are about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people from henceforth even for ever”*

The following verses of Psalm 121 go on to tell us the source of David’s help – verse 2 reads: *“My help cometh from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.”* It would seem therefore that David’s words in the latter half of verse 1 are by way of a question, leading on to the idea of God’s surrounding presence. Something of the same thought of permanence can be seen in the use in scripture of hills and mountains to represent kingdoms and earthly powers, and the kingdom of God in the next age. *“It shall come to pass in the last days that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it.” Isaiah 2:2.*

But the hills and mountains not only speak to us of abiding stability in a changing world but they are a symbol of elevation, of lifting up and out of the daily routine of life with its pressures and cares. It is notable that our Saviour often retired into a mountain apart to pray and to commune with the Father, and while most of us are not able literally to do this, there is a need to come aside from the world and its affairs. It is good that not only privately but also in the company of others of the Lord’s people we climb the hills together, as it were, away from the busy clamour and turmoil of society and as the hymn writer says – *“Bid our souls on soaring wings, ascend into a purer clime.”*

Still today, as we read the psalm, we can rejoice with the Psalmist in his meditation upon the watch-care of God over His people. He is still the Father of Lights, with whom is no variableness neither shadow of turning. As the hills overshadowing Jerusalem pictured His protection of natural Israel, so the same God, the Father of all who come to Him by Christ Jesus, is ever careful for His children. *“There is an eye that never sleeps beneath the wing of night; there is an ear that never shuts when sink the beams of night. There is an arm that never tires when human strength gives way; there is a love that never fails when earthly loves decay.”*

“HE CHANGETH NOT”

This psalm, which is a favourite of many Christians, is a poem and in poetic form it conjures up pictures of One who is all-powerful, all-compassionate and eternal in His care, One upon whom we may rely for every phase of life, One who is as everlastingly sure and steadfast as the hills which David looked upon. These characteristics of our Heavenly Father and our God are the sure foundation of our comfort and consolation.

Without them, the remaining promises recounted in the psalm would have no value. These fundamental qualities of God are clearly set out for us in verses 2, 4 and 8 especially, and are the surety of His faithfulness.

In verse 2, we see that the Psalmist, having declared that his help comes from Jehovah, goes on to speak of His creative power – “the Lord, who made heaven and earth.” What can be beyond the power of such a source of help? “*When I consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained, what is man that thou art mindful of him or the son of man that thou visitest him?*” Psalm 8:4. This question we might well ask with the Psalmist and it is surely a reasonable one.

The wonder of it all is that God is mindful of all His creation, He so loved all mankind that He gave His Son to be their Saviour. He who dwells on high moreover is ready to dwell with all who are of humble spirit and contrite heart. Again in Psalm 19:1, we see David meditating in the night watches on the glory and power of Jehovah – “*The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork*” – and we marvel with the Psalmist that the same Almighty, the Creator, is the answer to His query “Whence cometh my help?”

The prophet Isaiah tells us that the Creator faints not, neither is weary, nor is there any limit to His understanding. But more importantly for each one of us, it is He who gives power to the faint and to those without strength it is He who gives His strength. (Isaiah 40:28,29) As Paul discovered, His grace is sufficient, for when we are weak, when we recognise our own inability, then we can be strong in His strength.

David’s reliance for strength and help then is on Him who, as Creator and Sustainer of the universe, has unlimited power to save and keep. There have been many mighty and powerful human rulers but we would be very loath to look to them for help even in small ways, much less in the matters of life itself, as David was looking. “*My help cometh from the LORD, who made heaven and earth.*” (Verse 2) – this is his sure answer.

HIS WATCHCARE

Verse 4 of the psalm goes on to tell us “*He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber or sleep*”. This is plainly much more than just continual wakefulness, rather God’s care and concern for His people are clearly shown as active and constant. “*The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous and His ears are open to their cries.*” (Psalm 34:15)

What a rich privilege it is for us who live some 3000 years later than the psalmist and have come to know God’s love and care by Christ Jesus, the Good Shepherd who knows and cares for each one of His sheep.

“*Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth those that fear Him; for He knoweth our frame. He remembereth that we are dust.*” (Psalm 103:13,14) “*Can a woman forget her sucking child that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands.*” (Isaiah 49:15,16) These were His assurances to His faithful ones of old, so too His children of this Gospel Age are never out of His memory, never out of mind – always before Him, constantly the objects of His oversight and love and care.

David’s God, our Heavenly Father, is then all-powerful, all-seeing and all-caring. Is this not enough? The best human love and care may tire or be diminished by the folly or waywardness of the object of that love, but God’s care and help, praise Him, are not like that. Turning to verse 8 of the psalm, we realise that, like the Creator Himself, His care and over-ruling are eternal. “*The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth and even for evermore.*” The writer to the Hebrews reminds us of His promise – “*I will never leave thee nor forsake thee!*” (Heb. 13:5) “Never” is a very long time, all that we will ever need.

We can be sure then that His keeping and protecting power will be over all of our life’s journey. What full sufficiency there is here for us! More than ample provision has so freely been made for us. From whence does David’s help and ours come? Truly it comes from Him who is not only all-powerful but all-caring – the eternal, unchanging One. Our help truly comes from the Lord and from Him alone. Let us look then at those promises of help to which the Psalmist refers in the following verses of the psalm. There seems to be a pattern to these:

- First – He will not suffer thy foot to be moved (Securing)
- Second – 3 times – He will be thy keeper (Sustaining)
- Third – He is thy shade by day and night (Protecting)
- Fourth – 3 times – He will preserve thee (Guarding)

PRECIOUS PROMISES

- (1) “He will not suffer thy foot to be moved” The devil is ever anxious to draw God’s people away from

the stand they have taken. This is very true today, perhaps even more so than it was for David, who also met and succumbed at times to temptation, yet was forgiven when he later repented. We who have come to God by Christ Jesus have been given His “whole armour” so that we may in His strength be able to stand in the evil day and having done all to stand (Eph 6:13) This armour must be put on and *kept on* – behind it stands the guarantee of God – “He will not suffer thy foot to be moved.”

“Unless the Lord had been my help, my soul had quickly dwelt in silence. When I said, my foot slippeth, thy mercy O Lord held me up.” So David testifies to the truth of this promise of God and surely we could also testify of His securing power in our lives. He is able to keep us from falling as we trust Him; the help we need to stand firm in the storms of life truly comes from the Lord.

(2) “He will be thy keeper”. The thought of God’s keeping power is introduced from three points of view. First, as we have seen, it is unfailing, second, the Lord is the keeper of His people in every age and third, He is *thy keeper*, not just a constant, caring keeper of His people as a whole but of each one. This is at the heart of both Old and New Testament teaching – our Father’s personal care. So David can say “The Lord is MY shepherd”, not just a national shepherd but David’s own. And we can say with the writer to the Hebrews, “The Lord is MY helper (not just of the whole Church of God, though this is so) and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.” (Heb 13:6) Indeed, all His promises can and should be claimed personally.

(3) “The Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand, the sun shall not smite thee by day nor the moon by night”. The words are reminiscent of Psalm 91, which so beautifully speaks also of God’s protection over His people – “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty”. What a lovely picture this conjures up, the shadow of a mighty rock within a weary land, a refuge in the time of trouble. Here there is protection from the fierce and burning trials of life’s active days and the subtler testings and fears of the silent midnight hours. Truly, He is our comfort by day and our song in the night!

(2) “The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil, He shall preserve thy soul”. The thought is similar to that in the earlier verses that speak of God’s keeping power, but David now expands on how the Lord will personally watch over each one of His own. First, He will preserve from all evil, from all harm, from evil-doers and their efforts to injure or waylay. There may be setbacks or losses on the way but nothing can harm the eternal welfare and blessing of each trusting child of God. The promise of Psalm 91:10,11 is – There shall no evil befall thee... for He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways”. “My times are in Thy hands”.

These assurances will not mean automatic immunity from all troubles and trials, life for the Christian, as for David, is not like that. But God’s preserving and protective and keeping power is always there amid all life’s circumstances. Our Lord’s prayer for His people was I “pray not that Thou should take them out of the world but that Thou should keep them from the evil one”. (John 17:15).

Second, He shall preserve thy soul, thy life. Our lives are already hidden with Christ, whatever experiences we may have to go through. So we should be able to echo the apostle’s words in 2 Timothy 4:18 “The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work and will preserve me unto His everlasting kingdom”. That is surely His promise, realised and treasured by the Psalmist so long ago; and it still holds today.

Third, He shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth and even for evermore. In all our affairs, God is there! “Whither shall I flee from Thy presence?” asks the Psalmist and indeed there is nowhere that the trusting child of God can be placed where the Father’s hand cannot reach. How important that we remember and always seek His presence and keeping power in the daily round and common task, by the still waters and in the valley of the shadow. Surely, His presence and power, with His goodness and mercy, will follow us all the days of our lives.

“LIFT UP YOUR EYES”

In this end of the age, the Lord’s people have so much cause to LOOK UP, to LIFT UP their eyes to see by faith their redemption drawing near. All the signs about us, viewed in the light of God’s word, tell us this so graphically. It was never more true that “now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand” (Romans 13:11,12) Let us look up and rejoice daily in the glorious prospects ahead for God’s gospel age children and for all mankind.

Above all, let us look up to Him who is our Rock and our Fortress, from whom alone our help comes. Let us lift up not only our eyes but our heads and our hearts and our voices to praise and magnify our Heavenly Father and to honour His dear Son, our Saviour, who is our living help and strength. Our Heavenly Father is abundantly able to keep us each one and for each one His grace is sufficient.

“Now unto Him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.”

The Gift of Wisdom

“Whence then, comes wisdom and where is the place of understanding? It is hid from the eyes of all living.” “God understands the way to it, and he knows the place thereof.” “Behold, the fear of the Lord that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.” “Oh that God would speak... and that he would tell you the secrets of wisdom.” So cried the prophet in a past dispensation. “Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him; on the left hand, where he loth work, but I cannot behold him; he hideth himself on the right hand that I cannot see him.”

With the coming of Christ, light has been shed on the Scriptures which are able to make one wise unto salvation, for Jesus Christ is made unto us wisdom, justification, etc. This could be described as the heavenly wisdom, first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. This wisdom, like faith, is a gift of God, from the Giver of every good and perfect gift. But this gift of wisdom is different from many other gifts of God, inasmuch that before it may be enjoyed, it is withheld from all but those who are prepared to ask for it. It is not like the sun that shines, the rain that falls, on just and unjust; not like the wonderful air we breathe, available for righteous and unrighteous; nor like the fruitful seasons providing food for saint and sinner.

All these sifts are available freely, without money and without price, no charge made by the Giver; in fact one is compelled to accept them. The earth yieldeth her increase; there is good food and drink, good sense, sight, hearing, smelling, etc., ours to use and enjoy, gifts already in our possession without asking for them. How we receive and employ those gifts is another story. If we employ them wisely, “this man is blessed in his deed.” If we choose to employ them foolishly and find ourselves floundering it would not avail much to ask for added wisdom when all that is necessary is to correct foolish behaviour. But of this gift of wisdom, there is a reservation attached to its possession. Of those for whom it has been reserved, each one is obliged to ask for it.

“IF ANY LACK WISDOM”

James sets it out – “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.” Those not needing any, along with those who have enough, *do not ask*. Automatically, they exclude themselves from a rich heritage. People indifferent about gifts seldom put them to good purpose. They stow them away in some out of the way place, out of sight. If wisdom is employed in the daily problems weightier trials will not seem so formidable. No trial can successfully be endured; no lesson can be learnt, without wisdom. “God giveth liberally,” but not to all those who do ask. The motive for the request is considered, and if it is found selfishness would be served, “they ask amiss” and might well wonder why they do not receive.

There are two important qualifications necessary before the gift will be bestowed: faith - “let him ask in faith, nothing wavering” – in conjunction with a sense of lack. Where there is a conscious sense of lack, self-examination is always under consideration. In the morning we ask for wisdom to guide us through the day ahead. But there may be no lack apparent covering that day’s experiences. It is a different story at the close of the day; reflecting, we see where we have erred, where we may have done better – many places in the day’s activities, with maybe one huge blunder weighing heavily in our assessment of folly versus wisdom. Faith may now take a bold step. We have the requirements necessary to ask for the gift, confidently expecting an answer, a favourable answer, that some portion of the gift of wisdom will now be granted. It is no haphazard, no routine request, this asking for wisdom; it is a living faith and a consciousness of lack that assures the suppliant of a liberal supply.

No one could refer to Wisdom and not think of King Solomon. Universally acknowledged the wisest of men, whence cometh this wisdom of his, thought of as being supernaturally endowed? “To him that hath, more shall be given.” A previous and, in this case, generous possession of wisdom being put to use qualifies for more. “He giveth wisdom unto the wise” (Dan. 2:21), those wise enough to exercise what they already have. Most people would be familiar with some of the marvelously wise things done by Solomon. It would be very interesting to hear answers to the question, “What was the wisest thing Solomon ever did? Our reply would be, when he requested the gift of wisdom above every other consideration. He *wisely* asked for “a wise and understanding heart, wisdom to govern this great people.” He already had enough, as his request shows, of wisdom to value above everything, an increase of the same gift, to help him govern. God was so pleased with his desire that He granted benefits Solomon had not asked for; wealth, power, length of days – all given without request.

Yet Solomon with all his wisdom, failed to take his own good counsel. Of the many causes contributing to his failure, without doubt, one was the inability to take criticism. He would pursue his own sweet way, excusing in himself all manner of folly. How true his own words in Eccl 10:1. The apothecary was one who manufactured sweet and precious ointment. This ointment, in containers, was placed on shelves to await

buyers. Sometimes a few flies were trapped in the stickiness and died in the ointment. The precious ointment was not only spoilt, but emitted a foul smell. A little folly in one of good reputation becomes a great blemish. True wisdom is true honour. It gains a reputation likened to precious ointment: pleasing, valuable. This kind of reputation, like the sweet-smelling ointment, is obtained with great care and difficulty. Both are rendered valueless, repulsive, obnoxious, by a few dead flies in one case and a little folly in the other. A little folly at any stage in consecration, even at the end of a long and faithful service, should it be left unattended, could foul the whole effort.

“LET HIM ASK IN FAITH”

Faithful and loyal service do not guarantee immunity from the effects of folly any more than good works can atone for indiscretion. “Oh that God would speak and show thee the secrets of wisdom, that they are double to that which is.” The gift of wisdom will differ in its prescription for each individual. If the requirement of wisdom could be printed on cards for distribution, each member would have a card differing from his neighbour’s; no two cards would be alike, nor would they be transferable. Each card would be like the white stone in Revelations, having a particular and personal character. “Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering,” this recommendation confirms the idea that a request for wisdom comes AFTER its lack is painfully apparent. One in this state would be emotionally disturbed, and for that reason more prone than otherwise to waver and doubt and be discouraged. Remorse retards an unwavering faith. Yet the gift of wisdom is conditional on this faithful approach to the problem. Jesus insisted on some healing occasions for this unwavering faith, – “Believest thou that I am able to do this?” We may even be asking for wisdom to overcome a trial similar to one or more earlier experiences. But we are assured – “He giveth to all, liberally and upbraideth not.”

What a priceless gem is wisdom! Do we value its excellency, see our need and the unspeakable advantages it carries? It cannot be purchased with all the wealth of the world; it cannot be willed in an inheritance for another. It is written of a well-known Bible commentator – He was near the end of his earthly course and recorded: “I have now disposed of all my property to my family; there is one thing more I wish I could give them, and that is the Christian religion. If they had that and I had not given them one shilling, they would be rich; and if they had not had that and I had given them all the world, they would be poor.” Nor does wisdom pass to us through the traits of heredity. It is a gift of God, and excels folly as much as light excels darkness.

History records many travelling great distances in search of wisdom. They crossed the seas, deserts, mountains to visit seats of learning in quest of what Paul describes – the hidden mystery of God. (1 Cor. 2:6,7.) One outstanding figure was the Queen of Sheba. She had heard from others of the great wisdom and fame of Solomon. “There came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all the kings of the earth which had heard of his wisdom.” It is commonly known how in the telling of strange and wonderful things there is a tendency, especially where fame is concerned, to exaggerate. The queen decided to discover for herself. She was so confounded and amazed at such wisdom and skill that “there was no more spirit in her.” Solomon “gave her of his royal bounty.” He instructed a diligent pupil concerning this gift of wisdom, which was so appreciated she in return gave out of her treasures gold, precious stones, and of spices a very great store.

Jesus alluded to her. “The Queen of the south came from the uttermost arts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon,” and no doubt He was saddened by the disregard of the princes of this world for the Greater than Solomon. However, as He imparts to those with the ears to hear something of God’s wisdom, does it not also leave us floundering, amazed, “with no more spirit in us”? The Queen said of what she thought was an exaggerated report, that not only was it true, but the half was never told. She expressed her appreciation in gifts. We may lack the silver and gold she was able to give, but what about the spices? The Wise Men of the East gave of such to our Lord. Have we any spices to give in gratitude?

THE CONTRAST

It is interesting to contrast earthly wisdom with heavenly wisdom. Both these influences present claims to our affections. Their methods and what they have to offer are set out comparatively in Prov. 9... The heavenly has a sacrifice, bread and wine, and from the highest places invites the simple (those seeking instruction) to eat and drink bread and wine, and at the same time to forsake the foolish and live anew, in the paths of understanding.

Earthly wisdom, pictured as a foolish woman, also occupies a prominent and respectable high place of esteem in the city of men. She also calls to the simple passengers out of their way, seeking, seeking, something... the advice these unfortunate people are given is that “stolen waters are sweet and bread eaten in secret is pleasant.” This so-called wisdom is earthy, sensual; that is, appealing to natural appetites, to a sense of pleasure and desire of gratification. If gratified, conscience and love (with all its wonderful attributes) are slowly but surely strangled by envy, strife, hatred, confusion and every evil device.

Heavenly wisdom is satisfying and entire for all the understanding; it glows with a light and purity; is a guidance for will, cleansing for the conscience and still more, strength for a practical expression of a Christian life. “Her ways are ways of pleasantness and her paths are peace”. “Happy is the man that findeth wisdom – wisdom is the principal thing,” because a “man of understanding hath wisdom.”

While it is our intention that these columns be used for teachings strictly in accord with the Lord's Word, we cannot accept responsibility for every expression used, either in the correspondence or in the sermons reported.

God's Inheritance in the Saints

“The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his (God's) inheritance in the saints.” (Eph. 1:18.)

When we read and think about the subject of inheritance as presented in the Bible, our minds generally dwell upon the reward that the followers of the Lord will receive upon their proving faithful unto death. This we have stated in the latter part of Revelation 2: 10 – “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”

This is quite understandable, for the majority of New Testament passages referring to an inheritance do apply to the heavenly reward of the saints of this Gospel Age. We believe that our text in Ephesians 1: 18 is one of the few in the New Testament which refers so directly to the thought, not of the saints' inheritance, but to God's inheritance in the saints. Some people may ask, Is there really any difference in the two thoughts? A careful examination will show that the Lord and the Apostles revealed quite a difference, even though it is not apparent on the surface.

To illustrate, let us examine two texts of Scripture applying to the next age. Firstly, in Psa. 2: 6-8, we have the prophetic record of God saying to Christ– “Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.” Christ has purchased the whole human race, and He is going to ask for them to be His inheritance in God's due time. Secondly, in Matthew 25: 34 we have the reward for the world of mankind at the end of the Millennial Age revealed. “Then shall the king say unto them on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” Here we have the Lord assuring those who are of the “sheep” class that they will inherit this wonderful kingdom on the restored earth, whereas in the Psalm we see mankind is to be given to Christ for an inheritance.

In another comparison of texts which apply to the saints of this Gospel Age we have Daniel 7: 22 and Mal. 3: 17. In Daniel we read: “The Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom.” In other words, they are shown as entering into their inheritance, the wonderful heavenly reward; whereas in Malachi it is stated — “They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels.” Does this mean that the saints become the possession of God only when they are “made up” as the Bride of Christ? No, indeed, they are prospectively His inheritance, His possession, from the beginning of the Christian way, but as there is a possibility of coming short or falling away, they are not fully His until proved faithful unto death.

Let us note some texts which help us to see that we really become the possession or inheritance of our Heavenly Father right from the beginning of the first impulses of the Christian life. In John 6: 44 our Lord says— “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.” We see here the Father's drawing influence upon those in a right heart condition, those who are yearning for something better than the present life. The Father acts upon their hearts and minds, drawing them towards the One whom He has sent to be the Saviour of the world. So accepting Christ, they become justified by faith.

We read further in Romans 12: 1, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” God has drawn these to Jesus. In presenting their bodies now, they are acceptable to God. He is the One who is vitally and overall interested in them because they have accepted the sacrifice of His Son, the means of approach to Him, and they really become God's possession when they present their lives to Him.

In 2 Cor. 1: 21, 22 we read, “Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the spirit in our hearts.” When we grasp the meaning of the word “sealed” we begin to realise what a relationship is implied in being a member of God's inheritance. It means to stamp with a signet or private mark, for security or preservation. This of course implies a marking as of ownership, and the same Greek word is used with reference to our Lord Jesus, as is used for the saints.

In John 6: 27 we have a reference to our Lord's own sealing— "For him hath God the Father sealed." We may ask, But did not Jesus always belong to the Father, even as the Logos? If so, what is implied by the Father sealing Him?

This undoubtedly refers to the begetting of our Lord Jesus when He was 30 years of age for the highest inheritance of all, the divine nature. And in being begotten for that heavenly inheritance He also became God's inheritance or possession of the highest order; and this is the same sealing for possession or inheritance upon every member of the saints, who are walking in the steps of Christ.

Let us note Eph. 1: 13, 14 in this connection. "In whom (Christ) ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance." This refers to a foretaste or prepayment of our inheritance "until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory."

Of our Lord Jesus we read in Heb. 1: 9, "Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." Of course, our Lord Jesus was anointed above all others, but we notice that these "fellows" are also anointed with the same "oil of gladness." Just to realise that to the full! And we do well to ask ourselves, How is the "oil of gladness" working in our lives? Is it provoking us unto love and to good works amongst our "fellows" who are also members of God's inheritance? We know it is possible for the work of the "oil of gladness" to be somewhat hindered by our own will, by self getting in the way, restricting the lubrication, so to speak, of our hearts and minds. A blockage in the lubrication system of any machinery is serious, and especially is this so in the hearts and minds of those called to be members of God's inheritance.

The Apostle exhorts us along this line in Eph. 4: 29-32. This helps us to cooperate with God in appreciation of the holy spirit dwelling in our hearts. Reading from verse 29— "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers. And grieve not the holy spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."

2 Cor. 6: 16, 18 helps us to see the favour of the Lord to those so blessed as to be invited into this wonderful inheritance of God, by the indwelling of the holy spirit. "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. And I will be a Father unto you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

Joshua, Son of Nun

PARENTAGE AND EARLY LIFE

The leader of the Hebrews in the conquest of 1 Palestine was Joshua, a prince of the tribe of Ephraim (Num. 13: 2). His pedigree is preserved in a more perfect form than that of any of his contemporaries (1 Chr. 7: 20-27), and it reaches back through some ten generations to Joseph. His father was Nun, of whom only the name is known. His grandfather, Elishama, marched through the wilderness of Sinai at the head of his tribe (Num. 10: 22), and probably had the immediate charge of the embalmed body of Joseph, which was carried up for interment at Shechem (Ex. 13: 19; Josh. 24: 32). Joshua was born in the land of Goshen, the cradle of the Hebrew nation, in the reign of that long-lived Rameses II., who figures in history as the national hero of the Egyptians (the Sesostris of the Greeks), and the oppressor of the Hebrews. The favourite palace of the king was in Goshen, at Rameses-Tanis, the Zoan of the Bible (Num. 13: 22), where there was also a vast idol-temple which he restored at immense cost. Joshua must therefore have been familiar from his youth with the sight of palaces, temples, obelisks, sphinxes, and other signs of the ancient civilization, and seen how his countrymen had yielded to the spell of the established idolatry during their long sojourn in the land of the Nile.

One of his last appeals to the heads of the people reminds them how "their fathers worshipped other gods in Egypt" (Josh. 24: 14), just as from the age of the captivity a voice recalls how the Hebrews "defiled themselves with the idols of Egypt," and their maidens committed shameless sin (Ezek. 23: 8; 20: 7, 8). The hard conditions of his early life, spent in cruel bondage, not less than his contact with a civilisation which fitted Israel for an independent national existence, were a qualification for the great task assigned him in the providence of God. His name was originally Oshea or Hosea, "salvation," but Moses added a syllable containing the name of Jehovah, as if to imply that the son of Nun was to be the instrument of God's salvation to the Hebrews (Num. 13: 16). It was a singular honour that he should be the first to bear the name which is "above every name" (Phil. 2.9).

EARLY ACHIEVEMENTS

Joshua steps forth suddenly out of obscurity. His name first occurs in Scripture in connection with the defeat of Amalek in the first days of the desert life (Exod. 17: 9). This fierce border tribe, occupying the peninsula of Sinai and the wilderness intervening between the southern hills of Palestine and the border of Egypt, fell upon the rear of the Hebrew host, which was encumbered with women, children, and baggage (Deut. 25: 18). Joshua had the task of repelling the attack. He won a decisive victory after an obstinate battle, which saved the Hebrews from all further molestation in the peninsula. From this day forward he takes the position of “minister” or attendant of Moses (Exod. 24: 13). He ascends the mountain range of Sinai along with his master at the first giving of the law (Exod. 32: 17).

He is next heard of rebuking the prophesying of Eldad and Medad (Num. 11: 28). When Moses resolves to send twelve spies from Kadesh-Barnea to search out the land of Canaan, Joshua is one of the twelve, standing, no doubt, at the head as the most distinguished (Num. 13: 1-10). Joshua and Caleb alone of all the spies brought a favourable report, and encouraged the Hebrews “to go up and possess the land” (Num. 14: 6-9). We know nothing of Joshua during the weary years of the wandering in the Arabian desert. We can well suppose that none of the lessons of that singular period would be lost on the man whom Moses selected by God’s command as the military leader who was in less than seven years to lay six nations and thirty-one kings prostrate at his feet (Num. 27: 22, 23).

CHARACTER AND FITNESS

Joshua stands before us simply as a godly warrior, designated to his work by a Divine call. He is “the first soldier consecrated by the sacred history.” He was “strong and of a good courage” (Josh. 1: 6). The keynote of his character was a remarkable simplicity of faith joined to a severe simplicity of life, an intense patriotism, a courage that feared no danger, and a cheerful and unselfish devotion to duty. He ruled the tribes constitutionally by consulting their representatives in all matters of moment (Josh. 21: 1). Though they were divided by jealousies, he was able to win their confidence and to secure their co-operation in carrying out the great work of his life. We shall see that he was a splendid strategist in war. There is nothing, however, more remarkable in his life than his complete self-effacement in presence of the tremendous events of the conquest. Scripture is often reticent about its heroes. It is a surprise, however, to find that Joshua’s name occurs in no later part of the Old Testament, though the transactions of the conquest are often referred to.

Only twice in the New Testament is he mentioned (Acts 7: 45; Heb. 4: 8). Yet he was the greatest Hebrew character between Moses and Samuel – a period of four hundred years – and he alone, we are told, of all the heroes of Israel after the time of Moses, survives in the traditions of the Samaritans. There is something like solitude in his position at the end of his busy life — “a lonely man in the height of his power, separate from those about him, the last survivor, save one, of a famous generation” — and the silence of Scripture almost warrants the supposition that he was without wife or child or heir. This was the man so highly gifted by nature, by grace, and by opportunity, whom God raised up to lead the Hebrew tribes into Palestine.

LAST WORK (JOSH 23 & 24)

After the conquest and division of the land, Joshua retired to his modest inheritance at Timnath-serah, among the hills of Ephraim, appointing no successor to his dignities, and spending the closing years of his long and eventful life in simple but honoured privacy. He claimed no higher authority over the tribes than to call them together after the lapse of some eighteen years — “a long time after that the Lord had given rest to Israel from their enemies round about” — when he gave two parting addresses, one to the rulers, probably at Shiloh, the other to the assembled tribes at Shechem. They were both memorable meetings. He was, perhaps, the last link to connect the generation of the conquest with the generation of the exodus. He reminds the Israelites of the Lord’s past goodness, exhorts them to courage and constancy, and warns them gravely against the dangers of intercourse with the heathen. His affectionate appeal was immediately answered by a solemn engagement on the part of the tribes to serve the Lord; and, as a visible memorial of the covenant, a large stone was set up “under an oak that was by the sanctuary of the Lord” — the place consecrated ages before by Abraham as he passed through the land. This was the last public act of Joshua. His work both of war and of peace was done. Nothing remained for him but to die.

DEATH AND BURIAL (JOSH 24: 29, 30)

We have no account of the circumstances of his death; merely this brief record — “Joshua, the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being a hundred and ten years old,” just the age of his great ancestor Joseph. Five-and-twenty years after he had crossed the Jordan, he died at his own inheritance, full of years and honours. Like many another great warrior, he ended his days in peace. Then “they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnath-serah, which is in Mount Ephraim, on the north side of the hill Gaash.” This hill is mentioned again (2 Sam. 23: 30; 1 Chron. 11: 32), but its site has never been discovered. It is supposed by

some that the tomb of Joshua is still to be seen at Tibneh. But later investigation is more doubtful about this identification, and favours the Jewish tradition, which fixes the site at the modern Kefr Haris, seven miles north of Shiloh.

The soil of Palestine, already so rich with the dust of the good and great, would be henceforth dear to all who would venerate the name of Joshua. But death did not end his usefulness, as we infer from the suggestive sentence — “And Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua.” His last act was to bind the people firmly to God’s service, and long after his death his earnest piety and zeal survived in the recollection of a people who were thus kept faithful to their obligations. The influence of his character is not yet exhausted. “He being dead yet speaketh.” Christian thought now looks back with admiration upon a character without a parallel in the history of conquest. He must ever hold a foremost place among those Hebrew worthies who “through faith subdued kingdoms,” and remain an example to all ages of that pre-eminent power of looking upward which strengthens all right means in carrying out God’s work. (Prof. Croskery)

Christian Fellowship

“That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you that ye may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.” “If we say we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness we lie and do not the truth; but if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin.” (1 John 1:3, 6, 7.)

In these verses it is stated that our fellowship as Christians is with the Father, with the Son and with the brethren. There is also fellowship in prayer and praise, in knowledge, in study and in purpose, in service, in joy, in sympathy, in hope, and so on. According to Strong’s concordance, the word fellowship means – participation, partnership. A dictionary meaning is – communion, intimacy, joint feeling or interest, joint participation. In the Bible, distribution of worldly goods or substance for the benefit of others is also spoken of as fellowship. (Rom. 12:13; 15:26; Phil. 4:15).

All are familiar with the fact that fellowship implies kindred qualities of mind and heart. For instance, the generous love the generous, the noble and upright love the noble and upright, the honest love the honest, and the meek the meek, etc. We can only enter this Divine fellowship by accepting Christ as the sacrifice for our sins and ceasing to be sinners. Then we realize that *God* is our friend and we also become friends of others similarly regenerated, and as we grow by partaking of God’s Holy Spirit, we begin to love the brethren.

There are two planes of fellowship a natural plane on which people of like qualities are drawn together, and a spiritual plane on which those who may be unlike in natural qualities, but alike in spiritual hopes, aims and ambitions are drawn still more closely together by a new tie and a fellowship that binds not by fleshly ties but their hearts in Christian love and unity.

THE BASIS OF FELLOWSHIP

What then is the basis of Christian fellowship? The term Christian, from a Biblical viewpoint, is quite an exclusive one. What is necessary in order to become a Christian is clearly taught. Christians are those who not only believe that Christ is the Saviour, but have gone further and shown their faith by offering themselves by full surrender in consecration to God. They die to self and take up their cross and walk, even as Jesus walked, in new life. The basis of Christian fellowship is a mutual relationship with Christ and through Christ with all who are in sympathy with Him, joined together as fellow members of His Body. There is at once a joint interest and feeling, a partnership, a participation in Christ.

In 1 Cor. 1:9, it is stated that God has called us unto the fellowship of His Son. This is not something reserved only for the future, it begins already, now. Paul in his letter to the Philippians desired to know Christ, to realise deeply the power of His resurrection, and to comprehend the fellowship of His sufferings (Phil. 3:10); not a merely superficial knowledge of Him, but an intimate acquaintance through deep knowledge and experience. This same thought of fellowship is mentioned in 1 Cor. 10:16, 17, a fellowship, a participation in the drinking of the cup and breaking of the bread.

Christian fellowship then is something deeper and stronger than mere fellowship of belief, because our Heavenly Father gives us to partake of things beyond our own nature. We fellowship with Him in His plan, for He has made known unto us secrets that were hidden from generations in past ages. He promises us fellowship in His own Divine nature, meanwhile working in us to do His good pleasure as we work with Him to do His will. We might have a degree of fellowship with all believers, but it would not be full Christian fellowship, which is “fellowship in the mystery.” This is illustrated in the tabernacle services. It is a fellowship of priests in the Holy, not just with the Levites in the Court, who can come no further.

The Christian fellowship is a family fellowship, “For in love God has predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ” (Eph. 1:5). “They are all of one (Father), for which cause Jesus is not ashamed to call them brethren”. (Heb. 2:11). Jesus did not need to grow into this fellowship, for He was always in fellowship with the Father, and there is only one way we can come into this family fellowship, i.e., by accepting the terms laid down by Jesus – faith and obedience.

In John 14:23, it is stated that both Father and Son will come to us and “take up their abode with us”, if we keep His commandments. This is a very precious thought – partaking of food together – lodging together. The same thought is given in Rev. 3:20; also in Luke 12:37, which is especially applicable at the end of this age. Jesus will, if we respond, come in and sup with us, and will also spread a feast for us. Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with the Son.

PREREQUISITES OF FELLOWSHIP

Seeing then that Christian fellowship is the portion of all consecrated believers, are there any further requirements for a permanent, workable and beneficial fellowship? How can we best answer this, seeing there are so many individuals and classes of persons who would all say they are consecrated Christians and yet if asked what they believed would express quite a variety of doctrines and practices. Is fellowship under such conditions likely to be either possible or profitable? It should be possible if all recognise certain essentials.

(A) Uniformity of faith, not in a humanly prescribed creed nor recognition of any earthly authority or control whose word must be obeyed as the voice of the Lord, not a seeing eye to eye on mysterious parts of Scripture, types or symbols, but a unity of faith – one faith.

(B) Recognition of the clear and essential teachings of the word of God. Unity on essentials must be maintained, but liberty on non-essentials be granted to all. We would, of course, have fuller fellowship with those who see many points of truth as we do, than we would with those who see only the fundamentals, but we must receive in fellowship those who have taken the necessary steps in harmony with the first essentials and have as much fellowship with them as possible.

We do not fellowship with each other because of non-essentials, nor because of personalities, but because of each being justified and consecrated and living in harmony with the fundamentals of the word. “If we walk in the light we have fellowship one with another”. (1 John 1:7)

There is another essential without which there could be no profitable fellowship. The Christian is to have no fellowship with darkness or error; he is to do more, “rather reprove them” (Eph. 5:11) also (2 Cor. 6:14). “What fellowship has light with darkness.” A further essential necessary to helpful fellowship would be as stated in Rom. 8:9, “If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.

Those not having the Spirit of Christ have nothing in common with the consecrated Christian, there is no fellowship of love.

UNITY OF THE SPIRIT

In Eph. 4: 1-3, it is stated that each should walk worthy of His calling, but also endeavour to keep the unity of the spirit in the bonds of peace. Christian fellowship is thus spoken of as a unity of spirit, a participation in Christ’s anointing – a fellowship of love. The Spirit of Christ will manifest itself prominently in brotherly love, and must be a special feature of Christian fellowship. When mutual love becomes established among brethren, there comes a sense of rest and naturalness in each other’s company, which is the very essence of fellowship. A Christian writer has expressed this thought as follows:- “O the comfort, the inexpressible comfort of feeling safe with a person, having neither to weigh thoughts nor measure words, but pour them all right out, just as they are, chaff and grain together, knowing that a faithful hand will take and sift them, keep what is worth keeping, and then with the breath of kindness blow the rest away.”

That is the abiding condition of friends of Jesus, no necessity for reserve or hiding in this absolute confidence borne by the certainty of high unselfish love. Let us then endeavour to keep the unity of the spirit, then there will be much building up of each other, rejoicing with them that rejoice, and weeping with them that weep.

All will probably agree then, that these four essentials are necessary:-

- (1) That all be consecrated to God.
- (2) That there be a uniformity of faith in the Word of God.
- (3) That all be aiming to walk in the light.
- (4) That all possess the Spirit of Christ and brotherly love.

MAINTENANCE OF FELLOWSHIP

In the maintenance of Christian fellowship there is, as already stated, a call for effort by each and all. All should endeavour to keep the unity of the spirit, and follow after things that make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another. (Rom. 14:19; Heb. 10:24, 25). Fellowship cannot be maintained, except self and self-will be kept under, and in its place the mind of Christ be developed as pointed out in Phil. 2: 1-5, "How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." Nevertheless there will be tests also in connection with fellowship, as stated in 1 Pet. 4: 12, "Think it not strange of the fire among you". (Diaglott).

Trials will come among us because of our inherent weaknesses, conflict with other members' viewpoints or lack of judgment; but fellowship is not a theory, it is a condition that no amount of discussion can bring about or hinder. In nature, birds of a feather will flock together, so it is with the Lord's people. Creed fences or obstacles are no barriers to those who desire and will have fellowship.

Satan, however, will attack the spirit of fellowship and misconstrue that which is good and beautiful. What shall we do then? Be rightly exercised by it and stand up to our experiences. We remember how Peter disfellowshipped himself from Jesus, denied that he knew Him, but it was turned to good account by Jesus, who had prayed for him. We learn by experiences not to flee from difficulties, but seek the Lord's help and guidance. Think of those who have stood their tests, the steadfast, patient, plodding Christians, through good report and through evil report, so different to those who have not stood their test and have been discouraged and lost fellowship.

What helpfulness is derived from Christian fellowship? We might answer this by another question. What benefit does a person get in the gathering of live coals together in the fireplace? He soon gets comfort and warmth out of the glowing coals. So in the gathering together in Christian fellowship there is that comfort of love and fellowship, of hope, a sympathy in suffering, a strengthening of faith, patience and humility, a stimulating joy, a lightening of care, and a sharing of spiritual food. Just as a live coal separated from the mass would soon grow cold, so those straying from the fellowship of Christians would be in danger of growing cold or lukewarm, missing much of development and instruction and stimulation.

Neither should fellowship be regarded as a duty merely, which we owe to other fellow-members, but should be regarded as a precious privilege, not with the thought only, "How much can I gain there," but also "How much can I help in the giving." Why should we meet together? That we might have spiritual fellowship. Why should we consider the Word of God? That we might grow in grace and knowledge and love, grow in preparation for the fellowship in the everlasting future. May the Lord help us to appreciate, more and more His Divine fellowship.



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“WAIT PATIENTLY FOR HIM”

(Psalm 37:7)

In Psalm 37:7 we have this expression of the Psalmist, “Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him.” Even though evil doers may seem to prosper, the true child of God must not allow his confidence in God to be shaken. In due time evil doers will receive punishment for wrong doing, while the righteous will be blessed and encouraged. It is surely then the part of wisdom to give earnest heed to the directions of God’s Word. “Let none that wait on Thee be ashamed; let them be ashamed, which transgress without cause” (Psalm 25:3).

The marginal reading of our text is, “Be silent to the Lord, and wait patiently for Him.” According to Strong’s concordance, the Hebrew word here translated, “wait patiently,” has in it the thought of carefulness. It implies that we should be very careful to wait for the Lord, wait attentively, wait patiently, for Him. The pathway of the Christian is beset by many dangerous by-paths, and they are not wise who feel that they can walk that way in their own strength. The attitude of the true disciple is that expressed in the hymn that says, “Keep Thou my way O Lord, myself I cannot guide, nor dare I trust my faltering steps, one moment from Thy side.”

The Lord has promised that He will guide His people. (Psalm 32:8), “I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go, I will guide thee with Mine eye.” Again our Lord Jesus is likened to the Good Shepherd. (John 10:4), “And when He puttee forth His own sheep, He goeth before them, and the sheep follow Him, for they know His voice.” So then, to understand clearly the Lord’s will for us, we need to hearken carefully to His voice, that is, we need to become familiar with His word, and additionally we need to study carefully the life of Christ, our Guide, our Shepherd, our Leader. In Psalm 119: 105 we find these words, “Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”

So it is that when we are not quite sure which way the Lord would have us go, if we come to some place where we are not able to see the right pathway, we need to call to mind the Psalmist’s words, “wait patiently for Him,” that is, refrain from acting if the matter is one of importance and likely to involve in difficulties. We are not wishing to convey the thought that Christians should be slothful or inactive, but rather should at all times and especially in matters of importance, “ponder the path of our feet, and let all our ways be established” (Prov. 4:26). To do this we will find that much careful searching of the Word will be necessary, as well as earnest prayer for promised grace and help to enable us to understand the will of God aright.

TAKE TIME TO BE HOLY

This thought of waiting for the Lord is frequently mentioned in the Scriptures, and it is surely a lesson that every follower of Christ will need to keep in mind. We must not run ahead of the Lord; many of the Lord’s people have made mistakes along this line. Our attitude should be that expressed in the hymn:

“Take time to be holy, let Him by thy guide;
And run not before Him, whatever betide,
In joy or in sorrow still follow thy Lord,
And, looking to Jesus, still trust in His Word.”

In Psalm 27:14 we have another expression along the line of waiting for the Lord. It reads, “Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart, wait I say, on the Lord.” Another Scripture very similar to this one is found in Isa. 40:31, and reads, “They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint.” In these two texts our attention is called to some of the blessings that will result from our waiting upon the Lord. It will mean that our strength of character in righteousness will be developed.

But much will depend upon the manner in which we Wait upon the Lord. Our waiting for and upon the Lord

must not be in a restless or fretful manner. In order to be pleasing to the Lord and to bring to us the fullness of His blessing, we must learn to wait patiently, heartily, uncomplainingly. There may come times when our efforts to make the truth of God's plan known to others may seem to meet with little or no success, and there may be the tendency to become somewhat discouraged. Let us not grow weary in well-doing. Let us still wait patiently upon the Lord, and be of good courage, and He shall strengthen our hearts.

The Lord surely desires that all His people should wait patiently for Him; not seeking to please self in any of life's affairs. Surely this is what all consecrated Christians have covenanted to do. The attitude of our hearts is expressed in the words, "Lord what wilt Thou have me to do"? Through His Word the Lord directs His people, saying, "My son give Me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe My ways: (Prov. 23:26) If our hearts be truly given to the Lord, we will delight in His ways, our eyes will attentively consider His ways, our ears will be open to hear and heed His instruction. "My son, attend to My words; incline thine ear unto My sayings, let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart (Prov 4: 20-21).

The Heavenly Father wishes us to live in an attitude of constant regard for His will. He wishes us to understand clearly the underlying principles of His Word. Justice-righteousness-the Golden Rule—"treat others as you would be treated," must guide our conduct and all our dealings with our friends and neighbours. We will find that we need to wait patiently for the Lord, while we seek to learn of Him the lesson of applying to our hearts the principles of truth and righteousness contained in His Word.

THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

Patient and careful consideration of the life of our Saviour will also greatly assist us in understanding the will of God for us. The 30 years of Jesus' life, spent in the humble home at Nazareth, previous to His consecration at Jordan, all speak of a heart fully submitted and patiently waiting for the Father's due time. What a lovely life that must have been, and how blessed that home where the spotless Lamb of God found shelter, "Patient waiting upon God" would seem to be the keynote of our Saviour's life. Then when our Lord had reached manhood's estate, 30 years under the Law, He came to John at Jordan, and knowing that the time had come to present Himself to God as the ransom-price for man's sin, He came in the spirit of loving submission to His Father's will, and the language of His heart was, "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God."

He had waited patiently for the guidance of the Heavenly Father, and He had come to understand what God wished Him to do; as the Apostle tells us in Heb. 10: 5-7, "When He cometh into the world He saith: sacrifice and offering Thou wouldst not, but a body hast Thou prepared me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin Thou hast had no pleasure." Then said I, "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God." Our Lord realised that the time for offering the real sacrifice for sin had arrived. God had prepared Him a body, and He came to lay down in sacrifice that perfect sinless body that thus He might provide the ransom-price, which in due time would take away the sin of the world.

We note our Lord's course at the time of His consecration when the Holy Spirit was poured out upon Him. Luke 4:1 reads, "And Jesus being full of the Holy Spirit returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness." He found it necessary to wait upon God before engaging actively in His ministry. The forty days of fasting in the wilderness would no doubt be spent in prayer and meditation. By the aid of the Holy Spirit just received at Jordan, our Lord sought to understand the best way to begin His ministry. Even the perfect mind of our Saviour needed special preparation for the work before Him. Surely He found wisdom and strength as the result of His patient waiting upon God, for we see how He was enabled to resist the temptations of the Devil, who sought to turn Him aside from the path marked out for Him by Divine wisdom and love.

How glad we are that Jesus overcame all the wiles of Satan. Having faithfully withstood temptations, He is therefore qualified to be a merciful and faithful High Priest, able to assist us to overcome in all our temptations and trials. Our Lord was strengthened as the result of His having waited upon God. The temptations of Satan served only to establish Him the more completely in the doing of the Father's will. So we read in Luke 4:14, "Jesus returned (that is, from the wilderness experience) in the power of the Spirit into Galilee, and there went out a fame of Him through all the region round about, and He taught in their synagogues being glorified of all."

"TO DO THY WILL, O GOD"

We realize that not only at the time of our Lord's consecration, but also right throughout His earthly ministry, He waited continually upon God. That is, He did nothing, undertook nothing in His own name. "I came down from heaven not to do Mine own will, but the will of My Father that sent Me. (John 6:38). "Verily I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do." (John 5:19) "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work." (John 4:34). Expressions like these from "the faithful and true witness," help us to see how Jesus waited patiently for God. His every thought and motive was fully submitted to the will of His Father. Every plan suggesting itself to His mind for consideration must be put to the test. What is the will of God? Is this matter in line with the principles of righteousness? Is it in harmony with my consecration vow to sacrifice and faithfully walk the narrow pathway of self-denial?

Thoughts such as these would surely be in our Lord's mind, as He would continually be seeking to know and do the Father's will. It was because Christ had such a great love for His Heavenly Father that He sought to do what would be most pleasing in the sight of God. We are assured that Jehovah appreciated very much the love and obedience of His faithful Son. "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hand." (John 3:35). Again "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." (Matt. 3:17) We too, earnestly desire that Jehovah should be well pleased with us. We may be sure that those found worthy to be joint-heirs with Christ in His Kingdom will include only such as are pleasing in the Father's sight.

We must all be purified from all iniquity in order to be made meet for the Master's use. God has pre-determined the characteristics of the Church. We must become at heart, copy-likenesses of Christ, and the effort to attain that degree of character will affect the whole life. The thoughts, the motives, the actions, will as far as possible, be brought into line with God's will, and His law of love. This work of building character is a very important matter in God's sight. The Heavenly Father is very deeply interested in the progress and development of His children. "The Father Himself loveth you," is our Master's assurance. So, when trials and difficulties or perplexities arise, we must not allow these to discourage us. Let us remember the Lord's instructions to wait patiently for Him, and endeavour to be rightly exercised by each lesson as it comes to us, that we may so develop more of the peaceable fruits of righteousness.

Let us not make the same mistake as the Israelites of old. In Psa. 106, we are told how God delivered them from Egypt at the Red Sea by His mighty power. At the time of their deliverance, Israel sang Jehovah's praises and believed in Him, yet they soon forgot His works and verse 13 says, "they waited not for His counsel." This was the point of their failure, they lacked faith, they hearkened not to the voice of the Lord's providences, they heeded not His counsel, but hurried along in the doing of their own will, pleasing themselves. Let us always remember that God's way is the best way; peace, contentment and satisfaction of heart, can only be ours only so long as we maintain an earnest, patient and steady effort to do God's will.

"LET US DRAW NEAR"

We are not wise enough to guide ourselves, we are not strong enough to cope with the forces of evil arrayed against us, but our Lord and Saviour, our Captain, offers us His guidance and protection. He invites us to draw near to Him in full assurance of faith, with unwavering confidence in His power and love and goodness. The Lord expects us to trust Him fully. "Without faith it is impossible to please Go." Therefore, no matter what difficulty may confront us in the Christian way, let us remember His promise, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee," and again, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Thus, trusting and waiting patiently for Him, as we follow His steps in the narrow-way, we will find in Christ a true and unfailing source of strength, wisdom, mercy and grace.

Truly, Jesus is mighty to save all who put their trust in Him. He saves us not only from the guilt and condemnation of sin, but also from its power. This deliverance or setting free from sin and its service, which by the Lord's grace we begin to experience in the present time, will have its complete fulfillment when the whole Body of Christ is changed to be with and like the Lord in the First Resurrection. (Rom 8:23; Col. 3:4). That is truly a glorious prospect to look forward to, and it does us good to think sometimes of the future inheritance of the Church, when, united with her Lord in Kingdom power, she shall reign over and bless all mankind.

But the thing that claims our attention now is our preparation for the Marriage of the Lamb. Does our Bridegroom occupy the important place in our hearts? Are we giving Him our best and fullest service? Are we carefully watching and guarding against the encroachments of fleshly or worldly affections or attractions? Are we "patiently waiting for Him"? Perhaps we may feel that we have not, in every matter, been as faithful as we would like to have been. If that is so, let us not become discouraged, but rather let us make up our minds that by His grace we will strive to be more faithful in the future than we have been in the past.

Let us heed the Apostle's words in Heb. 12:1-3. After reviewing the lives and example of some of God's faithful ones of the past, the Apostle says:-"Seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us; looking unto Jesus." Here the Apostle mentions four things, which he regards as necessary to be observed by those running in the race toward the mark for the prize:

- (1) "lay aside every weight" – earthly hindrance or unnecessary care;
- (2) "lay aside the sin that so easily besets us" – any lapse in faith on our part;
- (3) "run with patience" – cheerful, constant endurance, strengthened as we -
- (4) "look unto Jesus" – His perfect faith and obedience.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF WAITING

Surely there are many blessings to be obtained by those who wait patiently for the Lord. In the midst of trial and perplexity, how good it is to draw near to our Heavenly Father and wait upon Him in prayer and seek counsel and guidance from His Word. "Truly my soul waiteth upon God, from Him cometh my salvation.

He only is my Rock and my salvation. He is my defence; I shall not be greatly moved.” (Psa. 62: 1-2.) The Psalmist knew how vain it was to hope for deliverance to come from anyone else other than Jehovah, and so he says in Psa. 62:5: “My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from Him,” and then in verse 8 - “Trust in Him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before Him, God is a refuge for us.” It is because God is all-wise, as well as all-powerful, just and merciful, that we learn to wait patiently for Him, knowing that He will cause all things to work together for our ultimate good and blessing. (Rom. 8:28).

In the days that lie before us may we each one realise the Lord’s rich blessing upon us as we seek to wait patiently for Him; hearkening to the instructions of His word and following the leadings of His Holy Spirit. (John 16:13; Rom. 8:14.) Let us remember the Apostle’s words to “Set the affections on things above, not on things on the earth,” (Col. 3:2), and to cultivate a love for righteousness and truth by thinking on the things that are pure, good, true, just and lovely. (Phil. 4:8). How grand and satisfying will be the ultimate outcome if we persevere in this way and cease not to wait patiently for the Lord! It will mean that He will own us as His Bride, His body members and when He who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory. (Col. 3:4). (RM:1930)

“The Truth Shall Make You Free”

“Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore, thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, an heir of God through Christ”. (Gal 4:6,7)

In writing his epistle to the church in Galatia, the apostle is endeavouring to defend them against certain Judaising teachers who were seeking not only to undermine his teaching and personal influence, but thereby to bring believers under bondage to the Jewish law; giving the inference that faith in Christ was only efficacious when supplemented by the keeping of the law.

The apostle (chapter 1:1-9) expresses his surprise that those Galatian Christians should so soon have become entangled in this error, when the gospel of the kingdom had so clearly been set before them. Then (Chapter 1:10 to 2:10) he reproduces the evidence of his apostleship, and in a masterly way sets forth the strong foundation of the hope of the gospel, the entire freedom of both Jews and Gentiles from the bondage of the Law Covenant, and the glorious liberty and peculiar privileges of the children of God.

The Gentile Christians had never been under the Jewish law. They were “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise”. But, through the preaching of the apostle, they were brought nigh to God “by the blood of Christ”. (Eph 2:12,13); i.e. through faith in His blood they had been freely justified. “This only would I learn of you”, said he, “Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?” (Gal 3:2,3)

Then he proceeds to show further that while the Gentiles were not to be brought under bondage to the Jewish law, neither were the Jews justified by it, for it proved to be unto condemnation to every-one who was ever under it, except the one perfect man, Christ Jesus, who fulfilled all its conditions, and, being blameless, rendered Himself an acceptable sacrifice to redeem those who were under the Jewish law (Chapter 3:10,11,13), as well as all of the Gentile world who were under the curse of the Edenic law, which was the same law written originally in the heart of the first perfect man, Adam. Thus, “by one offering He hath perfected forever (made complete by His righteousness) them that are sanctified (fully consecrated to God)”, whether Jews or Gentiles. (Heb 10:14)

In the words of the text, he then bids them mark the fact that the witness of the Holy Spirit with their spirits is to the effect that they are the recognised children of God, and that they came into this grace without the works of the law. He says, “Because ye are sons (i.e. you have believed in Christ alone for salvation, have consecrated yourselves to Him and therefore have been adopted into God’s family), God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son (the seal of your adoption – Eph 1:13) into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant but a **son**; and, if a son, then an heir of God through Christ”. What a blessed privilege! Why then go back to the beggarly elements by which the Jews so long and so vainly sought to find salvation? (Chapter 4:9) In Christ alone is there full salvation for both Jew and Gentile; in Him there is no difference, for we are “all one in Christ Jesus”.

Thus the way of salvation is set forth as the way of simple, confiding faith. People in all ages have sought to complicate the way and to hedge it about with forms and ceremonies. They have added penances and prayers and fastings, monastic rules and regulations and numerous and varied superstitions, but the simplicity of the true way they stumble over. To keep the perfect law of God was a thing impossible for imperfect man; but if it had been possible, truly, says the apostle (Chapter 3:21), that would have been the way of salvation. But God had mercy upon our weakness, and, through Christ offers us salvation upon the terms of simple faith and of loyalty and obedience to His will to the extent of our ability.

To thus accept the favour of God through Christ – the evidence of sonship and the present and prophetic inheritance of sons – is to enter into the blessed rest of faith. This rest of faith is something which the world can neither give nor take away. It brings with it peace and happiness and joy in the midst of all the shifting

circumstances of the present life. To those who have entered into this rest of faith penances are seen to be of no avail, while prayers are occasions of sweet communion with God; feastings from the Lord's table take the place of fastings; active zeal in the Master's service supplants the gloomy and useless life of the solitary and self-tortured recluse; and the glorious sunlight of truth chases away the shadows of human superstition.

How blessed is this rest of faith! Would that all who name the name of Christ might fully enter in! Certainly, there are self-denials and sacrifices and disciplines and trials, and often persecutions along the way, but in the midst of them all there is rest and peace. Those who know this rest, though in the world, are not of it; they are in the world as the Lord's representatives and ambassadors. They are here to tell "the good tidings of great joy" to all who have ears to hear, and to make known the unsearchable riches of Christ. They are the light of the world, and, if obedient to the Master's voice, they will not hide their light by retiring from the world and shutting themselves up for religious meditation.

Some in times past have gained reputations for great sanctity by secluding themselves from the world and devoting themselves to a monastic life. How strangely their lives contrast with the active, zealous devotion of the Lord and the apostles and the early church, before this superstition was promulgated. Let us mark the footprints of our Lord and those who followed Him, and strive to walk in them. As children and heirs of God let us rejoice in our inheritance with thanksgiving, and let our zeal in service manifest our love and devotion to God. (R 1657)

"If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed". (John 8:36)

"Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free". (John 8:32)

Harsh and Kind Words

One day a harsh word rashly said,
Upon an evil journey sped,
And, like a sharp and cruel dart,
It pierced a fond and loving heart,
It turned a friend into a foe,
And everywhere brought pain and woe.
A kind word followed it one day,
Flew swiftly on its blessed way,
It healed the wound, it soothed the pain,
And friends of old were friends again;
It made the hate and anger cease,
And everywhere brought joy and peace.
And yet the harsh word left a trace
The kind word could not quite efface;
And though the heart its love regained,
It bore a scar that long remained.
Friends could forgive, but not forget,
Or lose the sense of keen regret.
Oh! if we could but learn to know
How swift and sure our words can go,
How would we weigh with utmost care
Each thought before it sought the air,
And only speak the words that move
Like white-winged messengers of love!
(Anon)

Still Wait

When clouds hang heavy o'er thy way,
And darker grows the weary day,
And thou, oppressed by anxious care,

Art almost tempted to despair,
Still wait upon the Lord.
When friends betray thy loving trust,
And thou art humbled in the dust,
When dearest joys from thee have fled,
And hope within thy heart lies dead,
Still wait upon the Lord.
When Death comes knocking at thy door,
And in thy home are sorrows sore,
Though age comes on and eyes grow dim,
Still look to Christ, still trust in Him,
And wait upon the Lord.
Whate'er thy care, believe His word;
In joy or grief, trust in the Lord.
Good courage He will give to thee,
And strong, indeed, thy heart shall be,
By waiting on the Lord.

(Anon)

A Mountain Top Experience

We use the expression “A Mountain Top Experience” to designate an experience that is especially pleasant to us, not only from a physical point of view, but also spiritually beneficial. It could be a Convention or a study meeting, where we learnt something we never quite understood before, or it could be a season of Class fellowship where we all were found to be of one accord when we faced a special problem or course of action to be taken. These mountain-top experiences act as booster stations for us where our spiritual energy is revived when it may have been down a little.

These mountain-top experiences cause our energy to go up again. It is like getting a car battery recharged. The battery is in the car, the outside casing is in good order and the interior parts are all there and everything seems to be all right, but the battery has lost its power. What has happened? Well, probably one of several things. The battery has become run down or over-loaded. The energy of the battery may have been used for the wrong purpose, either way it needs re-charging.

We know that when a car is going we can have the lights on and the radio playing and yet the battery will not run down, because while we are going towards our destination the car battery is being charged by the generator. This can be a very fitting illustration of why our spiritual energy may be low at times or even dead. Perhaps too much energy is being used for the wrong purposes and instead of going somewhere spiritually, we are “parking” too long. Activity in the Lord’s service begets spiritual energy. This is a very important thing to remember. **Activity in the Lord’s service begets spiritual energy.**

Another cause for a battery to become run down or even totally destroyed is that impure water was added to the battery when the level was low. Distilled water should be used to replenish the water in a battery if it is low. Why? Because our regular tap water has impurities in it that can be damaging to the battery. Our drinking water has such things as chloride, iron, lime, manganese and so forth. Our bodies reject what they do not require, but a battery does not. For instance, if there is a manganese content in the water and we put into a battery over five one-thousandths of the weight of the active material, it causes corrosion and can destroy the battery completely. Just that infinitesimal part of manganese can destroy the car battery beyond recharging.

SPIRITUAL RENEWAL

Here again we can learn something to profit by spiritually, because it shows how careful we should be that the Water of Truth that we use to add to our spiritual bodies, if our spiritual batteries need replenishing, is quite pure. We must be absolutely certain it is pure and peaceable and so on, otherwise it will have a very harmful effect on our spiritual energy. Unfortunately, it can lead to the destruction of our spiritual life. We are not going to be able to give any light if this life we have as new creatures is put to death. Our eternal destiny can be lost by these small impurities coming in and corroding and destroying. Malice, hate, envy, strife, things of that kind can destroy us spiritually. So we must be very careful what we add to provide us with energy for our spiritual light bearing.

One would think that Jesus would not require a mountain-top experience. Maybe He did not. But Jesus had

one, just the same. After Jesus' baptism we find that the account of the early part of His ministry is described largely in verses like this, "He went about doing good." "No man spoke as this man spoke." "And the people heard him gladly." Expressions like these described in a general way the ministry of our Lord. Then we find that Jesus chose His disciples and was ready to face trials and difficulties. In Luke 9:22 we read – "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected of the leaders and chief priests and scribes and be slain, and then be raised on the third day." Here very plainly Jesus was telling the disciples that He would suffer and die, yet they forgot all about it. In verse 23 He said – "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." In other words, it was not all going to be peaches and cream, this life of being a disciple of Jesus. He was preparing them for a later period of time that was to come.

Then Jesus made a statement that most people find very difficult to understand. In verse 24 of Luke 9 He says – "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever will lose his life **for my sake**, the same shall save it." We understand the meaning, but not too many people do. It is simply a continuation of His preparing His disciples and perhaps even Himself for the suffering that was to come. Jesus was telling them and us, – if you want to follow Me it will be self-denial and suffering, and once you have entered into the way and been accepted by the Heavenly Father, there is no turning back. So we must enter into this way very carefully. If we have promised to give up our old ways and then try to hang on to this present earthly life's aims and ambitions, we will lose everything. But He says, – if we are faithful and sacrifice our life for Him, then we will have His blessing and guidance. We realise that many people are dedicated and suffer and are sacrificed to a degree, for many other causes; but if we sacrifice and live for His sake, as a follower of Jesus, we shall save the new life that is begotten in us.

"INTO A MOUNTAIN TO PRAY"

It is here that Jesus and some of His disciples were given a mountain-top experience that was to be such a comfort and help to them in the days ahead. Luke 9:28-36, *"And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered and his raiment was white and glistening. And behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias: who appeared in glory, and spake of His decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep: and when they awoke, they saw his glory, and two men that stood with him. And it came to pass, as they departed from him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles: one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias: not knowing what he said. While he thus spake, there came a cloud, and overshadowed them: and they feared as they entered into the cloud. And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him. And when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone. And they kept it close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen."*

If we had just this one account of this experience of Jesus on the mountain top with His disciples, we might have a little difficulty in knowing just what happened. But we have also Matt. 17:1-9 and Mark 9:2-9. By putting together all three accounts, we have a very clear picture of what happened and its meaning for us.

The occurrence is called the Transfiguration Scene. The question that comes to our minds is, Did this really take place in its entirety as it is recorded, or was it a vision? In Matt 17:9 the question is answered for us. Verse 1 called it a "high mountain." "As they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead." So they actually went up into this high mountain, but what they saw and what they heard was a vision, on no less an authority than that of Jesus. Who was there with Jesus? Peter, James and John. Someone says, You have forgotten Moses and Elias. But they were not really there. They were only in vision. To have them there, they would have had to be raised from the dead and it was not time for them to be raised from the dead.

THE MEANING OF THE VISION

But what is the meaning of Moses and Elias being there? This vision is a symbolic representation of the glory of Christ's Millennial Kingdom. The appearance of Jesus was altered. He became a glorious being, and even His clothing became glorious clothing. It was a picture of His being raised a Divine being after His resurrection. Moses and Elijah represented the association with the Lord and the glory of His Kingdom of the two companies, the earthly phase of the kingdom and the heavenly phase of the kingdom. Moses represented the earthly phase, Elijah represented the spiritual or heavenly phase of the kingdom. They saw the symbolic representation of the kingdom established in power and glory, the earthly and the heavenly phases of the kingdom. They talked about Jesus' decease that would be accomplished, but surely they talked about the glory of the kingdom and what it would be like. Why do we say that? Listen to what Peter said. He was so overwhelmed that he said – "Lord, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias." He just wanted to stay there for the rest of his life. He did not want to go back down from the mountain top.

Why did God choose Moses to be in this scene? We all know the story of Moses and that he was used to make a picture or type of the coming earthly phase of the kingdom. What did Moses do? He delivered the

children of Israel out of bondage. Christ in due time will also deliver the world of mankind from the bondage of sin and death. Moses was a mediator between God and Israel. So Christ, with the Church, will be the Mediator between the earthly phase of the kingdom and the heavenly phase of the kingdom. When Israel came into the Promised Land after wandering around in the wilderness, what do you think it was like? It was probably like a new life. For 40 long years they had little to eat and drink besides manna and water. Now they had entered this land full of milk and honey. When the spies came back it took two men to carry one bunch of grapes, they were so bountiful. So Moses is a typical picture of the earthly phase of the kingdom. In the eyes of the world of mankind it will not only **seem** like a new life, but it will **be** a new life, for they will be raised from the dead.

Why was Elijah chosen? Because Elijah was a prophet and God blessed him. He prayed for the rain to stop and it stopped. He prayed for rain to fall, and it did so. He had a wonderful victory over 400 prophets of Baal, and was finally caught up in a whirlwind and taken away. That was a great miracle! This might represent the experiences of the Church this side of the veil, and the way they will be ushered into heaven itself, which will be the greatest miracle of all.

So Peter was ready to stay there the rest of his life. Let us build homes and live here, was his thought, but it was not to be. What is the lesson for us in this little experience? Sometimes we may feel especially blessed at a Convention or a specially nice study meeting and feel it is a shame to have to go back to work in the world with its problems and we too want to stay on the mountain top. But God in His wisdom says, No. And why is that? For the same reason He said No, to Peter, James and John. They had to go down to preach the Gospel and have more testings and severe trials, to prove themselves faithful even unto death.

Mountain top experiences refresh us and enable us to clean up our hearts and make them a suitable place for the Holy Spirit to dwell. If we are putting new furnishings into our home, it is much easier if we clean out our household before putting in the new things. To turn out everything is not so bad, but we have to make a decision what to do with this or that. Sometimes cleaning out the mind that has been filled with improper thoughts or incorrect beliefs is harder. It is amazing what can be found behind the furniture of the mind. Sometimes we have thoughts in our minds that get hidden away and wrong can come from them. We have wrong conclusions sometimes. They are like the dust behind the furniture. Sometimes we find that the real reasons for believing what we do are that we are selfish. We covet another person's prestige, or we are jealous of his or her success. We may expect others to walk in the right way and forget the truth of the matter ourselves.

“ALL THINGS ARE BECOME NEW”

When we are spiritually begotten, old things pass away and all things become new. This is a time when it is important to be careful, because this is something that will affect our eternal destiny. Once we are spirit-begotten and our house cleaned of jealousy, lies, pride and other things of the flesh, our house is empty. But the question is whom do we invite back into the mind? Do we invite back seven other spirits that are more wicked? In Matt 12, there is an interesting lesson in verses 43-45. “When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.” So there is a principle here that Jesus is telling us that we must be especially careful on this second time around, because this is the last time we have a chance to furnish the mind with proper thoughts.

In 2 Cor. 6: 15, 16 we read about somebody who is going to come and live with us. “What concord hath Christ with Belial? 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.” So God says He will come and live with us. Whenever we have an important visitor come to our house, we immediately try to clean up the house better than it usually is. So if an important visitor is coming, we will try to have the whole house cleaned up and everything made ready. That is how we should treat our minds and hearts. God wishes His Holy Spirit or power to live here, but not in a dirty house.

“MY BELOVED SON – HEAR HIM”

Then getting back to Luke 9 and the Transfiguration Scene, we read in verse 34 – “there came a cloud and overshadowed them: and they feared as they entered into the cloud. And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him.” The Father is represented as being in the bright cloud, and in effect He was saying, Now Moses was a great leader and a great man of faith, and he did mighty works and miracles for me and on my behalf. And so was Elijah. He did mighty works and miracles also. But that is in the past. This is My beloved Son: I want you to listen to Him. “Hear ye Him!”

In Luke 16:16, we see that the Law was until John and after that the kingdom of heaven was preached. Jesus Christ brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. Paul speaks about the mystery hid from

ages and generations, and now made manifest to the saints by Jesus. In Heb. 2:3, we read about this “so great salvation; which at first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him.” “Hear ye Him” was the message.

The message for Peter, James and John is the message for us. When we listen to the words of Jesus and hear the teachings of Jesus, we have the precepts to live by and the wonderful plans and purposes of God for us. Here was another testimony from God Himself declaring our Lord to be His Son. There were three occasions when the Heavenly Father confirmed the fact that this was His Son. Once at His birth, the heavenly messenger announced Him. At His baptism the voice declared – “This is my beloved son.” Then in this Transfiguration Scene God declares – “This is my beloved Son, hear ye Him!” Then when the voice was passed, the vision was over.

Why did God give Jesus this experience? Was it to encourage our Lord in the sufferings and trials that would come upon Him? Jesus during the 3 1/2 years had been seeking to be pleasing to God but sometimes, no doubt He wondered, Am I really doing what God wants me to do? Then God assured Him, Yes, you have done everything just the way I wanted you to do it. “This is my beloved Son; hear Him.” We have the same experiences as our Lord. At times we wonder, Am I really doing what God wants me to do? Have I been faithful. How wonderful when, every once in a while, God assures us in one way or another, Yes, you are, but keep on keeping on.

Did this experience help Peter later in life, near the close of his ministry? Yes, we have Peter referring to this in a very special way. In 2 Pet. 1:16-18 we have Peter saying – We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.” Peter was saying, I’m sure beyond any shadow of a doubt that we have the truth, and God is dealing with us. We note that Peter, at the time he said this, was very near to the end of his human existence.

Paul knew ahead of time when he would die and be buried. But Peter also knew and not only knew when, but how he was to die. In 2 Pet. 1:13, 14 we read – “Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance: knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me.” Jesus told Peter how he would die. We go back to John 21:18, 19 and read what Jesus said to Peter – “Verily, verily I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself and walkest whither thou wouldest; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.”

It is a beautiful lesson, this vision, this experience Jesus had with his disciples Peter, James and John. They saw a vision and they gave it to us, and now we have seen the vision. Do we fully appreciate the message contained there? The message very simply is this; we will from time to time have mountain top experiences, but we cannot live on the mountain top all the time. We have to go down into the valley and suffer, be tested and tried and preach the gospel. The example is there, and it is up to us to follow it. May the Lord help us to do so. (NM:1970).

Effectual Prayer

“If my People, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven...” (2 Chron. 7:14)

Of all the duties Christians are to perform, none is more essential or more neglected than prayer. How few there are who truly pray! How few really wish for the true riches: humility, renunciation of self, the reign of God upon the ruins of their self-love. These things must be sincerely desired in all aspects of our lives. Without this desire, our prayers are merely an illusion, like a pleasant dream to one who is suffering intense pain.

For many, prayer is viewed as a fatiguing ceremony and they feel justified in shortening their time in prayer as much as possible. For others prayer is a mere custom – done by rote and repeated in form and frequency just as they had first been taught. Many pray when they are afraid, and still others pray only in times of tribulation. For effective prayer we need to examine our motives and our attitudes.

We might ask ourselves these questions: Do we honour God with our lips while our hearts are far from him? Do we feel a chilling indifference when we approach him who is a consuming fire (Deut. 4:24; Heb. 12:29)? Is our prayer missing a zeal for God’s glory? If our answer to any of these questions is yes, then there is little hope that we will be blessed in our prayers. To be blessed in prayer requires that our approach to God be accompanied by a sincere hatred for sin and a thirst for righteousness.

CONCENTRATION

Those who resort to prayer because of the things *and seek my face, and* which they have been taught or

because of their own fears do so with laxity and a wandering mind. But all earthly objects must disappear from our minds when we approach the Almighty. To whom do we speak with such concentration if not to God? Can he demand less of us than that we should think about what we say to him? Dare we to hope that he will listen to us, that he will think of us, when we forget the subject of our own prayer while we are still praying? We must pray attentively! The result of our fearful prayers and of those which arise from an insincere profession is not blessing. Such prayers result, rather, in the drawing down of condemnation from God (Isa. 29:13,14; Matt. 15:8,9).

To pray is to lift one's heart to God saying, "Let thy will be done." The pronouncing of words is not prayer. God listens to our heart and not to our lips. Our heart must be engaged in prayer, fastened upon the subject of its prayer. Prayer is the desire to do, or to submit to, the will of God; and not that alone, but also to do so to God's glory.

We must seek counsel at the feet of the Creator, laying our plans before God, for only he can make them successful. Without him our designs are only a delusion, however good they may appear to us. Only God can aid us. Often the help which we receive from others is empty, but God's blessing results in an abundance – even when it is brought forth through our meagre exertions and poor planning.

QUIET

Reserve a portion of your time for meditating upon eternity rather than devoting all of your time to action. Jesus invited his disciples into a desert place of periodic rest when they returned from proclaiming his message in the cities of Israel. How much more necessary it is for us to approach the Source of all virtue to revive our faith and love when we have been discouraged and weakened by conversation with men who act and speak as if they had never known of God.

Asking in faith is another step to effective prayer. We need that internal, heartfelt confidence that God will not reject those who bring their all to him and who rest their all upon his goodness. Must we confess that this childlike confidence is lacking in our prayer? Do we approach God confidently and without hesitation as one who is longing for a companion, or do we approach him each time anew, as though this were the first benefit we have ever asked or received from him? We need to ask in faith, knowing that God will love the heart that trusts in him and rests its all upon his goodness.

A LAST RESORT?

Do we resort to prayer only after all other efforts have failed? To find this to be the case would be to recognize our own infidelity to God, an infidelity which would render us unworthy of his grace. One who prays as a last resort and without faith cannot hope that his prayer will be answered. Our faith must be firm enough not to hesitate, for God will love the heart of one who trusts in him.

What is paramount in prayer? Prayer does not require one to quit what he is doing. The best of all prayers is to act with pure intention. And we must be persuaded that the simplest, most humble prayer is best. The most acceptable prayer will be that which most conforms to the words of the Son of God and his Apostles. Let us pray so as to learn from God what we are and what we ought to be so that we may meekly fulfill our duty wherever we may find ourselves.

This union with God in prayer must be the result of obedience to his will. Only in this way may we measure our love to him. Our meditations ought to become more profound and intimate. Divine truths should enter the substance of our lives to nourish us and cause us to grow. (The Herald)

The Miracle Book

There is a miracle of diversity in unity; it is in its own greatest evidence to its divine origin and authority and we cannot consider these two great facts without being tremendously impressed with the fact of the diversity of Holy Scripture and the fact of its unity.

There is diversity of **language**. The Old Testament was written in Hebrew, and portion of it in Chaldean. The New Testament was written in Greek. There is a diversity of **authorship**. These Scriptures were not written by any one man, neither by a company of men collaborating with one another. Men with greatly diversified mental calibre and training and occupation were employed in writing the Bible. Moses was a shepherd, Joshua was a soldier, Samuel was a seer, David was a king, Solomon was a philosopher, Amos a herdsman, Daniel a statesman, Ezra a scribe, Matthew was a taxgatherer, Luke a doctor, John a fisherman, Paul was a scholar. Men of such diverse temperaments and training were employed in the writing of these sacred Books.

There is a further diversity of **place** in which these Scriptures were produced. They have come to us from the desert of Sinai, from the wilderness of Judea, from the banks of Chebar, from the city of Zion, from the public prison of Rome, from the isle of Patmos.

There is no literary phenomenon in the world to be compared with it; not only so, but there is diversity of **form**. In Genesis there are stories, in Leviticus there is ritual, in Deuteronomy there is oratory, in Ruth there is romance, In Samuel and Kings there is national history, in Job there is drama, the Psalms are sacred hymns, in

Proverbs we have ethics, in Ecclesiastes we have philosophy, in the Canticles we have a love song, in Joel and Habakkuk we have rhapsody, in Isaiah and Jeremiah we have prophecy, in the Gospels we have biography, in Acts we have church history, in the epistles we have doctrine, in Revelation we have the Apocalypse. These and other literature have place in this great spiritual classic.

But not only have we diversity of language, of authorship, of place, of form and of writing, but also of **subject matter**. Is there any other book in the world to be compared with it from this standpoint? In the Bible we read of God, mankind, of angels and demons, of Jews and Gentiles, of Christians and pagans, of saints and sinners, of the Church and the world, of peace and war, of friends and foes, of blessings and curses, of holiness and sin, of honour and shame, of faith and unbelief, of time and eternity, of life and death, of love and rage, of heaven and hades. These and countless other subjects are brought to our notice within the covers of this extraordinary volume.

But we are not impressed with any sense of incongruity. There is an eminent fitness in the relationship of these Tremendous Themes to one another. Nor were these writings produced at any one **time**; they do not belong to any one age; they have come to us as the growth of some 1,500 to 1,600 years. Is there any other book in the world that can be compared with this as to its diversity?

Were the number of subjects treated or their equivalent brought together in any other book no publisher would take the risk of publishing it and no purchaser would ever buy it and yet the Bible is the most widely circulated book in all the world. Other books have a season, they have a run and then we hear of them no more. But this Book lives on through the ages, and outlives all other literature and is the Queen of all literature.

Our astonishment is infinitely greater when we come to realise that notwithstanding all this diversity the Bible is nevertheless A Sublime Unity. We take the fact of this unity, then its nature. There are laws that govern organic unity. There are two kinds of unity which we may speak of as mechanic and organic. Mechanic unity is the unity of a building and is lifeless. Organic unity is the unity of a body and is alive. Scripture in its unity is not mechanic, it is organic. What are these laws? First, each and every part is essential to the whole. A famous Hebrew scholar once heard a sermon and criticised it, and said that the sermon was twice too long, it should be cut in half, it does not matter which half. It is quite evident that sermon was not a unity. It cannot be said of the Bible that it is twice too long; that we could well do without one half and it does not matter which half. The Bible is a whole and every part is necessary.

The two Testaments are essential to one another. They brood over the mercy seat as a cherubim of gold did of old, each answering to the other. "The New is in the Old contained, the Old is in the New Explained." Genesis and Revelation are essential to one another. Genesis is the book of commencement, Revelation the book of consummation. There can be nothing before the commencement, there can be nothing after the consummation and so Genesis anticipates Revelation and Revelation consummates Genesis. Each and every part is essential to the whole.

The second law that governs organic unity is this, that each part is related to and corresponds with every other part, Genesis with Mathew, the two great beginnings. The books that introduce the two covenants, Leviticus and Hebrews – Leviticus giving all that is essential to Judaism, and Hebrews all that is essential to Christianity. Exodus with Acts – Exodus telling of the nationalisation of the people of God and Acts of the beginning of the Christian Church and the first generation of her history. Joshua with Ephesians – the former telling of a nation's inheritance, the latter of the Inheritance of a heavenly people. Daniel the Old testament Apocalypse with Revelation the New Testament Apocalypse, pointing beyond the rise and fall of the world's empires to the coming of Him who is King of kings and Lord of lords. Each is related to every other part, corresponds with every other part.

There is an extraordinary illustration of such correspondence. Take the first three chapters of Genesis and the last three of Revelation and you will find that each of these three chapters of Genesis and last three of Revelation treats of the same subjects but in the reverse order. In Genesis we have the first Heaven and Earth, in Revelation 22 the last heaven and earth. In Genesis 2 we have husband and wife, in Revelation 21 the Lamb and the Bride. In Genesis 3 the sentence is pronounced upon Satan, and in Revelation 20, the sentence is executed. It is little wonder that the devil attempts to get us to believe that the one book is all myth and the other all mystery.

Where there is organic unity every part is pervaded with the spirit of life. Hebrews speaks of the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever. The word of God is not a dead letter. We can no more leave the Bible alone or leave it out of our reckoning than we can leave Christ alone. Christ does not derive His value from the Bible; the Bible derives its value from Christ. Only through the Bible can we get to Christ; our eternal knowledge of Christ comes through the Bible.

There can be no question as to the fact of organic unity in the Scripture. The nature of that unity – structural unity: The Bible is built up in an extraordinary way not to be accounted for by accident or chance and in both Testaments we find a sequence. For instance in the Old Testament from Genesis to Esther we have history and further back we cannot go. But begin that first verse of the first of Genesis and interest is aroused, we are led

on through all these Books right to the sublime end in the Apocalypse of John. We are impressed as we read with the amazing diversity of which we have spoken. The thing unfolds and presents itself as a sublime story. All these stories are one story, all these revelations are one revelation and all these records are one record.

Across the whole of the Old Testament you may write the word expectation and across the whole of the New you may write the word realisation. In Genesis there are Origins, in the Revelation there are Issues and all the way between from Exodus to Jude there are processes leading from those origins to those issues. The revelation of God to man has been made in history and everywhere in Holy Scripture there is historical continuity and sequence. There is historical unity everywhere in Scripture; there is further Prophetical Unity. Here there is opportunity for the wildest confusion and multiplied contradiction, as witness modern prophecies. But although there was not and could not have been any collusion among the writers of Holy Scripture there is no contradiction.

There are four great themes of prophecies – the Messiah, the Jews, the Gentiles and the Church. Some treat of one and some of another and not a few touch upon them all. But there is an amazing harmony everywhere, there is no contradiction among the voices. In the Old Testament there are predictions, in the New there are fulfilments. In the Old we get types, in the New antitypes. The whole of the Old is leading up to the First Advent and the whole of the New is leading up to the Second Advent. There is prophetical unity as well as structural unity, and historical unity everywhere in Scripture. Further we have here doctrinal unity. Now, were men left to themselves how utterly impossible it would be to have synthesis of doctrine and harmony of teaching. But these many writers across the Ages were not left to themselves.

Everywhere in Scripture Jehovah is God. To take one doctrine, we are told in some quarters that Jehovah was the tribal Deity of the Hebrews placing Him much on a level with Ashtoreth of The Old Testament enemies of Israel. The New Testament declares Him to be the God of all the earth, the Creator of the universe and its sustainer. The Jehovah of the Hebrews is no tribal Deity, He is the God of all men. God so loved—not just the Hebrews, nor the Church—but the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Everywhere in Scripture man is a sinner. The Old Testament does not present man as half a beast on his way up to morality and the New as a man made like God; both Testaments agree in saying that man has sinned and come short of the Glory of God. There is perfect harmony of doctrine. Both Testaments teach that Christ is the One and only Redeemer and His Cross our only hope. Redemption in the Old Testament anticipated, is in the New accomplished and it is the One Great Theme which runs through all the Scriptures. It is the note that dominates in this Orchestra from start to finish.

We also have spiritual unity. Think of the level of thought in the Bible. Think of its range, of its vision. Think of the sublimity of its themes. Think of the loftiness of its ideals. Think of the power of its appeals. The horizons of the Bible are infinitudes and immensities. The current coin of this realm is Faith, Love and Hope. Think what the Bible has done for the individual. Think of all who, were they with us still would say, “this one thing I know—that whereas I was blind now I see.” No man ever came to say that by studying philosophy or science, but many have through an acquaintance with the word of God.

Think of what the Bible has done for society. Think of what it has done for the Church of God throughout the world and in all ages and for national life, especially for our own and for the world where the Word of God has been accepted and believed. There is emancipation, there is deliverance from degradation and from cruelty. The Bible has brought release and relief to men and women and safeguarding of children. It has turned the demons out of cruel hearts and made men sober and kind. If the Bible is to be judged by what it has accomplished then verily it is the Book of Books and the Word of God. It could have no other origin than God Himself. And if it is of Divine origin, then it is of Divine authority. It does not need our apology or our special pleading. Give it a chance, it will demonstrate its own character and its own Power.

This is the staff upon which multitudes of Pilgrims have found their way to the shining home far away up among the delectable mountains. This is the star that has guided mariners on the storm tossed oceans through the ages. This is the weapon with which Christian soldiers have fought their battles to glorious victory. This is the compass that has guided men in darkness and distress. This is the Book on which many a sainted mother and father laid down their heads as upon a pillow in the last moments of life and passed away crooning some Old Testament Psalm such as “The Lord is my Shepherd I shall not want”, etc. This is the Book of all ages and they who build upon it are as eternal as God.

Wholly Thine

“Oh, to be clean, to be pure, to be true!

Cost what it may, to be Thine through and through;

Purged from the promptings of evil within,

Freed by Thy grace from the thralldom of sin!

“Oh, to be simple to that which is ill,

Wise with a wisdom alert to Thy will:
Earnest of purpose and single of eye,
Eager to live and unfearing to die!
“Oh, to be fair, to be just, to be kind,
Sober in spirit and humble in mind;
Patient, unselfish, regardful of all,
Thinking no evil, though evil befall!
“Oh, to be fervent, unceasing in prayer,
Watching thereunto Thy praise to declare!
Living or dying, this blessing be mine
Always, in all things, to wholly be Thine!”
(Author Unknown)



Volume 83 No. 3 MELBOURNE, JULY-SEPTEMBER 2000 **“THERE WILL I MEET WITH THEE”**

“There will I meet with thee, and I will commune with thee, from above the mercy seat.” (Exodus 25•22)

A RENDEZVOUS WITH GOD

In the words of the text, God is saying that He has appointed a trysting place where He will condescend to come near to His servant Moses in intimate communion, and there unfold His will! A meeting ground provided by God Himself where He, the high and lofty One inhabiting eternity, will hold special converse with mortal man! Wonderful indeed was such a mercy seat, centre of close communion and unique revelation, that holy place where Moses, “faithful in all his house as a servant”, might be alone with God. How exceptional were his privileges, and how extraordinary the revelations he received in his rendezvous with God.

Yet this was only a typical approach to God’s presence. Wonderful though it was, it was but a shadow cast before, giving promise of better and greater things to come. In a time, then distant, with a glory far excelling, a great “Mercy-Seat” would be provided by God in His progressive purposes. Then with still more sublime meaning He would speak to recipients of His grace, saying, “and there will I meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the Mercy Seat.” In due time “Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house are we” would be the centre of a greater intimacy with God, a great unfolding of His grace, and a richer inheritance, “eternal in the heavens.” Truly, “if what faded had its glory, then what lasts will be invested with far greater glory.” Now through the Spirit, and by a nearer approach to God, “we all mirror the glory of the Lord with face unveiled, and so are being transformed into the same likeness, passing from one glory to another.” (2 Cor 3:11, 18 Moffatt)

We call to mind that “holy men of old searched diligently concerning the grace that should be the happy estate of ones in a coming day” - our day! We should never forget that righteous ones of other ages could not see or hear things now unfolded to us and placed within our reach, “which things even the angels desire to look into.” But now, since God in Christ has reconciled us unto Himself, “from above the mercy seat” He sends the word of His grace to us through His ministering apostle. “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from ‘a consciousness of evil’ (Diag) and our bodies washed with pure water.” (Heb 10: 19-22)

God was indeed in Christ reconciling us unto Himself. He was in Christ in such intimate union, in such sympathetic tenderness, and in such immeasurable sacrifice that His redemptive love remains too profound for us to fathom, and costly beyond our comprehending. How dear to the heart of God are His blood-bought children! What insight into the depths of that love comes to those grateful, receptive hearts who keep constant tryst with God close by His own lovingly provided Mercy Seat! What words from above that great “propitiatory” are heard there, and how much those words are constantly needed by even the most faithful saints!

Dark stains from the pit from which we were lifted can flash before the mind; recollections can come which send a dart of pain through the now cleansed conscience; and moments, acts and memories we would rather forget forever, can come back like a cloud over the spirit within. How all this painful recollection will be shut out from our unsullied and unbroken communion in heaven we do not know, but while we are still tabernacling in flesh wherein is no perfect righteousness, it is good that we visualise at times that from which redeeming love has lifted us. Praise be to Him by whose kind favour we have been washed, cleansed and sanctified and for whom there is therefore now no condemnation.

“HE IS OUR PEACE”

Oh, the peace the Saviour gives! Truly, “He is our peace.” The past, with all its stains and shadows, its foolishness and indiscretions, is under the blood -that efficacious, full-atoning blood which “cleanseth us

from all sin.” The voice which speaks from above the Mercy Seat speaks peace, the perfect peace of which the Psalmist wrote, “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.” (Psa 32:1) This is surely a blessed state when, concerning it, the apostle challenges, “Who will bring accusation against God’s chosen ones? Will that God who justifies? Who is he who condemns? Will that Anointed One who died, and who still more also is at the right hand of God, and who intercedes on our behalf? Who shall separate us from that love of God, which is in the Anointed Jesus.” (Rom 8:33-35 Diag)

“We have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have been introduced into this favour in which we stand, and we boast in hope of the glory of God.” (Rom 5:1,2 Diag) “This favour in which we stand” - what a heritage it is! Here “the God of peace” shall be with us, “righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit” stabilise us, and here we may be filled “with all joy and peace in believing, that (we) may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit.” (Phil 4:9, Rom 14:17, 15:13) How complete is our peace **with** God, and how marvelous the peace **of** God into which it leads us.

Does life have its disturbing incidents, and problems their disquieting distractions? Are there burdens of our own to bear and loads borne by others that we must share in fulfilling the law of Christ? None is immune from such personal burdens, nor exempt from such load-sharing, if they are true to God and to His children. But has God not said, “I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat? And there He speaks, “Be not anxious about anything, but in everything let your petitions be made known to God by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving and that peace of God which surpasses all conception, shall guard your hearts and your minds by Christ Jesus.” (Phil 4:6,7 Diag) What a Mercy Seat is ours! Blessed rendezvous with God, where weary spirits find relief, often escape the snare of the tempter, and find at times a ladder such as Jacob saw, and exclaim with him, “This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.” (Gen 28:17)

Wonderful words came from the lips of Jesus, words of life and beauty indeed - words illuminating prophetic pages, words establishing new standards of life and conduct, and words so laden with endearment that we are left in speechless **wonder**. To those with whom God can commune “from above the mercy seat” the word is “The Father Himself loveth you.” He loves us! Yes, but with what an astounding depth and measure! Jesus gave us its dimensions, “that the world may know that Thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, **as Thou hast loved me**. (John 16:27, 17:23) Could there be, therefore, any surer test of our nearness to God through Christ than in finding our hearts responding with an inexpressible gladness to such declarations of so unique a place in the love of God?

If, as we are told, “the goodness of God leadeth to repentance”, it must surely follow that when repentance has prepared the way for this further revelation of divine love, a greatly increased inflow of love to God will lift one up where communion from above the mercy seat will be habitually sought after. Such will be blessedly real, and give to the whole perspective of life a maturity embracing even greater nearness to God, greater light on His inspired word, and richer foretastes of heavenly fellowship.

“GIVE ME THINE HEART”

Does God really crave this close, intimate, reciprocal love from us; does He find in our ardent affections toward Him an odour of sweet incense? Can it be that His emotional depths are stirred in a special way by the warmth of our responsive love, when, as we know, He has the sublime, unceasing outpouring adoration of heaven’s highest creatures? His word reveals that it is indeed so. Is He not asking for this love in His appeal, “My son, give me thine heart”? Is it not the same appeal in His other words to us, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind”?

Herein we perceive the divine delight in our love; He does rejoice in its overflowing purity and performance. He is love, and it is the very character of true love to crave reciprocation. He who bestowed mother-love on womankind bestowed it out of the fathomless depths of His own great parental affection. Our power to love with all our heart, soul, strength and mind was given to us for this great purpose. We turn the pages of the written Word and we gaze upon the reflection of infinite love revealed in the living Word, and love begets love, reciprocal affection becoming a consuming joy within, and from our hearts we can say -

“Take my love, my God; I pour

At Thy feet its treasure store;

Take myself, I wish to be

Ever, only, all for Thee.”

But if we would know ‘God’s love drawing thus powerfully on our heart’s love, we need to remember that it is found only around His own appointed trysting place, “the blood-bought Mercy Seat.” This is where the apostle brings us, saying, ‘Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” (1 John 4:10) It is therefore clear that only when we keep habitual rendezvous with God at the Mercy Seat will our love for Him rise up as a sweet incense, rejoicing His heart. Also, since love is the fulfilling of the law, where other than in this same hallowed place where God communes with us from above the Mercy Seat, will His love become shed abroad in our hearts, broadening and deepening until God and neighbour are loved according to the command in which Jesus epitomised the whole Law? It is

through abiding in this sacred place where God meets with man that we find joy and rest in His love, and there fellowship with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Words of assured forgiveness have come from Him who promised to meet us at our Mercy Seat. Wonderful words of love have also been spoken there to our cleansed and dedicated hearts. The past has been put under the blood, and the present made a blessed walk of close communion with God. But still there is more to follow. How like our Lord to speak again and say to us now as He said to His brethren long ago, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." (John 15:11) So that our joy may now be complete He has spoken words calculated to give us the assurance that all we have committed to Him for the future is safely in **His** keeping. By virtue of our being His purchased possession, bought by the blood of His dear Son, can we not, by faith, believe that He who began His good work in us will surely complete it?

"THE LORD IS THY KEEPER"

He who is able to make all grace abound toward us and whose Spirit bears witness with ours does indeed speak to us "from above the Mercy Seat", enabling us to rejoice in a hope both sure and steadfast. "He shall give His angels charge over thee" is a blessed promise. Another is equally assuring, "The Lord is thy keeper; the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand" (Psa 121:5) Again, "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty". (Psa 91:1) Such comfort coming from a keeper who never slumbers or sleeps, must, if we are true-hearted, give us faith to say, "I know whom **I** have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which **I** have committed unto Him against that day". (2 Tim 1:12) And again. "Now unto him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of **His** glory with exceeding joy; to the only wise God, our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, now and ever". (Jude 24,25)

Here, surely, is a message "from above the Mercy Seat" peculiarly comforting and assuring at this time. To such as are now waiting in hope "for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ", what rest of heart there is in knowing that our trust is in One able to keep us from falling and to make us stand faultless and rejoicing before His glory. "He is able to keep you from falling". He who knows us each one, with all our weakness, who knows our "unprofitable" service and all about our mistakes and failures, is able to keep us, each one. Faith believes that He can and will, for "He is faithful who promised".

All along the way there has never been wanting "from above the Mercy Seat" the word in season for present needs. God has never failed to speak to us through the medium of His all-embracing Word. Comfort, warning, great and precious promises, reproof, everything necessary to our fellowship with Him, He has spoken. Even in the wonderful now in which we live, there comes the message by which we are in a special way privileged to keep a rendezvous with God. We stand on the border line, our salvation is so much nearer than when we first believed. All along we have been favoured to know "a place than all beside more sweet", a try sting place of prayer and communion where "the oil of gladness on our heads" has been no figment of our imagination, but a true witness of God's Spirit bearing witness with our own. He who has spoken full and abiding forgiveness, and sent into our life the needed heart-strengthening words of endearment, has spoken in just as faithful a manner to loyal hearts those words whereby such may rejoice in hope of a final attainment of the glory to which they have been called in the love and foreknowledge of God.

Thus, among the incidents and diversified experiences of life we treasure recollections that memory preserves for us as hallowed resting places to which our hearts turn for fresh encouragement when faith needs reminders of God's never failing love and care. He who has spoken the word of good cheer to our hearts along the way over which we have so far come, will not be silent towards us in times like those in which we live. As before, He will continue to speak to us "from above the Mercy Seat", giving strength for daily needs and assuring us that soon, perhaps very soon, He will have us with Him yonder in His immediate presence. Then face to face and in a glory exceeding all previous conception, ours will be an eternal rendezvous with God.

Thanks be to Him for all past and present joys of communion through Christ, our Mercy Seat. Praise be to His name that, even here in the house of our pilgrimage, He has walked with us in such priceless fellowship. In love and joy we long for the hour when, no more with veil between, we shall see Him in all His glory and know the rapture of perfect communion with our Father and with a Bridegroom whom our souls love supremely. How transporting is the prospect of this eternal rendezvous in glory! (RJM:77)

Fear Not, Little Flock

(Luke 12:32.)

What endearing words, so sweet, so simple, so full of meaning and what comfort they bring to the heart in this day of fear! They remind us of a mother who hearing a cry in the night, rises swiftly to tend the one she loves. Taking the trembling one in her arms she tells it to fear not, while she rocks it to sleep on her breast.

How many times we are told in the Scriptures to fear not, and our Saviour must have realised the great power fear would have over the human mind when He told His little band of faithful followers so many times to fear not.

What a persistent and formidable foe fear is. It attacks from every direction. It is the imp and progeny of sin, and where it hides the child of God may be sure that the Adversary is working very hard to stumble the unsuspecting one. Nevertheless, a godly fear is necessary in the composition of a true Christian character, for the child of God must fear to do evil, or to wound the feelings of a brother or sister, and should reverence and fear God. Fear makes a splendid watchdog, which should warn if any evil approaches the heart, but it should never repose in the heart.

Never in our lives do we need faith and perfect trust in God more than we need it today. People seem to have lost faith in God, and evil and vice abound. What a vivid picture Paul paints of the people of to-day, when he declares that they would wax worse and worse; that in the last days trying times should come, for they would be lovers of self, money-lovers, boasters, haughty, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, without natural affection, implacable, accusers, without self control, ferocious, rash, self conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than God, having a form of piety but denying the power thereof; and from all such he exhorts us to turn away.

O, the blessedness and peace that reigns in the heart of the children of God, who look to the Father with the faith of a little child, never doubting that the Divine hand that has supplied the wants of today, will also provide the needs of tomorrow! As the mother runs to the aid of her sick child, even so, God will come quickly to the aid of those who call upon Him, and His best gifts are to those who have perfect faith and implicit trust in Him.

Our Saviour teaches this lesson. When He was with His disciples on the lake of Galilee, a storm arose, lashing the waves to fury; and in the midst of the tempest the boat had sprung a leak and the disciples were in great peril. In fear and dismay they ran to our Saviour and found Him sleeping peacefully. They awakened Him, saying, "Master,

Master, we perish." Then arising, He rebuked the wind and the raging of the water, and there was a great calm. And He said unto them, "Where is your faith?" In this case the disciples' fear was caused by a want of faith. Had they had perfect faith in their Master, they, too, could have slept peacefully and would have known no fear.

The Psalmist gives us a splendid pen picture of that storm in the words, "They that go down to the sea in ships and occupy their business in great waters; these see the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep. For He commandeth and raiseth the stormy wind which lifteth up the waves thereof! They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths. They reel and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble and He delivers them out of their distress. He maketh the storm a calm so that the waves thereof are still" (Psa. 107:23-29). It may be that our Saviour had previously been discussing these powerful words of the Psalmist, and to try the effect of His teachings and to test their faith had permitted the raising of the storm. Even so it is today, amid all the gathering gloom and the banking of the storm clouds, when men stagger and reel under the power of the Divine hand.

Although the storms are of a different character, they are purposely sent by God to try our faith, and to see if we have perfect faith and implicit trust in Him. O, if we could only have that sweet love and trust in God, which even little children teach us every day by their confiding faith in us.

We see many instances where our Lord tested His disciples and gave them warnings. After Peter had made his avowal of love, our Lord had warned him that he would deny Him, and we all know the result. Jesus, revealing Himself to Paul on the road to Damascus, told him plainly that he would suffer many things for His Name's sake. And as we follow the Apostle Paul in all his wanderings, we see him buffeted from pillar to post, and treated by some as the scum of the earth. We follow him to prison, and in depths oft, five times he received forty stripes save one, thrice he was beaten with rods, once stoned, thrice shipwrecked, in perils often, in perils among false brethren, in weariness and painfulness, in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness, and yet, in spite of all this formidable list of fears and sufferings he counts them all as light afflictions. So real was his faith, so great his love and loyalty to his Master, that fear could find no place in that noble heart. We realise that the many things he suffered acted as the chisel of persecution that shaped that noble character into a gem of loveliness, which has so endeared him to all believers.

As we look back over the mist of years and recall the wondrous words of the Apostle which have shed a halo of glory around the cross of Christ, reaching numberless hearts, stimulating and comforting, and leaving an impression which is the reflex of Christ's glorious character, let us step forward bravely and courageously into the future, and "fear not." (PP 6/31)

THE MERCY SEAT

From every stormy wind that blows,
From every swelling tide of woes,
There is a calm, a sure, retreat;
Tis found beneath the Mercy Seat.

There is a place where Jesus sheds
The oil of gladness on our heads;
A place than all beside more sweet;
It is the blood-bought Mercy Seat.
O! whither could we flee for aid,
When tempted, desolate, dismayed?
Or how the hosts of foes defeat
Had suffering saints no Mercy Seat?
There, there on eagle wings we soar,
And sin and sense molest no more;
And heaven comes down our souls to, greet,
While glory crowns the Mercy Seat.

(BSH 89)

The Mind

MAN'S AUTOMATIC STEERING MECHANISM

"Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God. (Rom 12:2)

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." (Phil 2:5)

There is much that we do not know about the 1 functions of the mind. However, much has been discovered in this day of increased enlightenment, and since we are living in a very eventful period in history of the human race, when many minds are being subjected to much subtle propaganda with far-reaching effect in its influence on people's minds, it may be helpful to take a brief look at some important things which are known about the human mind. Then we can consider a few texts of Scripture which will help to nurture and cultivate our renewed minds, the "mind of Christ" which is in all those who have fully consecrated their lives to the service of God, and who have been begotten by the Holy Spirit to the new nature, the spiritual nature.

A dictionary definition of "mind" is "the seat of consciousness, thought, volition and emotional powers; memory, opinion". Consider one of the many texts in the New Testament in which reference is made to the mind - Romans 12:2 - *"Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind."* Dr. Strong gives the meaning of the word here for mind (Greek – *NOUS*) as "the intellect, i.e. mind (divine or human in thought, feeling or will); by implication meaning." Consider another example Phil 2:5 – *"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus."* Dr Strong defines the word here (Greek - *PHRONEO*) as "to exercise the mind, i.e. entertain or have a sentiment or opinion; by implication to be (mentally) disposed more or less earnestly in a certain direction; intensively to interest oneself in (with concern or obedience)."

Having in our thoughts, then, these definitions of the "mind" which must be renewed by the mind of Christ, and which all of His followers must seek to have, it may be of profit to analyze, by question and answer, some further details in this connection, namely, Why must this human mind be renewed? First of all let us think of the mind as that something which mankind has above all others of the animal creation – the capacity to think, to reason, to plan, the power to translate thoughts into actions, the scope for reaching out after new horizons, the power to visualize the thinking and planning of today put into effect tomorrow. That something, if it is in tune with the great Master Mind of the universe, can be capable of the greatest good and rise to the greatest heights even on the human plane of living. After all, we understand that mankind was created in the image of God (Gen 1:26,27) – in His moral likeness, a reasoning, sentient being. Even today, when so much evil is in the world, there are many noble examples which show up the finer human qualities as being of divine origin.

However, if the human mind is given over to the influences of the Adversary, the satanic forces of evil and of spiritual wickedness in high places, this same mind can be capable of the most diabolical evil and cruelty, and be the greatest power for the destruction of things good and pure, to a degree almost beyond words to describe. So then, each one of us as a human being has this "something" called the mind. Before we came to Christ, it was the "natural" mind, and, before going on with the question, Why must this mind be renewed in following Christ?, let us pursue the analogy of the "automatic steering mechanism".

This something called the mind is that which directs' people's everyday thoughts and actions and has some influence for good, bad or otherwise on not only themselves, but also on all those with whom they associate each day. As Christians, should we not then seek to know something of what mankind has learned, but more importantly what God's Word has to say, in respect of such an important part of every one of His creatures, and more especially so in respect of those who are His New Creation, His peculiar people, those whom He has drawn by His Holy Spirit to Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 2:9, John 6:44)

Volumes have been written by those who have studied the human mind and its behaviour. A knowledge of some of the basic findings in this area is helpful in enabling us to appreciate with a remarkable piece of electronic mechanism the mind is. It has been well called “man’s automatic steering mechanism” and when we expand this concept a little further and then relate it to what God’s Word has to say on the same subject, we begin to see just how very important it is that our minds be stayed upon our Heavenly Father and His righteousness. (Isaiah 26:3) It is said that one tenth of every human mind is conscious and nine tenths subconscious, that is, outside the range of attention. It is through this remarkable arrangement that our Creator has built into the human brain what might be called a subconscious homing device, which in its effect is really a subconscious feedback cycle.

It works on the principle that, as we know, mankind is endowed with five senses – sight, hearing, feel or touch, smell and taste. Each day, humanity judges its affairs by the exercise of these five senses. Every day, every hour, every minute, every second of our wakeful or conscious time, via these senses, mental impressions of situations that continually develop and pass around us in the daily course of our lives are fed back through the one tenth conscious part of our minds to the larger, nine tenths part, the subconscious. Examples are the constant barrages of advertising, radio, TV, hoardings or whatever other means. Thus any repeated impression or thought fed back in this manner can build up a tremendous bank of subconscious energy.

These thoughts and impressions are received by the subconscious as the operational “data” on “the way things are”, much in the same way in which a program is fed into a computer. The subconscious then goes to work to suppress or expand our performance to conform exactly to this set pattern. We can see then why Solomon said, “As a man thinketh in his heart (or mind) so is he.” (Prov 23:7) Thus, then, is how a person’s daily performance is controlled.

If one takes a daily “failure”, or “life is difficult”, or “no progress” attitude, that is, a constant negative thinking program, and builds up thereby a self-image of this kind, he or she can be sure that their subconscious will use all the forces or resources of the human body to limit their energy – their creative ability, analytical skill and perception – so that they conform exactly to the “operating formula” of this self-image. They literally cannot do any better than their self-image, built up from their thoughts and mental perceptions. Failures should however not be allowed to produce a further negative “can’t do any better” frame of mind, nor should the reactions of others lead to a constant “I can’t seem to please anyone” attitude. Nor should visualizing of things they fear might happen or they hope will happen make them give up trying to think and act and hope positively.

Let us see how some of these thoughts can be applied in our Christian lives and also how they answer the question as to why the human mind needs to be changed and renewed by the transforming power of Christ in us and working through us by the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 12:2, already referred to, goes on to give the reason why the human mind needs renewing – “so that you may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” How very true, indeed! The veil of human mindedness in the natural man or woman hangs between them and the sacred and spiritual truths of God. The only way to set it aside is by full consecration to the doing of God’s will, which is to sacrifice the flesh and its worldly interests and pursuits. It is in the glorious and privileged condition typified by the Holy of the Tabernacle that the consecrated children of God enjoy their inner life and walk with God. This is quite beyond the sight of the world and the worldly. What a precious thought!

In the “Holy” we are experiencing the transforming and, during this process, we are learning more and more so that we may truly prove what is God’s good and acceptable and perfect will for us. “The very God of peace sanctify you wholly.” “This is the will of God, even your sanctification.” “Sanctify them through Thy truth, Thy word is truth.” (1 Thess 5:23, 4:3, John 17:17) What a privilege is this proving of God’s will! The Greek here translated “prove” was used in times past in the context of testing or proving of metals and signifies to investigate, examine and discern. By careful tests under close examination and observation the metal was proved. So it is that we prove the will of God.

How do we do this? One way is surely through the study of His Word individually and with others, by prayer and by faith. We all know the joyful experience of gathering around God’s Holy Word together. On such occasions we meditate upon the Scriptures, we endeavour to rightly divide the word of truth. (2 Tim 2:15) With sentiments of praise and worship in our hearts, we wait upon the Lord and He speaks to us through His Word. How important it is then that we assemble ourselves together in the right attitude of heart and mind.

As we come to see less and less of ourselves, and more and more of Jesus and His spirit of love in our hearts, we see how the subconscious feed-back cycle works out in our Christian lives. For instance, if we come to Bible Study and feed into our one tenth conscious mind critical thoughts, not positive or constructive, not in harmony with God’s love for what this brother or sister has to say, instead of endeavouring to see Jesus and His words, the negative impressions feed into the nine tenths or subconscious part and build up to become the force which directs our daily lives. If we continually dwell on the weaknesses, real or imagined, of our brothers and sisters, seeing always their faults instead of their Christlike qualities, then just as surely as we are feeding these impressions into the subconscious mind, to that extent we will be the poorer in our own spiritual

lives.

If we would only follow our Lord's example of positive action when tempted to criticize, condemn or judge our brethren! When tempted to listen to something which is in the nature of gossip or evil-speaking, if we resolved instead to think and speak as would our Lord and Master if He were in our position, how greatly we would enrich our Christian living. How much more influence for good our daily lives would become if we saw to it that each day and hour and minute we were feeding into our "computer" the right program for Christian living. Is this, then, how the mind is renewed?

This may mean a complete change of ideals and a new attitude to our whole way of living – "Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His marvelous face!" Our Heavenly Father asks from us a full surrender, full consecration, non-conformity to this world and a transforming to kingdom requirements. Then and only then, can God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shine into our hearts and minds by the gospel to give us the light of the knowledge of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ. This knowledge cannot be comprehended by the natural mind. (1 Cor 2:14)

What is the result of this transforming work? Development of the character likeness of Christ? Growth in the fruits of the Spirit? (Gal 5:22, 23) Daily development? Yes, a desire to please Him in all things and a love in our hearts which comes from God the Father! But how can we continue in this way against the powers of Satan aligned with all the forces of evil to thwart God's plan? We can surely "gird up the loins of our minds". (1 Peter 1:13) We can continually keep before us those virtues of Phil 4:8 – "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things."

Can we develop or cultivate our five human senses to a greater appreciation of our daily needs as new creatures in Christ Jesus, or could we say that we have also what may be called five spiritual senses corresponding to the five natural ones? Can these be cultivated? Yes, indeed, as we come more and more into Christ, the "eyes" of our understanding open wider and wider to things not seen by the natural eye. By degrees, the "hearin'" of faith increases until every good promise of the Divine Word is forceful and meaningful. In time, we come into closer "touch" with our Lord and His invisible powers (the powers of prayer and praise). After a time and little by little we "taste" that the Lord is gracious and precious. As we progress, we come to appreciate those sacrifices and incense prayers which are a "sweet odour" to the Lord.

But can Christians, then, be considered as having a sixth or spiritual sense which enables them even though still in the flesh to understand things quite beyond the perception of those around them not begotten by the Holy Spirit? Yes, indeed, for we read (1 Cor 2:9,10,14) – "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit, for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God... The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

How grand, how glorious, how rich is the daily experience of all those, who by the grace of God are finding that the things of this earth are growing dim, as the "deep things of God", revealed by His Spirit come more and more into focus, as the "mind of Christ" in us. (1 Cor 2:16) enables us to appreciate the transforming work which has brought about this renewal of mind. What exultation, what thanks are due to our Heavenly Father as we experience with the apostle Paul the joy of understanding "even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations but now is made manifest to His saints; to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory," (Col 1:26,27)

May God bless all these things to our hearts and minds, that we may see the daily need, the constant need, for feeding through our conscious minds thoughts and impressions which are godly and pure, so that the force which is built up in the subconscious will direct our daily lives and actions in ways pleasing to our Heavenly Father and edifying to all those with whom we daily associate. Amen.

(The above article is taken from an address given about 30 years ago.) (NM)

"In the Days of Thy Youth"

"Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them". (Eccl 12:1)

Those of the Lord's children who early gave their hearts to Him and committed their way to His guidance can all bear testimony to multiplied blessings as the results of that early start in the right way. We are always glad to see young people among us taking the first steps in the way of life. To all such young pilgrims we would say, God bless you! You are starting out as young soldiers of the cross, and we want you to be brave and true soldiers, and to remember that the first duty of a soldier is obedience to his Captain – Jesus Christ.

Give close attention and try to understand what He would have you do, and then be very prompt to obey, whether or not you are fully able to comprehend the wisdom of His directions.

Many question how early in life a child may give his or her heart to God and be fully consecrated to Him, but the Scriptures make very plain the fact that they may and should be consecrated to the Lord by their parents before their birth, that thus their prenatal influences may ensure them a mental and spiritual inheritance tending to godliness, and that with the dawn of intelligence this disposition should begin to be cultivated and warmed into vital, active piety, so that at a tender age they may understandingly ratify the parental covenant of entire consecration to God.

We have many notable examples in the Scriptures of such early consecration to the Lord. It is said of John the Baptist that his parents “were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless”, and that John was given to them in answer to prayer – “filled with the Holy Spirit, even from His mother’s womb”. (Luke 1:6,15,44,66,80) Paul was similarly endowed from his birth (Gal 1:15, Acts 26:4,5), and was zealous toward God long before his conversion from Judaism to Christianity. (Acts 22:3,4) So also were Timothy (2 Tim 1:5,3:15), Samuel (1 Sam 1:11,2428,2:11,18,19) and Moses (Exodus 2:1-10).

Those thus early devoted to the Lord escape many a snare and many an entanglement, which in later years bring distress and trouble to so many. They do not have to reap the bitter harvest that always comes from the sowing of “wild oats”; they do not find it so much against the current of their nature to live godly lives; and they have in later years the strength of character born of continued self-discipline and self-restraint, and all the blessed advantages of a long acquaintance with God and of the instructions of His Word and of the leadings of His gracious providence.

How wise is the counsel, “Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth... while the evil days come not” etc. These evil days of bitter disappointment and despair will never come to those who in youth commit their ways unto the Lord and trust Him to guide their paths. His ways are ways of pleasantness and all His paths are peace. They are not by any means smooth! and easy ways, but they are always peaceful and pleasant, because He who has said, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Heb 13:5), is always present to comfort and to bless, and to make all things work together for good to those who love God – the called ones according to His purpose.

Those of the consecrated who have children and young people under their care have much to do in shaping their course and in leading them to Christ, by throwing around them the influences of their own consecrated lives, and imparting to them such instruction as their own acquaintance with the truth and their more matured experience and judgment can give. Such efforts, properly directed are not lost upon the young. Let them see both in example and teaching how distinctly the line is drawn between the *consecrated* believer and the world; that there is no compromise with the world; that to follow Christ is to renounce the world with all its ambitions, its gaiety and its pleasures and companionship.

Let them see the hollowness of worldly pleasures, and take occasion to call attention to the dissatisfaction and unrest of those who pursue these delusions, and the peace and joy of those who have left the world to follow Christ. It is helpful also to tell others how graciously the Lord has led us, to speak of the various turning points in our course, where the friendly crook of the Good Shepherd kept us from straying away into the wrong path; or how when once we strayed His mercy tenderly pursued us and brought us back to His fold; how He has shielded us from evil, comforted us in sorrow; satisfied our longing souls with the joys of His salvation; and made us sit down with Him in heavenly places.

To all dear children and young people who have given their hearts to God, and who are trying daily to follow Jesus – God’s blessing. There are little ones who love Jesus and who are not ashamed to stand up for Him among others who do not love Him or try to please Him; who are brave and true to God, even when laughed at and thought peculiar when they speak of the good news of the kingdom. And it is cause for joy to see young people, who have renounced the world and its ambitions and pleasures, among the most faithful of those who have consecrated their lives to the Lord. May this good work go on in a deepening and widening course.

Let the young rejoice in the prospects of a lengthened campaign and great usefulness in the Lord’s service; let those of maturer years bear up bravely and wisely under the burden and heat of the day, doing valiant service as veterans in the army of the Lord; and let the aged pilgrims, leaning upon the staff of divine truth and rejoicing in its steadfastness, stand as beacon lights to others, and at the end of their course be able to testify, “I have fought a good fight, I have kept the faith”. (R1671)

“We Cease not to Pray for You”

(Col. 1:9-14)

The loving care of the apostle Paul for all the 1 churches which he or his co-workers had planted is well known, not least through his epistles or letters to them. In these he usually includes a prayer on behalf of

the particular congregation concerned, expressing his desire and prayer to God for the very best in Christian understanding and grace for them. These prayers are indeed some of the richest of his writings so let us consider his earnest prayer for the brothers and sisters at Colosse, as recorded in Colossians 1:9-14.

“For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that you might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; giving thanks unto the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.”

At the time of writing, the apostle had evidently not been to Colosse himself, but had received news through Epaphras of the welfare and progress of the brethren there. There were apparently some troublesome elements in their midst, as there were in some other churches, including the destructive influence of the Gnostics and the legalistic contentions of the Judaizers. Nevertheless, Paul was still able to commend those in Colosse for their faith in Christ Jesus, their love for the saints and their love in the Spirit. It was on this account that his keen desire and prayer was that they might grow and be strengthened in their faith and in their daily lives.

The issues which affect the Christian today may well outwardly appear different but the apostle's petitions for the Colossian brethren are really just as appropriate for us today. We live in a day of materialism, an outlook quite at variance with the concept of the true riches set before the Christian. The world is still full of philosophies but, without the love and power of God, these have no life-giving or life-sustaining value. The Christian life calls for growth and development in the knowledge and understanding of God's will but it is still intensely practical. We are not called to shut ourselves away, but to let our lights shine. There are still legalists about also, but we are counselled to stand fast in the liberty wherein Christ has made us free.

One commentator says of this prayer of the apostle that “there is something very precious and exceedingly instructive in being thus permitted to share the thoughts, and notice the petitions offered up by the apostle Paul for the Lord's people in various circumstances. His deep concern for their growth in grace, their development in divine things, their apprehension of the purposes of God, and the manifestation of spiritual power in the life... all these come out very strikingly as he bows his knees before the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ... It is questionable if any merely human writer has ever been able to give as helpful suggestions for our own prayer life as will come to us in our meditation upon these various petitions.” (Ironsides)

From the passage quoted above, we note that verses 9 to 11, and possibly the opening clause of verse 12 concerning thankfulness, list the apostle's petitions for the brethren; the remaining portion to the end of verse 14 lists blessings and privileges which were already theirs, and on which the apostle desired that they build. The giving of thanks in verse 12 may refer to Paul's doing so for their present standing in the Lord, but in other prayers and exhortations the importance of the grateful heart and the open expression of thankfulness is strongly commended. It is part indeed of his cure for anxiety – “in everything by prayer and supplication *with thanksgiving* let your requests be made known unto God.” (Phil 4:6)

Let us then look briefly at the features of Paul's prayer and how they come down to us today. They are probably five in number and all have extensive implications. The **first** petition is that the Colossians (and we also) may be *filled* with the knowledge of God's will. There are a number of things which the apostle wished his hearers in the various churches to be filled with – in Rom 15:14 “all knowledge”, in Eph 3:19 “the fulness of God”, in Eph 5:18 “the Spirit”, in Phil 1:11 “the fruits of righteousness”. These are closely related and probably encompassed in his prayer for their filling with the knowledge of His will.

There are two words commonly used in the New Testament for “knowledge” and it is interesting that the stronger of the two is here used. The more general word GNOSIS is used frequently and favourably in the New Testament, but it was evidently the boast word of the Gnostics. Something better is what the apostle here sought for the Colossian brethren and the word EPIGNOSIS is used. This is defined as “exact or full knowledge, discernment, recognition... expressing a fuller or full knowledge, a greater participation in the object “known”, thus more powerfully influencing (those concerned)” This is an element in Paul's prayers for the Philippians, Ephesians and for Philemon also.

In another of his epistles, Paul had to take some to task for still relying on the milk of the word, when they should have progressed to the strong meat stage. So with each Christian, the simple basic elements of the faith do not change but the vision of our Heavenly Father's ways and will should be expanding and growing more radiant as “still new beauties may we see and still increasing light”. Such discernment is not the product of human wisdom, but of the influence of God's Holy Spirit on each believer's heart. As it is written – “*Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.*” (1 Cor 2:9)

The apostle's hope and expectation for the Colossians and for us is for a broadening and deepening perception of the Divine character and greater comprehension of His love as outlined in His word, including the blessing of all mankind after the call and preparation of those who are to share with their Lord in that

grand program of blessing. Elsewhere, the apostle prays that the Lord's people *"may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height and to know the love of Christ, which passeth (human) knowledge."* This is not like earthly knowledge, which puffs up, but, blessed by wisdom and spiritual understanding, leads on to Christian maturity. How important it is that our Bible classes be geared towards this end, that our minds and hearts be open to beauties that we may not have noted before and that we listen to what others have appreciated!

Wisdom is the key to the proper application of knowledge. Furthermore, in 1 Cor 13 Paul goes so far as to say that all knowledge, and even all faith, without love are vain. But here the Christian is blessed by the inner working of the Spirit of God to provide the "spiritual understanding" for which Paul prays. In his corresponding prayer for the Ephesians, Paul seeks for them *"that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened."* (Eph 1:17) Understanding enables us to see what the will of God is for us, in our own lives and in our relations with others, to recognise their needs and their virtues and so to act appropriately.

The subsequent features of Paul's prayer follow on from the infilling with a clear knowledge of the Divine will. The **second** petition is "that you might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing". The daily practicality of faith is here again brought to our attention. Surely it is the desire of each heart to please God. The profession of our faith is good but it needs daily expression if we are to please Him. "Without faith, it is impossible to please God" – we read this in Heb 11:6, but the examples of faith whom the writer goes on to tell us about all showed their faith by lives and acts of faith and obedience. The worthy walk is the daily expression of our thankfulness and of our love for Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvellous light.

The **third** petition of the apostle's prayer is for "fruitfulness in every good work". The primary fruitage desired in every Christian is the development of the fruits of the Spirit. These in turn will lead to lives of fruitfulness in service to the Lord, to His people and in witness to those around us. In parallel with this petition, the apostle seeks for his hearers a **fourth** blessing – increase in the knowledge of God. The daily walk and work will surely lead to closer communion with our Father and our Saviour, who promised to come and abide with each child of God. This takes our thoughts back to the opening petition but here the emphasis may be more on a personal knowledge built on experience of the love and mercy of our Heavenly Father in all His dealings with us.

Paul's own testimony near the end of the way, based on his experience, was – "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." This is the knowledge that has been learnt and tempered in the fire of experience and this can sustain us. "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent." (John 17:3) "That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death." (Phil 3:10)

A **fifth** petition is for the strength to carry on the good fight of faith in reliance on His glorious power. As Christians, we are not currently subject to physical threat in this land, but the Christian faith in which we rejoice is being more and more reviled. Often now, we hear reference to "Bible myths" and the alleged refutation of the Bible by science, the concept of freedom for each one to choose his or her own way to God, in whatever guise they envisage Him. We can appreciate earnest seekers after truth, however misguided, but our stand can only be that there is no other name, no other way, no other Lamb than our dear Lord and Saviour, and we may well especially need the Divine strength to be true to our Lord.

We must never forget however that our Father's power is not a meagre power like ours, but a glorious power. Paul was assured, as we may be, that His grace is sufficient in every situation. This Divine power, exercised in the resurrection of our Lord, is now, through Him, effective for His followers. So strengthened, the Christian will be able to endure patiently, to suffer long and in all things to rejoice. Such staying power comes only through faith in Him whose power is infinite. It is said of the faith heroes of old that they "out of weakness were made strong", by faith. So, Paul's desire and prayer for the brethren at Colosse and for all God's people was for their growth in discernment of God's plans and purposes, a closer walk of faith, fruitfulness in character and every good work, increase in personal acquaintance with God and finally Divine strength to endure steadfast to the end.

Over it all, we have our Saviour's own assurance given not long before He was to leave the disciples – "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age." Right down the age, He has been caring for His church and in these last days of impending transition we can be sure that His promise is still sure. May the prayer of Paul for the Colossians and our Lord's promise of His abiding presence be fulfilled in each of our lives in this and each succeeding year. Amen

Thankfulness

A thankful spirit pervaded the entire life of Jesus, and surrounded with a heavenly halo His otherwise darkened path. In moments we least expect to find it, this beauteous ray breaks through the gloom. In

instituting the memorial of His *death*, He “*gave thanks!*” Even in crossing the Kedron to Gethsemane, “He sang a hymn!”

We know in seasons of deep sorrow and trial that everything wears a gloomy aspect. Dumb nature herself to the burdened spirit seems as if she partook in the hues of sadness. The life of Jesus was one continuous experience of privation and woe – a “valley of Baca,” from first to last; yet, amid accents of plaintive sorrow, there are ever heard subdued undertones of *thankfulness* and joy!

Ah, if He, the suffering “Man of Sorrows”, could, during a life of unparalleled woe, lift up His heart in grateful acknowledgment to His Father in heaven, how ought their lives be one perpetual “hymn of thankfulness,” who are from day to day and hour to hour (for all they have, both temporarily and spiritually) dependent on God’s bounty and love.

So let us cultivate the thankful spirit; to those who do so it becomes a perpetual feast. There is, or ought to be, with us no such thing as *small* mercies; all are great, because the least are undeserved. Indeed, a really thankful heart will extract motive for gratitude from everything, making the most even of scanty blessings. Paul, when in his dungeon at Rome, a prisoner in chains, is heard to say, “I have all, and abound!”

Let us guard, on the other hand, against that spirit of continual fretting and moping over fancied ills; that temptation to exaggerate the real or supposed disadvantages of our condition, magnifying the trifling inconveniences of every-day life into enormous evils. Think rather how much we have for which to be thankful. The world in which we live, in spite of all the scars of sin and suffering upon it, is a happy world. True, the “Everlasting Hills” are in glory, but there are numberless eminencies of grace, and love, and mercy below; many green spots in the lower valley, *many more than we deserve!*

God will reward a thankful spirit. Just as on earth, when a man receives with gratitude what is given, the donor is more disposed to give again; so also, “the *Lord* loveth” a cheerful “receiver”, as well as a cheerful “giver”.

Let ours, moreover, be a *Gospel* thankfulness. Let the incense of a grateful spirit rise not only to the Great Giver of all good, but also to His blessed Son our dear Redeemer. Let it be the spirit of the child exulting in the bounty and beneficence of His Father’s house and home! “Giving *thanks* always for all things unto God the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ!”

While the sweet melody of gratitude vibrates through every successive moment of our daily being, let love to our adorable Redeemer show for *Whom* and for what it is we reserve our notes of loftiest and most fervent praise. “Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable Gift!”

OUR GUIDE AND MASTER “The Lord alone did lead him” (Deut. 32:12)

The hill was steep, but cheered along the way
By converse sweet, I mounted on the thought
That it so might be till the height was reached;
But suddenly a narrow winding path
Appeared, and then the Master said, “My child,
Here thou wilt safest walk with me alone.”
I trembled, yet my heart’s deep trust replied,
“So be it, Lord.” He took my feeble hand
In His, accepting thus my will to yield Him all
And to find all in Him. One long, dark moment.
And no friend I saw, save Jesus only.
But oh! so tenderly He lead me on
And up, and spoke to me such words of cheer,
That soon I told Him all my grief and fear,
And leaned on His strong arm confidingly.
And then I found my footsteps quickened
And light ineffable, the rugged way
Illumined, such light as only can be seen
In close companionship with God.
A little while, and we shall meet again
The loved and lost; but in the rapturous joy
Of greeting, such as here we cannot know,
And happy song, and heavenly embraces,

And tender recollections rushing back
Of pilgrim life, I think one memory
More dear and sacred than the rest, shall rise.
And we who gather in the golden streets
Shall oft be stirred to speak with grateful love
Of that dark day when Jesus made us climb
Some narrow steep, leaning on Him alone.

(Gertrude W. Seibert)

Gifts of Faith

Faith may be viewed from two standpoints – *belief* and *I 'trust*. In the Scriptural use of the word faith, we understand it to be a belief in God and the things that we have reason to recognise as being of God – God's prophecies, the promises of his Word, etc., and a heart reliance on him – not just belief in anything. The latter would be what we would term credulity. And the person who could believe anything would be foolish; whereas, he that believes what God has said has the Wisdom that cometh from above, and is, therefore, wise from the Scriptural standpoint.

We understand that the purpose and determination of the Christian should be to have his faith largely developed, and he should obtain it from the Scriptures. Many people have faith which they believe to be of God, but which, on investigation, they find to be unscriptural and not a faith in what has come from God, in what he has expressed, but from the traditions of the "Dark Ages" and from college professors, etc., and is quite contrary to the "faith once delivered to the saints".

In this particular sense we would understand faith to represent a heart-quality of trust in the Lord – something that has been acquired through the knowledge of God – through acquaintance with him by the various means by which he has been pleased to reveal himself. This is a faith which cannot continue to subsist or increase unless knowledge shall increase, based upon the Divine Revelation, and full acceptance of it and the coming into harmony with the Almighty, so as to be able to apply the promises and to recognise that they belong to the individual.

We would consider faith, then, as belief in God and in his promises, as a personal trust in God, giving us the rest and peace of God. As to how these views of faith agree with the words of our Lord. "*When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth*", and as to how they agree with the statement of the Apostle Paul in Corinthians respecting faith as a gift of the Holy Spirit, we would say that in the first of these passages the rendering should be, "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find The Faith on the earth?" The implication is not that he will find no faith, but Shall he find "The Faith (the Doctrine) once delivered unto the saints"; hence we understand our Lord's words to mean that when the Son of man cometh he will not find, save in a few "The Faith once delivered unto the saints", but will find instead misconceptions.

And so we find that many Christian people, when talking on this subject, do not know what they are talking about. They have not "The Faith once delivered to the saints". Thus we are reminded of the statement of the Scriptures that "the inhabitants of the world have been made drunk" with the false doctrines which have perverted the Word of God. Instead of the "good tidings of great joy" they have been told bad tidings of most horrible torture. It is intimated in the Word that *some* will have The Faith. But the Lord implies that it will be a small number who will possess it.

Respecting the gifts of faith: At the very beginning of this Age gifts of speaking with tongues, gifts of interpreting tongues, gifts of healing, etc, were bestowed so that they might be exercised for the benefit of the people. It would require a great deal of faith to be able to say, as did Peter to the impotent man at the temple, "Arise and walk". One would need the "gift" in order to do this. And so with those who spoke with tongues. It would need to be a miraculous gift which would enable them to master any unknown language.

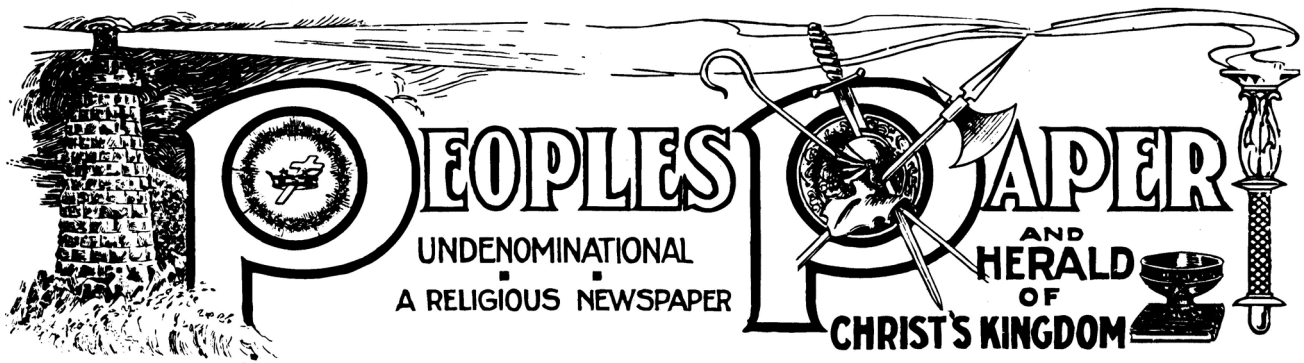
Those gifts which God chose to give were granted because the Church was in its infancy and needed them for encouragement. The gifts were given also for a witness because the Church did not then have the New Testament; it had not as yet been written. The early Church needed some means for instructing one another. And so one would arise and speak in an unknown tongue; a gift of interpretation would be given to another, and he would rise and give the interpretation. These gifts were given amongst them as a sort of drawing power to cause the Lord's people to assemble themselves together. Thus was the Word of God sent out for a time through this imperfect channel.

We should not think that a higher development was indicated by the possession of these gifts, but rather, these gifts were granted during the infancy of the Church, and we should not pray for them. The Scriptures show that either they were the gifts possessed by the Apostles or else, subsequently, they were the result of the impartation of the Holy Spirit and laying on the hands of the Apostles; as, for instance, when Philip, the deacon, sent the Apostle that he might lay hands upon the people that they might receive the gifts; evidently Philip had not the power to do this of himself.

As to the desire for speaking with unknown tongues, the Apostle gave them a warning reproof. He said, *"I would rather speak five words in the Church with my understanding — that by my voice I might teach others also — than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue."* (1 Cor. 14:19, 19.) He tells them that if any man possessed the gift of speaking with tongues, let him pray that he might interpret — that he might be able to express himself intelligibly to those to whom he was speaking, rather than in dark sayings. And then he proceeds to say that this strong desire for emulation in the possession of the gifts did not of itself indicate deep consecration to God. He tells them that if they spoke with the tongues of men and of angels, it would profit them nothing, if they did not have love. The possession of an unknown tongue did not imply that a man had reached a higher attainment and relationship to God.

He says that the fruits of the Spirit are more to be desired, which are these — meekness, gentleness, patience, fortitude, self-control, long-suffering, brotherly-kindness, love. Peter tells us, *"If ye do these things, ye shall never fall, for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ"* (2 Pet. 1. 10, 11.) We might have all the gifts of the early church and have no evidence whatever that we would be sure of a place in the Kingdom. Love excels all the other virtues, because it is the most enduring.

When we shall see and know thoroughly faith will, practically, have come to an end. And hope will be practically at an end when our hopes in our Heavenly Father's promises have reached fruition. But love had no beginning and it will have no end. God is love. Since God was without beginning, so Love was without beginning; because it is His character, His disposition; and as He endureth forever, so Love will endure forever. (CTR)



Volume 83 No.1 MELBOURNE, JANUARY/MARCH 2000 THE TEST OF ENDURANCE

"Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off" (1 Kings 20. 11.)

The test of endurance is certainly one of the severest tests of faithfulness to which the elect Church, the Body of Christ, is subjected. It is the test which gauges and registers the strength of every other virtue and grace, and no soldier of the cross will be crowned with the laurels of victory who has not stood this test. The Christian life is a warfare, and the above words of one of the kings of Israel to a boastful enemy of the Lord's people, are applicable, not only to every new recruit in the Lord's army, but, similarly, to all who have not yet finished the good fight of faith.

The first gush of enthusiasm in the Lord's service, much as we may and do appreciate it, may be but the hasty production of the shallow soil of a heart which immediately receives the truth with gladness but, having no root in itself, endures but for a time, and afterwards, when affliction and persecution arise, immediately is offended. (Mark 4. 16-17.) Such characters cannot stand the fiery tests of this "evil day", whereof it is written – *"The fire (of that day) shall try every man's work, of what sort it is"*. (1 Cor. 3. 13.)

Therefore, says the Apostle Peter, *"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you."* (1 Peter 4. 12.) All of the elect Church must be so tried; and blessed is he that shall endure unto the end. The sure Word of prophecy points to severe conflicts and great trials in the closing scenes of the Church's history. Elijah, a type of the Body of Christ, finished his early career and went up by a whirlwind and a chariot of fire – strong symbols of storms and great afflictions. John, another type of the Church, was cast into prison and then beheaded. And we are forewarned of the great necessity of the whole armour of God, if we would stand in this "evil day".

It therefore behoves every one who aspires to the prize of our high calling to brace himself or herself for the severer conflicts and trials of faith and patience that may suddenly and without a moment's warning be sprung upon them. In the battle of this day, as in all battles, the effort of the Enemy is to surprise and suddenly attack and overwhelm the Lord's people; and the only preparation, therefore, that can be made for such emergencies is constant vigilance and prayer and the putting on of the whole armour of God – the Truth and the Spirit of Truth.

"In your patience possess ye your souls." No other grace will be more needed than this in the fiery ordeals of this "evil day"; for without patience no-one can endure to the end. All along the Christian's pathway, ever and anon, they come to a new crisis; perhaps these are often seemingly of trivial importance, yet they realise that they may be turning points in their Christian course. Who has not realised them? There comes a temptation to weariness in well-doing, together with the suggestion of an easier way; or there springs up a little root of pride or ambition, with suggestions of ways and means for feeding and gratifying it. Then there comes, by and by, the decisive moment when you *must* choose this course or that; and lo, you have reached a crisis!

Which way will you turn! Most likely you will turn in the direction to which the sentiments you have cultivated have been tending, whether that be the right way or the wrong way. If it be the wrong way, most likely you will be unable to discern it clearly; for your long cultivated sentiments will sway your judgement. *"There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof is the way of death."* (Prov. 14. 12) How necessary, therefore, is prayer; that in every crisis we may pass the test successfully! Nor can we safely delay to watch and pray until the crisis is upon us; but such should be our constant attitude.

The life of a soldier, ever on the alert and on duty, is by no means an easy life; nor do the Scriptures warrant any such expectation. On the contrary, they say "Endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ"; "Fight the good fight of faith". And yet many Christian people seem to have the very opposite idea. Their ideal Christian life is one without a breeze or a storm; it must be one continuous calm. Such a life was indeed more

possible in former days than now, though the world, the flesh and the Devil always have opposed them, and always have had to be resisted by every loyal soldier of the cross. But now the opposition is daily becoming more and more intense; for Satan realises that his time is short, and he is determined by any and every means to exert his power against the consummation of the Lord's plan for the exaltation of the Church.

Consequently, we have many and severe storms of opposition; and still there are doubtless more severe trials to follow. But those who, with overcoming faith, outride them all – who patiently endure, who cultivate the spirit of Christ with its fruits and graces, and who valiantly fight the good fight of faith, rather than withdraw from the field – such will be the “overcomers” to whom the laurels of victory will be given when the crowning day has come. (R.1656)

REJOICE EVERMORE *Thess 5:16*

Be glad that your life has
been full and complete;
Be glad you have tasted both bitter and sweet;
Be glad you have walked
in both sunshine and rain;
Be glad you have felt both
life's pleasure and pain;
Be glad for the comfort that you
found in prayer -
Be glad for God's blessings,
His love and His care.

(From Sr. Schulz)

“That your Joy Might be Full”

Our Lord left many precious legacies with His disciples when He departed from them. Apart from their treasured memories of the years spent in His presence, of His loving character, His wondrous works, His matchless words, He left them His peace, He promised to send them the Holy Spirit to be their Comforter and guide when He had gone, and He also left them the gift of joy, as we read in John 15:11, from which the title is taken – *“These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you and that your joy might be full.”*

At other times, He told them that in the world they would meet with tribulation and opposition, and at many times in the past and today in some lands these have been and are very real and very severe. Even in our own comparatively peaceful society, Christians are being daily more reviled. “Yesterday's People” was how one of our political leaders described Christian leaders in recent times when they spoke out on matters of Christian values and principles. No doubt he echoed the sentiments of many in our society and we remember our Lord's words, speaking of this end of the age – *“because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall grow cold.”*

Yet our Master's provision for His disciples and for His people down through the gospel age was that His joy might stay with them and their joy be complete. How can this be? What are the qualities of His joy that can enable the believer to rejoice even in trial? What are its source and foundation, and perhaps even more to the point for us, do we experience that joy in our own lives, are we able to pass something of it on to others? Joy can be infectious and we all remember, no doubt, with special delight those whose faces and demeanour have lit up our lives with their radiant joy in the Lord.

THE SOURCE – ABIDING IN HIM

It is notable that the words of our subject were uttered by our Lord after He had recounted to His disciples the illustration of the vine and the branches. He had been stressing the need for fruit bearing, for growth and development in character and in Christian life and testimony, but the key to this was “abiding in Him” as pictured in the abiding of the branches in the vine. We don't use the word “abide” so much nowadays but it speaks of permanency of relationship, of becoming established. The complete dependence of the branches on the vine in the illustration leaves no doubt as to the only source of Christian vitality and joyful living.

“Abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, no more can you, unless you abide in me. If you keep my commandments, you shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in His love. These things have I spoken unto you that my joy might remain in you and that your joy might be full.” Let us note carefully that it is our Master's joy that we are to have and be filled with. What was our Master's joy? We shall return to this later.

Christian joy comes then from that relationship with our Lord that is so close that it is termed “abiding in Him”. We see this in human relationships – what joy there is in the presence of those we love, either in the realm of natural ties or in the blessed bonds of Christian love! What glorious rejoicing there is in meeting up

again after separation from those who are in our hearts and our love, as we are in theirs! Such a joy in our Saviour can sustain us even in trial, as Peter tells us after speaking of the trial of our faith – *“Jesus Christ, whom having not seen, you love; in whom, though now you see Him not, you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”* (1 Peter 1:8)

The Psalmist says – *“In thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.”* (Psalm 16:11) Some of his joy here is prospective, but David knew, as the Lord’s people of this age should also know, the joy of the divine presence here and now. *lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the age*” are our Lord’s own words of assurance. The source then of our joy is not in favourable circumstances, wealth, status, or any other thing, but in a person, our dear Saviour and Lord.

THE FOUNDATION – GOD’S WORD

But joy must also have a firm foundation, even as faith and hope must. Just as Jesus Christ is the source of our life and peace, so is He and His finished work the foundation of our faith. *“For all the promises of God are in Him yea, and in Him amen.”* An empty joy would be the height of foolishness. The Christian’s joy needs to be one that is fully aware of the circumstances of life with its perils, of the need for circumspection and the use of the faculties with which God has endowed His creation, but can still rejoice, confident in the divine love and care and the sure promises and provisions of God’s word.

If Christian joy is to surmount disappointments and difficulties, it must have this sure foundation. For the believer, this is the Word of God and the message of His love as portrayed in all His dealings with mankind, culminating in the gift of His dear Son to be the Saviour of the world. Joy and faith must go hand in hand, and in one of his benedictory greetings, the apostle prays – *“now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit.”* (Romans 15:13) Here faith, hope and peace, with the indwelling Spirit of God are all linked with joy – *“may God fill you with all joy and peace in believing.”*

THE NATURE OF CHRISTIAN JOY

How then would we characterise Christian joy? We have seen that its source is Jesus Christ Himself, that its foundation is in the Word of God, that it is centred in Christ, further that it is a substantial not a vague or empty joy. Different people have varying ideas as to what makes for joy or happiness – pleasure, excitement, friends and so on, but all too often there is little, if any, residual joy in such outward things. To be of any real value, joy must be an inward and a deep and lasting experience and this is the very essence of Christian joy.

Among our Lord’s final words to His disciples on the night on which He was betrayed are those recorded in John 16:19-22 – *“Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask Him, and said unto them, Do you enquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while and you shall not see me, and again, A little while and you shall see me? Verily, verily, I say unto you. That you shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice; and you shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy... you now therefore have sorrow, but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you”*. They were about to encounter separation from the one they had come to love and trust so much, but He assured them that not only would their sorrow be turned into joy but that no one could deprive them of that joy. This assurance is true also of the peace which He gives. As with joy, it is “in Christ” that the Christian has peace.

This joy is then not a fleeting or illusory experience but a deep and inner conviction, not reliant on outer conditions or momentary pleasure, not appealing to the sensual instincts, but to the consecrated heart and mind. It should nevertheless move believers to the expression of their joy as a testimony and encouragement to others. Some detractors of the Christian faith depict its followers as gloomy, killjoy types and sometimes some may seem to dwell overmuch on human wickedness, coming times of trouble, etc. Christians cannot ignore such things, which are foretold in God’s word, but their assurance is in Jesus’ words – *“In the world you shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”* (John 16:33).

PEACE AND JOY IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

Peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ and then the infilling of that peace of God which passes human understanding which follows faith are then necessary pre-requisites for true Christian joy. A full assurance of faith is also needful to ensure complete confidence and joyful trust in the outworking of God’s purposes in each one’s life. Such joyful assurance enabled the two captives in the Philippian gaol to sing praises to God at midnight. And what an influence that had on the gaoler and his household. The joy of each Christian can and should still shine through and be a blessing to others in any situation. *“Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing instant in prayer.”* (Romans 12:12)

There is also a need for a sure hope within before there can be full and real inner joy. Speaking of death and resurrection, the apostle Paul says that Christians sorrow not as others who have no hope. The Christian’s hope is as certain as the word of God Himself, with whom there is no variableness or shadow of turning.

“Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it.” It was for the joy set before Him that our dear Saviour endured the cross, despising the shame and being faithful unto death is now seated on the right hand of God. The Christian hope is spoken of as *“an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil, whither the fore-runner is for us entered, even Jesus.”* (Heb 6:19,20)

But the Christian’s joy, however real and sure, cannot be or remain a selfish possession, indifferent to the sufferings and difficulties of others. The apostle instructs us – *“As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”* There may well be little that we can do in the wider sense, but to those about us, those with whom we have to do, our neighbours, our families, our brethren, let our inner joy be expressed in the kindly word or deed, perhaps just in the happy smile or greeting. May our joy, our peace, our gentleness, toward those we meet show to others that we too “have been with Jesus.”

JOYFUL IN TRIBULATION

To the unbeliever, probably the strangest feature of the Christian life is that even in adverse circumstances, their inner joy can still shine through. This is not to suggest that their experiences will in themselves be enjoyable; some indeed have gone through unimaginable trials for their faith, but the assurances of God’s word have stayed with them and enabled them to endure - *“if you endure chastening, God dealeth with you as sons... now no chastening for the present seemeth joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them who are exercised thereby.”*

James’ words would take us even further – *“count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations, knowing that the trial of your faith worketh patience, but let patience have her perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.”* Once more, the thought is not that the trials themselves will be any cause for rejoicing but the evidence of our Heavenly Father’s working out of His perfect will in us reinforces the assurance of His fatherly love and care and in this we can indeed rejoice, for it is those whom He loves that our Father chastens, and in the awareness of this divine oversight of our lives the Christian may calmly rejoice.

The testimony of the prophet Habakkuk expresses the thought poetically – even though all surrounding circumstances conspire against him, he can and still will rejoice – *“Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.”* In all such expressions of joy in trial, one common factor can be seen, namely that the joy is not in the trial itself but in the Lord and in His dealings with each one.

PURPOSE IN CHRISTIAN JOY

Another feature of Christian joy and one which sets it apart from other “joys” is a reality of purpose. Many in the world have materialistic objectives or pursue self-gratification, but these seldom bring any measure of lasting inner joy or peace, conversely they often bring grief and loss. On the other hand, for Christians, the gift of life in Jesus Christ has brought them into a new relationship, into a family – the family of God’s children, into the plans and purposes of God’s boundless love and mercy. These provide blessings beyond comparison even now and hold prospects of future blessings for all mankind. The Psalmist’s words sum up the Christian’s privileged state – *“Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound, they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance.”*

There are truly many grounds for Christian joy but the inner confidence and joy of each one is not given for selfish retention but for passing on as we are able to others, perhaps merely in the cheerful smile, the hopeful word, the kind act. The clearer understanding of death, resurrection and judgment with which the Lord’s people have been blessed in these last days is a rich treasure and there are hearts out in the world desperately in need of comfort and consolation. These days not many seem to want to respond to the call to discipleship but we can minister where opportunity presents itself in this area of concern to many. Surely, we have a real message of hope – *“Weeping may endure for a night but joy cometh in the morning.”* *“till the day break and the shadows flee away.”*

“THAT MY JOY MIGHT REMAIN IN YOU”

Let us now return to our Lord’s words in the text verse - *“These things have I spoken unto you that my joy might remain in you and that your joy might be full.”* We have seen that the secret of Christian joy rests in “abiding in Him”, in His love and His ongoing provision, and is founded on the sure and faithful promises of God’s word. Just as in the illustration which our Lord had shortly before given, the branches draw their sustenance from the vine, so the Christian is nourished by the Holy Spirit promised by our Lord. So it is not surprising that joy is listed among the fruits of the Spirit, second only to love.

But we note that the Christian’s joy is to be that of the Master Himself – that MY joy remain in you. What

then was our Master's joy? Surely, it was the daily doing of the Father's will. *"My meat is to do the will of Him who sent me and to finish His work."* *"For I came down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of Him that sent me."* So our Lord passes on to us His exhortation – *"If you keep my commandments, you shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in His love."* The path of trust and obedience is surely the way of true Christian joy.

Go, labour on; spend and be spent -

Thy joy to do the Father's will;

It is the way the Master went;

Should not the servant tread it still?

JOY IN HIS PRESENCE

The ultimate joy of the Lord's people when they enter into the presence of their Lord we cannot really grasp but we know from the foretaste granted to us here and now that we will be able to say with the Psalmist - *"I shall be satisfied, when I awake with thy likeness"*. We are assured by the apostle John that when He, our dear Lord and Saviour, shall appear, we shall be like Him and see Him as He is. In the meantime, the message to us as children of God, seeking to follow in the Master's steps, is to serve Him with gladness, to present always a positive testimony to His goodness and mercy in our lives, to look beyond the problems of our day to God's glorious tomorrow.

In speaking to others, let us not dwell unduly on the evils and iniquities of the world, but rather remember that the gospel entrusted to us is, by definition, "good news". Let us be bearers of good tidings to any with an ear to hear, not only at Christmas but at all times. By God's grace, may we each seek with the apostle of old to finish our Christian course with joy and if faithful enter fully into the perfect joy of the Lord.

Amen.

My Joy Remain: Your Joy be Full

(John 15:11)

Our Lord concluded the little lesson of the Vine and the branches, so short and yet so full of meaning and depth, with an illustration of why He gave it, saying - *"These things I have spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you."* These wonderful words of life have come down to us through the centuries and have helped to cheer and encourage so many of the Lord's followers in the narrow way.

Many objections are raised against, pure and undefiled religion. Some complain that it is gloomy, joyless, a fetter upon the heart and brain; that it drives people from every temple of pleasure with a whip of small cords; that it posts notice, "No Trespassing Here", in every field of enjoyment. Our answer must be that this is a mistake; that these are the words of those who do not know or understand what they are speaking about.

Those who have truly made a covenant with the Lord, who have truly accepted Him, who have truly laid down their lives at His feet and become His followers in sincerity, are filled with His joy, as He promised. Moreover, it is an increasing joy, which day by day and year by year becomes more nearly complete. This joy will not be complete however until that which is perfect shall come and that which is in part shall be done away with; until in the resurrected condition we shall see as we are seen and know as we are known; and appreciate to the full the joys of our Lord, hearing His welcome invitation, "Enter into the joys of thy Lord."

We enter now into those joys through faith, through anticipation, through rest of heart, but by and by, we shall enter upon them in actuality. Meantime, it is the world which has not submitted itself to the Lord that does not appreciate the joys of the Lord, but is full of selfishness and ambition and strife and envy. The world does not know us even as it did not know Him. It does not know our joys in the Masters service even as it never appreciated the joys of our Lord in doing the Father's will, even at the sacrifice of His life. (Selected)

The Life of Stephen.

The words of our Lord and the Apostle in Rev.2:10, and 2 Tim. 3:12, seem specially applicable to Stephen, as he was one of the early Christians who was literally stoned to death on account of his loyalty to His Master and the truth. What we know of Stephen is recorded in Acts 6 and 7, which consist mainly of a discourse of defence given by him when brought before the Jewish council charged with blasphemy. It has been said that his words read more like the language of the Apostle Paul than that of any other New Testament writer, and we can trace through his statement a character worthy of being copied by all who are endeavouring to follow in the footsteps of the Master.

We first read of Stephen when he was chosen as a deacon along with six others to relieve the Apostles from the service of temporal things; he was a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, an eloquent speaker and very zealous in proclaiming the truth – Acts 6:8.

The Church at this time was in its infancy and was rapidly increasing. This caused much opposition and hatred from a class of scribes and rulers who were endeavouring to uphold their traditions, and they wrongly accused Stephen of blasphemy. See Acts 6:12-14. After the false witnesses had given evidence he had the opportunity of defending himself in this very dangerous position which no doubt he realised to the full – set before a council of excited and angry people who were determined to take his life at any cost. Yet the record says, “All that sat in the council looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.” What a testimony this is of Stephen’s faith and confidence in God; well did he know that the Lord was on his side and had confidence in His words – Luke 21:15.

Stephen’s discourse was based on Jesus and the resurrection. Beginning with Abraham he traced the history of Israel down to his own day, showing the Lord’s leadings with them and making particular reference to Moses – Acts 7:37. He was drawing attention to the fact that just as Moses had at first been rejected by Israel, so the one “like unto Moses” – Jesus – had been rejected by them. Nevertheless, as Moses afterwards became the leader and deliverer of the people, so also Jesus in due time would be the greater Deliverer.

Continuing, he showed that God at first established the tabernacle in the wilderness and then the temple at Jerusalem, and further that God has now provided that a still higher temple should take the place of the building made with hands. As it was not blasphemy to accept the temple of Solomon instead of the tabernacle of Moses, so neither should it be so considered to accept the higher spiritual temple of which Jesus is the Head, in place of the earthly temple. His words were so logical and convincing that his accusers could not resist the wisdom and spirit by which he spoke.

The words of Acts 7:51-53 were evidently the outcome of interruption by his hearers, and given as a rebuke, indicating that they were responsible for the death of Jesus, and this made them more angry. They could see that he was innocent of the accusations, yet were determined to kill Him. We realise that Stephen’s face was still aglow with joy and peace of mind in the privilege of the last opportunity of proclaiming his faith in the resurrected Jesus and seeing the angry faces of his accusers caused him to cast his eyes heavenwards – verses 55, 56. This vision was no doubt given to strengthen his faith for his death just at hand. The explanation of it gave his accusers the opportunity they were waiting for, as they evilly construed it to be additional blasphemy – verses 57-60. Thus we have recorded the death of the first Christian martyr – “They stoned Stephen... and he kneeled down and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge; and he fell asleep.”

The events leading up to Stephen’s death were very similar to those preceding the death of his Master. Our Lord was falsely accused of blasphemy against God and the temple and brought before the Jewish council and condemned. Stephen no doubt had all this in mind throughout his own trial; he had consecrated to follow in his Master’s footsteps even unto death, and had the faith and courage to fulfil his vow. What an example he is to all who have entered into the same covenant; we should also be faithful unto death by whatever means our Father may permit. It has been said of the life of Stephen, “The lesson for us all is faith, courage, zeal, a loyal heart, a shining face, love and prayers for our enemies – to see that none render evil in return for evil.”

Let us all be copies of Stephen and do good unto all in the face of the greatest opposition. We may not be persecuted as was Stephen and other early Christians, but we all need to develop the same traits of character as were manifest in them. The following quotation seems to sum up Stephen’s life: “The beneficent influences of the Gospel of Christ since Stephen’s day so permeated the civilised world, and so affected it, that the followers of Christ are not at present in danger of being stoned to death for preaching the Gospel. Nevertheless, the Apostle’s words still hold good – 2 Tim. 3:12. It is still necessary to suffer with Christ if we would be glorified with Him and share with Him in the coming Kingdom.

But the persecutions of today are more refined than in any previous period. The faithful today are not stoned with literal stones, or shot with literal arrows, or literally beheaded, but it is still true that the wicked shoot out arrows at the righteous, even bitter words, and many because of faithfulness are reprovèd and slandered and cut off from fellowship – beheaded for the testimony of Jesus – Rev. 20:4. Let all such emulate Stephen, the first Christian martyr. Let their testimony be given with radiant faces like his. Let their eyes of faith perceive Jesus at the right hand of God, as their Advocate and Deliverer. Let their words be with moderation as were Stephen’s, and let it be true of them as written of him, “full of grace and power” and “filled with the Holy Spirit.” (JBH:38)

“Riches of Glory”

(Continued from last issue)

Ephesians 3:14-21

The Apostle, in continuing his prayer for the “saints at Ephesus” and “the faithful in Christ Jesus,” beseeches the Father that they might “Know the love of Christ that passeth knowledge.” What does Paul mean? Can we take this as literally true and applicable to each member of the Church as individuals? We appreciate things by comparison. Does Christ’s love for us surpass, say, that of a mother’s love for her child?” Pure mother love is the most self-sacrificing love on earth. Within its own limits of the family, mother love is a beautiful symbol of the love of God for all his children. It is like a sample of sea water within the restricted limits of a cup, as compared with the illimitable ocean. How impossible it would be, however, for this mother love to contemplate Gethsemane and Calvary for her son on behalf of their enemies and deliberately to arrange for it in advance.

When Paul speaks thus of the love of Christ in this prayer, he speaks from the depths of his own experience. In Galatians 2:20, he says: “I have been crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live. And yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life that I live, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved *me* and gave himself for *me*.” A mother’s love is like the knowledge-surpassing-love of Jesus, in that she bestows on her family as a whole, the whole of her mother love. Mother love, however, is not rationed so that the more children she has, the less of her love there is to go round. The love of Christ is the love of God, that “Immortal love, forever full, forever flowing free; forever shared, forever whole, a never ebbing sea.”

Incredible as it may seem, Jesus loves each of us with the whole of his love. Had you or I been the only one in all the world needing salvation, what he did for all, he would have done for you or for me. If a mother has four children and one of them is in such danger that she can save him only at the risk of her own life, she does not take a twenty-five per cent risk because he is only one of four. She does what mother love can’t help doing; she goes all out to save her boy. So it is with Jesus. In the parable of the hundred sheep, only one was lost, but the shepherd left all the others and went all the way, in his utmost endeavor to save it and bring it back to the fold.

Paul’s appreciation of this personal love of Jesus shines through all his epistles and was the mainstay of his life. This it was that sustained him in all his sufferings for the Gospel’s sake. The sublime summit of his great epistle to the Romans is reached in chapter eight, and the very topmost pinnacle is this same love of the Lord, his Lord and ours. How wonderful are verses 35 to 39: “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

“THAT YE MIGHT BE FILLED WITH ALL THE FULLNESS OF GOD”

The idea in the above words seems to be that of being filled with all the overflowing superabundance that there is in God. As if we should say, The fullness of the Great Lakes in North America overflows in the glory of Niagara Falls. Or that the sun radiates into space everywhere surrounding it, its glorious, abundant wealth of light, heat, and power, of which our tiny planet partakes to its fullest capacity.

God is the perennial and inexhaustible Fountain of Life, the Source of every blessing. Adam received of God’s fullness at his creation. The lower orders of the animal creation in the progressive stages of their development had been partakers of God’s bounty up to the level of their being, but for man it was reserved that he should be filled with all the fullness of God, as the image and glory of God. Were we to go to Niagara with a cup and fill it at the mighty falls, how small it would look in comparison. Yet, up to its capacity it too would be filled with the fullness of the Great Lakes behind.

Paul is speaking in his prayer not of the old creation, but of the new. What copper is to gold, perfect human nature is to the divine. God made man in his own image, a human likeness of himself. Of the New Creation, however, we are told: “Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the *image of his Son*.” Not a human image but a divine image. Of man it was said: “After our likeness let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the fowl of the air and over the cattle and over all the earth.” But of the New Creation it is written: “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne.”

Filled thus with all the fullness of God, partakers of the divine nature, possessing a divine body with all its unimaginable properties and powers, what a glorious inheritance utterly beyond our finite comprehension awaits the Church beyond the veil. Here and now, however, we have an earnest of this inheritance. As a present possession we can be filled with all the fullness of God, through the possession of the Holy Spirit. Referring to our Lord, John says (John 1:16): “Of His fullness have all we received, and grace for grace.” Each grace in Him through the power of the Spirit can be reproduced in us, thus resulting in our being conformed to His image.

Paul gives us a wonderful list of the results of the infilling here and now of this fullness of God. It comprehends everything the heart could wish for, leaving nothing to be desired. He speaks of it in terms of the choicest fruit. (Gal. 5:22, 23.) "The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, temperance, faith." What lovely gardens our hearts would be; what delightful sources of fragrance and refreshment could they contain for others; what places of quiet retirement for ourselves, if the fruit of this heavenly tree was everywhere in evidence in vigorous, healthy growth? Ah, yes, we say, but how can I ever have such a garden? Listen now to what Paul has to say in the Doxology with which he ends his prayer.

"EXCEEDING ABUNDANTLY ABOVE ALL THAT WE ASK OR THINK"

Oh, for more of Paul's enthusiastic faith! See how he takes this statement, wonderful in itself, that *God is able*, and magnifies it over and over again for us. "Unto Him *that is able to do all that we ask*." How different from earthly fathers who find themselves powerless so often, through lack of means, to grant their children's requests for things in themselves innocent and good. But God is able to do not only all that we ask, but *all that we think*. There is nothing that we can think of that is beyond God's ability to grant us. But Paul continues, and inserts the word *above*, making it read, "above all we ask or think." But Paul is not satisfied even with this, and goes on to add another word, *abundantly* above; and yet another word, *exceeding* abundantly above. "Unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think," is His grand finale.

Paul is like some great master of music seated at an organ worthy of his skill and power, who has one of the grandest of themes to express and develop, entitled, "God is able." As we listen, softly come the opening strains, "Able to do all we ask." Then the music increases in volume as the theme develops into "Able to do all we ask or think." Then as other stops are brought into requisition and more power is applied, the exquisite music swells with the next movement into "Able to do above all we ask or think." This leads us on to the grand crescendo and climax which thunders and throbs through the great cathedral in waves of richest harmony: "Unto him that is able to do *exceeding abundantly* above all that we ask or think, to him be glory in the Church.

This is not merely abstract thinking, theoretical reasoning. It is not based upon what God has done in his mighty works in far-off places and far-off times, but upon what God is doing *in us here and now*. Notice the wonderful truth that Paul adds to all the foregoing, telling us that it is all "according to the power *that worketh in us*." The power was laid on at Pentecost and has been available to every member of the Body of Christ since. All we have to do is to switch it on by the exercise of faith. Do we find ourselves always doing so?

How exceeding abundantly above all they could ask or think were God's dealings with Israel. The ten plagues culminating in the death of Egypt's first-born; the deliverance through the Red Sea after the seemingly hopeless position at the water's edge; two millions of men, women, and children in the wilderness for forty years; guided through the trackless desert, supplied with water in the sandy wastes, provided with sustenance in lands where no crops could grow. Surely all this was exceeding abundantly above all they could ask or think.

Yet of Natural Israel it is said, "They limited the Holy One of Israel." Thirty-eight years before they did so, they could have entered the promised land. The forty spies who were sent out brought back a glowing account that it was even as God had promised, a land flowing with milk and honey. In proof they brought back a huge bunch of grapes which it took two men to carry. But along with this glowing account of the land, all but two of the forty spies reported that it was quite impossible for Israel to go in and take possession of it. The cities were impregnable, with walls which reached up to heaven. The men of the cities were giants before whom they seemed as grasshoppers. And so "they could not enter in because of unbelief." – Heb. 3:19.

How is it with us? Do we ever find ourselves wandering in the wilderness when we should be resting in the enjoyment of the promised land? Do we listen to the voices within of unbelief or act on the inspiration of faith? Are we free of all trace of care, worry and anxiety? Knowing that God is so superabundantly able, do we think big things about God and ask big things from God? Is my faith such that I rest in complete assurance that above all I ask or think; nay, abundantly above all I ask or think; or does even that, not sufficiently express the fullness of my faith so that I say, "Exceeding abundantly above all that I ask or think God is able" to meet every contingency? A contemplation of this wonderful prayer should verily make us realize that God gives to His children "according to the riches of His glory."

"UNTO HIM BE GLORY IN THE CHURCH BY CHRIST JESUS"

This last portion of Paul's prayer underlines what God expects of us in view of all the provisions He has made for us from His riches in glory. In rendering His report to the Father in John 17, our Lord said, "I have glorified thee on earth; I have finished the work thou gavest me to do." His mission on earth, to glorify God, was passed on to his church, collectively and individually. "Unto him be glory in the Church," through the person and power of Christ Jesus our Head and Pattern. The ultimate question which each of us must put to ourselves is, therefore, Is God being glorified in me? Our constant aim should be to make this true day by day,

so that like our Lord we might be able to make report with joy at the end of the way.

God's purpose is that there shall be unto Him glory in the Church by Christ Jesus, and this not only throughout the Gospel Age, but "throughout all ages, world without end, Amen." What wonderfully long views the Bible gives us! The outlook on the future from the standpoint of the world and the standpoint of the Christian is like the contrast between an outlook over the slums and that over the wide open spaces of some beautiful stretches of God's country. Think of the glorious panorama of sea, mountain, and sky that you may have witnessed in the highlands. There as we have looked upon range on range of mountains seemingly endless in the blue distance, we may have thought how very suggestive of the expression we have here, "throughout all ages, world without end."

In the foreground of the picture we think of that noble Millennial mountain of the Lord concerning which the Bible has so fully informed us. But what of all these other peaks fading away into the blue distance of the ages to come? What is the content of Ephesians 2:4-7: "But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved), and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus"? What do these ages to come have in store for us from the "riches of his glory"? Our reply must be, "Now we see as through a glass darkly, but then face to face; now we know in part, but then shall we know even also as we are known" (The Herald)

MY PRAYER

Grant me, O Father, according to the riches of thy glory, to be strengthened with might by thy spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in my heart by faith; and that I might be rooted and grounded in love, and thus be able to comprehend with all saints the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of the mystery of thy will in Christ; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, and so to be filled with all the fullness of God. Thou art able to do for me exceeding abundantly above all I can ask or think, according to the power of thy spirit working in me; enable me therefore to live to thy glory as a member of thy Church here and now, and throughout all ages, world without end, through Jesus Christ, my Lord. Amen. (A.D. Kirkwood)

"Strengthen thy Brethren"

"And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."
Luke 22:31,32.

Jesus told Peter that when he was "converted" he was to strengthen the brethren, and in his first epistle we find him so doing. He begins by pointing out the fact that the sufferings of Christ had been foretold by the prophets through the power of the Holy Spirit. Peter says that the Holy Spirit "testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." – 1 Peter 1:11

Later in the epistle Peter explains that the footstep followers of Jesus share in these foretold sufferings. He writes, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." – 1 Peter 4:12, 13) When one suffers it is a great source of strength to know the reason for it, and here Peter is reminding us that there is the best possible reason for our suffering as Christians; that reason being that it is the divine will, having been foretold by God's holy prophets.

Again Peter writes, "What glory, is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps." (1 Peter 2:20, 21) Peter was grieved when he saw Jesus suffer for well-doing, but through his conversion he came to understand that this was the divine will for his Master, and that it is now God's will for Jesus' disciples.

Peter says further on the subject of Christian suffering: "Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye; and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled." (1 Peter 3:13,14) We have a good example in Jesus of the principle involved in this exhortation – "Who... will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" True, they brought cruel suffering upon Jesus. They placed a crown of thorns on His head, and they 'hung Him on a cross until He died, but they did not eternally harm Him! They only completed the sacrifice which He had covenanted with His Father to make.

As a new creature Jesus was not harmed. All that happened was that through death and resurrection He exchanged His cross for a crown. And it will be the same with us if we continue faithfully to lay down our lives,

following in the Master's footsteps. This is what is involved in what Jesus said to Peter prior to His crucifixion; that one saves his or her life by voluntarily losing it through sacrifice.

GOD'S CARE

How welcome should be Peter's admonition, "Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you." (1 Peter 5:7) God's care of His people is exercised in many ways – through the Holy Spirit; by the guardian angels; through His Word of truth; and by our association with the brethren. We need all these helps, especially when we are suffering with Christ. While everything is going well, we might be inclined to overlook the need of God's care. But we need Him *all* the time, in fair weather and in storms; may we never fail to seek the throne of heavenly grace in our *every* time of need.

Peter adds that we are to "be sober", and to "be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world." (1 Peter 5:8,9) Satan attacks the Lord's people along many lines, but here the apostle seems to be reminding us that his attacks will come through efforts to discourage us because of our afflictions; and indeed this is one of Satan's methods of attack.

We are to resist these attacks through steadfastness in the faith – our "most holy faith" (Jude 20) It is through this most holy faith that we understand the reason for Christian suffering. If we do not know why we are suffering, we are vulnerable indeed to Satan's endeavours to discourage us. But how different it is when we know that we have been called to suffer with Christ – to enter into a covenant with the Lord by sacrifice; to take up our cross and follow Him.

THE JOY OF FAITH

Enlightened Christians who are faithfully laying down their lives will not ask why they are suffering, but will rejoice in the fact that they are partakers of the sufferings of Christ, and will in due time partake of His glory. Rejoicing in the most holy faith, these will realise that Christ suffered and died as mankind's Redeemer, and that they have been invited to die with Him, to be planted in the likeness of His death so that they might also be the likeness of His resurrection. (Romans 6:5)

They will know that it will be in the "first resurrection" that they will enter into His heavenly inheritance, and have the privilege and honour to be associated with Jesus in the promised blessing of all the families of the earth. They know that eventually all suffering and death will be destroyed, and the whole earth will be filled with the Lord's glory. For these reasons, they will not allow Satan's roars to frighten them, and will continue to cast all their cares upon the Lord. ("Dawn")

"But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit,"

The Intents of the Heart.

(Psalm 139:23,24)

The Scriptures make it very clear that God, our Heavenly Father is able to know our every thought and motive, and that there is nothing we can hide from Him. This understanding should have a very sobering effect on us. We accept the Bible record and the fact that God is the Creator of man, and seeing He created the marvellous mechanism of the brain, He can also read the thoughts it records. We are unable to do this. We can only know what is in the mind of another as it is revealed by word or deed, and so can gain only a superficial understanding of others as we know what they say or do.

It is interesting to read the selection of David as king of Israel, as recorded in 1 Sam. 16: 7 – "But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." The dictionary has a good description of what the heart represents. It reads, – "The heart is the chief organ of the physical life and occupies a most important part of the human system. The word came to stand for man's mental and moral activity. The heart is used figuratively for the hidden springs of the personal life. The heart being deep within, it represents the hidden man. It represents the true man, which is concealed."

DAVID CHOSEN

Samuel was sent by the Lord to select and anoint the king for Israel, to be chosen from the sons of Jesse. The seven older sons were passed over, though by appearance they would have been acceptable. David, though smaller and not so attractive, was selected. "The Lord looketh upon the heart." It was David's sincere heart loyalty that later on allowed him to be forgiven when he committed sins. All our thoughts and motives are naked before the Lord. There is nothing we can do to hide them from Him. If we recognise this, it should help us to watch our -thoughts and motives very carefully. It could be an encouragement to us as we realise

our mistakes and failures are not of the heart, and God deals with us according to our heart intentions.

This seems to be the thought the Apostle has in mind in Heb. 4: 14-16, when he says, "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." We can come boldly, or with confidence, to the throne of grace, because we know that through faith in the sacrifice of Jesus we can seek forgiveness for our unintentional sins, if our hearts are right in the sight of God.

When Jesus was on earth, He was able to read the thoughts and intents of the hearts of others. This was through the power of the Holy Spirit. We remember the time when Philip introduced Nathanael to Him, and He said, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile." This surely indicated that He knew the heart of Nathanael, even before he was introduced to Him.

"LOVEST THOU ME?"

This is clearly shown also in the life of Peter. Just before He was crucified, He told Peter he would deny Him three times. Peter did not think this was possible, and said to Jesus that he would die for Him before denying Him. No doubt Peter sincerely meant this, but Jesus knew when the test came Peter would deny Him. Peter learnt the lesson. That Jesus knew this in advance and foretold it made a very marked impression on Peter's mind. Later on, after Jesus' resurrection, Jesus was to remind Peter that He knew the thoughts and intents of his heart.

The incident is recorded in John 21. It was here that the disciples decided to return to their fishing business. They laboured all night without catching a fish. In the morning they saw a stranger on shore. He questioned as to whether they had any fish, and the answer being "No", the stranger advised them to cast the net on the other side of the boat, and to their surprise the net was filled. A similar miracle had occurred when Jesus first called them to follow Him, so they knew this was Jesus. Peter swam ashore to greet Jesus, and they made a fire and pre-pared a meal and ate together.

It was after eating together, and still on the shore of the lake, that Jesus questioned Peter. He said, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He said unto him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee, Jesus saith Unto him, Feed my sheep."

That Jesus asked Peter three times, "Lovest thou me?" must have taken Peter's mind back to the time when, before the crucifixion, he denied Him three times. This must have been a reminder to Peter that Jesus still knew every thought and intent of his heart. By now Peter realised he could hide nothing from his Master. That is why he said, "Lord thou knowest all things: thou knowest that I love thee."

Yes, Jesus did know what was in Peter's heart, and He knows what is in our hearts. In the resurrection Jesus was exalted to the Divine nature, and it is true of Him, as it is of our Heavenly Father, that all the thoughts and intents of our hearts are open and naked before Him; He knows us better than we know and understand ourselves. This would be a terrifying thought if we did not know that. He is our sympathetic Advocate before the Heavenly Father, and that God does not look upon us according to our imperfect, fallen flesh, but according to the intentions of the heart.

THE FIRST LOVE

We get a similar lesson from the message to the church at Ephesus. Though the messages to the seven churches cover the period of the church's history, it is true of a group of Christians or an individual Christian at any time. This message says, "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars; and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted." These are wonderful commendations indeed. But the Lord said, "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love."

This could be true of us. It seems important that when we realise our hearts are open and naked before God, we should search our own hearts, and this should be a lesson from the message we have just read. When we look back over our past, especially to the early years of our consecrated life, have we the same love for the Lord now as we had then? Our love for the Lord will be shown by our love for the brethren. If Jesus said to us today, "Lovest thou me?" could we answer as Peter did, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee?" If because of weakness of the flesh our good intentions fail, we have an assurance from the

Apostle Paul, "Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, and find mercy and grace to help in time of need."

We saw earlier that David was selected as king of Israel because God knew his heart. Later on he did commit some sins which were not good in the sight of God. David sought forgiveness, and was later restored to favour with God. He said, "Search me, O Lord, and know my heart." We also should be pleased, as were David and Peter, that God knows our heart. David seems very much impressed with this thought, for in the Psalms so many times he mentions how the heart should be kept. Psa. 51: 10, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." He also said in Psa. 19: 14, "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my Redeemer." JBH: 66

"Consecrated, Lord to Thee"

(The following tribute to the life and work of Frances Ridley Havergal was published in the December 1936 issue of "Peoples Paper" to mark the 100th anniversary of her birth. The author's name is unknown).

Frances Ridley Havergal was born on the 14th December, 1836, and, in due course, every talent she possessed was consecrated to the Lord. She recognised early that, 'in God's great field of labour, all work, is not the same; He hath a service for each one who loves His Holy Name', and, as we sing the praises so ably written and expressed by this servant, our thanks ascend to the 'Giver of every good and perfect gift', for the faithfulness displayed in the use of these gifts. Her pen ceased not to declare in a most pleasing ministry the praises of Him who knew no sin.

*Father; we bless Thee with heart and voice
For the wondrous grace of Thy sovereign choice,
That patiently, gently sought us out
In the far off land of death and doubt;
That drew us to Christ by the Spirit's might,
That opened our eyes to see the Light,
That arose in strange reality
From the darkness that fell on Calvary.*

(Isa 62:12, Eph 2:13)

There was also in her music constantly a sense of insufficiency in self, and a desire to 'Let every thought be captive brought, Lord Jesus to Thine own sweet obedience – That I may know in ebb-less flow, the perfect peace of full and pure allegiance.' (2 Cor 10:5)

While we would draw attention to her many delightful works, we would also call to remembrance that in her ministry much pain was endured, inasmuch that, in the employment of her talents for the Lord, many were drawn to herself. These she had to re-direct, and while she cherished dearly the love and affection of many, she desired it only for Jesus. "I want you" was said to many, "but I want you for Jesus."

*Singing for Jesus, our Master and Friend,
Telling His love and His marvellous grace, Love for eternity, love without end;
Love for the loveless, the sinful and base, Singing for Jesus and trying to win
Many to love Him and join in our song...*

God has surely supplied all our need. Some may appreciate a particular ministry more than another, and yet, as one string reverberates faithfully the music it is intended to sound, its companion strings will, if in tune, reciprocate and accord sympathetically. One hundred years (has not dimmed) the music of love that rings out from the heart of Frances Ridley Havergal.

"VESSELS OF MERCY, PREPARED UNTO GLORY"

(by Francis Ridley Havergal)

Vessels of mercy, prepared unto glory!

This is your calling and this is your joy!

This, for the new year unfolding before thee,

Tells out the terms of your blessed employ.

(Rom 9:23)

Vessels to honour; made sacred and holy.

Meet for the use of the Master we love,
Ready for service all simple and lowly,
Ready, one day, for the temple above.
(2 Tim 2:21)

Yes, though the vessels be fragile and earthen,
God hath commanded His glory to shine;
Treasure resplendent henceforth is our burthen,
Excellent power; not ours but Divine
(2 Cor 4:5.6)

Chosen in Christ ere the dawn of Creation,
Chosen for him to be filled with his grace,
Chosen to carry the streams of salvation
Into each thirsty and desolate place.
(Acts 9:15)

Take all Thy vessels, O glorious Refiner;
Purge all the dross, that each chalice may be
Pure in Thy pattern, completer, diviner,
Filled with Thy glory and shining for thee.
(Prov 25:4)



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HOLDING FAST THE FAITHFUL WORD

(Titus 1:9)

In Titus 1:5 we read that Paul had left Titus in Crete in order to set in order the things which were lacking there, and to ordain elders in each city on the island as Paul had appointed him. In Titus 1:6-8 the apostle goes on to list the criteria by which Titus was to evaluate the suitability of those whom he would appoint as elders. *"If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unseemly, for a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God, not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre, but a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate."* (A bishop is simply an overseer in N.T. terms; the job of the elders was to "oversee" each of the churches.) The attributes listed are all commendable and in today's language we could summarise them by saying that the elders needed to have characters and ways of life which were beyond reproach.

In Titus 1:9 the apostle Paul adds another criterion for those who would be elders – *"Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers."* It is this particular attribute of those who would be elders that we are to concentrate upon. *"Holding fast the faithful word as they have been taught."* Consideration of this particular criterion could initially suggest some doctrines which Paul might have in mind. But just what did Paul have in mind when he said – holding fast the faithful word? What particular faithful words did he have in mind? Let us go to the Scriptures and see what words they identify categorically as faithful words and which are necessary for us to hold fast.

There are some six references directly to faithful words in the New Testament, apart from the text verse. One of these is in Paul's first letter to Timothy and we realise that as well as leaving Titus in Crete, Paul had left Timothy in Ephesus to do the same work there. In 1 Tim 3:1 Paul says – *"This is a faithful (AV – true) saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work."* This is a parallel passage to Titus 1 and lists the characteristics of those who would be bishops or overseers. It is not proposed to consider further that passage at present, rather let us go on to some of the other texts, which are more pertinent to our subject.

"TO SAVE SINNERS"

The **first faithful saying** for consideration is in 1 Tim 1:15, where the apostle says to Timothy – *"This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief"* Why would Paul be telling Timothy or emphasising to him that this is a faithful saying? It is certainly a faithful saying, it is the very foundation of the Christian faith. But when we think about the environment in Ephesus and also that which Titus faced in Crete, we can easily see why Paul mentions this particular truth as being of very great importance. In 1 Tim 1:3-7, Paul says to Timothy – *"As I besought you to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that you might charge some that they teach no other doctrine, neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions rather than godly edifying which is in faith; now the end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned, from which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling, desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm."*

So Timothy in Ephesus was confronted with a situation where some were abandoning their faith in Christ Jesus and reverting to being teachers of the law, and it was therefore most pertinent that Paul mention in his letter to Timothy that one of the faithful sayings to be emphasised was *"that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."* Titus also had to confront the same problem in Crete. We previously read Tit 1:5-9, let us turn now to vv 10,11 – *"For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the cir-*

cumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake." Both at Ephesus and Crete there was a tendency in that day to revert to the teachings of the law. Also in Galatia, Paul writing to the church there says - *"O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth crucified among you. This only would I learn of you, Received you the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now made perfect by the flesh?"*

These circumstances of course belong to the first century A.D.; we are now on the brink of the 21st century. Is then this exhortation to hold fast the faithful word, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, still important, is it so necessary for us to be forthright about that doctrine? "He came into the world to save sinners", what does that really mean? Who are the sinners that He came to save? How privileged we are to believe and understand what Paul says to the Romans - *"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."* (Rom 5:12) No Bible Student would question or doubt the truth of these words, but many professedly Christian people deny or have no comprehension of the clear statements of the Scriptures as to the origin of sin with our first parents, how it came upon mankind, and more importantly how it is to be overcome. This is a challenge to us all, and who knows what greater challenges we are going to face in the days to come.

THE RESURRECTION

He came into the world to save sinners, but what does it really mean to save sinners? If we asked around, we would probably find that most believe that saving sinners means taking them from the earth and translating them into heaven. This is not the answer; and we are privileged to know that God's plan to "save sinners" makes a perfect and more far-reaching provision for all in due time, by the resurrection from the dead.

Let us see how in the early church the hope of the resurrection was very quickly lost sight of, and also how important it is. Returning to Paul's first letter to Timothy whom he had left in Ephesus; in Chap 1:18-20 we read - *"This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them might war a good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience, which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck, of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander"* These had put aside the faith and had even made shipwreck of some. What did Hymenaeus do that made their faith shipwreck? The apostle leaves us in no doubt, for in 2 Tim 2:16-18 he tells us in no uncertain terms - *"But shun profane and vain babblings, for they will increase unto more ungodliness, and their word will eat us doth a canker, of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus, who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already, and overthrow the faith of some."*

Hymenaeus and Philetus had lost faith in a future resurrection, had lost faith in the salvation which Christ has provided for the world of mankind, and even more seriously, had overthrown the faith of some. When we think about it, how critical is this conviction that the resurrection for the whole of mankind is still future? How many people do we find who really believe that? How many professedly Christian people have no answer or hope for the millions who have never heard the gospel? So we see that the apostle's words that Christ Jesus did indeed come into the world to save sinners, to save the whole world of mankind, is a faithful saying, which, while we take it for granted, is something which we actively need to hold fast.

Another text which has come under severe criticism in time past, not among the brethren but from "outside" is 1 Tim 2:3,4 - *"For this is acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved and to come unto a knowledge of the truth."* This text we frequently refer to and we all rejoice in. One interpretation of this text is that God wills all to be saved but it will not happen because they do not want it, they turn a deaf ear. That God's will is that all be saved is a truth which assuredly we all have to really hold fast. According to Strong's Concordance, wills is the correct word. God wills all to be saved. The point is - will it come about? Surely, it will through the resurrection, and that is also when it will come about.

Yet many still say, yes, God wills all to be saved, but it will not happen if they do not want it. In the next breath, they will say that God is all-powerful, omnipotent, ruler of the universe. How do these two statements balance? If God wants something done and He is all-powerful, why wouldn't it happen? So, again, the doctrine of the resurrection, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners is really a key issue and something which we must also hold fast.

THE CALL OF THE CHURCH

A second faithful saying which we must hold fast is found in Paul's second letter to Timothy - 2 Tim 2:11. To put this verse into context, we need to read several earlier verses in the chapter - *"Thou therefore my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ... Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead*

according to my gospel, wherein I suffer trouble, as an evildoer, even unto bonds, but the word of God is not bound. Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. It is a faithful saying, For if we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him. If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him." (2 Tim 2:1-3,8-12) In a nutshell, what is Paul here telling Timothy? Is it not the calling of the church? Paul was suffering "all things for the elect's sake", those whom God had chosen.

Just how important is an understanding of the calling of the church to the overall plan of God? There are at least four good reasons why we must hold fast to this faithful saying concerning the call of the church. The **first reason** is that it gives us confidence, an understanding of the calling of the church gives us assurance. Romans 8:28 is a very well known verse - *"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God."* How often we hear this verse misapplied to natural disasters and the like? In the overall plans of God, these are working out His purposes in "the big picture", but the text is saying that "all things work together for good for them who love God, the elect." *"Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth."* (Rom 8:33) Who indeed can lay anything to the charge of God's elect - if we believe that we are of the elect, what a tremendously powerful statement that is to us!

The **second reason** why it is so important for us to hold fast the faithful saying of the calling of the church is that it explains to us the church's pilgrimage during the present gospel age. *"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that you should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light; who in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God; who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; having your conversation honest among the Gentiles, that whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation."* (1 Pet 2:9-12) How often do we hear the mission of the church during the gospel age misrepresented? Truly, we acknowledge that we are strangers and pilgrims as the elect of God.

This leads us the **third reason** why it is so important for us to understand this doctrine, for, if we understand the church's pilgrimage, then we recognise the need for our sanctification as outlined in 2 Cor 6: 14-18. Verses 16 and 17 read - *"And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God, as God has 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, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you."* In a word, our dedication or our fervour to be sanctified depends upon our understanding of the pilgrimage of the church.

The **fourth reason** why it is important for us to understand the faithful saying of the calling of the church is that it gives us an overall view of God's plan. We are not the only ones who are being "saved". No, the calling of the church enables us to see the manifold wisdom of God's plans and purposes. *"To make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God... to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known (or made known) by the church the manifold wisdom of God."* (Eph 3:9,10) Further in Rom 8:19 we read - *"For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God."* The earnest expectation of **all creation** - consider the power of those words! How critical these things are!

Reading on in Romans 8, verses 20-22 - *"For the creation was made subject to vanity (futility), not willingly, but by reason of Him who hath subjected the same in hope; because the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now."* The whole creation travails in pain, waiting until the church is complete! How important it is to understand this faithful saying!

"ALL THINGS NEW"

This brings us to the **third faithful saying, in Rev 21:1-5**. *"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away, and there was no more sea. And I, John, saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall be there any more pain; for the former things are passed away. And He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new And He said unto me, Write, for these words are true and faithful."*

What a wealth of promises is in these words. Let us just take from Verse 4 - *"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes!"* Do we really believe that? Some people say that there will surely always be sorrow and there will always be tears. So when we declare that we believe that a day will come when there will be no

more tears, their response is likely to be - “get real” or “this is pie-in-the-sky stuff” But this faithful saying we hold fast, there is to be not only no more tears but no more sorrow or crying or pain, and no more death itself. This is surely just the most wonderful hope, is it not? How blessed we are to understand it and to hold it fast, for it is the fulfilment of the first faithful saying which we considered in 1 Tim 1:15, that “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” Here it is fulfilled!

Another reason why we must hold fast to this faithful saying is that it is at this time that the second faithful saying that “if we suffer with Him we shall also reign with Him” will be fulfilled.

The final reason why we can hold fast to the faithful words of Rev 21:1-5 is found in the last verse (v5) - “*He that sat upon the throne said. Behold I make all things new; and He said unto me, **Write, for these words are true and faithful!***” Amen. (GS:98/99)

Acceptable Thoughts and Words

(“Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer” Psalm 19:14)

How beautiful in the sight of right-thinking people is a well-balanced character, and, in contrast, how unlovely are the undisciplined and ungoverned - the selfish, the unjust, the unkind and the violent-tempered. Naturally, the one awakens in us emotions of pleasure and admiration, and the other of pain. If such is the appreciation of virtue and the abhorrence of the lack of it among mankind who have lost much of the original image of God, with what keen appreciation must they be observed by a pure and holy God.

People of the world, who have no personal acquaintance with God, have no special thought as to how they appear in His sight; but with what carefulness should those who love Him and who value His approval study to conform their conduct to His pure and holy mind. True, all the justified and consecrated, notwithstanding their imperfections and shortcomings through inherited weaknesses, are acceptable to God through Christ, whose robe of righteousness amply covers us; but the measure of our acceptableness to God, even through Christ, is only to the extent that, while availing ourselves of His imputed righteousness, we are earnestly striving to attain actually to the standards of perfection.

By so doing we manifest our actual appreciation of the Divine favour. With what confusion and chagrin would one be covered who, in the midst of a fit of violent temper, or an unjust or mean transaction unworthy of his dignity of profession, should be suddenly surprised by the unexpected appearance of a beloved friend of high and noble character. Yet the eye of such a one is ever upon us. How constantly, then, should the above prayer of the Psalmist be in the minds of God’s consecrated children? The thoughts of our hearts are not manifest to others until we express them in words or actions; but even the very thoughts and intents of our hearts are all open and manifest to God. What a comfort to the honest-hearted!

The Psalmist repeats this enquiry another way, saying. “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?” and then replies, “By taking heed thereto, according to Thy word.” Then he frames for us this resolution, “I will meditate on Thy precepts, and have respect unto Thy ways. I will delight myself with Thy statutes; I will not forget Thy word.” (Psa 119:9,15,16) Here is the secret of a pure and noble life, acceptable to God. It is to be attained, not merely by prayers and righteous resolutions, but, in addition to these, by careful, painstaking heed; by systematic and diligent effort of self-cultivation; by the persevering weeding out of evil thoughts and the constant cultivation of pure, benevolent and noble thoughts; by nipping in the bud the weeds of perversity before they bring forth their hasty harvest of sinful words and deeds.

THE DIVINE STANDARD

But observe, further, that this heed or care is to be taken, not according to the imperfect standing of our own judgment, but according to God’s word. The standard by which we test our lives makes a vast difference in our conclusions. The Psalmist further commends this standard to us, saying, “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.” (That is, if we take heed to our ways according to God’s law, it will turn us completely from the path of sin to the path of righteousness.) “The testimony (the instruction) of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple” (the meek, teachable ones - clearly pointing to them the way of righteousness.) “The statutes (the decrees, ordinances and precepts) of the Lord are right (the infallible rules of righteousness) rejoicing the heart” (of the obedient).

“The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean (not a menial, servile fear, but begotten by love - a fear of falling short of His righteous approval), enduring for ever. More to be desired are they (the law and testimony of the Lord) than gold; yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is Thy servant warned (concerning the dangers of the way and the snares of the adversary and concerning everything which is calculated to discourage or hinder growth in

grace), and in keeping of them there is great reward. Who (in the use of his own fallible judgments, and without the standard of God's law) can understand his errors (can rightly judge himself)?" When, as we measure ourselves by this standard we detect and deplore our shortcomings, let us remember the Psalmist's prayer, "Cleanse Thou me from secret faults" - thus supplementing our efforts by our prayers.

But there is still another part of this prayer which the Lord thus puts into our mouths. It reads, "Keep back Thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me; then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression." Well, indeed, may we pray and strive to be kept back from such sin - sins of pride and arrogant self-will which does not meekly submit to the will of God. Let us beware of the slightest tendency toward pride and self-will, or the disposition to be wise above what is written, or to take for granted what God does not clearly promise. If we watch and strive against the very beginning of that proud and haughty spirit which surely presages a fall, then, indeed, we shall be "innocent from the great transgression."

MEDITATING ON GOD'S WORD

"Blessed is the man... whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who doth meditate therein day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." (Psa 1:1-3) If we make the word of God the theme of our constant meditation, its principles will soon be assimilated and become part of our mental make-up, making our characters more beautiful and commendable both to God and to those about us; and in harmony with this habit of the mind the acts of life will speak.

The purified fountain will send forth sweeter waters than formerly, bearing refreshment and good cheer to all who come in contact with it. It will make for happier homes - better husbands, better wives and better children. It will sweeten the temper, soften the voice, dignify the language, cultivate the manners, ennoble the sentiments and lead its charming grace to every simple duty. It will bring in the principle of love, and cast out the discordant elements of selfishness. Thus it will make the home the very garden-spot of earth, where every virtue and every grace will have ample room to expand and grow. It will not only thus favourably affect the individual and the home-life, but it will go out into the avenues of trade, and truth and fair dealing will characterise all the business relations, and thus God will be honoured by those who bear His name and wear the impress of His blessed Spirit.

While the heights of perfection cannot be reached as long as we still have these imperfect bodies, there should be in every child of God a very perceptible and continuous growth in grace, and each step gained should be considered but the stepping-stone to higher attainments. If there is no perceptible growth into the likeness of God, or if there is a backward tendency, or a listless standstill, there is cause for alarm. Let us constantly keep before our eyes the model which the Lord Jesus set for our example - that model of the complete fulfilment of the will of God. Let us follow His steps of righteousness and self-sacrifice as nearly as a full measure of loving zeal and faithfulness and loyalty to God will enable us to do, and we shall have a blessed sense of the Divine approval now, and the glorious reward of Divine favour in due time. (R4834)

HE IS WITH THEE

He is with thee! - in thy dwelling,
 Shielding thee from fear of ill;
All thy burdens kindly bearing,
 For thy dear ones gently caring,
Guarding, keeping, blessing still
 He is with thee! - in thy service
He is with thee certainly,
 Filling with the Spirit's power,
Giving in the needful hour
 His own messages by thee.
He is with thee! - with thee always
 All thy nights and all thy days;
Never failing, never frowning,
 With His living kindness crowning,

Turning all thy life to praise.

(F.R.H.)

“So Run that you May Obtain”

(1 Corinthians 9:24)

The apostle Paul, as a man of his time, was evidently familiar with the Olympic and Roman Games of his day and drew analogies from them to point the way to Christians. One great distinction, of course, he hastens to make, is that participants in the public games sought the reward of local acclaim and honour, the winner's wreath or crown, all corruptible prizes which soon fade. The Christian, on the other hand, is seeking an incorruptible crown, one which will never fade, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to all who finish the course with faith and joy.

With the modern Olympic Games to be staged in Australia in the year 2000, we will all be brought into contact, to some extent, with accounts of the athletes' aspirations and preparations. We can be sure that none will be taking a casual approach to their events, their training will be intense, hearts and minds will be fully absorbed in physical and mental preparations, other interests and pleasures will be set aside until all the heats and finals have been fully completed. As Paul reminds us, they know only too well that in public games events, there can be only one winner, intensifying the degree of dedication required. The Christian needs the same sort of zeal, but thankfully in our race all faithful unto the finish are to receive the crown.

Though the apostle Paul particularly uses the analogy of the footrace to illuminate his exhortations to the Lord's people, there are earlier lessons along this line in the Old Testament. The wise man and the psalmist both have advice for us -

(1) Proverbs 4:11,12 - *“I have taught thee in the way of wisdom, I have led thee in right paths. When thou goest, thy steps shall not be straitened; and when thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble.”*

Psalm 119:30,32 *“I have chosen the way of truth, I have set my heart on your laws. I run in the path of your commands, for you have set my heart free.”* (NIV)

In the first instance, the necessity for listening intently to the coach's instructions to avoid stumbling is stressed. For the Christian, this means watchfulness and prayer, a meek and teachable spirit, for elsewhere he warns us that “pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.” (Prov 16:18) In the second instance, the psalmist emphasises the need to know and follow the rules. For the Christian, this means familiarity with our training manual, the Word of God, the sole guide as we run the race. At times we may falter, but our Father is every ready to forgive the contrite runner.

RUNNING INSTRUCTIONS

However, the most direct instructions for the Christian concerning the race and the prize of faithfulness for which each entrant is running are given by the apostle Paul in his letters to the believers at Corinth and to his Hebrew brethren. In the first, he points out the urgency and immediacy of the running, and issues a challenge to maximum effort and personal discipline. In the second, he outlines the preparation necessary, the persistence required and the prospect before each runner, with a reminder that lives of faithful ones of past ages, and we might well add men and women of faith down the gospel age, are there to encourage and to urge us on.

The apostle's familiar words to the Corinthian brethren read (Revised Standard Version) - *“Do you not know that in a race all the runners compete, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable one... I do not run aimlessly. I do not box as one beating the air, but I pummel my body and subdue it, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.”* (1 Cor 9:24-26) The challenge so clearly set before us then is to “so run that we may obtain the prize” and a prime pre-requisite is self-control.

The apostle is of course not suggesting here that Christians are competing with each other for the prize, but rather that the same diligence, the same concentration of endeavour which an athlete strives for, is necessary. The apostle Peter expresses a similar idea in his words - *“wherefore, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure, for if you do these things you shall never fall, for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”* (2 Peter 1:10,11) The calling to which he here refers, elsewhere defined as a *high* calling, a *holy* calling and a *heavenly* calling, is indeed the goal towards which each entrant in the race is running. Diligence - single-mindedness and zeal - is not merely an option for any serious runner in our race but a necessity.

It is common nowadays for athletics or sporting coaches to require of their competitors or team members

that they be “focussed” on the task in hand. All their thoughts and efforts are to be concentrated on preparation for the event, with the desired goal firmly fixed in mind and heart. The same “focus” is surely the need of the Christian entrant in his or her race also, as Paul indicates in Phil 3:13-15 (RSV) - *“Brethren, I do not consider that I have made it (the prize) my own, but one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward (high - AV) call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature be thus minded.”*

Though the apostle in these words does not specifically refer to running. Vine tells us that the word translated “straining forward” (AV - “press”) is used as a metaphor from the foot race and pictures “speeding on earnestly”. We will see more on this point later from the letter to the Hebrews, but the point of dedication to the course on which each one has entered is clear. The apostle is not suggesting that victory in the race rests upon our own efforts, for the victory is by faith, manifested in daily seeking to do the Father’s will. *“This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.”* (1 John 5:4)

SELF-CONTROL

Turning again to Paul’s words to the Corinthians, we note that as well as requiring the complete dedication of every contestant who would gain the prize, there is a need to be “temperate in all things”. The verb translated “is temperate” (AV) is used figuratively of the rigid self-control practised by athletes with a view to gaining the prize and is of prime importance to each Christian entrant in the race. One of the precious fruits of the Holy spirit is “temperance” or self-control. It is also one of the vital characteristics to be added to our faith, being next after virtue and knowledge (2 Peter 1:5) It needs to be exercised in respect of our own pattern of life and in all our dealings with others.

An area which most athletes pay great attention to is diet. For the Christian, what he or she eats and drinks needs to be chosen wisely, but what is taken into the mind and heart is far more important, for it is out of the abundance of the heart - what has been stored up there - that the mouth speaks. This can either glorify God or bring shame to His name when the careless expression or thought slips out. Faulty diet will surely slow the reflexes and retard progress and only those things which will sustain faith and strengthen character have any real place in a Christian’s diet.

A right and nourishing diet on our part may also bless other runners in the race - *“Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying.”* (Eph 4:29) This shows up another difference between the public games event and the race in which the Christian is engaged. In the latter, helping another competitor is quite allowable, even encouraged, and will not lead to disqualification or loss of ground. The ministry of exhortation and encouragement is a privilege and is open to all the Lord’s people. *“Let us cheer our homeward journey, by sweet fellowship in prayer; thus the law of Christ fulfilling, thus each other’s burdens bear”.*

ENCOURAGEMENT

The apostle concludes his instructions to the Corinthian brethren with words of personal testimony and example. As a runner, he runs with a fixity of purpose, not wandering on and off the track, not looking to left or right but straight on ahead, running a disciplined race. He enlarges on this in his words to the Hebrew Christians, as we read in Hebrews 12:1,2 - *“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”*

In his letter, the apostle has just listed many of the great characters of Old Testament times who were pleasing to God because of their faith and who await what is described as “a better resurrection”. Their faith and faithfulness should be, he says, an incentive and encouragement to us. To illustrate this, he draws a picture for us of a crowd of spectators at the Games, looking on and urging on the contestants. To these, we might add the faithful ones, known to our God, who finished their course with joy down through the gospel age. *“A crowd of witnesses around hold thee in full survey; forget the steps already trod, and onward urge thy way.”*

There would seem to be three key points which Paul here seeks to impress on his readers and they come down to us, as it were, as the words of our apostolic running coach -

- (1) lay aside every weight
- (2) run with patience
- (3) look unto Jesus

As each year passes, it is surely good to review the lap just completed, to take to our hearts the lessons learnt, to make any reparations necessary, and then without any further backward glance, press on in the strength which our dear Saviour has promised will be provided still.

PREPARATION

As part of the weight laid aside, the apostle tells us that he had determined to forget those things which were behind him. There would have been many features of his past life which the one-time zealous Pharisee and persecutor of Christians would, following his conversion, wish to put behind him, but all of us have memories of failures, mistakes, and so on which would be better forgotten. The habit of recrimination is a corrosive one, rather we do better to learn the lessons, make any reparations needful, then having obtained forgiveness, press on.

Present-day athletes seek to carry as little as possible in the way of unnecessary weight, such as items of clothing which would create wind resistance, they choose light weight footwear and so on. The Christian is not concerned with this type of weight but the burdens of unbecoming habits, unprofitable activities, associations or distractions, can seriously affect the running of our race. In these matters, we cannot judge others, but we need to examine our own lives to ensure we are carrying no surplus baggage. For running footwear, feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace might be a good choice, having in mind Isaiah's picture of one running over the mountains with good tidings of salvation.

Many things which are quite proper for mankind in general need to be carefully scrutinised by the Christian lest the Adversary use them to find a means of stumbling him or her. There may be areas where we are especially vulnerable and even in points where we feel strong, Satan may play on pride. So for safety in our running, let us hear again the words of the wise man - *"keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life... let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee."* (Prov 4:23,25) The only true focus for our eyes we will see shortly.

PERSEVERANCE

Once prepared for the race, the need is for patience or endurance, without murmuring or complaint. This is another characteristic to be added to faith and follows temperance or self-control which we considered earlier. The apostle had just previously exhorted the Hebrews to renewed faith and determination; they had begun well under very severe trials, so he urges them - *"cast not away therefore your confidence which hath great recompense of reward, for you have need of patience that after you have done the will of God, you might receive the promise."* (Heb 10:36) A good start is important in any race, but perseverance must follow.

The Christian race is not what would be termed a sprint or dash, requiring a short burst of speed. Equally careful preparation and training is still needed for Christians, but their course is "unto death", that is, it is a whole-of-life experience. *"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."* (Rev 2:10) The race will surely have its difficulties, we may be disappointed with others who were once running with us, but our Heavenly Father knows and His promise is that His grace is sufficient. In his lovely benediction, Jude assures us also that our Heavenly Father is "able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy." (Jude 24)

PROSPECT

The third and final point of the apostle's exhortation to would-be runners is to run "looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of faith", and to consider His example. Two aspects are here present, first He is our goal, on whom our eyes are to be set, the one who has gone on ahead to prepare a place in His Father's house for all who by faith complete the course, and who waits to receive each one unto Himself. It was He to whom we were first drawn by God; it was He in whose strength we set out to run the race of faith set before us. This course of trust and obedience He first faithfully completed and His perfect example is the second aspect of Paul's exhortation. Consider Him! It was our dear Saviour who endured the cross for us, who endured the opposition of sinners against Himself, but for His faithfulness was raised and is now seated at the right hand of God's throne.

The apostle advises any of us who may be inclined to grow weary or to faint by the way to consider Him and by faith to draw new strength to continue on. In Hebrews 6:20, He is spoken of as our "forerunner". In this instance the allusion is not to the footrace but to the idea of a scout or herald sent before royalty, but it again shows our Saviour as going on in advance of His footstep followers. These are to be with Him where He is, even in heaven itself; they are to be like Him and see Him as He is *"He (Christ) is the Head of the body, the church... the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He might have the pre-eminence."* (Col 1:18)

But not only is our dear Saviour our perfect example, our source of strength and our goal, but He is also the only solid foundation of unity among all runners. The true unity of the Spirit, with its sevenfold basis, which the apostle Paul commends to us in Eph 4:3-6 will not come about of its own accord, by human efforts or rules, or by unanimity on every point of doctrine. Rather, it will grow as each one looks steadfastly upon Him who is the Author and Finisher of faith for every faithful runner in this great race. The closer we each look on

Him, the more we shall see Jesus in others and be closer drawn together in love.

Run the straight race, through God's good grace,

Lift up your eyes and see His face.

Life with its way before us lies.

Christ is the path, and Christ the prize.

For the Christian, each passing year presents an opportunity for further running in the race for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, another year of opportunity for faithfulness and for growth in grace and knowledge, for usefulness in service. Let us resolve then to run with patience the race set before each one of us, in full assurance of faith, confident that He who first invited us to enter upon the race will also provide the grace and strength to finish the course. His promise to natural Israel in Isaiah 40:29-31 seems so well to cover all aspects of Christian progress, and particularly in any time of stress and weariness is surely ours to claim.

"He giveth power to the faint, and to them who have no might He increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall; but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint."

"Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart. Wait, I say, on the Lord!"
Psalm 27:14. (98/99)

"Riches of Glory"

Ephesians 3:14-21

The Apostle Paul was a master of the art of prayer. It would be difficult to find anywhere so profoundly deep thoughts in such a short space, as this prayer of his in Ephesians 3:14-21. Every expression is worthy of being pondered and prayed over. This prayer is intercessory, for his love for the Church was of a parental nature. Paul's tender solicitude for others puts to shame our oftentimes indifference. Being apostolic and for the Church as a whole, this intercession embraces us. Without this example we might have wondered how the great Apostle of the Gentiles would express himself in prayer, and for what he would make intercession. This prayer leaves nothing to be desired, and like our Lord's intercessory prayer in John 17, is certain to be answered. As we consider it in detail, let us each say, This is Paul's prayer for me, sure to be heard and answered if I have the faith to believe and receive.

"FOR THIS CAUSE" (V.14)

This phrase connects up with verse one, which in turn is linked with the previous chapter. The intervening verses constitute one of Paul's characteristic parentheses. A part of the hidden mystery was that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs with Israel. The middle wall of partition had been broken down. Because they were now fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God, Paul offers this prayer for them. For this cause "I bow my knees unto the Father, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." We are told that it was customary for the Jews to speak of the angels as God's upper family, and of men as his lower household. Since families take their name from their progenitor, having a common father constitutes a strong bond of unity.

"That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory." We are acquainted with the idea of government grants. They may be for education, housing, road improvements, hospitals, or sometimes given to individuals for distinguished services. Naturally the amount of the grant depends on the richness or otherwise of the country in question. Paul prays that God would give us a grant, according to the riches of his glory.

How rich is God? What are his resources? His is all the silver and all the gold and the cattle on a thousand hills. How easily God could make every one of his children a millionaire. Is Paul going to ask such a grant for us? Would we have been more interested in this prayer had this been included? But money is far too poor and mean a thing for God to include in a royal grant. God's gifts are priceless - things that money cannot buy. Think of even the natural gifts that he has given to man. And remember that in this prayer we are dealing not with natural but with spiritual gifts. How fearfully and wonderfully made is man. Think of his God-given gifts of reason, memory, imagination, will, sight, hearing, and all the senses. How much in money values are these things worth? What would we take, say, in exchange for our sight or any one of the things mentioned above? How paltry is money in comparison with such gifts. As the natural man is so abundantly blessed of God, Paul does not insult the new creatures in Christ Jesus by requesting for them such a thing as money.

"STRENGTHENED WITH MIGHT"

If natural grants are so wonderful, what must spiritual grants be like? With quickened interest let us go on

and see. The first thing that Paul asks is that we be “strengthened with might by his spirit in the inner man.” One of the best of natural blessings is that of good health. It is necessary as a foundation for all the others. One who is always sickly and ailing is not in a position to enjoy the good things which he is otherwise in possession of. Appropriately, therefore, Paul begins here. He asks that we should be strong and robust, thoroughly able to enjoy the pleasures and discharge the duties of the spiritual life.

Nations today, as never before, are piling up armaments, not for aggressive purposes, but to enable them to keep what they already have. It is needful for their security and freedom that they be strong, faced as they are with strong and extremely powerful potential enemies. This is true of us. We have foes far too strong for us who would soon despoil us of any treasures included in a spiritual grant if the power to hold and to keep were not first given.

So valuable is this grant of power that stress is laid upon it. “Strengthened *with might*.” Paul has two prayers recorded for us in this Epistle. The first is in chapter one, and in verses 18 and 19 we read, “that ye might know what is the *exceeding greatness* of his power to usward who believe.” This power came at Pentecost, and has been in the possession of the Church ever since. Before it came, it is on record in John 20:19 that “the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled *for fear of the Jews*.” How different it was afterwards, when we read that the Scribes and Pharisees and rulers *marvelled at their boldness*.

The practical question which we should each put to ourselves in this connection is, Am I possessing and enjoying this item of God’s grant from his riches of glory? Is the inner man so strengthened that I am free from all fear, anxiety, and worry? Peace comes from the conscious possession of adequate resources. Have I abiding within, the peace that passeth all understanding, because of the conscious and constant possession of the mighty power of the spirit of God within? Faith and full surrender are the two simple conditions which will enable us to make contact with a power abundantly adequate for all our need.

“THAT CHRIST MAY DWELL IN YOUR HEARTS BY FAITH”

It must have been rather a shock for Zacchaeus in his elevated position, when Jesus stopped and looked up at him. Can you picture his amazement and rapture when the Lord said, “Make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at thy house.” What an honour to entertain Jesus even for a passing visit, and how proud it made the despised tax gatherer. But this provision of our grant means not a passing call but an abiding presence. Just what is meant, however, by Christ dwelling in our hearts? Paul, of course, was not referring to the heart as a physical organ. In these modern times, science has revealed as never before the wonders of the mind and particularly of the subconscious mind. It tells us that the conscious to the subconscious is as the surface of the sea compared with the vast unfathomable ocean depths.

In this subconscious mind of man, God dwells, governing all the important and vital functions of our bodily organism. These he has placed entirely beyond man’s control. The beating of the heart, the respiration of the lungs, the digestive processes, etc, are all involuntary, for if otherwise, man could not keep himself alive. The same principle is illustrated in the wonderful instincts of the insects, birds, and animals. Instinct is just a little bit of the mind of God given to them. Similarly, in ways beyond our understanding, Christ dwells in us, in our subconscious as well as our conscious mind. Perhaps the radio affords the best illustration of this. What takes place in the broadcasting room is reproduced in our own home just as if it were an extension of the Broadcasting House. Distance is annihilated. In like manner we may think of the Lord by means of the carrier wave of the Holy Spirit, radiating his thoughts of light, life, and love to us. Thus he dwells in our hearts just as two intimate friends dwell in each other by close affinity and friendship.

The Lord can dwell in us only as his mind is reproduced in us, just as it is with the radio program. We must think his thoughts, experience his feelings, share his sentiments, and work towards his objectives. Psychologists tell us that our conscious minds are being continually stimulated by our subconscious, whether in good or bad directions. Similarly, if our subconscious mind is kept on the Lord’s wave length, the result will be that our conscious mind will be continually stimulated by him. We have all experienced how a great joy or a great grief sheds a brightness or casts a shadow over the inner life even when we are not thinking consciously of it. So is it with the indwelling of the Lord. With Christ dwelling in our hearts by means of our faith, there is produced an abiding sense of the sunshine of peace and joy. An inward music and rhythm in the soul is experienced. There is a sabbath feeling of holy rest, even when we are not consciously thinking of him. Thus, we are strengthened with might by his spirit in the inner man, *in order that* Christ might dwell in our hearts by faith.

“THAT YE, BEING ROOTED AND GROUNDED IN LOVE”

There are two metaphors here: that of a tree firmly rooted in the soil, and that of a house solidly built on a sure foundation. It is rather unusual to speak of love as a foundation. Generally faith is regarded as the foundation and love as the superstructure. There are, however, pictures within pictures, and love in its turn can be looked upon as a basis for other blessings. To be rooted and grounded in love means, in the first place, to be estab-

lished in the sure confidence of God's love for us, regardless of all circumstances. As Whittier has expressed it in his poem, "The Eternal Goodness":

"Yet in the maddening maze of things,
And tossed by storm and flood;
To one fixed stake my spirit clings,
I know that God is good."

This is really the essence of the message of Jesus, whose mission was to reveal God as our Father. What a dreadful thing it would be if God were other than Love? Just as it would be if a child should begin to doubt if father or mother were other than kind and loving. Taking our Heavenly Father's love for granted, as the natural child does, has the greatest stabilizing effect on our lives. In every experience, pleasing or painful, we can say, in line with what Jesus has told us, "My Father knoweth what things I have need of." In this way we can be immovably rooted and grounded in his love. This is what we might call the subjective aspect of the matter.

There is, however, also another, an objective aspect which concerns not God's love for us, but our love for him and for others. Love for God is demonstrated, not by sentiment and emotional feeling, but by obedience to his revealed will. Jesus himself gave us this as a test, as recorded in John 14:21: "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." Going by this rule, it is easy to gauge the measure of our love for God. One of Jesus' outstanding commandments is the new commandment which he repeatedly emphasized, that we love one another as he loved us. How simple and sure is this index of our love for Christ.

We cannot, however, possess this love for God and for our brethren in Christ without having a sympathetic love for all. Do good unto all as you have opportunity, is the apostolic injunction. In this prayer Paul requests for us that we be rooted and grounded in love as a general and all-comprehensive principle. It is the farmer's practice to have a regular rotation of crops because of the fact that each particular species takes from the soil the elements suited for its growth and development. Paul tells us here that the only soil that suits our growth, and which never becomes impoverished, is the soil of love.

But Paul uses not only the picture of a tree rooted and grounded in love. He suggests here also the metaphor of some great building which demands a firm foundation. He is going on to speak of a superstructure in his next item of the royal grant, which is such that only love is capable of sustaining its weight. Before passing on to its consideration let us impress upon ourselves the importance of keeping our hearts free from all forms of lovelessness, encouraging only thoughts of love for others embodied in loving words and loving deeds. We remember Dickens' immortal "Christmas Carol" and the wonderful transformation of "skinflint Scrooge." Our aim must be to eliminate all Scrooge-like tendencies, and to encourage the Christmas spirit of peace and good will in our hearts all the year round.

COMPREHENDING THE LOVE OF CHRIST

"That ye may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height."

You will notice that the above quotation is followed by the expression, "and to know the love of Christ that passeth knowledge." There seem to be two ideas here, the breadth, length, depth, and height; *and* to know the love of Christ that passeth knowledge. If there are two ideas, to what does Paul refer when speaking of the breadth, length, depth, and height? Expositors differ in their opinions, but we have a guide to Paul's meaning in his prayer recorded in the first chapter of Ephesians. These two prayers are complementary the one to the other, and the parallel in chapter one to this expression of dimensions in chapter three, seems to be in verse 18: "The eyes of your understanding [*Diaglott*, "heart"] being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints."

Reading this text as "the eyes of your heart," gives us the same idea as in chapter three of *love* being the foundation for this particular knowledge. This point of view is confirmed by the fact that the mystery and magnitude of the High Calling is revealed in Ephesians more clearly than anywhere else in, the New Testament. So true is it the case that it makes this Epistle what we might call the Highlands of the Bible. How profoundly exalted are the ideas in these expressions contained in chapter one, verses 3 to 5, and 9: "Blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ"; "according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world"; "predestinated unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself"; "having made known unto us the mystery of his will, that in the dispensation of the fullness of times, he might gather together in one, all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth."

In the chapter in Volume One of *Studies in the Scriptures* on the "Mystery Hid from Ages," there is a diagram of a pyramid with the top stone detached, showing a perfect pyramid in itself. This illustrates beautifully the idea in this verse, Ephesians 1:10, of "gathering together in one all things in Christ." Everything by and by will be conformed to the perfect lines and angles of the top stone. But the wonder of the *mystery* of the

breadth, length, depth, and height of it is introduced by Paul in the next verse: "In whom (Christ) also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." Chosen in him before the foundation of the world, the Church are to be sharers in the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, as his Bride and Joint-heirs.

With the background of this Epistle in mind, we have little difficulty in interpreting these expressions of breadth, length, depth, and height. As we, too, stand all astonished with wonder, we also feel the need for such expressions. How broad is the Divine Plan of the Ages, the eternal purpose of God? How wide and comprehensive is its scope? It embraces all things in heaven and in earth. Its length, how far-reaching! Centred in the Logos, it reaches from the beginning to the end of time: from before the foundation of the world to the ages to come and beyond. Its depth? From the uttermost, reaching down and taking hold of those who were dead in trespasses and in sins. Its height? To the uttermost. Though by nature the children of wrath, the wonder of the promise is: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me *in my throne*." Verily truth is stranger than fiction, and this call of the Church is in comparison to the most wonderful fairy tale ever written, as the light of the sun at noonday is to that of a candle. (The Herald)

(To be continued)

At the Feet of Jesus

(A Christmas/New Year Meditation)

"When they (the wise men) were come into the house, they saw the young child (Jesus) with Mary, His mother; and fell down and worshipped Him; and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto Him gifts; gold, and frankincense and myrrh." (Matt 2:11)

One of the interesting records in Scripture in connection with the birth of our Lord is that concerning the wise men from the east, who came seeking the newborn Jesus, the King of the Jews, with presents of myrrh, frankincense and gold to lay at His feet. We should be able to gather from this incident some valuable suggestions respecting our obligations to the great Messiah, and the propriety of renewing these and increasing them as we approach the opening of another year.

The wise men, according to tradition three in number, arrived in Jerusalem and began making enquiries about the newly-born Jewish king. The news soon spread, and the holy city was in commotion because, according to the prophets, Messiah, promised for centuries, was due to appear about that time, as we read, "all men were in expectation of Him." This expectancy would naturally be heightened by the coming of the wise men, or magi, from a far country, supposedly Persia, to pay homage to Messiah.

God chooses as messengers of His good tidings not only wise men and women, but reverential ones, people of faith. His choice of these messengers from the east to arouse the people of Judea and Jerusalem was no exception to this rule. Although heathen men, in the sense of not being of the nation with which God had so far dealt and to whom He had so far confined His gracious promises, they were, nevertheless, good men, reverential men, who earnestly sought to enquire as to the coming blessing of peace on earth and good will amongst men.

When they found the Saviour, they were not daunted by the fact that His home surroundings were of the humbler sort and they proceeded to worship Him in three senses of the word:-

- (1) They fell before Him, prostrating themselves, thus physically expressing their reverence.
- (2) They worshipped Him in their hearts and with the tongue gave expression to their rejoicing and adoration.
- (3) They opened their treasure box and presented to Him gifts appropriate to royalty; myrrh representing submission, frankincense, praise and gold, obedience.

With what degree of reverence have we bowed the knee, prostrated ourselves, given outward evidence through presentation of our bodies in full submission to our great King? For we not only know of Him but we have heard, not uncertainly, but with the voice of Him who speaks from heaven, of His great and precious promises for us and for all mankind. Have we offered our myrrh? Have we shown a willingness for service even to the extent of bitter experience, a joy to honour our King to the extent of suffering with Him? Have we worshipped Him in heart, not with an outward form of godliness without the power? In other words, have we offered Him the frankincense of heart adoration, appreciation and gratitude?

Have we laid at His feet our earthly substance, our gold? Have we realised that 'all that we have and all that we are' are offerings far too small to be worthy of acceptance by the great King, Emmanuel? Is this our present attitude? Will it be our attitude through the coming days, even until the end of our present pilgrimage? The apostle's words, "present your bodies living sacrifices, holy and acceptable unto God, your reasonable service", apply not only to the primary consecration of our hearts to the Lord, but are, as the scriptures express it, a covenant of sacrifice, an agreement to die daily to self and to be alive daily more and more in the Lord's

service to glorify Him in our bodies and spirits which are His.

If this has not been our attitude in the past, should it not be our future course? Either way, should we not also seek to continue to grow in knowledge, in love, in service, in worship and in the privilege of laying our little all at the feet of Him who is our gracious heavenly King, whose kingdom is soon to be established, and who has invited us to sit with Him in His throne, to share His glory, to participate as spiritual Israel in the great work of pouring out blessings upon the world of mankind, of every kindred, people, nation and tongue?

When we give our hearts, this includes all that we have and are in the highest and noblest and fullest sense. That which was illustrated in the three gifts of the wise men is all comprehended in the brief statement, "My son, give me thy heart!" Whoever give their hearts to the Lord fully and unreservedly, give their bodies, their worship and reverence and praise, their earthly treasure, time, talents, influence, money - their all - to be used in joyful service for the glory of their King.

The challenge today to those who have heard the Divine invitation but have never yet taken this step is to make a prompt response, glad in the knowledge that God is willing to accept their offering and service, and for the opportunity still open for them to present themselves now under the covering of the merit of the dear Redeemer's "robe of righteousness". This, the apostle declares, is their "reasonable service", by so doing, they may have a share in the gracious hope before all the Lord's people of a transcendent reward of glory, honour and immortality.

The challenge to those who have already accepted the Lord's favour, who have already presented their bodies as living sacrifices, who have already given the Lord their hearts, is to ensure that the sacrifice once placed upon the altar must remain there. The longer it remains there, the more joyful will be the service, the more appreciated every opportunity for self-sacrifice, the more thankful the heart and the more rich the experience of the peace of God which passes all understanding.

I give my heart, I long to love Thee better
Than ever I have done in years before;
That all I do may be a joy, not duty,
Lord Jesus, grant it, may I love Thee more.
(Charlotte Murray)



Volume 82 No.3 MELBOURNE, July/Sept 1999 **“TO HIM THAT OVERCOMETH”**

“To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I overcame and am set down with my Father in His throne.” (Rev 3:21)

Our text tells us that the Kingdom is for overcomers. To enable us to be overcomers and to attain the Kingdom we have wonderful provisions. When God stooped down to redeem us from all iniquity, He emptied heaven of its choicest treasure – He gave his well beloved Son! Now, “He who spared not his Son, his only Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things?” Yes, “*all* things are yours, for ye are Christ’s.” “*All* things written are for your sakes.” “My God shall supply *all* your needs, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” Without doubt, God is for us. We are assured of success, for He who has begun the good work will complete it unto the day of Christ.

The Apostle Paul, writing to Timothy, declared: “I know him whom I have believed, and am *persuaded* that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto his care against that day” (2 Tim. 1: 12). From the time that Paul was apprehended when journeying to Damascus, until the time he was able to write to Timothy that he had finished his course, having fought a good fight and kept the Faith, he had never stopped to look back. He had never entertained failure, but was always an overcomer. How expressive of the Apostle’s mind are these words: “We are not of those that draw back unto perdition, but of those that believe unto the saving of the soul.” No doubt Paul’s success was assured by his full realization of the fact that God was for him, and was more than all that could be against him. Paul’s confidence may be ours in great measure if we patiently follow him, even as he followed Christ.

THE BATTLE IS THE LORD’S

We ourselves are not sufficient to accomplish anything of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God. The Israelites of old made the mistake of thinking that the battle was theirs, and that success lay in themselves. We know their miserable failure. The battle was the Lord’s then, and the battle is the Lord’s now; but we are permitted to be vessels of His mercy in the struggle, and vessels unto His glory. If, by His grace, we finally prove ourselves to be overcomers, we shall gladly ascribe all the praise and glory to Him who called us, supplied all our needs, and *assured* us of success.

We must not imagine that we cannot be overcomers till the end of our course, when all the sum of our Christian experience will be brought to bear, and we would expect to hear the “Well done, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.” That is not all that concerns our overcoming. To be overcomers, we must meet the great problem of every present Christian experience. This thought is expressed by Jesus: “Be thou faithful unto death.” Not *at* death, but *unto* death. Again, “He that endureth unto the end shall be saved,” – not *at* the end but *unto* the end.

We must, then, meet the problems of present experience whether they be trials through affliction, or trials through pleasant things. There is an education going on all the time, and the education brings increased responsibility. Even the pleasant experiences we share are to us opportunities to overcome, by bringing forth *fruit* as the result of Spiritual fellowship. We must be overcomers all the time, for if we are not, then we are to some extent at least being overcome. We must make progress, or we will go back. We may liken ourselves to a man in a small boat pulling against the stream. The stream against which we pull is a three-fold one – the flesh, the world, and the Devil. We must pull against these all the time and make progress, for we cannot stand still. If we rest on our oars for a while, our three-fold stream is bound to carry us back.

FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH

To overcome is to gain the victory in some great contest. It is to conquer. But we are to be “*more* than conquerors” in all our experiences. How can that be? In this way, each time we overcome in some trial, we gain strength to battle with the next experience. We are thus more than conquerors even from the world’s

point of view, for those of the world *lose* strength through gaining a victory. In the world many victories are gained only when the conqueror is at the point of collapse; and it is well known that indulgence in contests of strength or endurance wear out the vitality. On the contrary, *we*, as New Creatures, gain strength in each contest by overcoming; as the Psalmist declares of us:—"They go from strength to strength, every one of them appeareth in Zion before God" (Psa. 84: 7).

The Apostle Paul gives many illustrations of the Christian's course, each of which is intended to teach, from various view-points, how diligent we must be if we would prove overcomers. He gives the illustration of a foot-race, saying, "They that run in a race, run all, but one obtaineth the prize; —so run that ye may obtain." It is the prize-winner who is our copy. We must strive for the prize with all the energy he displayed. A second illustration the Apostle brings before us is the fighting contest. Paul must have witnessed a contest of this kind and had evidently learned a lesson from it, which he desired to pass on to us. It is the value of hitting aright. Paul says he did not "beat the air." No, he had learned to direct his blows. Thus he writes: "I browbeat my body, and make it subservient; lest possibly having proclaimed to others, I myself should become one unapproved" (I. Cor. 9: 27). To be an overcomer, then, it is necessary that we should learn the science of blows, so that we may not "beat the air," nor our brethren, but, like the great Apostle, beat the right one, keep our *own* body under.

A third illustration is that of a wrestler in a hard encounter. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against rulers of darkness, against Spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto yourselves the whole armour of God" (Eph. 6: 12). In a wrestling contest the secret of success is to get the right grip. Once get the proper grip, and the contest is decided. Now the lesson which the Apostle would teach us seems to be this: Get thoroughly covered with the whole armour of righteousness, and our enemies will be unable to get any hold upon us. "Not having mine own righteousness." Ah no! That would give our enemies a splendid grip; but — "the righteousness" which is of God by Faith."

WHAT IS OUR CONTEST FOR?

In these illustrations the Apostle does not tell us what our contest is for, but gives them rather to aid us to overcome. What is our contest for? Why, some may say, the Kingdom. Yes, but what must *precede* the Kingdom? It is righteousness, personal holiness. It is not alone sufficient that we have the Lord's righteousness as our covering or armour. Uncle(that covering we must fight the good fight of faith, perfecting holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. Peter writes: "As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy;" and we have the words of Jesus; "Be ye perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." The Apostle John tells us that "He that doeth righteousness is righteous."

The typical priesthood of Israel furnishes us with a good illustration of this. God separated those priests, that through them he might bless the people. They were his chosen channels for mercy and blessing, doing a mediating work between God and Israel. This was for the object of foreshowing his purpose in calling the Antitypical Priesthood, our Lord Jesus Christ and his Church, that through them he might dispense his mercy or favour to all mankind in the Millennial Age. But in addition to this and in order to accomplish it, God separated his Priesthood, that in them he might exhibit the perfection of his holiness. We therefore find that the High Priest's garments were garments "for glory and beauty," and that on his forehead was the inscription "Holiness to the Lord." We are privileged to be of the antitypical priesthood, and personal holiness is one of the chief things for which we are striving.

WHAT WILL HELP US OVERCOME?

Suppose we now ask, What will help us to be overcomers? While we have seen that God will supply all our needs, we must on our part see that we put that supply into use, and so make it effective. First, then, a real *desire* to be an overcomer would help us. We must hold back nothing from the altar of sacrifice, however dear it may be to the flesh, but must make a full consecration. Then we must have a real *love* for all that is pure and good, and we must have so great an appreciation of the overcoming character, as to make it more to be desired than gold. It will greatly help us, also, not merely to *desire*, but to *will* to be an overcomer. Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the king's meat. That is the secret. We must have the desire and the will behind it, and the purpose in our heart to be overcomers; but more, we must *want* to have a character like our Lord Jesus Christ's; to be made a copy of God's dear Son.

To know ourselves will also help us. To apply the searchlight of Truth and the quickening power of the Spirit within. Then the knowledge of God will help us. To *know* God. Not to know about him but to have that experience with his Son which brings to us a true knowledge of the Father. We require also to know Jesus, to have tasted that the Lord is gracious, whom having not seen we love, that we might by the eye of faith look unto him who is the author and finisher of our faith — to consider him lest we be wearied and faint in our minds.

A knowledge of the Word of God is not only helpful, but necessary. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly" is the Apostle's injunction. Why? Because it will teach and admonish. We need the word for cleansing – "washing by the word." It can also be used as a mirror, which, if rightly arranged, will reflect the Lord's glory. At the same time it will reveal our own imperfection, and by this means we may be transformed into his image, from glory to glory. It was through the knowledge of the Word of God that Jesus proved himself the overcomer in the wilderness. "It is written," was the end of all argument with the Devil; and so it must be with us. When under special trials or tests, we must remember that: *the Word is written for our special help.*

There are some things which we are not called upon to overcome; they are to be avoided altogether – pride, "doting about questions and strifes of words, whence cometh envy, etc.," desire for riches, whereby many "fall into temptation and snare...flee these things." (1 Tim 6:4-6,9-11) The apostles counsel us – "resist the devil, and he will flee from you"; "be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." (James 4:7, Rom 12:20)

FORCES TO BE OVERCOME

Now we come to the things we must overcome in order to share in the Kingdom. The three great forces from which come our trials and tests, are (1) the flesh, that which lies closest to us; (2) the world, that which lies all around us; (3) the Devil, the power of the air. How are we to meet these? Shall we beat about the air, striking at anything or at nothing in particular? No, as already said, the Lord has taught us the science of warfare, so that all may be done orderly and calmly. First, then, we have the flesh, with all its cravings and desires seeking to be realized. How is it to be met? The Apostle gives us the Key – "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh" (Gal. 5: 16). "If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk." By walking, thinking, speaking and acting in the Spirit, we overcome the flesh and its desires.

In addition to the flesh we have to fight against the world, with all its glitter and show, its offers of fame, fortune, and applause. How shall we resist the world? By the Spirit again? Well, yes; but a particular operation of the Spirit, *viz., Faith*. "This is that which overcometh the world, even your faith." Faith grasps the exceeding great and precious promises of God, the unseen, yet eternal, things, enabling us to live above the things of the world. *In* the world but not *of* it, is the way Jesus put the 41-latter. It was through *Faith* that the elders obtained a good report (Heb. II: 2). It was Faith that enabled Abraham to become a sojourner in the land of promise, as in a land which was not his own, dwelling in tents: "For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." And so it is with us. It is only by the power of faith, faith in God and in his Word, that we may hope to overcome the world.

Then we have the third great force for evil, the Devil, that wily foe spoken of as "the prince of darkness," and yet capable of transforming himself into an angel of light; the adversary of God, and the accuser of the brethren. How are we to meet him? With a strong resistance, writes James, and with the complete protection of the armour of Righteousness, writes Paul. If he attacks the head, we have the helmet of salvation. If the body, the vital parts, we have the breastplate of righteousness. If he attacks the feet, we have the sandals of the preparation of the gospel of peace. Then, in order that we might have a shield of Faith and our arm free to use it for our protection, we must be girt about with Truth; and, lastly, the Sword of the Spirit, not an offensive, so much as a defensive, weapon.

There, then, stands the Christian warrior, enabled to withstand, even in the evil day; and having overcome all, to *stand*. In whose righteousness is he to conquer? In his own? No. "Not mine own" as the Apostle said, but "the righteousness of God" (as represented in the Christian armour), which is through the faith of Christ, who of God is made unto us Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption –complete covering. (I Cor. I: 30). "His raiment is my glorious dress."

TAKE COURAGE – CONSIDER HIM

We do not need to let appearances or feelings disquiet or cause us to be discouraged. Daniel did not appear to be the overcomer when King Darius caused him to be shut up in the lions' den. A stone was fixed at the mouth of the den, and sealed with the King's signet and with the signet of his lords, that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel. To all appearance the presidents, governors, and princes, the counsellors and the captains of Darius, overcame Daniel. But what were the facts; the morning declared it. The King spent a sleepless night, and was there early next morning with a lamentable voice enquiring for Daniel's safety.

Then answered the overcomer. "Oh King, live for ever. My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut up the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me, forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, Oh King, have I done no hurt." Then the record shows that the King commanded the persecutors of Daniel to be cast into the lions' den, and the lions had mastery over them in the morning. The powers of evil may appear to have the mastery now, but it is only appearance of victory. "The upright shall have the dominion in the morning."

Above all, let us “Consider him who bore the contradictions of sinners against himself, lest ye be weary and faint in your mind. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.” Remember that all chastening is for our profit, that it may yield in us the peaceable fruit of righteousness, and that we may be partakers of our Father’s holiness. Jesus was the great overcomer, tempted in all points, yet without sin. By looking unto Him, the author and finisher of our faith, considering well how He overcame in all His trying experiences, we will be helped to share in His triumph. Remember His cheerful word of promise to us—“These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16: 33).

These are a few of the many exceeding great and precious promises to the overcomers, for their help and encouragement. Rev. 2: 11,—“Not hurt of the second death.” Why, we would ask, is the Second Death in the Church’s zone? We are even as Israel’s first-born, typically, on that night before leaving Egypt; but who, through the sprinkling of the precious blood, escaped unhurt. Wonderful promises are these; and finally, our text,—“To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my father in his throne.” This is surely the crowning promise—to sit and share with our Redeemer and Lord in His Kingdom, even as He sits and shares with His Father (and *our* Father) in His Kingdom! (JG: 1909)

Moses The Man of God

(Psalm 90: title)

Moses himself is one of the towering figures of the Old Testament and several aspects of his life remind us of or point us to our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. The title “man of God” is truly a noble one, and indicates a person specially chosen by God for a particular service, a person very close to God in heart’s desire and character. The writer of the concluding verses of Deuteronomy testified of him - “there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face”. Elsewhere it is said that God spoke face to face with Moses “as a man speaks unto his friend.” Moses in turn spoke of a greater prophet like unto himself who was to come, even our Lord Jesus Christ.

During his life Moses made mistakes and the scriptures duly record these, but the final testimony to his faithfulness is given by the writer to the Hebrews in that great honour roll which is Chapter 11. The prayer of Moses which Psalm 90 records is thought to have been composed near the end of his life, perhaps not long before the nation was to pass over into the promised land of Canaan, which he personally would view from afar but not enter. So this grand character looked back over all the way in which Jehovah had brought the nation, and no doubt the overruling of his own life since first he was commissioned by God.

MOSES’ PREPARATION

Just as the apostle Paul declared that God had known and called him even before he was born, so we see in the circumstances of Moses’ life how God foreknew and was preparing his servant. His providential deliverance at the time of his birth surely makes us think of the way in which the young child Jesus was also preserved by divine provision, Moses in the court of Egypt with the princess, Jesus in the land of Egypt with his parents.

Again, like the apostle Paul, the early years of Moses’ upbringing were preparing him for quite a different purpose from that envisaged by his instructors in the royal palace. Paul the young zealous pharisee with excellent prospects, humanly speaking, in the Jewish Sanhedrin, was, under God’s hand, to be the great definer and preacher of the faith of the despised Jesus of Nazareth. Moses, the royal protege, was to lead a captive people out of bondage in Egypt to their own land.

Paul’s testimony to Moses in Hebrews 11:24-26 records that “by faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.”.

Moses’ first subsequent reaction as a young man of 40 to the plight of his own people was however a rash one and he was forced to flee. A further 40 years of preparation was in fact necessary before this man, who is elsewhere described as “very meek, above all the men who were upon the face of the earth” would be ready for God’s appointed service. In His wisdom, He saw that Moses needed this period of growth in wisdom and understanding. Great patience was also going to be needed to deal with the nation.

God’s plans for any whom He chooses for His service are never hasty or poorly conceived, and so in God’s due time, He was ready to reveal Himself to Moses at the burning bush and to commission him for service. We read in Exodus 3:2-6 that in Mount Horeb “the angel of the Lord appeared unto him (Moses) in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush, and he looked, and behold, the bush burned with fire and the bush was not con-

sumed.” Moses turned aside and God told him to take off his shoes since he was on holy ground. “Moreover He (Jehovah) said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God.”

God further assured Moses that He was now ready to deliver His people Israel and that Moses himself was to be used by Him for that mission. We recall his subsequent experiences at the hand of Pharaoh when he begged him to let his people go, his problems with the nation’s idolatry after the exodus while he was in the mount Sinai being instructed by God, difficulties with the constant murmurings and faithlessness of the people, until finally after 40 long years of wilderness wanderings, during which all the adults who came out of Egypt except Joshua and Caleb died, they came in sight of the promised land.

THE VIEW FROM PISGAH

Into this land, Moses was not to be permitted to enter, but God’s task for him had been faithfully completed, and Joshua, one of the two faithful spies of so many years before, was God’s appointee to lead the people into Canaan. Nevertheless, God graciously granted Moses a glimpse of that land and the final acts in the story of Moses, the man of God, are given us in Deut 34:5,6,10-12. “So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab according to the word of the Lord. And He buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-Peor, but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day. And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face. In all the signs and the wonders, which the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land, and in all that mighty hand, and in all the great terror which Moses showed in the sight of all Israel”.

Meanwhile, the time drew near for Moses to leave the camp of Israel and to go alone into mount Nebo and from the height of Pisgah to view the promised land, to die there and sleep in an unmarked grave, awaiting that better resurrection which the faithful of old looked forward to. (Heb 11:35) This must have been an emotional time for this faithful servant of God, now 120 years of age, and his thoughts would no doubt go back over the tempestuous years of his leadership of an often stubborn and wayward people on the one hand, and the wonderful overall provision and protection of Jehovah on the other.

So whether at that time or a little earlier, he was lead to meditate upon the permanence and unchangeableness of God and the relative shortness and fragility of human life. The words of his prayer come down to us in Psalm 90 and have particular application in the first place to natural Israel as Moses interceded for their restoration and for the return of the divine blessings. But they also reach into the hearts of all God’s people, for we have come to know and love and trust that one of whom Moses prophesied, saying, “a prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me, him shall you hear in all things whatsoever he shall say to you.” So much of Israel’s experiences, their deliverance from Egypt, the tabernacle provisions, the Passover commemoration, indeed speak so clearly to us of our Master, the Lord Jesus Christ.

THE PSALM OF MOSES

The early verses of this prayer psalm of Moses dwell on the everlasting nature of God, as creator and sustainer of all things. To the nation of Israel He had been in a real sense their dwelling place, their habitation, their spiritual home. “You only have I known of all the families of the earth” was Jehovah’s declaration through the prophet Amos. (3:2) This thought of God’s dwelling place comes over into the gospel age message also, for the Lord’s people of this time are also to dwell in Him and in His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. He in turn, we learn, will dwell with us, as was manifest to natural Israel in the wilderness in the cloud and the fire and later in the Shekinah glory in the tabernacle.

This mutual abiding is beautifully brought out by the apostle John, quoting our Lord’s own words in the context of the vine and branches analogy - “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can you, except you abide in me. (John 15:4) This abiding is surely a foretaste of our ultimate dwelling place with Him, in that place He has gone to prepare for us - our eternal habitation. “We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens”. (2 Cor 5:1) There we shall see and commune with our dear Lord, face to face.

Verse 1 of the psalm may well include the thought of a refuge as well as a dwelling place. The same word as is translated “dwelling place” in this verse is translated “habitation” in the next psalm (verse 9) “Because thou hast made the Lord, who is my refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation, there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come near thy dwelling, for He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.” (Psa 91:9-11) The first two verses of the same psalm add further - “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in Him will I trust.”

There is surely no greater security for any child of God, for one who trusts Him in any age, than to abide in His secret place, in the habitation of God. The word “abide” is not much used nowadays but it well encompasses the idea of constant and enduring residence. Though many in Israel failed to recognise or acknowledge

it, Jehovah had watched over His natural people, sometimes to discipline or punish, often to protect. So in this age, our Father may in love need to chasten or discipline us, yet He is ever faithful; what He has promised He will fulfil in us. "He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." (Heb 13:5)

REDEEMING THE TIME

In contrast to the unchangeableness of God, to whom a thousand years is just like yesterday when it is past, Moses goes on to point out the brevity and uncertainty of human life, hence his prayer - "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." (Verse 12) This does not entail filling every moment with great activity but the wise use of time. There is need for times of rest, of reflection, of recuperation - it is indeed only with wise use of such means that we will be ready for active service for our Heavenly Father and for His people. As for Moses, preparation for service is so important, we must first take in before we can give out.

For many, the daily round and common task, particularly in these busy times, make heavy demands on time and strength but our Heavenly Father knows all about us each one and He can answer the briefest prayer, the whispered plea of the weary or troubled soul. Still today, His grace is sufficient. But without neglecting rightful duties, it remains important for us to heed Paul's words - "See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil." (Eph 5:15,16) The word "redeem" here is defined as "buying up for oneself", that is, "buying up the opportunity" for some act or word for which the time is just right. This means "making the most of every opportunity, turning each to the best advantage, since none can be recalled once missed." (Vine)

So in Psalm 90, Moses reflects on the mercy and steadfastness of God, as he nears the end of the way, and his words of praise and meditation and exhortation come down to us today. Moses looked out upon the prospect of the promised land, which in this life he would not enter. By the signs around us in the world, national, political and religious, we view by faith and spiritual sight the prospect not so far ahead, we believe, of the glorious kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ - "millennial Canaan, our home beyond the tide". The psalm concludes - "O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days... Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it."

Let us daily remember God's mercies past and with fresh heart and renewed strength press on in service to our dear Lord, in the home, in the workplace, in the congregation.. "Let us not be weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all, especially unto them of the household of faith." (Gal 6:9,10) (98/99)

The Burial of Moses

By Nebo's lonely mountain, on this side Jordan's wave,
In a vale in the land of Moab, there lies a lonely grave;
And no man knows that sepulchre, and no man saw it e'er,
For the Angels of God upturned the sod, and laid the dead man there.

That was the grandest funeral that ever passed on earth;
But no man heard the trampling, or saw the train go forth
Noiselessly as the daylight comes when the night is done,
And the crimson streak on ocean's cheek grows into the great sun

Noiselessly as the spring-time her crown of verdure weaves,
And all the trees on all the hills open their thousand leaves;
So, without sound of music, or voice of them that wept,
Silently down from the mountain's crown the great procession swept.

Perchance the bald old eagle, on grey Beth-peons height,
Out of his rocky eyrie looked on the wondrous sight;
Perchance the lion stalking still shuns that hallowed spot:
For beast and bird have seen and heard that which man knoweth not.

This was the bravest warrior that ever buckled sword;

This, the most gifted poet that ever breathed a word;
For never earth's philosopher traced with his golden pen,
On the deathless page, truths half so sage as he wrote down for men.

And had he not high honour? the hill-side for his pall,
To lie in state, while angels wait with stars for tapers tall,
And the dark rock-pines, like tossing plumes, over his bier to wave,
And God's own hand, in that lonely land, to lay him in the grave!

In that strange grave without a name, whence his uncoffined clay
Shall break again—most wondrous thought—before the Judgment day,
And stand, with glory wrapped around, on the hills he never trod,
And speak of the strife that won our life with the majestic Son of God.

Oh, lonely tomb in Moab's land! oh, dark Beth-peor hill!
Speak to these curious hearts of ours, and teach them to be still.
God hath His mysteries of grace, ways that we cannot tell;
He hides them deep, like the hidden sleep of him He loved so well.

(Cecil Frances Alexander)

Guided by God's Eye

"I will guide thee with Mine eye"—Psa. 32:8

The eye is one of the most important organs of the body with which to give expression to the feelings. Either anger or pleasure are usually expressed by this means. One thought which we may take from the text is that one may be so desirous of doing the Divine will that he will be continually on the alert to please, just as a dutiful child, being on the alert to do the will of the parent, would look at the parent's eye, not waiting for the rod. So all of God's dear children of the Church should be looking unto Jesus for the expression of the Father's will concerning them. They look to Jesus as the Author of their faith and the one who shall be the Finisher of it. They look to Him as the great Counsellor and Guide of life. As we sometimes sing:

"Oh, Let no earth-born cloud arise
To hide Thee from Thy servants' eyes!"

Another thought is that as the eye is the symbol of wisdom, so God guides all things in wisdom. He sees to it that His children receive the necessary counsel, the necessary aid. Since He is the All-Wise One, nothing can escape His attention. Still another thought is that as we recognise the Divine purpose, the Divine will, the Divine outworking of that will, we see that in the present time God is not trying to save the world, but only "the called," "the elect," who are obedient in sacrifice. All who are of the First-born should seek to follow the same course as God, to be co-workers with Him. They should have no will of their own but do the Father's will.

One of the most important lessons for the spiritual Israelite to learn is to look to the Lord for leading in all of life's affairs — never to attempt any undertaking, either temporal or spiritual, without seeking to note the will of the *Toni* concerning it. We *are* marchin^g toward the antitypical Canaan and know that other experiences are due us and must be undergone ere we can inherit the promises. The lesson for us is prompt and thorough obedience to the Lord's leadings without murmurings — with joyfulness; and this can be expected only on the part of those who have learned the lessons previously given them, and above all, the lesson of faith — confidence in the Lord's power and goodness and faithfulness. (R.4852)

HE IS WITH THEE

He is with thee! — in thy dwelling,
Shielding thee from fear of ill;

All thy burdens kindly bearing,
For thy dear ones gently caring,

Guarding, keeping, blessing still
He is with thee! — in thy service

He is with thee certainly,
Filling with the Spirit's power,

Giving in the needing hour
His own messages by thee.

He is with thee! —
with thee always

All thy nights and all thy days;
Never failing, never frowning,

With His living kindness crowning,
Turning all thy life to praise.

(F.R.H.)

The Ministry of Comfort

“The Lord hath anointed me... to comfort all that mourn, to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified.” (Isa 61:1-3)

Our text is surely good tidings in a very broad and a very deep sense. Its message is one of “comfort,” not only to Zion, the consecrated church, but to *all who mourn*; and as mentally we cast our eyes over the world we are deeply impressed with the thought that the vast majority of mankind are in mourning: as the Apostle expresses it, “The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together.” There are undoubtedly a few who are full, satisfied, and who mourn for nothing, and who, therefore, under these conditions, are excluded from any share in this promised blessing; but they are exceptions to the rule. Some of them are wealthy in this world's goods, and feel that they have need of nothing, and are kept busy with their efforts to enjoy themselves. There are others of the same full class who, though not wealthy, have a very self-satisfied feeling as respects their moral status: they do not realize themselves as sinners; they do not realize their daily imperfections nor their need of a Saviour; and are not mourning for anything, and not therefore in the way to be comforted with any of the comforting assurances and promises and provision which the Lord has made for those who mourn.

So far as the world is concerned, our Lord's ministry of comfort to them is chiefly a future work. We rejoice, however, that the time is sure to come when all that mourn, all the “groaning creation,” shall be brought under the blessed influences and provisions of the Millennial kingdom, and shall there come to know the consolations which God has provided in Christ:—the balm for every trouble, every wound; the cure for every blight, every sin and every imperfection; and their privilege of profiting by these to the fullest measure by giving themselves unreservedly into the care of the Good Physician. But the poor world, blinded and deceived by the god of this world as respects the character and plan of Jehovah, can neither see, hear, nor appreciate now the wonderful provisions made for them, and hence they cannot receive the blessing, the consolation the “comfort” now, but must wait for it until the establishment of the Lord's kingdom, the binding of Satan, and the opening of their understanding with the eye-salve of the truth.

But as respects Zion, the consecrated church, this comfort is now her privilege, and all children of Zion need to be comforted. First of all, they need the comforting knowledge that their sins are forgiven, and that they are

no longer strangers and aliens and foreigners, but children of God, joint-heirs with Jesus Christ their Lord, if so be that they suffer with Him. They need to be comforted, too, with the assurances of the Lord's Word that our God is very sympathetic, "very pitiful," and that if anyone be overtaken in a fault he may be restored, and "not be utterly cast down." If the children of Zion had no such consolations as these they surely would be utterly discouraged, disheartened, and faint by the way; hence the Lord has provided these comforting assurances, pointing out to them that having begun a good work in them he is desirous of completing it, if they will permit him to do so, and that to this end they must abide in Christ by faith, coupled with obedience to the extent of their ability. What Christian is there who has not shared these consolations, these comforts, and what Christian has not needed them, and realized that without them he would long since have been undone?

MEANS OF PRESENT COMFORT

The Scriptures point out to us that our comfort comes through fellowship with the heavenly Father and with our Lord Jesus: we are comforted, not by believing that they are ignorant of our weaknesses and shortcomings, nor that they have a low standard of righteousness and a sinful basis of fellowship, but quite to the contrary of all this, they comfort us with the assurance that although our every imperfection is known to the Lord He is yet very sympathetic, very merciful; and that having provided, in the great sacrifice at Calvary, a full propitiation (satisfaction) for all sins, the Lord is very pleased to apply, on behalf of each of His adopted children, in full measure, the riches of grace necessary to the covering and offsetting of every unintentional, unapproved error and failure. What comfort is here! What consolation! What privileges of fellowship with the Father and with the Son!

This comfort, the Scriptures assure us, comes to us through the Holy Spirit—the channel, and, hence indeed, called the Comforter. (John 14:26) Those who have the Holy Spirit may have the comfort; those who do not have the Holy Spirit may not have this comfort, this consolation. It is only as we receive of the Spirit of the Lord, the mind of the Lord, His disposition, that we are able to understand and appreciate the lengths and breadths, the heights and depths of His love and compassion and provision for us, and to be comforted thereby.

Nevertheless, this comfort of the Holy Spirit (the channel of divine favor), reaches us through the Scriptures, for the Scriptures are the medium, or sub-channel through which the knowledge of God's grace and the comfort of all knowledge reach us; in the Apostle's language, "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and *comfort of the Scriptures* might have hope."—Rom. 15:4.

Yet while this comfort is of the Father, through the Son, by the Holy Spirit, communicated through the Scriptures, we are informed that in great measure it is communicated by the members of the body of Christ one to another, as the Apostle, for instance, after relating certain features of the divine plan respecting the deliverance of the church, says, "Wherefore, *comfort one another* with these words." (1 Thess. 4:18) Similarly, the Apostle declares that he sent Timothy to the church at Ephesus, and again to the church at Colosse, that *he might comfort* their hearts. This, of course, signifies that he was to draw their attention to the exceeding great and precious promises of the Lord's *Word*, and that thus they might drink in the Holy Spirit of all the promises, and that thus they might be comforted, not only with respect to the things promised, but with respect to the loving compassion and sympathy of Him who promises them.

Writing to the Thessalonians, the Apostle says that he sent Timothy—"to establish you and to *comfort you* concerning your faith, that no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto: for verily, when we were with you we told you we should suffer tribulation, even as it came to pass and ye know. For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter had tempted you." (1 Thess. 3:2-5) Here again it is evident that the comforting signifies and implies establishment in the faith once delivered to the saints, that all the terms and conditions of our covenant should be clearly held in mind, and that the promises of reward at the end of the journey might serve to comfort, strengthen and establish the children of Zion in their endurance of the tribulations as good soldiers. This comfort, again, was of the Lord, through the Holy Spirit, through the agency of Paul and Timothy. Again, the same Apostle, speaking in the same strain, says: "Wherefore, *comfort yourselves* together and edify one another, even as also ye do."—1 Thess. 5:11.

AMBASSADORS OF COMFORT

All of the Lord's people need to remember that in proportion as they are ambassadors of the Lord, and His representatives, it will be their privilege not only by and by in the kingdom to "comfort all that mourn," and to be the trees of righteousness, whose leaves will be for the healing of the nations (Rev. 22:2), but they should remember that in the present life they have a ministry of comfort to perform also, toward all who mourn *in Zion*—toward all of the Lord's people who are in any tribulation, physical or mental disquiet, disease; and they

should remember, too that just in proportion as they are filled with this spirit now, it is their privilege to bind up the broken-hearted, and comfort the mourning ones.

None can have this spirit of helpfulness, this disposition to comfort and strengthen, and to edify, and to upbuild the household of faith, except they have in considerable measure the spirit of the truth, the spirit of the Lord, the spirit of love. In proportion as they seek to cultivate this privilege of mutual helpfulness, in comforting and upbuilding and strengthening, in that same proportion they will find the spirit of love developing and abounding in their own hearts, and that their likeness to the Lord Jesus, the Head of the Body, is becoming more pronounced from day to day and from year to year.

Finally, in view of what we have seen respecting the Lord's goodness toward His people, and the methods by which He comforts them through the Holy Spirit, the Scriptures and the brethren, let us note one of the Apostle's expressions respecting the great comfort and consolations which God has provided for His consecrated, faithful people, saying:—

“Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, the God of all comfort, who *comforteth us* in all our tribulation, that we may be *able to comfort* them which are in any trouble, by *the comfort* wherewith we ourselves are *comforted of God*.”—2 Cor. 1:3, 4.

So then, all of our lessons and experiences in life in connection with trials and difficulties and tribulations, if we are rightly exercised by them, should bring us larger experiences in the Lord's comfort, through the gracious promises of His Word and the spirit of the same; and should make us the more capable and efficient agents and representatives of the Lord, His Word and His spirit, in communicating comfort to others about us in their trials and difficulties. (R.2664)

Brotherly Counsel

If we look into the record given us in the Acts of the Church of the first days, we find several outstanding characteristics that marked their collective life, as the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. First, we are told that they waited constantly upon the teaching of the Apostles. There was no printed Word of God then, as in the Lord's Providence there is now. In our case this would mean that our Church fellowship would function round the open Bible, where the Apostle's teaching, and that of the prophets of old are recorded for our instruction. More important still, it is here “the Saviour's welcome voice, sheds Heavenly peace around and life and everlasting joys attend the blissful sound.” Let us, like these early Christians, cherish the spirit of fellowship, not regarding ourselves as isolated units, but as members of ONE BODY of which the LIVING HEAD IS CHRIST. Let us regard no sacrifice or inconvenience too great to surmount in order to meet regularly together and exhort one another, and enthuse one another in the Christian way. The early Church persevered in fellowship, partaking often of this privilege in each other's homes, and over the hospitality of a simple meal.

The first characteristic of our communion together should be reverence. Reverence is the pervading tone of Heaven; it predominates over every other characteristic save Love alone. There is nothing so real as true Piety, or Godly fear. It introduces us into that which is within the veil. A sense of God's Reality, of His holiness, of His right over us, of His concern for us, of His glorious designs for us and for all. This is the foundation of all Piety and therefore of all Peace. In this spirit we view one another; not as in the flesh, but as in the Presence of God, endeavouring to preserve the unit of the Spirit in the bond of Peace, forbearing one another in Love, recognising in each other those who have been reconciled in Christ and called and chosen by God, as His peculiar people, a people for a purpose. How careful this would make us, so that in nothing would we offend one another, but rather sacrifice self in order to serve one another in Love, viewing our service for one another as rendered unto Him.

A Christian Church ought to be an exhibition of heaven upon earth — a manifestation of Christ below — a witness for God in the midst of the world, so that the world looking at the Church may be able to say: “This is a specimen of what that which is called the Gospel can do; this is a model of what the Christian teaching can achieve.” And so all with whom we come into contact in our intercourse in life will say: “That man does not say much about his Christian beliefs when transacting his business, but there prevails in all that he does an integrity, a singleness of eye, a simplicity of purpose, a faithfulness to his engagements, and a superiority to trial, that proves he must have some fountain of peace and comfort and joy that we have not; we will go and hear what he hears, learn the lessons he has learned, and taste, if it be possible, the happiness which we see in his character.” Such a one becomes to mankind either the salt that silently keeps a society from corruption, or the light shining on the hilltop that illuminates the earth with a ray of the glory of heaven. (F.G.M.)

THE TRIAL OF YOUR FAITH.

Though we know there must be trials, and there will be tears below,
Yet we know His glorious purpose, and His promises we know!
Only ask—“What saith the Master?” and believe His word alone,
That “from glory unto glory” He shall lead, shall change His own.
Ever more and more bestowing,
Love and joy in riper glowing,
Faith increasing, graces growing
Such His promises to you!
He is faithful, He is true!
Each Amen becomes an anthem, for we know he will fulfil,
All the purpose of His goodness, all the splendour of His will,
Only trust the living Saviour, only trust Him all the way,
And your springtime path shall brighten to the perfect summer day.
— F.R. Haveergal.

All His Paths

All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep His covenant and His testimonies. -Ps. 25:10.

“All the paths.” It is no small effort of faith to say so, when blessings are blown upon and schemes crossed, and fellow-pilgrims (it may be beloved helpmeets in our spiritual joys), are mysteriously removed, to say, “All-all is mercy. All-all is well!”

But they are “the paths of the Lord”—His choosing; and, be assured, He will “lead His people by the right way.” It may not be the way of their own selecting. It may be the very last way they would have chosen. But when He leadeth His sheep, “He goeth before them.” The Shepherd stakes off our pasture-ground. He guides the footsteps of His flock. He will lead them by no rougher way than He sees needful. Does a father give his child his own way? If he did it would be his ruin. Will God surrender us to our own truant wills, which are often bent on nothing so much as wandering farthest from Him? He knows us better. He loves us better.

Believer, it is the loftiest triumph and prerogative of faith to have no way—no path of thine own—but with childlike simplicity and reliance to say, “Teach me Thy paths.” “Undertake Thou for me!” Lead me howsoever and wheresoever Thou pleasest. Let it be through the darkest, loneliest, thorniest way—only let it bring me nearer Thyself.

“Oh, tell me, Thou life and delight of my soul, Where the flock of Thy pasture are feeding; I seek Thy protection, I need Thy control; I would go where my Shepherd is leading.

Oh, tell me the place where Thy flock are at rest, Where the noontide will find them reposing!

The tempest now rages, my soul is distress, And the pathway of peace I am losing?”

Would that we could keep our eye not so much on the path as on the bright wicket-gate, which terminates it. When standing at that luminous portal we shall trace, with adoring wonder, the way in which our God has led us, discerning the “need-be” of every teardrop— and to the question, “Is it well?” to which often on earth we gave an evasive answer, be ready with an unhesitating, “It is well!” What a light will then be flashed on these three oft mysterious words, “God is love!” Then, at least, shall we be able to add the joyful comment, “We have known and believed the love which God hath for us.”

Meanwhile, if you are treading a path of sorrow, consider, as an encouragement, that your Lord and Master trod the same before you. Behold, as He toiled on His blood-stained journey, how submission to the Divine will formed the secret of His support. “Even so, Father!” “Not my will, but Thine be done!” The true David was strengthened with what sustained His typical ancestor in a dark and trying hour, “O Lord, Thou art my God!” Believer, if it be your God in covenant who is leading you, what more can you require? “His ways are verity and judgment.” He will guide you, while you live, by His counsel, and afterward receive you into glory. My God! if such be the design of Thy dealings and discipline,

“I will both lay me down in peace and sleep, For thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety.”

(J.R. MacDuff, D.D.)

THE WEAVER

My life is but a weaving

Between my Lord and me;
I cannot choose the colours
He worketh steadily
 Oft-times He weaveth sorrow
 And I in foolish pride,
 Forget He sees the upper
 And I, the underside.
Not till the loom is silent
And the shuttles cease to fly,
Shall God unroll the canvas
And explain the reason why.
 The dark threads are as needful
 In the weaver's skillful hand,
 As the threads of gold and silver
 In the pattern He has planned.

The Fruit of the Spirit

("The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness faith, meekness, temperance." - Gal. 5:22)

THREE GROUPS OF THREE

Commentators, generally, have suggested that the nine elements of fruit mentioned in Paul's inspired analysis may be taken in three groups of three, corresponding to three sides of the much diversified Christian experience. The first three, Love, Joy and Peace find their sphere of operation in the inner life of fellowship with God, which is known only to God and to the Christian's own consciousness. Long-suffering, Gentleness and Goodness describe the Christian's character in relationship with others. Faithfulness, Meekness and Self-control manifest themselves in the personal character, which interprets itself in words and deeds, even in face and manner. In those who possess it and are themselves possessed of it, the Spirit of Christ bears fruit in every region of human life.

The essence, then, of the life and character of one producing the fruit of the Spirit is Love, Joy and Peace. These cannot be called *duties*; they should not be thought of as *virtues*, even; they are simply the result of communion or fellowship with God – the *fruit* of the Spirit. The *love* of God has been shed abroad in the Christian's heart by the Holy Spirit (Rom 5:5) The exalted Head of the Church was anointed with the oil of *gladness* and this anointing flows down upon the members of the Body as righteousness, peace and joy, in the Holy Spirit. (Rom 14:17) These three elements of the fruit are in the private, inner life which God alone beholds. Nevertheless when *Love* and *Joy* and *Peace* are within, they cannot but find outward expression, and make their possessors *loving, joyful* and *peaceful*; *loving* towards God, the brethren and all mankind; *joyful* with a calm but contagious and beneficent happiness; *peaceful*, with a sense of rest which cannot but diffuse itself in the direction of those with whom they come in touch.

Again, in their relationships with the brethren and all mankind, fruit-bearing Christians are seen to be Long-suffering, Gentle and Good. "Long-suffering", it has been observed, "is the capacity to present the same calm surface today, tomorrow, and the day after tomorrow, in spite of anything and everything." It is long temper, as contrasted with short temper; the ability to "bear all things". (1 Cor 13:7) "Gentleness" is to touch others lightly, and then only with a healing touch; to manifest a disposition at all times to be tender in the treatment of others – even in just reproofs. "Goodness" is to be good *to others*; to pronounce benediction upon them, to be benevolent to them, to see that they benefit from their association with us.

Finally, the true Christian character, as it develops, results in a practical, alert, circumspect outward life. Bright with a secret happiness, long-suffering with an infinite forbearance, the fruit of the Spirit will be seen in Faithfulness, Meekness and Self-control. The truly spiritual man or woman will be *faithful* in every duty, loyal to every promise. They will be dependable in business. Their friends will receive faithful and careful counsel. Their employer will get service out of them in which his just interests will be as their own. Their employees will find them watchfully equitable, considerate, courteous. They will take great care to owe no one anything. The local ecclesia will be well and truly served by them, be it ever so large, or small, or unresponsive. They will be known to be those who will take trouble for others, and who are glad to be their servants indeed for Christ's sake. They will be *meek*, avoiding any manner or habit of assertion among the brethren in matters of opinion or work. And with and over it all, they will be *self-controlled*. They will, for the glory of

the Master, *their* Master, and so that they may be truly serviceable in their ministry to others, watch and pray over their own acts and habits; over bed, and board and literature, and companionships, and recreation, and imagination, and tongue – over thought, word, and deed.

“THIS ONE THING I DO”

Will they progress thus, to perfection? No, not in this life! Indeed, as though to caution against such a thought the Apostle immediately presents the case of a brother overtaken in a fault, urging all, as they seek to restore the erring one, to do so in the spirit of meekness, lest they also should be tempted. (Gal 6:1) Perfection in this life is not present to the Apostle’s mind, here or elsewhere, for them or himself. In Phil 3:13, he emphatically declares: “I count not myself to have apprehended.” But he did not stop with that confession. His further words show that he had an objective which reached beyond the present life. “This one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” (Phil 3:13,14)

Let us then follow Paul as he followed Christ. As the Apostle Peter declares: “If ye do these things ye shall never fall.” “The contingency is not in the doing of these things *perfectly* and regardless of the righteousness of Christ to cover our transgressions and compensate for our *daily* shortcomings; but if, added to our faith in the imputed righteousness of Christ, we have cultivated all these graces to the extent of our ability, we shall not fail. When we have done all that we can do, we are still unprofitable servants, not daring to trust in our own righteousness but in the ample robe which is ours by faith in Christ, while, with constant “diligence”, we work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, knowing that the righteousness of Christ is only applied to such as desire to forsake sin and pursue that ‘holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.’”



Volume 82 No.2 MELBOURNE, APRIL/JUNE 1999 THE KING'S HIGHWAY

Under the reign of sin and death there is now a "broad road" in which, under the tendency of the world, the flesh, and the devil, almost all mankind are walking in a greater or less degree of selfishness and gratification of the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. Its grade is downward and away from God. Its end is death, in just harmony with the original sentence of sin in Eden. On it none can retrace his steps so as to return to God. He may stop for a time, or even attempt to return, but the grade is too steep, and the influence and pressure of the crowd irresistible; and soon he is on the downward course again – moving slowly or swiftly. But there is a way of life into which the pilgrim may turn. Of it our Lord said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life". There is, consequently only one way of return, through acceptance of Christ and obedience testifying thereto. Its gate is Faith, and at present it is a very difficult road to travel, even after it is found.

NARROW IS THE WAY

This gate and way have been open for over nineteen centuries (John 14:6). Comparatively few of the race have even seen or known of this path, for we are authoritatively informed that "few there be that find it". And the reason for this is given – "the god of this world (Satan) hath blinded the minds of them that believe not lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ should shine unto them" – 2 Cor. 4:4. Here is a marvellous thing. Why does the God of Love make the way of life so obscure that only a small portion of the race have any opportunity of even knowing it? – and so narrow and rugged that when found many are so discouraged with the prospect that they make but little effort to walk therein, and gradually drift back again into the general current of the broad road?

From the ordinary standpoint – the world's standpoint of human speculation – there is no reasonable answer to this question. But from the standpoint of the Divine Plan of the Ages, as revealed in the Scriptures, there is a very satisfactory answer.

The answer is that God's purpose of mercy respecting the world (which entered the "broad road" through Adam's transgression and sentence) is to deal with it as a whole; to let all have an experience with the wages of sin (death), and then, through Christ, to end the reign of sin and death under Satan and inaugurate a reign of Righteousness and Life under Christ, the Kingdom of God. Thus seen, the "narrow way" now open (which only a few see, and which but a "little flock" walk in faithfully when they do find it) is not meant to be the way of life for the race in general. It is provided only for a special class called variously in Scripture – "The Church of Christ", "The Bride", "the Temple of the Living God", "the Elect", "the Body of Christ", the "little flock" to which it is the Father's good pleasure to give the Kingdom. The gate of Faith is made obscure to ensure that those who enter shall be faithful. The way is rugged and difficult to ensure that all who continue in that way faithful to the end shall be "overcomers", shall be of strong character.

The special service for which these are being selected demands that they shall be tried as gold is purified in the furnace of discipline, that they may be found vessels unto honour and meet for the Master's use, when His time shall come for them with their Lord and Redeemer as "the seed of Abraham" to extend the blessing of God to all the families of the earth (dead as well as the living) – Gal. 3:16. 29 – and when they, with Him, shall be the kings and priests unto God, who shall reign on the earth during the Millennial Age to bind Satan's power (Rev. 5:10, 20:1-3) and to open the eyes of those whom he has so long blinded and deceived. By these God will prepare a favourable way for all. – Isa. 62:10.

A HIGHWAY SHALL BE THERE

When our Redeemer shall have taken to Himself His great power and established His Kingdom – after the last member of "the Church, which is His body", shall have been perfected and glorified with the Head upon

the throne (Rev. 11:17; 3-21) –after the great time of trouble such as was not since there was a nation shall have swept away present institutions, and humbled the pride of man in the dust, and brought the world into a teachable attitude, then the broad road to death will be abolished. Instead, the way to death (second death), thereafter will be hedged about and made narrow, and difficult, by reason of the speedy and just retribution which then will promptly follow every attempted violation of Immanuel’s laws. The narrow way to immortal life will also have terminated, having served its purpose by selecting the “little flock”.

Then Satan will be bound (restrained from deceiving mankind) and “the world” will be forced to respect the laws and Kingdom of God. The “flesh”, the weaknesses men labour under as the result of the fall, will alone stand between man and perfect happiness – and full arrangements are provided by the Mediator-King for assisting the fallen flesh back to perfection. The way of life will then be a Highway, cleared of every impediment –the Millennial Kingdom will at first make the road to death difficult (to ensure that only the wilful shall go by it into the second death), and the same Kingdom arrangements will make the way to life easy of access, and its name, correspondingly, will no longer be the Narrow Way, but the King’s Highway of Holiness, leading to life everlasting, and open to all who desire righteousness – John 10:16.

As the Prince of Darkness (Satan) rules now over the Broad Road, and its blinded millions whom he leads downward to death, so there the Prince of Light will rule over mankind, for whom He will open up the Highway of Holiness, upon which millions will go upward to life eternal. It is as a means to this end that He is selecting His Church, is causing the great trouble to come upon the world, and will shortly bind Satan for the thousand years of reign. More than this, He will open the blinded eyes that all may see the light of the knowledge of the goodness of God as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ our Lord – 2 Cor. 4:6. Not only will men learn unquestionably that Christ died for our sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God; but more, they will see and feel the restitution work begun in themselves and in their fellows. – Acts 3:19-21; Ezek. 16:48-50, 53-55, 60-63.

Sickness and pain and all diseases will yield to the power of the great Physician upon the throne; and He will not permit death to befall any except those who shall intelligently and wilfully refuse His offers of full restitution by rejecting the terms of obedience required under the New Covenant. Even these shall be liberally dealt with, for our Lord willeth not the death of him that dieth, but would rather that all should turn unto Him and live. Accordingly, while all will be forced to “bow” in at least outward recognition of that kingdom, yet their wills must remain their own, and their progress in restitution beyond the common advantages will depend upon their willingness or unwillingness to come into accord with that Kingdom and its righteous arrangements. Concerning these, we are expressly told by the Prophet that, if still sinners when a hundred years old, they will be cut off (in the second death, destruction from which there is to be no ransom, no resurrection).

THE LAW OF THE LORD

But although the condition of things in that age will differ greatly from present conditions, yet the law of God, like Himself, changes not; it is merely the conditions that will have changed. God’s law when exercised by our Lord Jesus and His Church, and tempered with mercy will be the same law in every particular that it always has been. It cannot change, for the same reasons, and to change it in any degree would be to make it imperfect. That law is Love. Full obedience to it means perfect love – controlling every thought, word and deed; partial obedience means a measure of love.

At the beginning of that new era the world in general will be loveless as at present, controlled instead by selfishness; for the heart of the natural (fallen) man is enmity against this law of God, which represents God’s character. When present-day selfishness shall have blossomed and gone to seed in the great time of trouble now impending, it will become apparent to all that, however selfish their hearts may be, their deeds must thereafter conform more closely to the principle of love-doing to others as they would have others do to them. It will thus be a practical lesson that the New King will introduce by the Law of His Kingdom. Then loving deeds and words will be made compulsory upon all, though their hearts (wills) may still be tainted with selfishness; for God does not now, and never will, force the wills of His creatures.

But perfect obedience in letter and spirit will not be realised by the world then on trial until the close of the Messianic age, for perfection of being is necessary to a perfection of obedience, and that entire age will be necessary to the full restitution or bringing back of such as accept the Son to the perfection and divine fellowship lost six thousand years ago. Such as thus believe the Son, accept of His grace, and are conformed to His image, and such only shall see life in the full and absolute sense and be presented unto the Father perfect and unreprouvable in love, when Christ shall deliver up the kingdom, having thus accomplished the work begun by Him three thousand years before, when He bought the world with His own life, that He might give life unto all them that obey Him.

At present there are “stumbling stones” to faith in the “narrow way” to test the faithful in trust and

endurance, and there are “lions” of opposition to threaten and to turn back discouraged all except the “peculiar” people whom the Lord is now selecting for the particular work of the future, as his Bride; but of the King’s Highway it is declared, “No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast”; and the stumbling stones shall all be gathered out, mountains of difficulty shall be levelled, and valleys of despair and discouragement shall be filled up, that the King’s Highway may be most favourable; that all the Redeemed of the Lord (who will accept the gift of life upon the conditions of its offer) may go up thereon to perfection. – Isa.35:8-10; 62:10: 40:4,5.

It will thus be seen that the human family will be gradually restored to a condition of perfection such as was lost by father Adam. As already shown, this will be accomplished by a course of judgments (disciplines) which will enforce an observance of righteousness. There will then be a short period of testing at the end of the Messianic reign, during which time Satan is to be loosed for a season. This will finally determine who are at heart lovers of righteousness and truly loyal to God and who have simply conformed to the kingdom requirements because it was easier to do right and paid better. The wicked will then go down into the second death, while the righteous will be rewarded with Eternal Life. – Matt.25 (PP1/20).

“Walk in Newness of Life”

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” – 2 Cor. 5:17.

Throughout the inspired Word of God mankind as a race are represented as dead – dead in trespasses and sins, dead in Adam, alienated from God through wicked works. Only those who have fled for refuge to the cross of Christ are ever spoken of as having life in God’s sight. These have passed from death unto life through faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ, and consecration to Him, and according to the above text and many others of a similar kind, those thus passed from death in Adam to life in Christ are now to be considered as living a new life. Of a life so altered in the matter of relationship to God as well as in all other aspects, it can be truly said “all things are become new.” Thus in another text we have the same Apostle telling us “that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” – Rom.6:4.

There is nothing ambiguous about such texts. The natural man, living under the condemnation of death, and following the downward bent of the fallen, fleshly mind, is sensual, inherently sinful, dead. But the one who has turned from sin, and by faith in Christ found peace and forgiveness at the mercy-seat of God, has thereby experienced something so far-reaching in its possibilities of relationship to God, to eternal life, and to present resurrection influences, that the contrasts of life and death used by the Apostle in these Scriptures become clear and forceful illustrations of this most important teaching of the New Testament.

In fact, this form of illustrating the state of those who are in harmony with God and those who are at enmity with Him, is a prominent feature of our Lord Jesus’ own teaching. “Let the dead bury their dead”, is His clear conception of those out of relationship with God. Then in contrast, speaking of those who had entered the way of life, He said, “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.” And to this might be added the testimony of the Apostle John, “He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.” – Matt. 8:22; John. 3:36; 1 John 5:12.

ABIDING IN CHRIST

It is manifestly important then that we note very closely the language used in our text. We observe that Paul is careful to tell us that it is only to such as are “in Christ,” that old things have passed away and to whom all things are become new. The words “in Christ” place a very particular emphasis on the fact that much more than a belief in Christ and His sacrifice is necessary to an enjoyment of these “new creature” privileges. It is not “If any man believe in Christ,” but “If any man be in *Christ*.” This distinction is ever a characteristic of the Word of God. The word of Christ may indeed be received and believed as truth by the simple processes of intellectual powers possessed, but the Scriptural emphasis is always placed on the deeper receptivity and response of the heart affections. “That on the good ground,” Jesus said, “are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.” – Luke 8:15.

We cannot be surprised, therefore to find that throughout the entire Bible God puts so much emphasis on the depth of heart soil we display, and on the depth of heart devotion and receptivity we manifest. As He said to Israel of old, so He continues to say to all who profess faith in Him, or claim any special relationship to Him, “The Lord your God proveth you to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.” (Deut. 13:3). This is the distinction intended in our text where being “in Christ” is the imperative requirement laid down by the Apostle.

What does it mean to be “in Christ”? It means that we have found the “new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh.” (Heb. 10:20). It means that by the exercise of

faith in the atoning work of Christ we have now been “quickened together with him”, and henceforth our “life is hid with Christ in God.” This, then, is how believers are united to Christ and can know that they are “in Christ”. The two important steps into this relationship are clearly stated by Paul: “Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him”. “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above.” (Rom. 6:8; Col. 3:1). Thus it is through death that we enter the sphere of new creature life—through faith in the atonement secured by the death of Jesus, and then by virtue of our baptism into death with him, we are raised to “walk in newness of life.”

“It is in the power of a new life that believers are united to Christ. They were dead in sin, and He, in perfect grace, came down, and, though Himself pure and sinless, was ‘made sin’ – ‘died unto sin’—put it away – rose triumphant over it and all pertaining to it, and, in resurrection, became the Head of a new race. Adam was the head of the old creation, which fell with him. Christ, by dying, put Himself under the full weight of His people’s condition, and having perfectly met all that was against them, rose, victorious over all, and carried them with Him into the new creation of which He is the glorious Head and Centre. Hence, we read, ‘He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.’ (1 Con 6:17). ‘But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved), and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.’ (Eph. 2:4-6). ‘For we are members of his body.’ (Eph. 5:30). ‘And you being dead in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses.’ (Col. 2:13). Thus we are constituted alive “in Christ”.

LIVING AS NEW CREATURES

In the regeneration process by which God’s new creation is developed, they are, by an act of pure grace, planted in Christ, and thus like the branches in the vine, they are constantly partaking of the sap and strength of Christ the Vine; therefore the life of Christ becomes increasingly manifest in them. The evidences of spiritual life must become sufficiently marked in the daily conduct as to give a real corroboration to a profession of relationship to Christ. This is made clear by the statement of Scripture: “They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the spirit the things of the spirit...Now if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his”. (Rom. 8:5, 9). These texts cover two important facts of Christian life. They very clearly point out our privileged and blessed standing in justification by faith, that is, our reckoned righteousness before God because we are now in Christ Jesus, and they also show that because we are thus complete in him, and recipients of the Holy Spirit in its creative power, the mind and character of Christ should, indeed must, characterise our daily life.

In this new life, according to yet another text, there is a renewing or transforming work at once begun, for so we read: “Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” (Rom. 12:2). This requires, therefore, that in this new creature life, new hopes, new visions, new purposes, new habits of thought and an entirely new point of concentration will now control such a consecrated individual.

What will that point of concentration be? Surely it will be perfect harmony with God’s purpose for us, which is that we should be conformed to the image of His beloved Son. Then it must follow that henceforth only that which definitely contributes to the development of Christ in the heart, and only that which is conducive to increasing spirituality, will interest and occupy the truly grateful believer. Under no other condition of mind and heart would it be true testimony to claim that old things had indeed passed out of the life. Then along with those new hopes, desires etc., will come a greatly changed attitude of mind toward things in general, such as trials, environments, and our contacts with seemingly adverse circumstances.

Among the physical defects to which men and women are heir, there is what is known as colour-blindness. In the spiritual life there is an alarming possibility of a moral colour-blindness, against which Jesus uttered his words so full of deep significance: “The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness.” (Luke 11:34). Certainly no one can live the new life in Christ until the divine Oculist has trained the moral eyesight to see the fine distinctions by which God discovers the single eye.

In the character of God there are righteous standards, firm and absolute, without shadow of turning; therefore the newness of life set before the follower of Christ, and the strong and admirable life, is the life that is keen to respond to this vision of God’s character. In the life of Jesus on earth there were many admirable qualities of character displayed, but pre-eminent place is given to His hatred of sin and His love of righteousness. Thus it is written of Him, “Thou hast loved righteousness and hatred iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.” (Heb 1:9). Living as new creatures in Christ requires this same uncompromising love of righteousness and hatred of iniquity.

WALKING IN THE SPIRIT

The reader of Paul’s first letter to the Corinthian Church must be struck with the seeming contradictions in several of his statements. In chapter 1:4, 5, we read: “I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace

of God which is given you by Jesus Christ: that in everything ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge.” Then while he is yet practically in the introduction of the letter, he is chiding them because of “contentions” among them, factional disputes, some saying “I am of Paul”; others, “I am of Apollos”; and others, “I am of Cephas.” Then in chapter 3, verse 1, he writes, “And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ”. What a paradox these statements appear to be! But herein lies the lesson for us. Paul certainly recognises these brethren as being new creatures in Christ, for he addresses them as saints or new creatures in Christ, but he very plainly tells them they are failing to live as becomes such.

The Apostle can thank God that they are “enriched in all utterance, and in all knowledge,” but he must, nevertheless, lament the inconsistency of their conduct. What pained the heart of Paul was that while they were enriched in knowledge, they had not entered into the truth in real spiritual power, in such a way as to really possess it and be possessed by it. He had wanted them to get hold not only of the letter but also of the spirit of the knowledge by which they had been enriched. He wanted them to understand that only the spiritually minded really possess the truth, and that if they would live as new creatures in Christ, the Holy Spirit must have free course in their lives in order to elevate them into the higher realms of maturity. He laboured to show them that being conversant with the letter did not in itself indicate real spirituality.

An able writer has well said: “Spiritual knowledge is not deep thought, but living contact, entering into and being united to the truth as it is in Jesus, a spiritual reality, a substantial existence. The spirit teacheth, combining spiritual things with spiritual; into a spiritual mind it works spiritual truth. It is not the power of intellect, it is not even the earnest desire to know the truth (though this must be present), that fits one for the spirit’s teaching; it is a life yielded to it in waiting dependence and full obedience to be made spiritual, that receives the spiritual wisdom and understanding. In the mind these two elements, the moral and the cognitive, are united; only as the former has precedence and sway, can the latter apprehend what God has spoken.

“It is easy to understand how a carnal or fleshly life with its walk, and the fleshly mind with its knowledge, act and react on each other. As far as we are giving way to the flesh, we are incapable of receiving spiritual insight into truth. We may ‘know all mysteries, and have all knowledge,’ without love, the love which the spirit works in inner life, this is only a knowledge that puffeth up, it profiteth nothing. *The carnal life makes the knowledge carnal.* And this knowledge again, being thus held in the fleshly mind, strengthens the religion of the flesh, of self-trust and self-effort; the truth so received has no power to renew and make free. No wonder that there is so much Bible teaching and Bible knowledge, with so little of real, spiritual result in a life of holiness. Would God that His word might sound through his Church: ‘Whereas there is among you jealousy and strife, are ye not carnal? Unless we be living spiritual lives, full of humility, and love, and self-sacrifice, spiritual truth, the truth of God cannot profit us.’”

Surely if we thus “live by the spirit” and “walk by the spirit”, in faith and obedience, we may rest assured that the Holy Spirit will do its complete, transforming work in us. We can rest in the faith that the Spirit will impact sufficient strength to live as becometh new creatures in Christ, working in us to will and to do all that is pleasing in the sight of God. It is the rich possession of the Holy Spirit that makes and marks the spiritual man or woman.

OLD THINGS PASSED AWAY

In thinking of the “old things” which the Apostle tells us are to pass out of the new creature life, we realise there are many. We may think of the gross sins and weaknesses spoken of as “the works of the flesh and the devil,” but for the present it will be helpful to examine another line of old things which must pass away through the operation of the Word and Spirit of God in our hearts now, or pass away in the fire which shall burn eventually, utterly consuming all that is “wood, hay, and stubble”. The life of the Christian is represented in the Scriptures under the metaphor of a building. This illustration suggests the idea of a slow, continuous process, a laying of stone on stone until the structure is complete.

Into this structure may be built “gold, silver, precious stones,” or “wood, hay, stubble”. Sooner or later the material with which we have built will be subjected to the test of fire, “the day shall declare it.” This symbol of fire is but the Bible way of stating that a searching revealing, testing, and destructive judgment will one day come upon all that is not of the gold, silver, and precious stones character. Whatever will abide in this test will be of permanent quality – it shall not pass away; but all that is not of this enduring quality will be utterly destroyed in that day of the revealing fire. The Lord will judge his people. He is judging them now. Christ is now coming in to judge, and when He comes into a life to judge it, light comes in with Him, and that light is pouring in upon the actions and inner life of all who are before His judgment seat. This is the solemn word of Scripture: “I am He which searcheth the reins and hearts; and I will give unto every one of you according to your works...He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches.” – Rev. 2:23, 29.

What then are our works – how have we built? Have we been building on Christ, in Him, and...for Him? Have we built for His searching eye so faithfully that we shall not be ashamed before Him? Have the old

things passed away under the power of the Holy Spirit's daily effective work in the heart through the passing years, or will they still remain to pass away in the fire which shall try every one's work of what sort it is. How evident it is that in this revealing fire one class of service, of teaching, and one kind of life, will be brightened and beautified and glorified; and another class of such things will be destroyed and burned up. The gold and silver and costly stones will be glorified and heightened in beauty by being brought into this contact with the hand and heat of the Refiner and His furnace, while the other will be proved to be so mixed with the old things as to merit destruction.

What will the day declare for each of us? How many surprises will there be – both among the workers whose building will abide the fire, and also among those whose works must perish in the flame! Well may we each ask ourselves, how much of our life work will be wiped out of existence; crushed into nonentity, and made as if it had never been at all? Whatever in our conduct has been acceptable to God, we are assured will last. It will last in the mind of our heavenly Father, and it will last in glorious results to ourselves, because it will be in accord with the perfect will of God, which is the first great permanent reality in the universe. Because He abides for ever, so will that in us which has glorified Him abide forever. May we then be more and more able to affirm with the Apostle, “old things *are* passed away.”

Happy indeed are they who really know that they are “walking in newness of life.” To know that there has been a complete separation from the pursuits and attractions of the flesh, and a new point of concentration permanently fixed in the life, the new creature life, is to know the blessed testimony of the Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are the children of God and heirs of eternal life with Christ our Lord. And so, possessed as we can be by new hopes, new visions, new aspirations, a new life in Christ, how comforting are the assurances of the Scriptures which teach us that God really gives us this high and perfect standing faith in the sacrifice of Christ.

ALL THINGS BECOME NEW

No doubt the poorest building on the foundation rock will have something in it that will remain after the fire of trial has done its work because it is on that Rock. But it is for us as true believers to cherish the noblest hopes and objectives. There is nothing new in seeking to be but “a doorkeeper in the house of the Lord.” It is proper enough to say with David that I would “rather be a doorkeeper in the house of the Lord, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness,” but it is much more proper for new creatures in Christ to conform their aspirations and expectations to the revealed will of God. And those who gain this true outlook will ever be seeking for higher and higher attainments in Christian character.

So let us build on the foundation other than which no man can lay, the gold and silver and precious stones, things which are eternally new – true thoughts and holy deeds, loving, pure, unselfish, Christ-like and permanent materials. Let us give all diligence to add to our faith whatsoever things are lovely, ennobling, things which never grow old nor pass away, because they originate in God, who is from everlasting to everlasting, ever new and unchanging. Then we shall not be “saved so as by fire” but by grace divine an entrance shall be ministered unto us “abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” (J.J.B .49)

“Power for Service”

“The God of Israel is He that giveth strength and power unto His people.” (Psa 68:35)

Whatever our abilities, we are unfit for God's service until He consecrates our power to His service. Until we receive this divine power, His Spirit, we have no power for any spiritual work –however small or humble. We seldom realise this weakness. Consequently, it is not our weakness which is our greatest hindrance. Our imagined strength inhibits our service to God. Every time we depend upon our wisdom, ability, intellect, or our power to argue and convince, we ignore a fundamental truth: “...our *sufficiency is of God*” (2 Cor.3:5).

When a ship has run aground, its own power is futile for moving it. Actually, rather than helping, its own power is apt to strain and damage the vessel. What then? The ship must await God's power: the power of the rising tide. This great force will easily accomplish what human engineering could not. This is a parable of human helplessness waiting for divine power. Our powers can be used by God, but only when we think nothing of them. When we surrender ourselves to the Divine power we can be used as God wills. Then we can be content to be despised, if by that despising He will be glorified.

CAUSES OF INSUFFICIENCY

It may be said that our insufficiency is threefold. We are not still enough for God to come to us. We are not empty enough for God to fill us. We are not sanctified enough for God to use and honour us.

Two metaphors show this clearly. One of these likens the action of the Holy Spirit upon us to the falling of the dew. The other likens the Christian to a clay pot made by the Lord, to be filled by the Lord, and used as the Lord may choose.

We need to be still in order for God to come to us. The influence of the Holy Spirit falls upon our life as the dew falls in the stillness of the night upon the drooping plant. The plant cannot make the dew; it can only wait for it and attract it. The dew is always near, suspended in the atmosphere. But the dew does not fall unless two conditions prevail. The air must be still and the plant must be cool.

We still need stillness in our heart if the grace of the Spirit is to revive us. The feverish heat of life must also abate for the blessed baptism, giving power from on high to descend upon the still, cool heart.

Again, we need to be empty in order for God to fill us. Paul describes the idea of true Christian character as “... *a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and men for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work:*” (2 Tim.2:21). The metaphor tells of the dignity to which we are called – to be honourable vessels. It tells us what our service is to be – prepared for good works. But what it tells also deflates our pride and misplaced self-sufficiency – we are only vessels. God formed us as it pleases Him. He uses us as it pleases Him. We have nothing. We are His vessels for receiving, carrying, and distributing that with which He fills us.

NOT ALWAYS EMPTIED OF SELF

It often happens that we are not satisfied with being just this, and nothing more. We are not always emptied of self so that the Master may put into us what He wills. It is honourable to be vessels in His hand. It is a marvellous grace that we who were vessels of wrath (Rom.9:22) can be transformed into vessels of mercy (vs. 23), and then to make these into vessels of honour which will be fit for the noblest use – to carry grace to other lives.

Do we realise that we are only vessels to be employed in different ways, some to more usefulness than others, some constantly in use, others only occasionally? All of them are empty vessels until He fills them, vessels to be used by Him in any way that He thinks best, or to be laid aside upon the shelf if they are of no present use. Do we always agree to this? Are we sometimes willing to be used, but only if He makes us great enough to satisfy our ideas or only if He will fill us with some aromatic spice instead of mere water? Are we willing to be used in the meaner ways? To be used in ways which do not bring glory to ourselves?

We need to be holy enough for God to honour us. Honourable vessels are sanctified vessels –purged from evil and dedicated to His service. This is the most essential characteristic. How can the Lord of purity use unclean vessels when He wants the vessel to carry the pure water of life (Rev.22:17) to some thirsty soul, or the wine of the kingdom (Luke 22:18) to some fainting heart?

A SINGLE UNCONTROLLED DESIRE

The measure of our Christian power is the measure of Christian dedication. A single desire which has not been put away, (whether of the flesh or of the spirit), a single besetting sin which we tolerate to exist in our lives will hinder our usefulness to God, even though we are vessels of the finest craftsmanship and ornamentation.

“*Take away the dross from the silver, and there shall come forth a vessel for the refiner*” (Prov. 25:4) is one of Solomon’s sayings. Its spiritual application extends deep. Does it not mean, “Take away all conscious defilement from soul and life, and then, as hallowed vessels, God will be able to use you for His praise?” It was a law for ancient Israel that they should “...*bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the Lord.*” (Isa 66:20). If the vessel was unclean, it was a vessel “...*wherein is no pleasure*” (Hos. 8:8), and the offering contained within would not be accepted. That law has never been removed from the statute book of Christ.

These are some of God’s answers to our questions about our insufficiency in service. They both rebuke and stimulate us when we listen to them in the secret place – for there only can they be heard. At such a time Saul of Tarsus was deep in self-condemnation and despair. He had been emptied of all self-sufficiency. Then the Lord said, through Ananias, “*he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel*” (Acts. 9:15). If we could only begin by emptying ourselves of self as did Paul, might we not end where he did too. “...*filled with the Holy Spirit*”. (Acts. 13:9). (The Herald).

“That Great Shepherd of the Sheep”

(Hebrews 13:20)

Isa. 40:11; He shall feed His flock like a shepherd: He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.

John 10:14,15: I am the Good Shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth Me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down My life for the sheep.

The first martyr in the sacred annals was a shepherd. All the patriarchs were shepherds. The confession of the sons of Jacob to the king of Egypt was, “Thy servants are shepherds.” Moses, the sublimest historian and lawgiver of the world, was a shepherd. David, the poet-king of Israel, the founder of the Hebrew monarchy, and the central figure in the history of the sacred people, was a keeper of his father’s flocks, and thought it

no degradation from the glory of the great Jehovah to sing of Him as “*the Shepherd of Israel*.” Therefore the title of “Shepherd” is one of great antiquity, and one of great honour.

Even the Almighty, Himself, does not hesitate to accept and appropriate the designation: “For thus saith the Lord God, *Behold I, even I, will both search My sheep*, and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out My sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day... I will feed My flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God. I will seek that which was lost, and bring them again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick.” (Ezek. 34:11-16). THUS FROM THE ANCIENT TIMES THE HONOURABLE AND BLESSED OFFICES WERE LIKENED TO THAT OF A SHEPHERD, and especially the dignity and excellence of Him in whom all offices centred, and all types and prophecies are fulfilled.

In the many sayings of our dear Saviour, He pictures to us His character, work, office, and relation to His people. But in none of these is the profound blessedness and preciousness of our Lord presented more impressively than in the picture which has deeply affected the Christian heart in all ages, namely, “Christ the Good Shepherd.” Because of its intense tenderness, mingled with sublimest dignity which pervades the description, it is universally admitted to be one of the most beautiful, as it is one of the most familiar images in all the Holy Scriptures. And though the Saviour took to Himself this title before His crucifixion, and with reference to His death for His sheep, it connects equally with His resurrection and His exaltation to glory.

Indeed as we behold Him exercising His shepherding care over His disciples, immediately after His resurrection, IT IS EVIDENT THAT HE INTENDED THAT THIS TITLE AND OFFICE AS THE GOOD SHEPHERD SHOULD BE A PERPETUAL ONE. In his letter to his Christian brethren subsequent to Christ’s resurrection, the Apostle Peter speaks of it as a *present office* of our blessed Lord, and reminds them of how they were once as sheep going astray, but are now returned *to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls*. And the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews (13:20) speaks of Christ as even now “that Great Shepherd of the sheep,” whom “the God of peace brought again from the dead.”

THAT GREAT SHEPHERD

Two aspects of the subject present themselves for our consideration. First, The characteristics of Christ with reference to His people, Second, The characteristics of His people with reference to Christ. In taking to Himself this title, our Saviour would therefore have us see in Him a being of great dignity, personal excellence, and princely authority. But it implies much more than this. Majesty and honour may awe and terrify, but of *themselves*, beget no bond of loving confidence and peaceful sympathy. We may know that Jesus is our blessed Lord and Saviour and be filled with reverence and adoration; but *we need more than this to put us at ease* in our contemplations of Him. And it is just *this requirement* that His character as Shepherd was meant to meet. It is a title of most intimate connection, familiarity and sympathy.

This intimacy is not at once so manifest until we become acquainted with pastoral life and duty in the ancient world. In Palestine, particularly, there was between the shepherd and his flock the *closest union* of attachment and tenderness. It was a country of intense ruggedness, and many consequent dangers from torrents, robbers and wild beast. *The shepherd...never left his flock. He lived with his sheep by day and he slept near them by night.* HIS EYE WAS EVER ON THEM, AND HE BECAME AS FAMILIAR TO THEM AS ONE OF THEMSELVES. He continually incurred personal risks and inconveniences for them. He learnt to love them and to feel that his interests and theirs were the same. The hazards and hardships of the flock were shared by him. His chief study was *their safety and comfort*. When they suffered or were in want, he took it upon himself, and was never happier than when he saw them satisfied and in peace. *Their danger was his danger*, and their lot was his lot.

The blessed Saviour has this living fellowship with all His people. He has left the society of others and become one of themselves, and joined Himself to them and them to Him, as one body, *bearing the same burdens of their life, necessities and exposure*, and giving Himself forever to their good peace. Like another and more glorious David, He stands out against the bear and the lion, that His flock may live; and puts His life in the place of theirs. *He imperils Himself in their sight*, and persists in the struggle even unto death, that they may see and know how truly their interests are assumed by Him, and then returns to them after His victory to reassure them how all His soul and strength are given for their security and blessedness, and *how safe they are* in His gracious keeping.

A GUIDE AND DEFENDER

A good shepherd is the *guide* of his flock. He knows his sheep. He understands their characters, their wants, their dangers. HE IS ENTIRELY ACQUAINTED WITH THE INMOST NATURE OF EACH INDIVIDUAL OF THEM, AND HOW THEY NEED TO BE DEALT WITH. He even calls them by name, and *chooses* them the *directions* in which they are to move, the *paths* they are to follow, the *places* in which they may roam by

day, and the *folds* in which they are to rest at night. When he would conduct them from one scene to another, *he goes before them and calls to them, that they may follow. And so is Christ the *Guide* of His people. He is thoroughly acquainted with every one of them, and selects all their changes for them, Even as the Father knows Him, and as He knows the Father, *so He knows His people*; and His every movement and word is meant to influence them towards their highest security and blessedness.

In all the varied paths and perilous places of human life, "*He goeth before them.*" Having looked out the good pasture, He takes the lead to bring us to it; or espying danger, He directs the way to avoid it. His Word often calls *in directions which we do not expect*, in ways that are very bewildering, over rocky paths, through thorny thickets, by dark and threatening ravines; but He knows exactly whither He would take us, and *what we can endure*; and is simply doing the work of the Good Shepherd to bring us where we may lie down in green pastures, and rest beside the still waters. The good shepherd cares for the sheep. His heart is drawn out toward them. And all his dealings with regard to them are conditioned by an undying affection for them. If any are fearful, or weak, or in necessity, his eye notices it, and his sympathy is enlisted, and the needed help is afforded.

The traveller in the oriental lands has seen with what tender solicitude the shepherd bound up the injured limb of some suffering member of his flock; how gently he took up the yet feeble lambs in his arms to carry them over the rough places, and up the difficult steep, and across the rapid waters; how kindly he helped such as were labouring with their burdens; how he lay all night at the mouth of the cave where he had folded his precious charge, that they might rest undisturbed till the morning dawned. *Even so* the blessed Saviour *cares for us*, and serves us, *both in the light and in the darkness*. A GOOD SHEPHERD IS ALSO THE FAITHFUL DEFENDER OF HIS FLOCK. He "giveth his life for the sheep." He stands by them in every peril, and defends them to the last extremity.

So Christ has loved His people, even to die for them. Nor have they a foe against which He is not armed, or from which He is not ready to defend them. No man shall pluck them out of His hand. All the resources of His might stand pledged for their security. The eternal majesty of the good Father of mercies must be vanquished and destroyed before even the feeblest of them can be touched, or have so much as a hair harmed. A shepherd indeed is Christ, of the true blood, and of a more than Davidic chivalry; a good, genuine, true-born Shepherd, who would sooner suffer the extinction of His own existence than that His sheep should fall a prey to the destroyer. "*Fear not, little flock,*" is His gracious word to His people. "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness." – Isa. 41:10.

THE SHEEP OF HIS HAND

Let us look now at the second aspect of this subject. *As Christ is a Shepherd, so His people are sheep*. Those who are His charge and care are described as "the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand." (Psa. 95:7). This reminds us of our exposed and lost estate without Christ. A sheep is an ignorant and defenceless creature by nature. It is quite incapable of self-government, and perishes without someone to look after it, and to provide for it. And it has many enemies, much more powerful than itself, against which it is in no way armed or defended. It must have a keeper.

We cannot be happy as our own masters. The sins and errors of the past, the bewildering difficulties of the present, and the darkness of the future, are all alike full of sources of distress and boding of unavoidable ill, if left to ourselves. The soul in its absence from the fold of Christ, whatever its momentary thoughtlessness, yearns and seeks about for someone to stand between it and danger, between it and disturbing uncertainty, between it and guilt. Hence the disposition of people of all classes and ages to group themselves around teachers, kings, conquerors, reformers, heroes, and to welcome to their hearts any show of ability to be entrusted with the keeping of what they cannot, with any idea of security, retain in their own hands.

Yet, as often as people have entrusted themselves to mere *earthly* leaders and human lights, the deeper has been their bewilderment, and the more certain has been their disappointment and ruin. It was in this helpless and lost condition that Christ found His people at His First Advent. "When He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd." (Matt. 9:36). Thus in due time the Good Shepherd was sent from on high. He began the assembling of His flock, the Elect, destined to be fellow-heirs of His glory. And never at any time since has He forsaken them or left them straying and fainting in the wilds of nature.

THEY HAVE BEEN GATHERED OUT OF EVERY SORROWFUL STATE KNOWN IN THIS ERRING WORLD, AND HAVE BECOME A PEOPLE SEPARATED UNTO GOD. Before He began the gathering of His sheep, it was as if they were lost in the wilderness, and the Lord went out seeking them until He found them. By the mouth of the prophet, He said of old, "I will seek out My sheep, and will deliver them out of all places whither they be scattered,...and I will bring them out from the people,...and feed them upon the moun-

tains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country.”

Having bought them with His blood, and come to them by His word and sacraments, and graciously proposed Himself to them as their true Shepherd, and drawn them by His loving ways and Spirit, *they have learned to know Him*, to confide in His wisdom and goodness, and to separate themselves from all the rest of the world, *to be one with Him* as their ever-blessed Lord and Master. *The word is that they know Him*. “I am known of Mine.”

THEY KNOW HIS VOICE

They have not only been taught, *who* He is, but they have *personal* acquaintance with Him. *They know Him by their own experiences of His goodness*. They have come to a sort of intuitive capacity to recognise Him. His voice, His Spirit, His Will, and His whole method, are as *familiar* to them, and are as readily distinguished by them, *as their own thoughts*. In whatever aspect He may present Himself, they know that it is He. And whether in view, or for the time, out of sight, they are satisfied that He is their true Shepherd, and that all His movements are for their good. Let men slander Him as they will, or bring what false reports concerning Him they may, *His sheep know Him*, that He is *everything* that they can require, and that *He is above all shepherds*, “The Good Shepherd!”

Knowing Christ is a thing of the soul and its affections, *more* than the intellect. There is such a thing as knowing *of* Christ, possessing complete *intellectual* information concerning His person and work, *and still being a stranger to Him*. Few seem to realise that. *Right* knowledge of Jesus is from *the Holy Spirit* moving the heart: not by the apparatus of mere cold philosophy, but by the still small voice which mixes itself with the *inmost feelings*. It is not found merely in systematic formulas nor dogmatic structures of Gospel truths, which, however valuable, complete, and beautiful, are *without the Spirit of God*, as dead as the little houses which the child builds with his blocks.

What is of primary importance is not the arrangement of these truths in piles for our admiration, BUT TO HAVE THEIR SPIRIT INFUSED INTO OUR SOULS AND LIVES, AND TRANSLATED INTO THE LIVING PULSATIONS OF OUR HEARTS. And in this, many of the humblest and least scientific are often more successful than brethren of very astute minds. *They know the Truth by being true*. They may not yet understand the Shepherd’s conversations, nor be able to blow the Shepherd’s reed, but, as His sheep, *they know Him as their Shepherd*. They know that they are His, and that they are safe in Him.

Thus, with the feelings of the soul assured, they have a deeper and more satisfactory knowledge than *any mere framework* of argument and intellect *alone* can give. Furthermore, *they hear His voice*. This was not true of the most of those to whom Christ first addressed Himself. “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.” (John 1:11) Haughty Pharisees and learned Scribes, *too wise in their own conceit to take in the logic of the heart*, demanded by what authority He did these things, and called for signs from Heaven to prove to them that the Truth was true.

The unlettered fisherman at the first word *felt a chord touched in their souls*, and responded with loving confidence and obedience, and confessed by the revealing light in their hearts that He was the Christ, the Son of the Living God; but the more *favoured* “children of the Kingdom” would have none of Him. They did not know Him, and would not hear His voice. They even made war with Him, and persecuted Him unto death. Therefore He tuned His back upon *that fold*, and *looked elsewhere to find His sheep*, which yet lay scattered among the nations, or wandering in the dark wilderness of heathenism. If the majority of the ancient fold, “His own,” refused Him, He would find others who should hear Him to complete the flock. AND SO CHRIST ALL ALONG THROUGH THIS AGE, HAS BEEN FINDING AND SHEPHERDING HIS TRUE SHEEP.

THEY HEAR HIS CALL

As the sheep know their shepherd, they know *his call* and obey it. The voice of Jesus is His preached Gospel. The hearing of that voice is not the mere hearing of the outward ear, but *a hearing with the heart and soul and life*, as the *knowing* of Him is of the *heart*. More than once have travellers seen great flocks strung along the hillsides of the sacred land, and seemingly indifferent to everything that was passing. But the moment the shepherd gave his call to lead them down at evening to where they were to be folded for the night, instantly they lifted up their heads, left off their grazing among the rocks and *started after their leader*.

In the morning, though several flocks belonging to different shepherds were together in the same shelter during the night, the shepherd of one had only to give his call and all the sheep belonging to him at once separated themselves from the rest, and took after him. THEY HEARD HIS VOICE. THEY UNDERSTOOD WHAT HE MEANT AND THEY CONFIDENTLY OBEYED. *Even so, Christ’s sheep hear His voice and follow Him*. Moreover, there are under-shepherds of the flock who are counselled to guard not only against wolves, but also to warn any wayward sheep that is *dull of hearing* the Good Shepherd’s voice, and tends to stray away *into forbidden paths* and lead others after him, particularly the lambs. And yet, again, Christ’s sheep are all one. They are gathered from different quarters and from many nationalities.

A LITTLE FLOCK

In all the Christian centuries, believers from many races and tongues have been found to make up the predetermined number of the “Little Flock” to inherit the Kingdom. Yet, of whatever national blood, from whatever region brought, or under whatever social economy reared, *they are all one in Christ Jesus* – OF THE ONE FOLD OF THIS AGE, WITH ONE SHEPHERD. It is true indeed that as an entire body, *they do not know each other here*. They may be ignorant of each other’s language or existence. Some may be high up on the summits, and some may be down among the valleys. Hills, mountains, rivers, seas may be between them. A *stranger* might think they belonged to very *different* owners. Indeed, IN NO KIND OF VISIBLE BODY HAS CHRIST’S FLOCK EVER BEEN KNOWN.

THE TRUE SAINTS OF GOD, MARKED AND SEALED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT, ARE THE CHURCH INVISIBLE! No matter how much the sheep of Christ’s flock may be scattered and separated *in human eyes wherever they are, they all know Christ, and are known of Him*, and hear His voice, and so are all joined together as one flock, members of the same fold, and having the *one* Shepherd. *External* differences may be many. Accidental elements of diversity may separate them widely. But *inwardly* looking to Him as their Shepherd, and *experimentally and in heart* made acquainted with His saving goodness, they are still *one body, with the same Head*, and united in one common fellowship of life and salvation. The further word of Jesus is, “*I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.*” (John 10:28) (WOTM 11/561)

TWIN PROMISES

(One negative and one positive)

“No good thing will He withhold from them who walk uprightly.”

(Psalm 84:11)

“Yea, the Lord shall give that which is good.”

(Psalm 85:12)

Eventide - A Memorial Meditation

“So He bringeth them unto their desired haven”

This may be said to be the Eventide of all 1 Eventides to us, for it holds memories which no other eventide in all the year can hold. Often we have asked ourselves as we gathered to the Table of the Lord “will this be the last time we shall celebrate together these memorials of His death. We may have gathered in the Lord for ten, twenty, in some cases even fifty years to “show the Lord’s death till he come”, and have always found this to be the night outstanding from all other nights for us.

At other times, by means of study or address, our minds might range the whole wide field between Paradise lost and Paradise regained, but on this night there is but one theme to which we may rightly turn. “*As oft as ye eat this bread and drink this Cup, ye do show the Lord’s death till He come*”. (1 Cor.11:26). So at his request it has come about that pious souls, over the centuries, have drawn together to “remember him”, and commemorate the act that made His broken body and shed blood available for their needs.

That sacrifice has accomplished something for needy men which nothing else in all creation could have brought about. It is in that body broken for our sakes, and in that blood shed for our sins, that all the satisfying merit has been found. Some may claim to see more of one thing, others more of another in that sacrifice, but however much we may seek to define or apportion this or that, it was His death that made redemption in its every phase a possibility. Upon that death the plan of God was made to hinge and turn. It is that death we have before us this eventide. Out of very gratitude we can sing.

“Saviour, thy dying Love

Thou gavest me,

Nor would I aught withhold

Dear Lord from thee

In love my soul would bow

My heart fulfil its vow

Myself an offering now

I bring to thee.”

If we have also seen this opportunity as an occasion to renew our consecration vows, and to repeat our affirmed desire to be made “dead with him” to God’s sovereign Will, that simple stanza can be our fervent prayer.

Let us not forget, that there is a communion “in the blood of Christ”, and “in the body of Christ” (1 Cor.10:16) which calls for the fullest consecration to the Will of God (as to an Altar. 1 Cor.10:18) and while

there is no thought of vicarious merit or of ransom-purchase here, it calls for the outright surrender and fullest consecration of all we have, and are, and hope to be to the sovereign purposes of Almighty God. And if we see it thus, the drinking of the Cup and breaking of the Bread can carry to our hearts the double thought, and we can also say,

*“Jesus, our Mercy Seat, covering me...
My grateful heart looks up, Saviour to thee
Help me the news to bear
Thy wondrous Love declare
Spread thy truth everywhere
Dear Lord for thee.
All that I am and have, thy gifts so free;
All of my ransomed life, dear Lord, for thee!
And when thy face I see
Thy sweet ‘well done’ shall be
Through all eternity
Enough for me”*

Once more, by the grace of God, we have been spared to meet together at the Table of the Lord, and partake, with those who love his blessed Name, of those simple emblems that stand for so much to us. We have acknowledged our indebtedness to him for his redemptive sacrifice, and have re-affirmed our own desire to be dead with him. Let us now ask the God of all grace and comfort to help us in the fulfilling of our vows, that thus our communion with Christ may be complete and entire, and that we may yet the more be “conformed unto his death”.

Let us in this quiet eventide so resolve to appreciate what we have done, that should it be our last, we may be found of him acceptable and ready to appear before His glorious face.

*“What rapturous joy shall then be ours
Forever Lord, with thee,
Clothed with our resurrection powers
Thine endless praise shall be.”*

TRULY BEAUTIFUL

Beautiful hands are they that do
The work of the noble good and true,
Busy for them the long day through.
Beautiful faces - they that wear,
The light of a pleasing spirit there,
It matters little if dark or fair,
And truly beautiful in God’s sight,
Are the precious souls who love the right.
(Anon)



Volume 82 No.1 MELBOURNE, JANUARY/MARCH 1999 HOPE FOR A TROUBLED WORLD

"For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God." (Romans 8:19-21)

Both the Old and New Testaments predict that a better time is coming: a time when justice and righteousness will be established on the earth, and peace abound everywhere. The apostle in Rom. 8:22,19, speaks of the whole creation groaning and waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God. Hag. 2:6-7 also speaks of the desire of all nations coming, but indicates a great shaking time preceding that event. "Yet once more I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land, and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come."

Peter, in his second epistle, chapter 3, speaks also of a new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, and also describes the great time of trouble preceding the establishment of same. He speaks of the "Heavens being on fire, and being dissolved. The earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."

It is clear that the apostle is speaking in figurative language, for if the earth and the heavens were literally to be so destroyed, there would be no people left to enjoy the new heavens and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness," which he assures us is to follow the burning-up time, just as the prophet declares that after the great shaking "the desire of all nations shall come."

Peter simply refers to the destruction of the present order of things in a fiery time of trouble, just as the first heavens and earth, which were before the flood, had passed away. The "earth" refers to the social arrangements or order among men. The "heavens" refers to the spiritual or religious portion of humanity. These elements have both got out of accord with God and righteousness. The whole earth is ungodly and selfish, and the religious elements have become confused in teachings and have lost the spirit of Christ. The apostle Paul (Heb. 12:26-27), quoting Haggai, says, "Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven, and this word yet once more signifieth the removal of those things that are shaken as of things that are made, that those things that cannot be shaken may remain."

Thus the apostle and the prophet refer to the woes of earth and the great remedy that God has provided, and which is soon to be applied. The declaration of the prophet that God will eventually establish a reign of righteousness in the earth, which, when realised, will indeed be the desire of all nations, is borne out by the testimony of every prophet and apostle (Act 3: 19-21), and cannot therefore, be disputed by any who acknowledge the inspiration of the Bible.

The cause of all creation's groaning and pain is sin; for all the moral and physical degradation which directly or indirectly causes the pain and groaning of humanity is part of the wages of sin. Humanity is thus under a blight, and suffers both individually and as a whole. Its own imperfect and often unjust governments, as well as its aches and pains of body and mind, are the natural consequences of its imperfect, fallen condition; and although men can do something toward general improvement, their efforts are at best but feeble and spasmodic - they are utterly incapable of releasing themselves from their difficulties.

Truly, all mankind are groaning; and yet, as the apostle indicates, they are not hopeless; they are waiting for something, they know not exactly what - a panacea for sickness, pain, sorrow and death - a just and righteous government, which will lift up the poorest and meanest from the mire of ignorance and squalor, to comfort and happiness.

What all mankind have longed and vaguely hoped for, God, through His prophets, has clearly and definitely foretold; and, further, He has shown exactly how it will be achieved, namely, through the agency of the Lord

Jesus Christ, who redeemed mankind by giving His life as a ransom-price for the life of the world, and who will shortly set up His kingdom and establish His authority over the redeemed race.

The only hope for the world is in this Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is God's long-promised remedy. Man's extremity will be God's opportunity; "The desire of all nations shall come," at a juncture when human ingenuity and skill will have exhausted themselves in seeking relief without avail. The present world-wide disorders are all factors in the "time of trouble," the "day of vengeance," with which this age is closing. Not only will it be a just recompense for misused privileges, but it will tend to humble the arrogance of men, making them "poor in spirit," and ready for the great blessings God is about to pour upon all flesh (Joel 2:28)

THE RIGHTFUL RULER

God's Kingdom will be established in due time, when He "whose right it is," will "take the Kingdom." He, who bought it with His own precious blood, will "take unto Himself His great power and reign." Force will be used - "He shall rule them (the nations) with a rod of iron - as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers" (Rev. 2:27). He will gather the nations, assemble the kingdoms, and pour upon them His fierce anger, and the whole earth shall be devoured with the fire of His jealousy; then, when they are humbled and ready to hear and heed his counsel, He will turn unto them a pure language, that they may call upon the name of the Lord to serve Him with one consent (Zeph. 3:8-9).

Not only will the Kingdom be established with force, and be a power that men cannot resist, but it will so continue throughout the 1000 years of Christ's reign, which is for the specific purpose of vanquishing the enemies of righteousness. "He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet," "The soul that will not hear (obey) that prophet (the glorious Christ-antitype of Moses) shall be destroyed from among the people" (in the Second Death). 1 Cor. 15:25; Acts 3:23.

Satan will be bound; his every deceptive and misleading influence will be restrained, so that evil shall no longer appear to men to be good, nor good appear undesirable and evil; truth shall no longer appear to men untrue, nor falsehoods be caused to appear true (Rev. 20:2).

The reign of Christ, however, will not be one of force only, but side by side with the rod of iron will be the olive branch of mercy and peace for all the inhabitants of the world; who, when the judgements of the Lord are abroad in the earth, wit, learn righteousness (Isa. 26:9). The sin-blinded eyes shall be opened, that the world may see right and wrong, justice and injustice, in a light quite different from now - in "seven-fold" light (Isa. 30:26; 29:18-20). The outward temptations of the present will be suppressed, evils will neither be licensed nor permitted, but a penalty sure and swift will fall upon transgressors, meted out with unerring justice by the glorified and competent judges of that time, who, nevertheless, will have compassion upon the weak: - 1 Cor. 6:2; Psalms 96:13; Acts 17:31; Mal. 3:5.

SUPPOSED DIFFICULTIES

All this would seem reasonable to thinking people but for two things. One is, the unscriptural view which for centuries has predominated that Christ is now reigning over and ruling the world. And yet, if versed in the world's history, all candid minds must admit that up to the present time there has not been a rule of righteousness such as the prophets predicted of the reign of Christ (Isa. 32:1). On the contrary, it is manifest that the kingdoms of this world are all under the power and subject to the invisible "prince of this world," Satan, who takes advantage of the darkness of human ignorance, superstition, and depravity.

Poor, frail humanity has indeed made some noble efforts at self-government, but the unseen and unrecognised powers of darkness have been too much for their efforts, and have succeeded in keeping in power a majority who were not lovers of righteousness. Nor can we hope for better than present results while selfishness remains the rule of action.

The second thing is the long delay before the establishment of Christ's Kingdom. People naturally wonder that God has not long since exerted His great power to suppress sin, and to lift mankind out of its present state of depravity, disease and death; and since some six thousand years have passed without such an interposition, many reason that God's future dealings should be judged by the past. Hence they conclude we cannot expect such a rule or Kingdom in the future, believing that all things must continue as they are now, and have been from the foundation of the world.

We answer, it can be shown that the Scriptures teach that not only has God promised such a Kingdom for the purpose of blessing the world, but He has also foretold the long period intervening in which evil has been permitted, good and sufficient reasons being given in the Bible for the nearly six thousand years that have elapsed. Yet, in examining these reasons for the apparent delay in the

establishment of the reign of righteousness, let us not forget that it is only measured by the shortness of the present life that six thousand years seem very long; with God, "a thousand years are but as yesterday" (Psalms 90:4). When clearly seen, this should remove every obstacle to belief in the promised Kingdom of blessing.

WHY THE LONG DELAY?

The long delay and its purposes are clearly marked in the Scriptures. Over four thousand years after the

first promise of deliverance, given in Eden (Gen. 3:15), the redemption was accomplished on Calvary. Nearly two thousand years more fill the measure of the Gospel Age (the period between Christ's first and second advents), during which time God is selecting and developing the Church - the Bride of Christ. Furthermore, this long period of six thousand years was designed to give the race a necessary experience with the dreadful effects of sin, its exceeding sinfulness, and the firmness of that justice which will by no means clear the guilty violators of God's just and holy law. Such an experience will be of inestimable value to all for all eternity and by contrast it will lead to so great an appreciation of righteousness, during Christ's reign, as to make it, when realised, what the prophet predicted - "The desire of all nations."

The delay, from the time of redemption to the Kingdom Age, while fulfilling this purpose to the world, serves particularly the further purpose - the development of the Church, a "little flock" of believers in and followers of Christ, sharers of His reproach in the present time, and therefore chosen and counted worthy to share His spiritual Kingdom, His glory, and His work - to reign with Him as joint-heirs of the long-promised Kingdom of God for the blessing of all the families of the earth.-Gen. 28:14; Gal. 3:16, 29.

During the Messianic Age, Christ's power will be exercised to prevent deceptions, clear away ignorance, strengthen the weak, and restore to sight those now blinded by the god of this world (2 Cor. 4:4). A thousand enticements to sin, which now make special appeal to the depraved appetites of the fallen race, will not be permitted when the new, heavenly rule is established; but the Gospel Church is called and tested during this age, while evil is permitted to hold sway, in order that their proving may be like that of gold tried in the fire. This company will be complete when the Gospel Age ends, and then the control of earth will be entrusted to them, under and in co-operation with the Lord Jesus, the King of Kings.-1 Cor. 6:2; Rom. 8:17.

THE DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS

When Christ's Kingdom has come, it will be just what all men need. At first it will rule with a rod of iron, dashing the now tottering kingdoms of this world in pieces like a potter's vessel (Psa. 2:9); breaking up civil, social and religious systems of tyranny and oppression; putting down all opposing authority and power; humbling the proud and high-minded; and finally teaching all the world to be still and to know that the Lord's Anointed has taken the dominion (Psa. 46:10). Then the blessing of its peaceful reign will begin to be experienced. Truth and equity will be established on a sure and permanent footing; justice will be laid to the line, and righteousness to the plummet (Isa. 28:17); and the great restitution work will progress grandly to its glorious consummation.

There will be sweeping moral reforms; great educational and philanthropic enterprises; and wonderful cures for every disease and deformity, mental and physical. There will be awakenings from death, and a grand reorganisation of society under the new order of the Kingdom of God. All the world's bitter experiences during the six thousand years past will then prove valuable lessons on the exceeding sinfulness of sin; helping them to appreciate the new rule of righteousness, to live in everlasting conformity to the perfect will of God, and thus to accept God's gift of everlasting life, designed for all who will receive it on His conditions of love and loyal obedience to His commands. Then, it will be true: "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17).

No creature of the redeemed race will be too low for Divine grace to reach, through the all-powerful and blessed agency of the kingdom. No degradation of sin will be too deep for the hand of mercy to fathom, to rescue the blood-bought soul; no darkness of ignorance or superstition will be so dense in any heart but that the light of Divine truth and love will penetrate its gloom and bring it to a knowledge of the joy and gladness of the new day, and an opportunity to share the same by obedience. No disease that can attack and pollute the physical system will be beyond the prompt control of the great Physician. And no deformity or mental defect will be able to resist His healing touch.

The grand work of restitution, thus begun on the living nations, will presently extend to all the sleeping families of the earth; for the hour is coming, yea, is not far distant, when all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of Man and shall come forth; when death and hell (hades, the grave) shall give up the dead which are in them; and the sea shall give up its dead (John 5:28-29; Rev. 20:13). What a glorious prospect the new dispensation will present when fully inaugurated! The changes from one dispensation to another in the past have been marked and prominent, but this change will be the most eventful of all.

"Close your eyes for a moment to the scenes of misery and woe, degradation and sorrow that yet prevail on account of sin, and picture before your mental vision the glory of the perfect earth. Not a stain of sin mars the harmony and peace of a perfect society; not a bitter thought, not an unkind look or word; love, welling up from every heart, and benevolence marks every act. There sickness shall be no more; not an ache nor a pain, nor any evidence of decay - not even the fear of such things. Think of all the pictures of comparative health and beauty of human form and feature that you have ever seen, and know that perfect humanity will be of still surpassing loveliness. The inward purity and mental and moral perfection will stamp and glorify every radiant countenance. Such will earth's society be; and weeping bereaved ones will have their tears all wiped away, when thus they realise the resurrection work complete.-Rev. 21:4."

No wonder that the thought of such a spectacle -of a whole race returning to God with songs of praise and everlasting joy upon their heads - should seem almost too good to believe; but He who has promised is able also to perform all His good pleasure. Though sorrow and sighing seem almost inseparable from our being, yet "sorrow and sighing shall flee away"; though weeping in sackcloth and ashes has endured throughout the long night of the dominion of sin and death, yet joy awaits the morning; all tears shall be wiped from all faces; beauty shall be given for ashes; the oil of joy shall replace the spirit of heaviness, and the whole earth shall be at rest. -Isa. 14:7.

THE CHURCH'S HOPE

A clearer knowledge of the world's hope should, and does, increase the church's appreciation of God's loving arrangement for His creatures. It adds new lustre to the church's hope when we realise that the glorious object of the call and discipline of the church in this Gospel age is for the development of characters, which being proved loyal to God, to righteousness and truth, will be associated with Christ in the great and grand work of uplifting whosoever will of men out of ignorance, sin and degradation, into God's likeness, and favour, and love. The apostle declares "He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." (1 John 3:3). It is a hope that helps onward to God and holiness. (P.P. 7/31)

After Death the Judgement

(Heb. 9:27,28)

This biblical teaching of a future opportunity for 1 salvation has often been misrepresented as the doctrine of a "second chance". Of course, this is not the case. The "ransom for all" which Jesus our Saviour gave, guarantees for Adam and all his posterity one full opportunity for salvation, and all who in this life have not had that opportunity must (If God and His Word are true - and they are) have the opportunity after their resurrection from death, during the coming reign of Christ Jesus, our Saviour.

Rather than the words "after death the judgement" signifying a final and irrevocable doom, as is contended by so many well-meaning Christians, a careful consideration of these words in their context, leads us to exactly the opposite conclusion and magnifies the purpose of our gracious heavenly Father.

First of all, it must be emphasised that verses 27 and 28 of Hebrews, chapter 9, should be considered together and this is made evident by verse 27 beginning with "As" and the next verse commencing with "So". In other words, verse 28 is both complementary to and in parallel with verse 27. The verses read (A.V.): "As it is appointed unto men once to die but after this the judgement: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation". Now let us place against the first part of verse 27, the first part of verse 28, thus:

"As it is appointed unto men once to die" "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many" and do the same with the second part of both verses, thus: "But after this the judgement" "And unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." From these arrangements, we clearly see that firstly the death of man and that of our Lord are set in parallel and secondly that judgement and salvation are set in parallel as well.

Death, as far as mankind was concerned, was inevitable after our first parent had sinned against his Creator. Death was, of course, unnatural, for man, subject to certain conditions, was created to live. But sin "entered" and death resulted "by sin" (Rom. 5:12). Although the intervention of death was in the nature of calamity, the writer to the Hebrews in our text intends to strike a hopeful chord. There is to be after death, not a further calamity but "judgement" which, as we have seen, is linked with salvation.

It was because death reigned over mankind that Jesus came to die. As verse 28 reads, "So Christ was once offered". He was offered to bear the sins, not of the few but of the "many" as signifying all mankind: "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous".

References in Scripture to the day of judgement indicate that it will be associated with manifestations of divine justice, punishment and reckoning and this is because accountability is woven in with man's very being. And where there is accountability, there must be adjudication. The Scriptural conception of a judge is not simply that of a jurist on a bench but that of a ruler or king, reigning in righteousness, guiding and blessing his subjects and avenging them of their enemies. Thus "God has appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained." (Acts 17:31). That Judge will deal with and order the affairs of mankind. He will administer the government of God, as shown in the words used by Israel of old, "Make us a king to judge us like all the nations" (1 Sam. 8:5). That administration and ordering of human affairs are the main characteristics of the day of judgement, is evidenced by Jesus having promised solemnly that more toleration will be shown in that day to the peoples of Sodom and Gomorrah and of Tyre and Sidon than to the people of the cities of Israel who rejected Him. (Matt. 10:14, 15; 11:21 to 24).

All this is in fact expressed in our text. When Jesus appears the second time, it will be without sin unto

salvation. "Them that look for him" must be an allusion to Israel waiting for the High Priest to emerge from the inner sanctuary towards the end of the Day of Atonement, after he had made an atonement for their sins. The whole nation, so to speak, awaited the signal that atonement had been accomplished for another year. Paul tells us that "the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God" - in other words, the creation waits for Christ to appear the second time for it is then that His people, the sons of God, will be with Him.

At His first advent Jesus gave Himself a Ransom. He will come again to put into universal effect the opportunity for salvation which his death and resurrection secured.

Judgement after death, then, is primarily and fundamentally a blessing. Seeing that after "once to die" the weighty clause is added "but after this the judgement", we discern therein the radiant light of full redemption. Hallelujah! what a Saviour!

The Way of the Righteous

(A Study in Psalm 1)

The First Psalm is in the nature of an introduction to the Book of Psalms. Its subject makes it peculiarly fitted to herald the sublime thoughts of later psalms, for it speaks of righteousness and evil and Divine Law. Around these three themes is built the whole fabric of revealed truth, and a clear understanding of them is an indispensable preliminary to the intelligent consideration and reception of the "deep things of God" (1 Cor. 2. 10).

The purpose of this Psalm is the declaring of the fundamental principle upon which God has designed His creation, viz., that those things which are right, just, in harmony with His own character, shall endure for ever, and that which is evil, unjust, out of harmony with the character of God, although it may subsist for a time, must and will inevitably pass away and out of existence. Divine creation is so ordained that nothing which is inherently evil can subsist indefinitely. It contains within itself the seeds of its own destruction and must eventually come to its end. Hence we have the law propounded by Paul in Rom. 6.23 "The wages of sin is death" -death being the antithesis of life, the opposite to conscious existence.

The Psalm eulogises the happy state of the righteous man, both now and hereafter, and accredits the maintenance of his righteous state to his observance of Divine Law. Against this it places in contrast the unhappy position of the sinful, and, declares in no uncertain terms that the end of that way is desolation, oblivion, non-existence. The fact that God's whole plan of development for man is based upon law is stressed, and rightly stressed here. It is when this fact is realised that we find ready to our hands a yardstick by means of which we can measure the relative values of differing interpretations of Scripture.

VERSE 1

"Blessed is the man" says verse 1 *"who walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful."* This word "blessed" is capable of deeper shades of meaning than the A.V. suggests. *"How happy the man . . ."* is Rotherham's rendering, and Young is even more emphatic with *"O the happiness of that one who . . ."* It is significant that "happiness" is the first quality to be mentioned in the Psalms; and characteristic of God ! His eternal purpose in creation is to the promotion of happiness amongst His creatures, and that happiness is only to be achieved by complete harmony with God.

Religion is not a thing to be kept apart from daily life and practised solely on Sundays; every affair and activity of every day can be woven into the fabric of one's personal communion with God and sanctified thereby. "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Col. 3. 17). "All things work together for good to them that love God" (Rom. 8.28). "The joy of the Lord is your strength" (Neh. 8.10). This is the normal condition of human life, from which men have fallen away, and only as they come back to this standing of absolute dedication of life and its activities to God can they find true happiness.

VERSE 2

"But his delight is in the law of the Lord. and in his law doth he meditate day and night." (vs. 2). Here is the great principle; we must be students of the ways of God and learn to understand the principles upon which He has founded creation. The term "law" here does not confine itself merely to a set of commandments with their negative prohibitions- "Thou shalt not . . ." -but extends to those basic principles of Divine creation which lie at the root of every code of laws.

We must learn *why* righteousness is desirable and sin to be abhorred and avoided; *why* God is dealing now only with the disciples of Christ, the "Church" and will turn to convert the whole world only when the next Age, the Millennial Age, has dawned; *why* there is one call to a spiritual salvation and destiny, and another to an earthly, and eventual lot, whether in heaven or upon earth. We shall not attain to complete knowledge of these things whilst in the flesh, but we can learn sufficient to make us the efficient servants and ambassadors of our king.

“The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul” says the Psalmist in another place (Psalm 19.7). “O how I love thy law; it is my meditation all the day.” “Great peace have they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend them” (Psa. 119. 97 and 165). In more measured cadence the Preacher says “The law of the wise is a fountain of life, that he might depart from the snares of death” (Prov. 13. 14).

“In the night” says the Psalmist (Psa. 42. 8). “his song shall be with me.” Who is there among us not familiar with the haunting pathos of Cant. 3. 1 “By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth”? Our faith is not for daytime only; it is a twenty-four hour a day and a seven day a week faith, and oft-times it is during the silence of the night that our deepest revelations come.

VERSE 3

Vs. 3 “*And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season.*” In the first Eden there were trees of life and a river that “watered the garden” and so gave it life (Gen. 2. 9-10). In the second Eden there are to be trees of life and a river of water of life (Rev. 22 1-2; Ezek. 47. 12) and the trees are to be for food and medicine-sustenance and healing. The Psalmist translates the symbol into reality. Those trees of life of the Millennial Age are none other] than the righteous of this Age who have measured up to the standards of the first two verses of this Psalm. *Because* they have thus entered into the Divine way of life they shall become “trees of life” to give both sustenance and healing to the redeemed multitudes who will come back from the grave “in that day”. True will it be of these whom Paul elsewhere calls “ministers of reconciliation” (2 Cor. 5. 18) that “*whatsoever he doeth shall prosper*” (vs 3).

There is a peculiar fitness in the association of trees with rivers. In hot countries trees are planted on the banks of rivers and streams in order to screen the water from the solar heat and to check evaporation. The trees thrust down their roots into the moist soil and are themselves sustained by the same waters that they are conserving for use and benefit of men. “There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High” (Psa. 46.4).

Every consecrated follower of the Lord Jesus during this Gospel Age is himself a “tree” nourished by that river which is the knowledge of God revealed through His Word, the holy Scriptures; and each such follower is by his Christian life and devotion helping to conserve that Word against the coming Millennial Day when its benefits will be made free to all mankind. “The Spirit and the Bride say ‘come’ . . . and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Rev. 22. 17).

VERSE 4

Now we come to the other side of the picture. “*The ungodly are not so but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away,*” (vs. 4). This likening of the wilfully wicked man and the hopelessly evil thing to chaff which is doomed to be scattered and lost is definite in the Scriptures. “Let them be as the chaff before the wind” says the Psalmist in Psa. 35. 5 “and let the angel of the Lord destroy them”. “The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the word of our God shall stand for ever” (Isa. 40. 8).

“How oft” says Job (21. 17-18) “is the candle of the wicked put out! How oft they are as stubble before the wind, and as chaff that the storm carrieth away”. David continues in the same strain (Psa 37. 1-2). “Fret not thyself because of evil doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity; for they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb”, and again

(Psa.5:4,5). “Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with thee. The foolish (properly ‘worthless’) shall not stand in thy sight; thou hatest all workers of iniquity.”

And this, which is said of individuals, is equally true of every evil institution which cumbers the earth, this aspect being seen in vision when Daniel interpreted the king’s dream and described how all the might and power of those empires which stand in the way of Messiah’s Kingdom will be destroyed by the “stone cut out of the mountain without hands” and how every vestige of them is to be scattered like the “chaff of the summer threshing-floors” (Dan. 2. 35).

Herein is made plain the Divine intention with regard to wilful evildoers. After the full and fair opportunity for life which is to be offered to every man under the reign of Christ in the Millennial Age, the penalty for continued and wilful sin will fall inevitably upon the sinner; withdrawal of life, the Divine gift of which the individual concerned refuses to make proper use. As final and irrevocable as the dispersing of chaff from the threshing floor, carried by the wind and utterly lost, is this, the logical and inevitable result of wilful and incorrigible sin.

VERSES 5, 6

“*Therefore*” says the inspired writer with conviction “*the ungodly shall not stand in the judgement, nor sinners in the congregation (assembly) of the righteous.*” (vs. 5). There is a direct link with the New Testament doctrine of the resurrection of mankind during the Millennial Age here, for the word rendered

“stand” is one that has the meaning of standing firm or being set up. The New Testament word for resurrection is “*anastasis*” which means a re-standing or standing up again. “There shall be a resurrection (*anastasis*) of the dead” said Paul (Acts 24, 15) “both of the just and unjust.

“The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgement” said Jesus (Luke 11, 31-32) and again “All that are in the grave shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto resurrection to life (Greek) and they that have done evil, *unto the resurrection to judgement (eis anastasin kriseus)*. This verse in Psalm 1 is clearly a reference to the fact that, although “sinners” will in fact be restored to life in the Millennial Age; no sinner will “stand” in that judgement; he will either cease to be a sinner and so enter into life, or remaining a sinner, reap the logical consequence of that choice as expressed in the concluding words of the Psalm “*the way of the ungodly shall perish*”.

In no finer words could the Most High express His determination to root out and destroy every vestige of sin from the fair earth of his creating, and to usher all mankind- “whosoever will” -into the orderly and glorious life which is the rightful inheritance of all who shall eventually measure up willingly to their Creator’s wise and loving designs. “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” (B. S. M).

The Sum of All Graces

“The greatest of these is love.” 1 Corinthians 13:13

Why is the quality of love made so important in the Word of God? Because it is the first thing, the most important thing, the principal thing. It is the fulfilling of God’s law; and indeed, the sacrificial love enjoined upon God’s saints of this age goes even beyond the requirements of the perfect law.

But why is love put first? It is because no other quality of character is so lovely, so beautiful, so productive of happiness and joy, so great a blessing to all upon whom it operates. It is the very essence of God’s character **GOD IS LOVE!**

This quality particularly represents his personality. While God is all-just, all-powerful, all-wise, we do not say that God is Justice, or that God is Power, or that God is Wisdom - but that God is Love.

He uses this great power only as love dictates and approves. He uses his justice only in the fullest harmony with his glorious attribute of love. Love is the mainspring of all his doings. Whoever, therefore, would be godlike must be loving, must have love as the dominating quality of his character and life.

Love and righteousness are inseparable. Love is to continue to all eternity, and only those who become the active embodiment of this gracious quality of character will live eternally. (Dawn)

THE CHURCH WHICH IS HIS BODY

“(God) has put all things under His feet and has made Him the head over all things for the Church, which is His Body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” (Eph. 1:22,23)

BODY OF THE ANOINTED

The apostle Paul tells us that there was one feature of God’s plan for human salvation which was not made known in the past; the fact that there was to be a Body of Christ - not one individual but a company. This figure is used when we speak of the body of an assembly of which the chairman is the head. So we speak of the body of Christ, of which Jesus Christ is the Head. God gave him to be the Head over the Church, which is His Body.

Through Paul, the Lord tells us that in this Body of Christ there would be both Jews and Gentiles, and that the two were to become one “New Man”, with Christ Jesus the Head and the Church the Body. (Eph 2:11-16, 4:11-16) The first members of this Body came from the Jews, to whom the call was first to be made, because they were the natural seed of Abraham. God had so promised Abraham and indeed many thousand Jews responded quickly to the Gospel message, showing a condition of consecration to God and His ways.

Then the door was thrown open to the Gentiles. There were not many of these ready for the call, and so it has taken nearly two thousand years to gather from amongst the Gentiles enough to complete the predestined number. These had not had the previous instruction of the Law to assist them or the prior favour of the Lord, and so it has taken a lengthy period to take out the proportionate number. Thus we were called out of the world to be followers of Jesus; invited to make the same kind of consecration to God which He made, and to receive and manifest the same Holy Spirit - the spirit of anointing.

During this Gospel Age the Father is calling only those who have the spirit of His Son, whose disposition

was one of faith and obedience. These cannot have the same degree of obedience because the flesh is imperfect, but they can have the same degree as far as the mind, the will, is concerned. God is looking at the will; He knows far better than we do that we cannot do the things that we would wish to do. The apostle said, "Yea, I judge not my own self.... He that judges me is the Lord." (1 Cor. 4:3,4) Paul did not know how much allowance to make even for himself, nor do we know how much allowance to make for ourselves, our brethren our friends, our neighbours. So the Lord instructs us not to judge one another, for by our standard of judgement we ourselves will be judged.

When we come into relationship with God by consecration, His love is specially directed to us. We have access into His presence through Christ, who assures us that "The Father Himself loveth you". This love which began when He begot us by His Holy Spirit, continues with us as long as we are loyal to Him and in proportion to the degree of that loyalty. Should we at anytime prove disloyal, the Holy Spirit would be taken from us. There is forgiveness for errors made through the weakness of the flesh, but disloyalty to the Lord, sin against the Holy Spirit, has no forgiveness. But while our trust is firmly placed in Him, He is able to keep us from falling.

What a wonderful honour is that to which God has called us! Those who have been begotten again by His Holy Spirit have been anointed thenceforth to be kings and priests unto God, and to reign with Christ a thousand years. There are tribulations identified with all their experiences; nevertheless, while they have these, they have also the peace of God which passes all human understanding. God's word declares that all things are theirs, for they are Christ's, and Christ is God's. He has promised grace sufficient for every trial - even the adversities of life work together for their good, because they love God and are called according to His purpose.

THE TRUE CHURCH

The church which our Lord Jesus Christ began to gather during His ministry and which was recognised by the Father at Pentecost, after the Ransom-price for all had been provided, was the little company of disciples who had consecrated earthly time, talents and life as a sacrifice to God. Theirs was a 'voluntary association' for mutual aid and was under the laws and commandment of Christ, the Head or recognised ruling authority. The bonds were those of love and common interest. Since all were enlisted under the captaincy of Jesus, the hopes and fears, the joys and sorrows and aims of one were those of the others. Thus they had a far more perfect union of hearts than could possibly be had from a union on the basis of any man-made creed. Their only union was of the Spirit, their law was that of love, their government was the will of Him who said, "If you love me, keep my commandments."

There are two senses in which the true church of Christ may be considered - all who, like the early church, are fully consecrated to the doing of the Father's will, amenable only to Christ's will and government, recognising and obeying no other - these, the saints from the beginning of the Gospel Age down to its close, when all of this company shall have been "sealed", constitute **The Church of the First Born**, whose names are written in heaven. These are all one in aim, hope and suffering, and will be joint-heirs with Christ Jesus to the great "inheritance of the saints in light", joint-heirs with Him in the kingdom which God has promised to those who love Him.

The other sense in which this same company is recognised is by counting a part for the whole. Thus all the living ones of this company may be spoken of as the Church, or again, any part of this company of living followers who may meet together may properly be called the Church, for wherever two or three are assembled, the Lord has promised to be among them. Consequently, that would be a Church meeting, an assembly of 'the Church of the First-Born'. The "general assembly" will be when all the Church are made like their Head and are glorified with Him and see Him as He is. God's Church is not yet organised, rather the Gospel Age has been the time for calling out and testing the volunteers willing to sacrifice and suffer with their Lord now, and thus prove themselves worthy to be recognised as joint-heirs in His Kingdom at the close of that Age.

It is then that He shall establish and organise His kingdom in power and great glory, to bless and rule the world with 'Divine Authority'. Meantime, the called out ones who are seeking to make their calling and election sure that they may attain to a share in the kingdom are "a voluntary association of believers", drawn together for mutual assistance in seeking to know and do the Father's will, so that they may be accounted worthy of the honours and glory promised. In this association of the consecrated, there is no imperial authority of one over another and no lording over God's heritage should be permitted, for the one and only Lord has left the clear instruction, "Be not called Rabbi, for one is your Master, even Christ, and all you are brethren."

There is abundant scripture proof that God's object in this selection, discipline and final exaltation of the

Church is for the ultimate purpose of blessing, through them, all His fallen, sin-stricken creation, by granting to all a full, perfect judgement or trial, under favourable conditions, of which perfect knowledge and sufficient help will be chief elements. Thus seen, the Church is being selected for the great work to be accomplished during the Millennial Age of restoring “whosoever will” of the fallen ones to the original state, leaving those still unwilling to embrace the Divine righteousness to go down into “second death” - final destruction.

Thus then is the Church of Christ defined. It is perfectly illustrated by the apostle Paul (Romans 12:4,5), when he compared the Church to a human body. In this figure the head represents our Lord, and all who are **His** constitute the Body, over which the Head rules. Jesus has been and always will be the Head over the Church as a whole; He is likewise the Head and Ruler of the entire living Church, and in every assembly where two or three (or more) meet **in His name** (where His word is sought and heeded), He is the Head, Ruler and Teacher. (Eph 1:20-23)

HOW TO JOIN THE TRUE CHURCH

All Christians should be joined to this association, or incipient organisation. In the light of what the scriptures say of this company constituting the Church, as we have seen, it is evident that all who have given up their will, talent, time, etc., are recognised as members of that Church of which he is the Head, and who know and are known by God. Thus, by consecration, we join the True Church and our names are recorded in heaven.

But some may still feel that surely there is a need to join some organisation on earth, assent to some creed, be enrolled somewhere. Let us always remember that in all things our Lord is our Pattern and Teacher, and in neither His words nor his acts do we find any authority for binding ourselves with creeds and traditions of men, all of which tend to make the Word of God of no effect, bringing us under bondage which will hinder growth in grace and knowledge. Paul warned against this, saying, “Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.” (Gal 5:1)

But how shall we then know one another? In reply, we might ask, How can we help knowing one another when the Spirit of our Master is made manifest in word and act and manner and look? Yes, the living faith, the unfeigned love, the long-suffering meekness, the childlike simplicity, coupled with the constancy and zeal of maturity, make manifest the Children of God and we need no earthly record, for the names of all such are surely written in the Lamb’s Book of Life. (P.P. 11/19)

A Morning Prayer

O God, enlighten my mind with Truth;
Inflame my heart with love;
Inspire me with courage;
Enrich my life with service;
Pardon what I have been;
Sanctify what I am; Order what I shall be,
And Thine shall be the glory, and mine
the eternal salvation, through
Jesus Christ my Lord.
-Bishop Vincent, N.Y.

Faithfulness Unto Death

“Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life.” (Rev. 2:10)

Faithfulness unto death means that we have I ‘pledged ourselves to someone to do some service, and that we intend to faithfully carry out that service, and fulfil it in our death.

Faithfulness, as viewed by the world, is much admired and praised; whereas unfaithfulness is looked upon with contempt. To illustrate:- Suppose a man were employed by a master to carry out some important work that required thoughtfulness, cautiousness and continuity for many years. If that man were faithfully doing all that was expected of him to the best of his ability, he would be appreciated, rewarded and praised by all concerned; but if, on the contrary he became thoughtless, careless and erratic, and seriously jeopardized the work given him to do, he would be cast off and punished because of his unfaithfulness. Now if faithfulness is appreciated by worldly people (whose standard of righteousness is low) how much more would Jehovah, the

Great God of righteousness, reward faithfulness in any service done for him?

Our text is addressed to those who have taken advantage of the favour of God in accepting the gift of righteousness through faith in the blood of Christ. We realise that by our faith we are made *holy* and *acceptable* to God. Hearing his invitation through the Apostle Paul (Rom. 12:1), we presented our bodies a living sacrifices (a reasonable service), and henceforth, not conforming ourselves to this world but being transformed by the renewing of our minds, we go on to prove what is that good, acceptable, and perfect will of God. Having thus consecrated ourselves to God, he, as it were, gives back to us our life and all we possessed, to use them now in his service till all is consumed, even to death. This brings out a very great responsibility, one which we could never of ourselves have undertaken; but we have presented ourselves in sacrifice because we have believed God and are trusting in him to supply all our need. The question is, then, shall we be faithful unto death? If we are, we shall receive the *crown* of life, the highest kind of life, immortality.

GOD'S LOVING-KINDNESS

Do we often think of the loving-kindness of God? Do we picture him as looking down upon us, his children, pitying and helping us in the various trials and experiences which are necessary to enable us, through the Spirit, to mortify the deeds of the flesh, that we as New Creatures may live? When we get our reward, we shall realise that it was all of God's favour that we obtained the prize. All the trials and temptations he sends us crystallize our character, and prepare us for eternity.

Look back to the beginning of the way. How we appreciated God's goodness and love when we first heard his truth! How we realised that he is indeed a loving, pitying Father! How gently he led us from one trial to another! He would not allow us to be tried above what we were able to bear, but when we went to Him in prayer, he always provided the promised grace sufficient to give us strength to resist. When troubles come upon us, and we realise what a loving Heavenly Father we have, do we not also realize a nearness to the Lord and find sweet peace such as we never found before? So God gently leads us, allowing the fire of affliction to come upon us little by little, and gradually, as we continue faithful in these trying experiences, we become crystallized in character. Not hardened in heart, but hardened in character to the intent that we may be enabled to bear more pressure, more trial, more affliction even till death.

If all the difficulties which we have already come through had come upon us at the beginning of the way, we should have been overwhelmed. As it was, they loomed up like mountains; but we faced them with a stout heart. We went to God and said, I am not able to surmount this by myself, but I know I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me. We proved God to see if he would give what he had promised, and we are very thankful to testify that we have never yet found him unfaithful. But we have had to look at ourselves more than once, however, and ask: "Am I faithful to God?" Can we say, "Father I have nothing but love in my heart toward thee, love so great that I love thee more than I love myself, more than I love life, more than I love all else?" Can we say we love the Lord Jesus Christ so intently that we are willing to suffer for his sake? Can we look into our hearts and say truthfully, "By God's grace and with the help which he will supply, I do really desire to be faithful, loving and kind, and am willing to endure all things even unto death?"

LIVING SACRIFICES

Are we willing to learn to lay down our lives for the brethren, striving day and night to give forth the Word of Truth? Are we endeavouring to work with our own hands that we may help those who are in need of help? Are we seeking at all times that wisdom which comes from above? For earthly wisdom is worse than useless in this life of sacrifice upon which we have entered. The wisdom from above not only teaches us to consider the object of our sacrifice, but also to look into the motive of everything which leads up to that object. It enables us to decide whether our doing this or that may help, or injure the brethren, - whether our first thoughts in connection with any work on their behalf are the best to act upon. But when we believe we have the leading of the Lord in any matter, let us be prompt to do it even at great sacrifice to ourselves.

How can we lay down our lives for the brethren? In this way: by being faithful to God, to Christ, and to each other. Can we look into our hearts and say: "There is not one individual in all the world whom I hate!" If we can say this, then we can add: "There is not one individual in all the world whom I do not love?" The Lord said: "If ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them.... But love ye your enemies, and do good and lend, hoping for nothing again: and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest, for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil." The world's standard is "Do unto others as they do unto you," but the Lord's standard is "As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also likewise to them." (Luke 6:31-35).

How can we prove to ourselves that we love our enemies, that we love the brethren, that we love the Lord and that we love our Heavenly Father with supreme love? Paul wrote to the Romans that he would be willing to be accursed (to suffer punishment) for his brethren's sake, if only he could bring them to Christ. That was his position. What a spirit of love and self-sacrifice! It was the same spirit which our master had. He laid

down his life daily for his brethren, the Jews, using up his vitality and energy in healing and blessing them. In this way he fulfilled the sacrifice, the merit of which he has applied for us. We also are told to lay down our lives for the brethren, using our vitality and energy in blessing them and giving them the glad message of the glorious hope of the glory of God (Rom. 5:2).

Our Lord during his ministry was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. He was not tempted as a sinful human being, but as a New Creature. His temptation came from three directions-the world, the flesh, and the devil. He overcame them. Each one of us is tempted in the same way, and the Lord knows how to help us overcome. You remember what he says to us, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you. In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." (John 14:27; 16:33).

As the trials and testings become more and more difficult, our characters gradually become harder and harder, more settled, rooted and grounded in the truth. We are being cut and polished as God's jewels. It is only by remaining faithful under all these trials and difficulties, and being rightly exercised by them that we can expect to receive the reward which God is offering to those only who are faithful unto death.

SOLDIERS OF CHRIST

We are spoken of as soldiers of Christ and enlisted, as it were, in our king's service. We pledged ourselves to fight for our country (not the earthly, but the heavenly country) against the world, the flesh and the devil. Now, when a soldier enlists, he is put under officers who give him instructions and put him through certain exercise and drill to fit him for the position he is to fill. So we, as soldiers Christ, are also placed under officers - Christ and those whom God hath set in authority in the Church. Their office is to give us our instructions, and the right kind of exercises. They tell us how to exercise our minds and how to make use of our opportunities so as to fit ourselves for service in God's kingdom.

A book of instructions also is given to the earthly soldier, that he may study the various forms of drill in order to become efficient. The Bible is our book of instructions, which enables us to decide whether the teaching we receive from our officers is according to the book of rules. Paul says, "Prove all things, and accept only that which is good." We require, therefore, to learn this book thoroughly, and to be conversant with all the rules contained in it, and so make progress, making ourselves perfect in every good work.

But it is not only necessary that we should be rightly exercised in all these matters, it is also necessary that we should put on the armour of God, and see that we have it *all* on, for our king has provided it. Above all, let us take the shield of faith wherewith we may quench every fiery dart of the Adversary. As we endeavour to be faithful to our Lord, to stand up for righteousness and truth, to show our love of the standard which God has raised for us, we shall find abundant use for our shield, because it is certain that we shall be attacked by the Adversary, the flesh, and the world.

How does the shield of faith quench the fiery darts of the Adversary? You have been striving for a long time to show your love for the brethren, and to do good to everybody as you have the opportunity especially to the household of faith. Have you, in your endeavours to do this, been evil spoken of? Has a different aspect been given to your words, and have you been accused of this and that? Have you felt very downcast, and find yourself beginning to wonder if there is anything in you at all? Have you ever felt your efforts do not appear to bring anyone into the Truth? If so, remember that even though your efforts seemingly do not bring anyone into the truth now, they will bear fruit some day. Remember also that it is a great privilege to have been used to speak the truth. We shall probably not know until we are glorified just how much the Lord has used us.

WALKING BY FAITH

Why do we believe that before long, the whole condition of things will be changed, that all the rule and authority now in existence will be laid low, and Christ reigning instead? How do we know this? We have accepted it by *faith*. How do we know we are consecrated to God, and how do we know he wants us? By *Faith*, based upon the Word of God. Unless we are full of faith, "faithful unto death," we will not receive the crown of life. Many of us do not naturally possess the necessary qualities. We like changes; we lack continuity. If we trust him, God will help us to develop that quality of perseverance and constancy to such an extent, that we will be able to remain faithful all the way through this life. Those qualities which we do not possess naturally, the grace of God working in our hearts will make up to us in some other way, so that we shall come off more than conquerors. We have not yet reached the end of all our experiences, the end does not come until death. Do not think it strange when still more trials come upon us the further we proceed into the evil day.

We require to know something about the character of our Heavenly Father, as well as his purposes concerning ourselves and his truth before we can develop his love. The love of God is unselfish. It loves because it loves to love. It does not love because of what it is going to get, but loves for love itself. God loved

us when we were enemies; when there was no reason why he should love us. He loved us because *He is Love*. We must be conformed to the image of his Son. We must endeavour to be holy as God is holy. We know that our earthly body will never acquire that state of perfection where it can be said to be holy in the actual sense; but we can be holy-minded; we can see to it that we have no desire to do wrong in any form.

May this be the spirit of each of us; may we endeavour to be faithful not only to God, but to the brethren, and even to our enemies. Yes, and may we be faithful even to our own selves- "To thine own self be true." How easy it is for us to deceive ourselves. Let us search our hearts daily. Let us watch as well as pray, lest we enter into temptation. Unless we watch and pray continually, unless we have circumcised our hearts, we are likely to be deceived. Let us lay our hearts bare before our Heavenly Father, and see whether we are carrying out that which we have promised to do. Let us see if we are faithful, if we are willing to continue faithful unto death. God grant we may all have sufficient grace to enable us to say in our hearts, "Thy will be done." Even though he may lead us through long dark ways, let us trust him where we cannot trace him. Has he not done all that he promised? *He* has been faithful, and he has told us to trust him, come what may; therefore, let *us* be faithful, even unto death, that by his grace we may receive the glorious Crown of Life. AMEN.

(JL:1909, abridged)

HE UNDERSTANDS

'Tis sweet to know

When we are tired, and when the hand of pain

Lies on our hearts, and when we look in vain

For human comfort, that the Great Divine

Still understands these cares of yours and mine,

No only understands, but day by day

Lives with us, while we tread the earthly way,

Bears with us all our weariness, and feels

The shadow of the faintest cloud that steals

Across our sunshine, even learns again

The depths and bitterness of human pain.

There is no sorrow that He will not share,

No cross, no burden for our hearts to bear

Without His help, no care of ours too small

To cast on Jesus, let us tell Him all,

Lay at His feet the story of our woes,

And in His sympathy find sweet repose.

He understands. (Anon.)



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A CHRISTMAS MEDITATION

He came to us; and He need not have come. He had the whole creation of angelic realms in which to find satisfaction if He wished, countless multitudes of sinless angelic beings to do Him homage and with whom He could have fellowship; but He left them behind. This earth was a dark place, dark with sin and wretchedness, its inhabitants violent, lustful, cruel; and they hated Him. Yet He came.

*"His Father's house of light,
His glory-circled throne,
He left, for earthly night,
For wanderings sad and lone.
He left it all for me-
Have I left aught for Thee?"*

That was why He came. He came for me, that I might be delivered from this dark abyss of sin, and rejoice in the glorious liberty of the children of God. He came for my fellows, too, that they might be rescued in like fashion. He came to establish the Father's Kingdom here on earth, that Kingdom which is already supreme in every other sphere of the Father's creation. He came to afford all a full, fair, free opportunity of eternal life.

*"He breaks the power of reigning sin
And sets the prisoner free.
His blood can make the foulest clean;
His blood avails for me."*

He came because He was the only one who could possibly come. He is the greatest in all creation and only the greatest can make the greatest sacrifice. And His sacrifice was the greatest. No creature in all heaven and all earth will ever be able to make so great a sacrifice. He who was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might become rich.

*"Man of sorrows! What a name
For the son of God, who came
Ruined sinners to reclaim!
Hallelujah! What a Saviour!"*

He came to tell men of His plans for their future happiness, how that even their killing of Him will not frustrate His hold over them. For He comes again to bring them all to Himself, as many as have not utterly extinguished their own capacity for repentance. And as assurance of that restoration, He has left His followers behind to go on telling of the glorious

Kingdom which will follow earth's dark night of sin, a Kingdom in which mankind will be drawn by every artifice in God's armoury to repentance and reconciliation with Him, walking along the way of holiness to full acceptance of salvation in Christ. For unto Him will every knee on earth bow, as now does every knee in heaven.

*"One offer of salvation
To all the world make known.
'Tis Jesus Christ, the First and Last;
He saves, and He alone."*

He came, and He comes again. Not now as a babe in a manger, but a glorious heavenly Lord, armed with all power in heaven and in earth. He comes to gather His Church to be with Him, and only those who are watching for His appearing will share in that gathering. He comes revealed in the consuming fire of Divine judgment for the destruction of all those institutions of men which stand in the way of His incoming Kingdom. He comes in

resplendent glory so that all may know that He has come, and at once begins to speak peace to the nations.

*“Down the minster aisles of splendour, from between the cherubim,
Through the wondering throng, with motion strong and fleet.
Sounds His victor tread approaching, with a music far and dim,
The music of the coming of His feet,
He is coming, O my spirit, with His everlasting peace,
With His blessedness, immortal and complete.
He is coming, O my spirit, and His coming brings release.
I listen for the coming of His feet.”*

The angels are singing in the distance; there are just a few who can hear their song to-day. Later on all will hear them and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads, obtaining joy and gladness while sorrow and sighing flee away.

*“For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder. And his name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, the mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.
(B.S.M.)*

“FOLLOW AFTER RIGHTEOUSNESS”

As year by year we press on in the narrow way, ...trusting in our loving Father and in His dear son, our Saviour, it is good to call to mind the advice given so long ago by the aged apostle Paul to his beloved son in the faith, Timothy. In his two letters, the long experienced warrior in the faith was seeking to reassure, to encourage and to stimulate his younger disciple to carry on the ministry of the gospel, for which he himself had so long laboured. His words were addressed to a relatively young man but they come down the years to us all of every age.

The apostle deals in his two letters to Timothy with the various features of God's plan and the manner in which that young man should seek to express them in his own life and ministry. The second letter, in particular, might be termed Paul's "goodbye letter" for he states clearly in it that the end for him is near. So to this young man, with whom he had formed such a firm and close relationship and whom he addressed in such affectionate terms, he confides, as it were, his closing thoughts, including among other things the rather plaintive plea for Timothy, if it were possible, to pay him one last visit in prison.

A CALL TO MINISTRY

Timothy was quite young, probably in his teens, when Paul first visited Lystra in Asia Minor, estimated to be in about AD 45. Timothy was of mixed parentage, his father being a Greek and his mother a Jewess. He was evidently brought up in the Jewish faith and when Paul came to Lystra with the good news of Jesus, Tim other, Lois, quickly responded and declared themselves for Him. Apparently, a local church was established there and in it Timothy grew up in knowledge and grace.

Paul again visited the town about six years later and it is recorded in Acts 16:1-3- *“Then came he (Paul) to Derbe and Lystra, and behold a certain disciple was there named Timotheus, Who was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium. Him would Paul have to go forth with us.”* So this association, which followed the departure of Barnabas, Paul's previous co-labourer, was formed and extended for a number of years of joint activity in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is clear that, during this time, a strong bond of loyalty and affection was forged between the older and younger servant of Jesus Christ.

In his letters to Timothy, we see something of the inner character of the aged apostle, we see the more tender, solicitous side of the grand old fighter for the truth, "Mr Valiant for Truth", as Bunyan calls one of his characters, and the great codifier of the Christian gospel in all its facets. We can detect in them a growing weariness from all his exertions, and no doubt his imprisonments, and his readiness to lie at rest in the Lord. We see also into the character and background of the younger man. It seems possible that, apart from his youthfulness, he may have been by nature hesitant or timid, and Paul had to urge him to carry on the ministry fearlessly. *“Let no one despise your youth, rather be an example to the believers, in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.” (1 Tim 4:12)*

So then, to assist the younger man, Paul out of the wisdom gained over the years, counsels Timothy and his words come down to us today, not only to the younger brothers and sisters, though especially to them, but to all who would live for Christ. We might consider his words of instruction, counsel and encouragement under three headings -

- (1) the foundation of faith
- (2) the call to follow after righteousness

(3) the reward of righteousness

THE FOUNDATION OF FAITH

For all God's people, faith must be founded upon the Word of God, the recorded word centred on Him who is the Living Word. Paul tells us in Rom 10:14-17- *"How shall they call on Him (the Lord Jesus) in whom they have not believed? How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? How shall they hear without a preacher? How shall they preach except they be sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace and bring glad tidings of good things"* ^L*So then, faith come by hearing and hearing by the word of God."* In his second letter, Paul urges on Timothy to "preach the word", not logic or philosophy or worldly wisdom, but the Word of God.

For this task, Timothy had the advantage of a godly mother and grandmother, whose faith the apostle commends. Through them, the young man had *'from a child known the holy scriptures, which are able to make wise unto salvation, through faith in Christ Jesus.'* (2 Tim 3:15) This grounding in the Old Testament scriptures would have been for these "Israelites indeed" a wonderful basis for the preaching of the apostle when he reached their town in the course of his missionary journeys, for these all point forward to the One, our Lord Jesus Christ, who is Himself the living Word of God, and who is the only foundation on which faith and character can be built.

As already noted, all evidently readily embraced the new Christian faith. Perhaps, like Simeon of whom Luke tell us, they were also "waiting for the consolation of Israel" or, like Anna, the prophetess, "were looking for redemption in Israel." So it was in due time that Paul called Timothy, the young man blessed with an hereditary faith and knowledge of the scriptures, but more importantly with a personal faith and conviction, to the ministry of the word of God, assuring him that - *"all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished unto all good works."* (2 Tim 3:16,17)

Into the ministry of the gospel, the young man may well have entered with some misgivings. He was following in the steps of a very gifted and seasoned campaigner. So the apostle deems it necessary to stir up his zeal, strengthen his resolve, and point him in the right way of service. Among many particular instructions, three which are grouped together seem to embrace the various aspects of his personal life and ministry. We might refer to them as the three F's, and they are found in 1 Tim 6:11,12 - *"But thou, O man of God, FLEE these things (worldly pursuits previously listed), and FOLLOW after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness: FIGHT the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life."* In 2 Tim 2:22, he counsels Timothy on similar lines to *"flee also youthful lusts but follow after righteousness."*

"FLEE THESE THINGS"

Whether we come into the faith in our youth, like Timothy, or in later life, all the lessons of the apostle to his young co-worker need to be learnt and put into practice. To flee youthful lusts might seem an unnecessary instruction to those of maturer years or, like Timothy, from a godly home, but there are many distractions, often harmless enough in themselves, to draw the new believer away. Lusts conjure up the thought of evils but the word can also mean desires, and for all believers there are self-denials and sacrifices which will have to be made if they are to be fully true to their Master. Paul himself gave up very much in status and prospects, but these so-called gains he was ready to count as loss and worthless in comparison with the riches of God's grace, the privileges of present service and the joy of future blessings.

Our Heavenly Father desires mature, well-developed sons and daughters. In the Christian way, we can only go forward or slip back; there is no standing still. Paul had to tell the Hebrew brethren - *"leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection."* (Heb 6:1) The thought here is of going onward towards completion of Christian understanding and character, of being progressively developed and changed more and more into the likeness of our perfect Master, fully sanctified, fully cleansed and set apart for His service. Paul had in fact to rebuke some of the Hebrew brethren for failure to progress; instead of being able to assimilate the "strong meat" of the word and to instruct others, they were still on the "milk of the word", suitable for infants.

"Every one that uses milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. Strong meat belongs to those who are of full age, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." (Heb 5:11-14) Behind his words is the responsibility of all who have been blessed by the word of God to daily feast upon His word, to seek more and more to learn well His will for them, to put that will into practice and in turn to be a blessing to others. *"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and for ever, Amen."* (2 Pet 3:18) *"Speaking the truth in love, grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, even Christ."* (Eph 4:15)

THE CALL TO RIGHTEOUSNESS

At the beginning of his counsel to Timothy in 1 Tim 6:11,12, the apostle addresses him in these words - "Thou, 0 man of God". Here he does not use the more affectionate, familiar terms of endearment elsewhere employed, such as "my own son in the faith", "dearly beloved son", and so on, but addresses him as "man of God." This is surely an arresting title. It has been pointed out that its use in the Old Testament is not uncommon, being used particularly of Moses, of the prophets and of David. The expression is nowhere else used in the New Testament, except in a general sense in 2 Tim 3:17, where, as already noted, the inspired scriptures are the all-in-all provision for each man or woman of God. In our verse in 1 Tim 6, the apostle is surely setting a very high standard and stern challenge before Timothy to be "God's man". The challenge to us is to be "men and women of God."

All who are begotten of God's Holy Spirit are His children, and in 2 Cor 6:17, 18 we read - *"Wherefore come out from among them, and be you separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you and be a father unto you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."* This is a blessed relationship, but the mode of address of the apostle in our verse would seem to present a greater challenge, to be all for Him who called Timothy and who has called us to be followers of His dear Son. *"Watch you, stand fast in the faith, acquit yourselves like men, be strong!" (1 Cor 16:13)* Here the same apostle directs a similar challenge to the faithful brethren in Corinth as to young Timothy, who had evidently already begun well and was to go on to be God's man of valour, like his older mentor.

This required active pursuit of righteousness; the verbs of challenge used here and in the previous verse are stated to be very emphatic. Flee right away from all unworthy, worldly things as far and as fast as possible. Pursue eagerly and constantly what is right and just and pleasing in God's sight, and in keeping with His character, deal gently with those around us. With this, the apostle links godliness, the devotion of the heart and will to that which is pleasing to God. Furthermore, Timothy's preaching and doctrine was to be according to godliness, that is, it was to be consistent with the divine character, harmonious with and productive of godliness.

Our Lord made it clear that such pursuit of righteousness, of right dealings with God and mankind, will bring opposition, will result in trials, but His promise stands sure - *"Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."* (Matt 5:10) and again - *"Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."* (Matt 5:6) Such an earnest longing will provide the stimulus to those who are called to pursue righteousness and the other gracious qualities listed by the apostle here and throughout his letters to Timothy.

In 1 Tim 6:11, Paul adds to righteousness and godliness, the heart's desire for full communion and harmony with God, first what we might consider the active qualities of faith or faithfulness and of love, and second the submissive qualities of patient endurance and meekness. In his second letter, he adds the qualities or graces of faith, love and peace out of a pure heart. (2 Tim 2:22) The exercise of all these can however only follow full acceptance of the divine righteousness and the inner development of the fruits of the Holy Spirit, which encompass all these traits of character.

THE NATURE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

We read that God is love, but also that "righteousness and judgement" are the habitation of His throne. (Psa 97:2) Of our Saviour, it was foretold - *"Thou lovest righteousness and hatest wickedness, therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows."* (Psa 45:7 quoted in Heb 1:9) To be pleasing in any way to God, to be eligible for any service for Him, not only Timothy, but young men and women of all ages must be lovers of righteousness, of the perfect wisdom, justice, love and power of our Heavenly Father as exhibited in our Saviour and in that grand plan of salvation which He has centred in Him.

How then would we define righteousness in our present context? The word is used in scripture in more than one sense, but in each case it carries the thought of rightness, exactness, complete justice. In 1 Cor 1:30, we read that Christ is made unto us righteousness, referring to our standing before God, justified by faith in Him. In our present portion, it is the righteous character of God as set before the believer, the pursuit of which will entail the development of a like character. Vine describes righteousness as primarily "the character or quality of being right or just", first of all an attribute of God. Perhaps for one definition of it, we might consider Phil 4:8 as descriptive of its various aspects - truth, honesty, justice, purity, loveliness, good report, virtue, praiseworthiness.

In our day, righteousness even by past worldly standards is conspicuously rare. Our daily news testifies to the moral corruptness of many in high places, people whom we once would have expected to look up to. For all too many now "the end justifies the means", including compromise, dishonesty, etc. This is an infectious disease and immunisation with the spirit of God's righteousness is the only complete and effective antidote. "All unrighteousness is sin" is the clear and unequivocal standard of scripture, with the injunction, "abstain from all appearance of evil."

Just as peace is not just the absence of strife, but an active force in its own right, so righteousness is not just

an absence of iniquity and injustice, but a positive longing for and practice of what is right in God's sight at all times. This cannot be in our own strength, for we know how the scriptures describe our righteousness, but in the daily strength which our Heavenly Father will supply, if we ask in faith. The pursuit and the practice go together, as the apostle John tells us - *"Little children, let no one deceive you; he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He (Jesus) is righteous."* (1 John 3:7) We need to be both hearers and doers.

THE PREACHING OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

The practice of righteousness in Timothy's own life was further to be manifested in his preaching. Here was a relatively young man, well versed in the Hebrew scriptures and well tutored by Paul, but commissioned to preach to many who would no doubt be his elders, possibly inclined to be contemptuous of him. So the apostle instructs him - *"Preach the word, be instant in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine."* (2 Tim 4:2) What is the basis for such preaching? As already seen, there can be one foundation only for Christian service, namely the holy scriptures, scriptures given by divine inspiration and fully sufficient for the equipping of every servant of God, whatever the area of ministry of that brother and sister in Christ may be.

In our time, we are blessed not only with the wonderful messages of the Old Testament prophets and others who wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, but with the record of much of our Saviour's public and private teaching and the messages given through His faithful apostles and others. These alone must be the basis of our preaching, as for Timothy. For many of the precious truths we cherish, there is a clear "thus saith the Lord", and these are the great fundamentals of our faith. To these, we can add those understandings which seem to flow clearly and inevitably from the great library of scripture. But there are other areas where, to be honest, we cannot be dogmatic and need to be wary of building too much upon them.

Perhaps as a guide to Timothy's preaching, Paul in his first letter sets out a brief but very comprehensive resume of the whole plan of God, not only for His people now but reaching forward to all mankind in due time. This would no doubt be a basis for the younger man's witness and preaching, as it has particularly and justifiably been for Bible students. *"For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved, and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time."* (1 Tim 2:3-6)

But as well as the pursuit and practice of righteousness, the scriptures speak also of the reward or prize of righteousness. We shall return to this later, but we are assured that it is within the giving of a righteous judge, and that, in the meantime, to cover our shortcomings, we have an "Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous." (1 John 2:1) The psalmist was led to write - *"Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous, for praise is comely for the upright."* (Psa 33:1) Those whom God has justified by faith, reckoned righteous in His sight, are assured of His constant care. *"The Lord is near unto them that are of a broken heart.... many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth out of them all."* (Psa 34:18,19)

"FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH"

Having urged the younger man, Timothy, to flee worldly ambitions and desires and to follow diligently in the way of righteousness and godliness, he proceeds to challenge him to take up the good fight of faith and to lay hold on eternal life. The word for fight used here can apparently refer to the fight of battle or the fight of the arena; in either case a foe has to be overcome and similar preparation, discipline and diligence are all important. The weapons of our warfare, as itemised by the same apostle in Eph 6, indicate a very real and crucial combat, including the onslaughts of the great enemy of God's people, the opponent of all righteousness.

But why would Paul call it a good fight? There is an account of a Greek general of earlier time, who is reputed to have urged on his troops by telling them in rather similar terms - "We fight for something that is worth fighting for. That makes it a good fight." In somewhat similar vein, the apostle himself, using this time the analogy of a foot race, declares - *"Know ye not that they who run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize. So run, that ye may obtain. And everyone who striveth for the mastery is temperate (uses self-control) in all things. They do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we are incorruptible."* (1 Cor 9:24, 25)

The Christian warfare, the combat, is one of faith, requiring full trust and surrender to the will of our Father, of whom it is declared *"Faithful is He who has called you, who also will do it."* (1 Thess 5:24) It requires daily faithfulness in the path and in the tasks set before us, for we all are stewards of His grace, stewards of whom it is required that they be found faithful. The old Testament heroes of faith, the cloud of witnesses, challenge us to emulate their fidelity. Above all, we have in our Saviour the perfect example of faithfulness and as we follow in his steps, we too seek to lay hold on eternal life, even as He was faithful unto death and is now set down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.

THE REWARD OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Nearly the last words of the apostle in his farewell letter to Timothy are very moving, as he confides to his

younger colleague - *"I am now ready to be offered and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day."* (2 Tim 4:6-8) He had earlier foreshadowed this in his letter to the Philippians - *"having a desire to depart and to be with Christ"* (Phil 1:23) - but it was not then the time. Now he is ready to depart, to be at rest in the Lord, to await "that day" when he would receive the crown of righteousness.

How glad we can be that the apostle did not stop at that point. No, he adds for Timothy's benefit and encouragement, and for ours - *"And not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing!"* What a glorious day that will be for those who win the great victory of faith! *"This is the victory that overcometh the world, even your faith,"* writes the apostle John. For Timothy, for all whom God has called and who by faith and obedience to the will of God make their calling and election sure, there is a crown of righteousness laid up in heaven. So may the beloved apostle's words challenge us to even greater faithfulness as each year passes. Let us hear his final words to his son in the faith, Timothy "man of God" - *"The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit. Grace be with you. Amen."*

Sacrifices of Thanksgiving

"By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name." (Heb. 13:15)

There is no better way, in fact there is no other way at all, to live a true life of thanksgiving and praise to God than to lay down our lives in showing forth His praises. When we consider that all we have and all we hope for are ours by God's grace, then we well know that our debt of gratitude calls for nothing less than the devotion of our all to Him, no longer living unto ourselves, nor for ourselves, but for Him.

It is this thought that is expressed by David in those well known words - *"What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all His people. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints. O Lord, truly I am Thy servant.... and the son of Thine handmaid. Thou has loosed my bonds, I will offer to Thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all His people."* (Psalm 116:12-18)

Again the Psalmist calls upon us to remember the Lord's goodness with thanksgiving, saying, *"Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men! And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare His works with rejoicing."* (Psalm 107: 21,22) How clearly does David here, as elsewhere, associate thanksgiving with declaring the works of the Lord! This is a very practical arrangement. If we had received special favours from an earthly friend and wanted to show our appreciation by letting others know of his goodness, there would be no better way to do it than to tell of his actions, of what he did for us.

How wonderfully the Lord has favoured us! What rich blessings He has bestowed upon us! How grand are the promises He has yet to carry out for us, and not only for us, but also for the whole world! To tell of all His works it is necessary to publish the truth of His plan. Thus it is that in appreciation of what God has done for us, because His love calls forth our love in return, His people became the light of the world, "a city that is set on a hill (which) cannot be hid." (Matt. 5:14)

As we count our many blessings we should not overlook trials which the Heavenly Father has permitted to come into our lives. If we had the choosing of our own experiences we would avoid the things which annoy, and vex, and try us, but God, in His great wisdom, sees that we need trials and in His love permits them. If our wills are wholly resigned to Him, then we will be thankful that He is providing all our needs, even ordeals that are so necessary for the rounding out of our Christian characters.

Some of our trials may be permitted by God to test our faith and confidence in Him. Others are to develop our patience and long-suffering. At times these may be in the nature of chastening from the Lord. In any case, they are permitted by our Heavenly Father who is too wise to err, and too loving to be unkind. Even though He may discipline us, it is in love, and our hearts should respond in grateful appreciation for this evidence that He is not withholding necessary experiences.

"IN EVERYTHING GIVE THANKS"

In these words, the Apostle Paul exhorts us in 1 Thess. 5:18. None but truth-enlightened, fully consecrated Christians can do this wholeheartedly. These know that nothing can come into their lives except that which is for their good. (Rom. 8:28) They know that they are the children of a loving Heavenly Father who is watching over their every interest. They have the assurance that even the most minute affairs of their lives, illustrated by the hairs of their head, are known by Him, and directed according to His wisdom and love. (Matt. 10:30)

“The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord” -this is a promise which every Christian should apply personally, and should believe with all his or her heart. (Psalm 37:23) If we are truly thankful for the manner in which the Lord is guiding our lives then we will not try to resist or go contrary to His will. Instead, with a prayer in our hearts and a song on our lips, we will continue to pay our vows unto Him, keeping our sacrifice on the altar until it is wholly consumed.

“He knoweth the way that I take; when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold”, said Job (Job 23:10) God also knows the way we take, and He is trying us as gold is tried. This means that He puts us through the fires of affliction so that the gold of our character might be refined. But how precious is the thought that the Great Refiner tempers the heat. He will not permit us to be tested above that which we are able to bear. If He sees that the heat is becoming so intense that we are apt to be injured, He provides a way of escape. (1 Cor. 10:13) Yes, He knows and He cares! (1 Peter 5:7) May this blessed truth become so thoroughly fixed in our minds and hearts that nothing will be able to disturb our inner peace and rest in Him and His promises!

We have been blessed with the light of the knowledge of God. His “wondrous works”, the glorious doctrines of the Divine plan, have enlightened us. We have a hope for the world and for ourselves. We have the assurance of Divine care, of Divine forgiveness, of Divine help, and of Divine discipline. All of these evidences convince us of Divine love. Yes, we know that He cares, and that “no good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly.” (Psalm 84:11) We enjoy this knowledge, because “God is the Lord, who hath shown us light.” Shall we not then respond with thanksgiving, making melody in our hearts unto the Lord and sounding forth His praises throughout the land? Let us thus offer the sacrifice of praise continually, and let us “bind the sacrifice with cords even unto the horns of the altar.” (Psalm 118:27) (Dawn)

“LORD INCREASE OUR FAITH”

(LUKE 17:5-19)

Our Lord’s teachings were contrary to the spirit of this world, and so adverse to its policy that His disciples felt that to adopt His methods and principles and discard their own really involved a revolution of their former ideas. In yielding themselves as true disciples, they felt the need of a stronger, firmer faith than they had yet been called upon to exercise.

They were quite persuaded from the purity and nobility of His character and from His miracles and His teachings, that he was indeed a teacher sent from God; yet, remembering the requirement of discipleship, “Whoso forsaketh not all that he hath (all his own ideals and will and possessions and earthly prospects), he cannot be My disciple.” they felt that to continue in this attitude of acceptable discipleship would require a growing faith which would rise to every emergency of His requirements. Hence their request, “Lord, increase our faith.”

They were quite right in their reasoning; for the Lord also clearly shows that true disciples make progress in the school of Christ toward the full overcoming of the spirit of the world. This progress can be achieved by faith only - by such full, implicit confidence in His teachings and training as will keep them continually as earnest, diligent pupils under His guidance and instruction. “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith” (1 John 5:4). This is very suggestive of what it signifies to be an “overcomer,” to whom pertains all the exceeding great and precious promises of the Gospel of Christ.

It is simply this: That day by day we attentively heed and patiently carry out the instructions of our infallible Teacher and Guide in full, unquestioning faith in His wisdom and love; no matter how heavy will be the daily cross or how severe the discipline. It is indeed a tedious, life-long process, but the end will be glorious, and even the daily discipline, patiently and meekly borne, will bring the present rewards of conscious prowess in the great work of overcoming and of a nearer approach to the goal of a ripened Christian character. All of this is implied in the beautiful words, so expressive of the faith and fervent devotion of true discipleship -

“Nearer, my God, to Thee, nearer to Thee, E’en though it be a cross that raiseth me.”

The Lord made no direct answer to this request of His disciples, but dwelt upon the power and desirability of faith, and His whole subsequent course with the disciples was a fulfilment of it. So it will be with us if, in a similarly true spirit of discipleship, we pray, “Lord, increase our faith.” The increase of faith will come, not by a miraculous infusion, but in the natural process of the Lord’s leading and training. In the school of experience, in following His leadings, and in the blessed results of each step of the way, faith develops and grows.

Verses 7 - 10 show that it is in the Lord’s service we are to look for the rewards of faith, the special manifestations of Divine favour, in the removal of obstacles and difficulties, found to be in the way of our progress in His service by cultivating Christian character in ourselves and others, and in ministering generally to the furtherance of the Divine plans. We may not expect these rewards of Divine favour, except as we carry out the service, and when they are received we are not to regard them as evidences that we have done any more

than it was our duty to do.

As servants of God we owe Him the full measure of our ability; hence *we* may not feel that we have merited or earned the great blessings of heavenly inheritance and joint-heirship with Christ. We have merely done our duty; but God, with exceeding riches of grace has prepared, for those who lovingly serve Him, rewards far beyond what they could have asked or hoped for. We can do no meritorious works; even at our best our service is marred by many imperfections, and could never find acceptance with God; except as supplemented by the perfect and finished work of Christ.

Verses 11 - 16 show how the rewards of faith, which are of God's free grace, and by no means earned by our faith, should be gratefully received. The examples given illustrate the fact that the rewards of faith are not always gratefully received. Here were ten lepers cleansed, and only one returned to give thanks and worship. So also of the many who receive justification by faith, the forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God through Christ, how few return to present themselves living sacrifices, thank-offerings, to God, their reasonable service.

(R1967)

THE GOOD THAT I CAN DO

I live for those who love me
Whose hearts are kind and true;
For the heaven that smiles above me
To rejoice my spirit too.
For the precious ties that bind me,
For the task by God assigned me,
For others still behind me,
And the good that I can do.

THE SEPARATED LIFE

As long as the Church remain amid earthly environments and more or less subject to the enticements presented by the "the world, the flesh and the devil", they will find it necessary to keep fresh in mind the real facts of the **separated life** God expects of His people. They will also find it necessary to be frequently reminded that it is an important part of Christian experience to spend and be spent in the service of God.

Inasmuch as the New Testament abounds in references to self-effacing sacrifice as a feature of our privilege in imitating Christ, let us give consideration to some of these, turning first to the words of Jesus in the Gospel of John; "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you; continue ye in my love. This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." (John 15:9-13, 13:14,15)

THE TRUE NATURE OF LOVE

In these several texts, Jesus distinctly tells us to imitate Him - "do as I have done unto you." Here He teaches us that there will be need to be a laying aside of all feelings of superiority in our approach to our brethren. He gives no encouragement to anyone to note the soiled feet of others and then in self-congratulation take the position that one's own are not soiled, and become occupied in parading the infirmities of others, some of which may be real enough to be seen, and some perhaps wholly imaginary. It is the true nature of love to "cover a multitude of sins." It is the spirit of true sacrificial love to believe that we would find better than we thought, if we only understood.

The noblest trait of Christian character springing out of loving God with all the heart is that of loving one's neighbour as oneself. Will not such love abounding in one's heart be manifested in esteeming others better than ourselves? Will it not lead us to minimise the defects, and "if there be any virtue, any praise, any good report" to magnify these? With this love, which is the love of God and of Christ, really abounding in our hearts, will it not be easier to make all needed provision and allowance for diversities, which in the very nature of things will be found among believers as long as the Church is in the flesh? Surely so!

We know full well why God's word makes love for the brethren so vital a matter, and makes our spiritual sonship dependant on our love for them. He has told us why by pointing us to the Son in whom He was well pleased. That Son pleased not Himself. He came to reveal the love of God to sinful, selfish mankind. He came

to completely separate His own from the world and its spirit by implanting love for righteousness and hatred for sin in their hearts, and He came to unite in a compact and heavenly unity the Church which He redeemed, unifying them not by creeds and rituals but by the cord of the love wherewith He loved them. Love of self must necessarily be eradicated from the heart before this feature of sacrificial love will hold sway there.

UNITED IN LOVE

Between the saints who shared the experiences of the day of Pentecost and those now awaiting the completion of the Church, there have been many differences of character, of experience, of knowledge, and of service, but in heart the saints have been, and the saints still are, one in faith, because there has been faith in the one Lord. They have one hope, because they are waiting for the same consummation - "that blessed hope." They have been one in love, when the love of God has been shed abroad in their hearts - blessed indeed is that tie that binds.

When believers are all seeking to grow in their love for the Lord, each heart absorbed by the greatness of the love and mercy by which salvation and sonship has come to them personally, they can be, praise God, united to one another in a bond of benevolent love which the influences of the present time of shaking will not disturb, and which eternity will wonderfully enlarge and confirm. The highest blessing of heaven will therefore rest on each one who has laboured by word and deed to foster the spirit of loving consideration for others, and who has by life and conduct striven to remove barriers between brethren, by bringing them together in the bonds of Christ's love.

Barriers that will grow higher and higher whatever other remedy for discord may be tried will melt away before the warmth of the love of God shed abroad in a truly sanctified, loving, benevolent Christian heart. If we want to have a place in the heart of God, the way thereto lies directly through the heart of the beloved Son of God. That heart knew no selfishness, no enmity, but was full to overflowing with love to God and mankind. O that we may in a fuller and greater measure be known as "imitators of God, as dear children", and walk in love even as the Anointed One loved us. (The Herald)

I would not seek in earthly bliss to find a rest apart from Thee, Forgetful of Thy sacrifice, which purchased life and peace for me."



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“BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT”

(Ephesians 5:18)

These words of the apostle Paul are addressed to the church of Christ, the saints; they do not apply to those who have a form of godliness only, but to those who have fully accepted the terms of the Lord's call, who have made the full consecration which alone brings any into the position of children of God. These are the only ones who have the Spirit of God, these only are begotten from above. But Paul would have us remember that it is not sufficient that we receive the begetting of the Holy Spirit, which comes to us at the very entrance of the narrow way. We should see that the Holy Spirit of God abounds in us more and more as we go on in our heavenward course. The little spark of the new mind should grow stronger and brighter day by day.

If this development does not take place, if we merely stand still, we shall soon begin to lose ground; but if we progress, the 'natural man' will gradually perish and the 'new man' will thrive. Christian development should be steady and continuous. We are to be more and more filled with the Spirit. Sometimes the Lord's children may say, "I do desire to be filled with the Lord's Spirit, but it seems as if my capacity is so small. I wish to have His Spirit in large measure, but I am unable to be what I long to be. I am not satisfied with my attainments." But if we are striving earnestly and prayerfully to become more like Christ, let us not be discouraged. Let us remember that if we keep filled to our present capacity, this very infilling will enlarge our capacity and then our earthen vessel will hold more of the Holy Spirit. This in turn still further enlarges our capacity; and so the expanding and filling goes on. Thus it is possible for us to be filled continually.

If it were an impossibility for us to be filled with the Spirit of God, the inspired apostle would not have so instructed us. To the truly consecrated child of God, this is possible, and not only possible but obligatory. But as there are ebbs and flows in the ocean tides, so with our sense of the Lord's presence with us and His smile upon us. We may not always realise His presence to a large degree, but the Lord's saints must learn to walk by faith, to trust Him and His abiding love and presence with us even through physical ill-health or unfavourable outward circumstances or conditions may at times make us feel downcast. We are to rejoice in the Lord, even though there may be for a time some heaviness of heart.

THE SPIRIT MANIFESTED

Speaking of the glorious salvation of the church, the apostle Peter says, "Wherein you greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations (testings), that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love; in whom, though you see Him not, yet believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." (1 Peter 1:6-8) We can thus rejoice even in the midst of severe trials that cause pain and tears. There may be times when it will seem as though we are more filled with the Spirit than at other times, but if we are striving earnestly to daily walk with God, this will not really be the case, it may be only a difference of surface feelings. The true child of God should steadily progress.

The spirit or disposition of the world will seek to invade the dominion of the new creature, and the new creature must be on the alert to see that his or her mind and body are freed from everything that would not be in fullest harmony with God's Holy Spirit. Each one should seek to judge himself or herself in this respect. We may not judge one another, but we should judge ourselves. We are to see to it that the Spirit of the Lord is manifest in our words, our thoughts and our conduct. We should be able to do this more and more successfully, more and more continually, as we go in the way and grow in grace and knowledge. This we shall do if we are watching, praying, striving, day by day.

The Spirit of the Lord dwelling in us in fullness, as it should be, will cause our entire being to be so absorbed

by the principles of righteousness laid down in God's Word, to be so in love with the heavenly things, heavenly hopes, heavenly prospects, that everything else will be of no value to us. This will be more and more our blessed experience if we continue faithfully in the narrow way, if we "follow on to know the Lord."

If, on the contrary, we find ourselves making provision for the flesh, making worldly plans, if we find ourselves inclined to lay up treasures on earth instead of in heaven, we should be most concerned, and should ask ourselves whether we are deficient, whether we are neglecting the means of grace - prayer alone with God, study of His Word, meditation upon the glorious things to which we have been called, watching ourselves as to our growth in the fruits of the Spirit. If we find that we are controlled by the spirit of contention, we should ask ourselves, "Are we seeking to deal justly and equitably with others - to give them their rights and not to intrude upon them? Are we cultivating the love which is forbearing, forgiving and kind?" (2 Tim 2:24, Eph 4:31,32)

If we find after close introspection that we are in full sympathy with the Spirit of love, and can see that we are gradually developing this crowning fruit of the Spirit, let us rejoice; for we should greatly deplore the matter if it were otherwise. If we find that we are controlled by this Spirit of love, we may know that we are filled with the Spirit. This Spirit of love will enlarge our hearts and minds, making us broader and nobler day by day.

However, we need to watch continually and pray; for there is constant danger otherwise that we may be tripped up or stumbled either by our own faults or those of others. We are never safe from being sidetracked unless we go often to the throne of grace. We cannot be filled unless we keep very close to the great Fountain from which our infilling comes. We must daily carry our earthen pitcher to this heavenly Fountain to be replenished, for we are leaky vessels. We are not to feel discouraged if we do not find in ourselves the rapid growth that we desire to see. Strong, sturdy trees that can withstand the fiercest storms are not developed in a day. Their growth is a slow steady process. We should show our loyalty to the Lord by renewed effort every time we fall. He is looking at us not to see if we are perfect in the flesh - for He knows that we are not and never can be - but to see whether or not we have the spirit of earnestness and loyalty which daily and hourly seeks to keep the body under and cheerfully take up the cross.

"FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH"

Christians are not to be like the worldlings who seek to drown their troubles and afflictions in pleasures, dissipations and frivolous diversions, but in every trouble they are to fly to the only true Source of solace and comfort and strength. This will drive away all anxiety and give them rest and peace even in the midst of trouble. Like the fabled halcyon bird, which built its nest and brought forth its young in the midst of the sea, the true child of God can be at rest even amid the billows and storms of life, and can prosper as a new creature and accomplish all the good pleasure of God's will.

This unwavering trust in the Lord, this abiding rest of soul, this zeal in God's service, is a matter of growth. "They go from strength to strength," the Psalmist declares of the inhabitants of Zion. "First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear," said our Lord of such. (Psa 84:7, Mark 4:28) Notwithstanding the difficulties of life, these can continue to make melody in their hearts unto the Lord. They rejoice no matter what may be the outward earthly conditions. They can smile even through their tears, knowing that, according to His promise, all things are working together for their good. To attain this development is to be filled with the Spirit; each consecrated disciple of Christ should reach this plane.

A Christian writer has well said, "Wherever there has been a faithful following of the Lord in a consecrated heart, several things have sooner or later inevitably followed. Meekness and quietness of spirit become in time the characteristics of the daily life. A submissive acceptance of the will of God, as it comes in the hourly events of each day, is manifested; pliability in the hands of God to do or suffer all the good pleasure of His will; sweetness under provocation, calmness in the midst of turmoil and bustle; a yielding to the wishes of others (where there is no conflicting principle involved); and an insensibility to slights and affronts; absence of worry or anxiety; deliverance from care and fear - all these, and many other similar graces, are invariably found to be the natural outward development of that inward life which is *hid with Christ in God.*" (R 5912)

"They go from strength to strength; every one of them in Zion appeareth before God." (Psalm 84:7)

O fill me with Thy fullness, Lord,

Until my very heart o'erflow

In kindling thought and glowing word,

Thy love to tell, Thy praise to show. (F.R.H)

Christian Fellowship

“That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you that you may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.” “If we say we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness we lie and do not the truth; but if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin.” (1 John 1:3,6,7)

Here it is stated that our fellowship as Christians is with the Father, with the Son and with the brethren. There is also fellowship in prayer and praise, in knowledge, in study and in purpose, in service, in joy, in sympathy, in hope and so on. According to Strong's concordance, the word fellowship means - participation, partnership. A dictionary definition is - communion, intimacy, joint feeling or interest, joint participation. In the Bible, distribution of worldly goods or substance for the benefit of others is also spoken of as fellowship. (Rom. 12:13; 15:26, Phil 4:15)

All are familiar with the fact that fellowship implies kindred qualities of mind and heart. For instance, the generous love the generous, the noble and upright love the noble and upright, the honest love the honest, the meek the meek, and so on. But among the Lord's people there are not many wise or great or pure from the natural viewpoint. Yet God's love goes out to those who are not naturally noble and pure, but who are, however, rich in faith. Is this a contradiction to the general rule of fellowship? Can God fellowship with those who are so far below His own purity and goodness? God's love to us as sinners was that of pity, of compassion, and of desire to lift us up to His fellowship.

We can only enter this Divine fellowship by accepting Christ as the sacrifice for our sins and ceasing to be sinners. Then we realise that God is our friend and we also become friends of others similarly regenerated, and as we grow by partaking of God's Holy Spirit, we begin to love the brethren. There are two planes of fellowship, a natural plane on which people of like qualities are drawn together, and a spiritual plane on which those who may be unlike in natural qualities, but alike in spiritual hopes, aims and ambitions are drawn still more closely together by a new tie and a fellowship that binds not by fleshly ties but binds their hearts in Christian love and unity.

THE FOUNDATION OF FELLOWSHIP

What then is the basis of Christian fellowship? The term Christian, from a Biblical viewpoint, is quite an exclusive one. What is necessary in order to become a Christian is clearly taught. Christians are they who not only believe that Christ is the Saviour, but have gone further than that and shown their faith by offering themselves by full surrender in consecration to God. They die to self and take up their cross and walk, even as Christ walked, in a new life. The basis of Christian Fellowship is a mutual relationship with Christ and through Christ with all who are in sympathy with Him, joined together as fellow members of His Body. There is at once a joint interest and feeling, a partnership, a participation in Christ.

In 1 Cor. 1:9, it is stated that God has called us into the fellowship of His Son. This is not something reserved only for the future, it begins already now. Paul in his letter to the Philippians said that he desired to know Christ, to realise deeply the power of His resurrection, and comprehend the fellowship of His sufferings. (Phil. 3:10); not a mere superficial knowledge of Him, but an intimate acquaintance through deep knowledge and experience. The same thought of fellowship is mentioned in 1 Cor. 10:16,17, a fellowship, a participation in the drinking of the cup and the breaking of the bread.

Christian fellowship then is something deeper and stronger than mere fellowship of belief, because our Heavenly Father grants us to partake of things beyond our own nature. We fellowship with Him in His plan, for He has made known to us secrets that were hidden from generations in past ages. He promises us fellowship in His own Divine nature, meanwhile working in us to do His good pleasure as we work with Him to do His will. We might have a fellowship with all believers, but it would not be the full Christian fellowship, which is “fellowship in the mystery”. This is a fellowship of priests in the Holy, not with the Levites in the Court, who can come no further.

The Christian fellowship is a family fellowship, “for in love God has predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ”. (Eph. 1:5) “They are all of one (Father), for which cause Jesus is not ashamed to call them brethren.” (Heb. 2:11) Jesus did not need to grow into this fellowship, for He was always in fellowship with the Father, and there is only one way we can come into this family fellowship, i.e. by accepting the terms laid down by Jesus - faith and obedience.

In John 14:23, it is stated that both Father and Son will come to us and “take up their abode with us” if we keep His commandments. This is a very precious thought - a partaking of food together -lodging together. The same thought is given in Rev. 3:20, also Luke 12:37, and is especially applicable at the end of this age. Jesus will, if we respond, come in and sup with us, and will also spread a feast for us. Truly our fel-

lowship is with the Father and with the Son.

ESSENTIALS FOR FELLOWSHIP

Seeing then that Christian fellowship is the portion of all consecrated believers, are there any further requirements for a permanent, workable and beneficial fellowship? How can we best answer this, seeing there are so many individuals and classes of persons who would all say they are consecrated Christians and yet if we asked what they believed we would find quite a variety of doctrines and practices? Is fellowship under such conditions likely to be either possible or profitable? We think it would be possible if all recognise certain essentials-

(1) There would need to be uniformity of faith, not in a humanly prescribed creed nor recognition of any earthly authority or control whose word must be obeyed as the voice of the Lord, not a seeing eye to eye on mysterious parts of scripture, types or symbols, but a unity of faith - one faith.

(2) A recognition of the clear and essential teachings of the Word of God would also be necessary. Unity on essentials must be maintained, but liberty on non-essentials be granted to all.

We would of course, have fuller fellowship with those who see many points of truth as we do than we would with those who see only the fundamentals, but we must receive in fellowship those who have taken the necessary steps in harmony with the first essentials and have as much fellowship with them as possible. We do not fellowship with each other because of non-essentials, nor because of personalities, but because of each being justified and consecrated and living lives in harmony with the fundamentals of the Word. "If we walk in the light, we have fellowship one with another." (1 John 1:7)

There is another essential without which there could be no profitable fellowship. The Christian is to have no fellowship with darkness or error; but is to do more, "rather reprove them". (Eph. 5:11); also noting 2 Cor. 6:14, "What fellowship has light with darkness?" A further essential to helpful fellowship would be as stated in Rom. 8:9, "If any man has not the spirit of Christ, he is none of His." Those not having the spirit of Christ have nothing in common with the consecrated Christian, there is no fellowship of love.

FELLOWSHIP IN UNITY OF THE SPIRIT

In Eph. 4:1-3, it is stated that each should walk worthy of His calling, but also endeavour to keep the unity of the spirit in the bonds of peace. Christian fellowship is thus spoken of as a unity of spirit, a participation in Christ's anointing - a fellowship of love. The Spirit of Christ will manifest itself prominently in brotherly love, and must be a special feature of Christian fellowship. When mutual love becomes established among brethren, there comes a sense of rest and naturalness in each other's company, which is the very essence of fellowship.

A Christian writer has expressed this thought as follows:- "O the comfort, the inexpressible comfort of feeling safe with a person, having neither to weigh thoughts nor measure words, but pour them all right out, just as they are, chaff and grain together, knowing that a faithful hand will take and sift them, keep what is worth keeping, and then with the breath of kindness blow the rest away." This is the abiding condition of friends of Jesus, no necessity for reserve or hiding in this absolute confidence born by the certainty of high unselfish love. Let us then endeavour to keep the unity of the spirit, then there will be much building up of each other, rejoicing with them that rejoice, and weeping with them that weep.

We believe that all will agree that these four essentials are necessary:-

- (1) That all be consecrated to God.
- (2) That there be uniformity of faith in the Word of God.
- (3) That all be aiming to walk in the light.
- (4) That all possess the spirit of Christ and of brotherly love.

HOW IS FELLOWSHIP MAINTAINED?

In the maintenance of Christian fellowship there is, as already stated, a call for effort by each and all. All should endeavour to keep the unity of the spirit, and follow after things that make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another. (Rom. 14:19, Heb. 10:24,25) Fellowship cannot be maintained, except self and self-will be kept under, and in its place be developed the mind of Christ, as pointed out in Phil. 2:1-5. "How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." (Psa. 133:1) Nevertheless there will be tests also in connection with fellowship, as stated in 1 Peter 4:12, "Think it not strange of the fire among you." (Diag.) Trial will come among us because of our inherent weakness, conflict with other members' viewpoints or lack of judgement; but fellowship is not a theory, it is a condition which no amount of discussion can bring about or hinder.

In nature, birds of a feather will flock together, so it is with the Lord's people (Matt. 24:28) Creed fences or obstacles are no barriers to those who desire and will have fellowship. Satan, however, will attack the spirit of fellowship and misconstrue that which is good and beautiful. What shall we do then? Be rightly exercised by it and stand up to our experiences. We remember how Peter disfellowshipped himself from Jesus, denying that he knew Him, but this was turned to good account by Jesus, who had prayed for him. We learn by experiences not to flee from difficulties, but seek the Lord's help and guidance.

Think of those who have stood their tests, the steadfast, patient, plodding Christians, through good report and through evil report, so different from those who have not stood their test, have been discouraged and lost fellowship. If we are sure what God's way is, then we get His blessing in His way. If we take a way that is not His way then we are the losers.

THE BLESSINGS OF FELLOWSHIP

What helpfulness is derived from Christian fellowship? We might answer this by another question, What benefit does a person get in the gathering of live coals together in the fireplace? **He** or she soon gets comfort and warmth out of the glowing coals. So in the gathering together in Christian fellowship there is that comfort of love and fellowship of hope, a sympathy in suffering, a strengthening of faith, patience and humility, a stimulating joy, a lightening of care, and a sharing 'of spiritual food. Just as live coals separated from the mass would soon grow cold, so those straying from the fellowship of Christians would be in danger of growing cold or lukewarm, missing much of development and instruction and stimulation.

Neither should fellowship be regarded merely as a duty, which we owe to other fellow-members, but should be regarded as a precious privilege, not with the thought only, "How much can **I** get there", but also "How much can I help in the giving". Why should we meet together? So that we might have spiritual fellowship. Why should we consider the word of God? So that we might grow in grace and knowledge and love, grow in preparation for the fellowship in the everlasting future. May the Lord help us to appreciate more and more His Divine fellowship. (P.P. 8/32)

The Glad New Time

There are coming changes great
In the glad new time;
Trust in God, and watch and wait
For the glad new time;
Mountain fears shall prostrate lie,
Vales of hope be lifted high,
Trembling earth embrace the sky,
In the glad new time.

There shall meet the great and small
In the glad new time;
Love shall be the Lord of all
In the glad new time;
From the mountains shall descend
Hearts of old that could not bend,
And the poor shall have a Friend
In the glad new time.

We shall lift oppression's load
In the glad new time;
We shall bear the cross of God
In the glad new time;
We shall seek the valleys deep
Where the weary strive or sleep,
And convey them up the steep
To the glad new time.

There shall be a joy in heaven
In the glad new time;
And God's resting shall be given
In the glad new time;
For His Sabbath shall be found
When the skies have touched the ground,
And the valleys shall resound
With the glad new time.

(These lines were written by George Matheson, who, during his college career, suddenly became blind; he, however, studied on, and became a distinguished Scottish preacher. He also wrote the beautiful hymn - "O love that will not let me go.")

KEPT IN PERFECT PEACE

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee" (Isa. 26:3).

'This thought is very precious to us as New 1 Creatures. "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding," is to rule and keep our minds and hearts (Phil. 4:7). We are to count the things of the present life as not worthy of comparison with the glories of eternity. And so the Apostle says, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:17-18). When our minds are stayed on the Lord, and we take the proper view of our experiences, we can sing with the poet:

"No storm can shake my inmost calm,
While to this Refuge clinging."

We have peace, no matter what the outward conditions may be. The trials and difficulties of life come to the Lord's people mingled with joys - the rain and storm, then the sunshine. They enjoy all righteous pleasures that are in harmony with their consecration. They learn to cultivate patience in trial, knowing that patience works out experience, and experience works out more and more that hope which maketh not ashamed (Rom. 5:3-5).

So, then, it is to the Christian that our text brings the assurance that when God gives quietness, none can make trouble. They "shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for My sake," said the Master, but then we are to "rejoice and be exceeding glad." "Let not your heart be troubled" (Matt. 5:11; John 14:1)

NECESSARY PROVING

Our Heavenly Father designs that various kinds of trouble shall come upon us, that these may develop and prove our characters. It is a part of the Divine Plan to permit us to have experiences of affliction (Psalm 119:67, 71, 75; 34:19-20). So when we see God's people in trouble or trial today we are not to say that God is against them. We are each to demonstrate our willingness to suffer according to His will, and often to suffer unjustly. Our Lord set us an example of cheerful, patient, submission to God's will. We are to walk in His footsteps. We have the examples of the Apostles, when trials and difficulties and persecutions came upon them; and the example of other saints all down the Age.

Trouble is not necessarily a sign of the disfavour of God. On the contrary, we know that "many are the afflictions of the righteous," and that "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." The truth will cost them something. Faithfulness to the Lord will cost them much. As the Apostle says, "If ye be without chastisement (discipline, training), then are ye bastards and not sons" (Heb. 12:8). If God gives peace of heart, who can upset the one who is thus in harmony with God, in whom this peace of heart is ruling?

This, then, is the greatest blessing of all. He grants this peace to those who are faithfully striving to walk in the footsteps of Jesus. We have a Refuge, which none but His own can know. No harm can reach us within this shelter; no storm can shake us from our moorings, for we are securely anchored to the Rock of Ages. "We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to the called according to His purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

"What though my joys and comfort die!

The Lord, my Saviour, liveth;
What though the darkness gather round!
Songs in the night He giveth.
No storm can shake my inmost calm,
While to that Refuge clinging;
Since Christ is Lord of Heaven and earth,
How can I keep from singing?"

(P.P. 8/31)

The Master's Touch

In the still lute the music lies unheard;
In the rough marble beauty hides unseen.
To make the music and the beauty needs
The Master's touch, the Sculptor's chisel keen.

Great Master, touch us with Thy skilful hand,
Let not the music that is in us die,
Great Sculptor, hew and polish us, nor let,
Hidden and lost Thy form within us lie.

Spare not the stroke! Do with us as Thou wilt!
Let there be naught unfinished, broken, marred;
Complete Thy purpose, that we may become
Thy perfect image, Thou our God and Lord!

(Author unknown)

Learning Righteousness

"When Thy judgements are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness."
(Isaiah 26:9)

The prophet Isaiah is believed to have lived in the 8th century B.C. and to have prophesied during the reign of five kings. The first was Uzziah during whose prosperous reign he received his vision of the glory of Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel, and received his call as a prophet. The last, it is thought, was Manassah, the renegade king, whom tradition says had Isaiah cruelly put to death.

His utterances are characterised by (1) the denunciation of national sin and unrighteousness, (2) the upholding of God's standards of righteousness, (3) the proclaiming of God's holiness and power and concern for his people and (4) visions of Messianic sufferings and reign. So in verses 8 and 9 of Chapter 26, from which the text is taken, the prophet describes the yearnings of his own heart, and those of like mind in Israel, for return to the old paths of service and obedience to Jehovah. Having himself been granted a glimpse in vision of the utter purity and glory of the Lord, his soul is restless for return to personal and national response to God and His perfect laws.

Isaiah 26, verses 8 and 9 read - *"Yea, in the way of Thy judgements, O Lord, have we waited for Thee; the desire of our soul is to Thy name, and to the remembrance of Thee. With my soul I have desired Thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek Thee early; for when Thy judgements are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness."* We can picture the prophet in his nightly meditation grieving for the waywardness of his people, their indifference to their God and their rejection of His commands. Isaiah seems to have moved in court circles and no doubt by day would be busily engaged on important matters,

but in the quiet night watches, how his heart would long to see God restored to His rightful place in the nation.

The prophet realised that the judgements of Jehovah, when truly accepted by individuals or nations, lead to the establishment of righteousness, of justice, of peace and of the only true joy. Well would he have echoed the Psalmist's words - *"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever; the judgements of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is Thy servant warned; and in keeping of them is great reward."* (Psa 19:7-11)

So under the inspiration of God, the prophet looks down the ages to a time when mankind will learn righteousness. No doubt, he would see this as applying to his own people first, but he extends it to the inhabitants of the whole world. In the light of other scriptures, his message clearly points us to God's great judgement day for all mankind. Paul in his address on Mars Hill speaks of this day - *"The times of this ignorance (of God's character) God winked at, but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent; because He has appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all, in that He raised Him from the dead."* (Acts 17:30,31)

But what manner of judgment did Isaiah have in mind? Certainly the passing of judicial sentences does not in itself conduce to righteousness in fallen mankind, rather the thought is that expressed in Isaiah 28:17, where through the prophet God declares - *"Judgement will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet."* This pictures the setting up of perfect standards, based on love, mercy and truth, the establishing of guidelines and clear paths for people's feet. The same prophet refers to this as a highway of holiness in Isaiah 35:8, a way where wayfarers, however weak and unskilled at the outset, will safely pass over.

In another Old Testament passage, the same word as is translated "righteousness" in the text is translated as "that which is altogether just" (Deut 16:20). What a wonderful prospect of perfection will the learning of this sort of righteousness mean for all mankind in the age to come. Through the centuries, there have been glaring inequalities and injustices among individuals and nations, but in God's new world, all will learn only that which is "altogether just". There will be equal opportunity for all; wealth, status, education, pedigree, will avail nothing. The invitation will go forth to all who will then be ready to hear, when - *"the Spirit and the Bride say, Come, . . . and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely."* (Rev 22:17)

There will be no racial or social barriers - *"they shall not teach every man his neighbour and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me from the least to the greatest."* (Heb 8:11) There will be the one gracious reward of everlasting life on a restored earth for all who will learn righteousness in that day - life purchased by our Lord for all at Calvary. But we might well ask, can we be sure that the nations will really learn and love righteousness? So far, as a whole, they have shown very little inclination to do so and in Verse 11 of the same chapter as the text verse, the prophet seems to ponder whether even God's intervention will have any real effect and whether the wicked will ever change, but he is assured that "they shall see, and be ashamed for envy toward Thy people."

How this will come to pass the prophet has already proclaimed in Isaiah 25:6-9 - *"In this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined; and He will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces, and the rebuke of His people shall He take away from off all the earth, for the Lord hath spoken it. And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God, we have waited for Him, and he will save us; this is the Lord, we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation."*

We know that in that day of which the prophet speaks, the great adversary of God's people will be restrained, and the message of God's so great love will permeate each willing heart and mind. Thus it will be that the grand promise given to Abraham so long ago will be finally fulfilled and through His seed all the nations of the earth will be blessed. Paul makes it clear that Christ Himself is first of all that seed, and that the Church of this gospel age are also by faith Abraham's seed and joint-heirs with Christ. (Gal 3:16,29) These will have part with him in that work of helping the nations learn righteousness in that promised time of blessing, which the scriptures indicate will start with Israel. The plans of God for the age to come however richly provide blessings for all people, including the abolition of all sorrow and sighing and finally even death itself.

The Lord's people are even now being prepared for their share in the work of instruction in righteousness, as foretold by the prophet Daniel speaking of that time - *"They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever"* (Dan 12:3) While we rightly look forward to that glad day, we need to realise that we ourselves here and now need daily to be learning more and

more of our Heavenly Father's righteousness, to be more closely conformed into the character likeness, of His dear Son, our Lord and Saviour, of whom it was foretold - *"I delight to do Thy will, O my God; yea, Thy law is within my heart. I have preached righteousness in the great congregation, lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord Thou knowest I have declared Thy faithfulness and Thy salvation."* (Psa 40:8-9)

Not only should we be learners of righteousness but preachers and doers in our daily lives, showing forth His praises, seeking to bring every thought and word and deed into harmony with God's perfect will. Like the instruments of a great orchestra, each of us needs to be coming more and more into closer harmony with our Master's example of righteousness. When the period of our preparation and tuning is finally completed, we may then be fit for the shedding abroad in the age to come of the glorious message of God's love and His perfect righteousness towards all mankind, so that, in turn, all the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness and enjoy the blessings prepared for them by their Creator for ever.

Life Abundant

O God, in restless living
We lose our spirits' peace.
Calm our unwise confusion,
Bid Thou our clamour cease.
Let anxious hearts grow quiet,
Like pools at evening still,
Till Thy reflected heavens
All our spirits fill.
Teach us, beyond our striving,
The rich rewards of rest.
Who does not live serenely
Is never deeply blest.
O tranquil, radiant Sunlight,
Bring Thou our lives to flower,
Less wearied with our effort,
More aware of power.
Receptive make our spirits,
Our need is to be still;
As dawn fades flickering candle
So dim our anxious will.
Reveal Thy radiance through us,
Thine ample strength release.
Not ours but Thine the triumph,
In the power of peace.
We grow not wise by struggling,
We gain not things by strain.
We cease to water gardens,
When comes Thy plenteous rain.
Oh, beautify our spirits
In restfulness from strife;
Enrich our souls in secret
With abundant life.
H.E.F.



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“WORK OUT YOUR OWN SALVATION”

(Phil. 2:12, 13)

In the two verses of the text, Paul is addressing the Church, and not the world. The world is not now on trial for salvation. This exhortation is applicable only to those whose sins have been forgiven, and who through Christ have been brought into a special relationship with God. Only these are able to appreciate the import of the apostle's words.

In the chapter from which they are taken, the Apostle Paul pays a beautiful tribute to the church at Phillippi. He refers in tender and loving terms to their obedience always to his instruction and counsel, not only when he was present with them, but likewise in his absence. He urges them to continued faithfulness and earnestness in this good way. He desires that they make still further progress in the Master's likeness, working out in themselves through humility and obedience the character development necessary, with fear and trembling, doing their part in the attainment of the salvation to which they had been called in Christ.

While addressed to the church at Phillippi the Apostle's words come down to us to-day no less forcibly. How wonderfully the Lord blessed the Apostle's writings, and used them for the benefit of the entire Church from Paul's day right down to the present time. They apply to all the sanctified in Christ Jesus. He reminds us, as he did the Phillippian church, that we are to “work out our salvation.”

ACCEPTABLE WORKS OF FAITH

The question arises - Does this exhortation to work out our own salvation conflict with Paul's other statement, that our salvation “is not of works, lest any man should boast”? We reply: No, our salvation from death is entirely by faith. As fallen, human creatures we have no opportunity of doing any works that would justify us before God. Until we have been accepted into God's family no works that we could do would be acceptable. God, who is perfect, is not pleased to receive anything imperfect, either works or anything else.

But when we have received the forgiveness of our sins - not by works, but by faith - and have become sons of God, through consecration and spirit-begetting, then comes the time when we can do acceptable works; for we are then members of the Lord's family, and the Holy Spirit within us through this begetting now has an opportunity for expression in works of faith. In other words, as imperfect human beings, we cannot work out our salvation; but as new creatures we can do this. Phil. 4:13.

Being justified by the blood of Christ, and being called with the heavenly calling, we can do our share in this great work of our own preparation for our future station and glory. We do this by giving heed to the instructions of our Lord, by allowing His word to dwell in us richly, and following the example which He has set us. We can never attain perfection in the flesh; but from the beginning of our consecrated life, our heart, our intention, must be wholly loyal - God would not accept a halfhearted consecration - and day by day this heart intention must become more and more fixed in the way of righteousness. We are to continue the work of bringing our very thoughts as well as our words and doings into subjection, and enlisting our talents in the service of the Lord.

THE POWER OF GOD

It is encouraging for us to know that this warfare is not one which we must wage alone. It is God who has led us thus far, and provided for all our needs in Christ; it is He who has implanted in our hearts the desire to do His good pleasure, and He will continue to lead and help us and work in us by His word of Truth, if we continue to give heed to His counsel. The Gospel message is the “power of God unto salvation” unto every one who accepts it, and no greater stimulus can be found than the “exceeding great and precious promises” given to us, that by these we might become “partakers of the divine nature.”

Our salvation is a salvation from death to life, from sin to righteousness. Moreover it is a transformation from human nature to divine. The first step to our salvation was the work accomplished by our Lord Jesus at Calvary - "He died for our sins." But the death of Christ alone was not sufficient to give us justification before God. No, a dead Saviour would avail us nothing. In order to help us out of our fallen state Christ must rise again from the dead, as the Apostle Paul states it - "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished." 1 Cor. 15:17, 18.

So we see that the resurrection of Christ was a matter of vital importance. Christ must rise from the dead and ascend to the Father, there to present the merit of His sacrifice, before God could recognise us and justify us by faith. So Christ has appeared in the presence of God for us, and God has accepted our consecration, because Christ's righteousness is imputed to us, making our sacrifice acceptable to the Father.

It is only certain ones with whom God is dealing now; He is not dealing with the whole world at present; only those who wish to turn away from all sin and to gain a character of holiness like unto Christ are now being received of God and trained, disciplined and fitted for the great work of the future - the blessing of all the families of the earth. It is those, the "little flock" for whom God is seeking in this age, and the invitation has gone out - "If any man would come after Me let him deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow Me."

Those now being drawn to Christ are willing to suffer something for Christ's sake - for the Truth's sake. These are the ones of whom the Apostle speaks in Rom. 8:4, saying - "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit." Christ demonstrated His perfection by keeping the law and now because we have accepted Him as our Saviour and are seeking to walk in His steps, the righteousness of the law is counted as fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit.

INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY

The working out of our salvation is no small matter; only by the Lord's grace to help us could we continue the work to its completion. It calls for patient, steady, earnest effort day by day - a gradual bending heavenward of that which naturally tends toward things of the earth. We are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. We must "put off the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of our minds; and put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Eph. 4:22-24.

The Apostle's exhortation comes to us individually - "Beloved, work out your own salvation." We are saved by hope the Apostle says in another place. We are not finally saved as yet. We must work out our salvation. This is something which each one in Christ must do for himself or herself by the Lord's assisting grace. One cannot work out the salvation of another; each must work out his own salvation. The expression "work out," has a peculiar force and meaning. It suggests something that will cost us an effort - something that requires time, patience and perseverance.

Some have the erroneous idea that God does all the fashioning, and that His children are to be merely passive in His hand; but the Apostle Peter as well as Paul does not so express it (see 1 Pet. 1:13-16). Peter exhorts us not to fashion ourselves according to the former manner of our lives in our ignorance of God and His truth, but rather we are to strive to be holy in our manner of living (Revised Version). There is a work to be done in us and about us, and those who are not up and doing, but who passively sit and wait for the Lord to work miracles in their behalf are greatly deceived and have need to give earnest heed to the Apostle's injunction to work out their salvation with fear and trembling.

In writing to the Romans (chapter 13:11,12) Paul says "that now it is high time to awake out of sleep, for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light." Even though we have been awakened from the sleep of sin there seems to be a danger that we may become somewhat drowsy concerning the wonderful salvation set before us. We must not allow ourselves to become "slothful in our diligence" but maintain our fervency of spirit in our service of the Lord. (See Rom. 12:11; Revised Version).

COPY-LIKENESS OF CHRIST

The Heavenly Father has predetermined that His New Creation shall all be copy-likenesses of Christ. The faithful overcomers must all be proved and found loyal to God and the principles of His Word. The Lord our God proves us to see whether we love Him with all our hearts. When we made our covenant with the Lord by sacrifice, we promised that we would live henceforth not for self, nor for the things of this world; but we would live for Christ - His will would be our chief concern; self would be denied and we would take up our cross daily and humbly follow in the steps of our Lord, who left us the example.

It is well that we examine ourselves from time to time to see to what extent we are carrying out our vow of consecration. Our Lord said, "Take heed to yourselves lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeit-

ing and drunkenness and cares of this life.” (Luke 21:34). How we need to take heed to ourselves - to examine ourselves, to criticise and correct ourselves; and to watch and pray continually so that we may walk more closely in harmony with the Lord’s requirements. This proper judging or examining of ourselves will assist us in the working out of our salvation.

In Heb. 3:14 the Apostle tells us that “we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.” How important is this matter of faith. We will need to be strong in faith in order to be successful in working out our salvation for without faith it is impossible to please God. And then the Apostle Peter tells us that we will need to give all diligence to add to our faith, by which we are justified, virtue, i.e., real goodness of character; this can only come after we have made full consecration of ourselves to God; then knowledge, which apart from consecration might puff up the mind, but received into a humble heart will nourish and sustain; then moderation, control, the spirit of a sound mind is necessary to make proper use of the knowledge attained, and patience or the cheerful endurance of hardship, that we may be properly exercised by our experiences, and further developed in piety, godliness, sterling character, justness, a clear perception and determination to carry out that which is right - pleasing to God.

Brotherly-love must also grow; a love that loves God, must love also those who are begotten of God. “He that saith he loves God and hateth his brother is a liar.” (1 John 4:20). But while it is easy to love the brethren in Christ - to love them that love us - there is a further step into the likeness of Christ, for “while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.” We must love all men; yes, even our enemies. “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you, and pray (that is, not formally, but with desire for their good) for them which despitefully use you and persecute you, that ye may be the children of your Father in heaven.” (Matt. 5:44,45.)

“GIVING ALL DILIGENCE”

We notice that the Apostle Peter’s exhortation - “Give diligence to make your calling and election sure,” is similar in meaning of that of Paul who says - “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” The thought in both these texts is that there is a work for each follower of Christ to do in the matter of attaining the prize set before us. God is faithful who has given us the exceeding great and precious promises. He has made every necessary provision for us, and will sustain us all along the way, and indeed without His help we could do nothing, but the Lord will expect us to show our appreciation of His goodness by our earnest desire to cooperate with Him in respect of the high calling to which He has called us in Christ.

Why does the Apostle say we should work out our salvation with fear and trembling? Does the Lord wish his children literally to tremble with fear before Him? We believe the Apostle’s thought is that we should exercise great care in respect of everything pertaining to our heavenly calling. It is the most important thing in the world to us; and we should realise how great a privilege is ours as well as our responsibility to make the best possible use of the many favours and blessings so freely bestowed upon us.

As we consider Christ’s example, also that of Paul, what an encouragement their lives are to us along the line of earnestness of purpose in doing the will of God. Our Lord said “My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me and to finish His work” (John 4:34). How earnestly He set Himself to know and do the Father’s will. Also Paul said, “For me to live is Christ” (Phil. 1:21). He had no other aim in life but to do his Master’s will. So we want to have more of the proper reverence toward God - the holy fear of doing anything displeasing to Him - the earnest desire to have His approval and blessing.

“GOD WORKETH IN YOU”

The reason why we should work out our salvation with fear and trembling (with great carefulness) is, that it is God who is working in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure. The thought that God, the Almighty Creator of all things has chosen us, invited us and given us of His spirit to enable us to run the heavenly race should inspire us to zeal and diligence in the Christian way. God is working in us to cause us both to will and to do His good pleasure. The question is - How are we reacting to the influences of His spirit which are at work in us and around us?

Are we so fully appreciating the great love of God toward us (manifested in His Word, and also in the life and sacrificial death of our Saviour) that we are being constrained daily to yield our hearts and minds and all our powers in loving, willing obedience to His will? Are we earnestly watching to keep our hearts - our motives, as well as our thoughts - pure and in harmony with whatsoever things are just and honourable and good and true? Is the love of God more and more being shed abroad in our hearts; and is it our one aim to be changed into the likeness of the character of Christ?

If so, then we may well be glad that we are learning some good lessons in the school of Christ, and we can be assured that He who has begun the good work in us will also complete it, if we continue to follow on in obedience and trust. So may the good work go on in us; let us resolve that as each day comes around we will

strive to learn the lessons God is seeking to teach us; the lesson of patient submission to His will, the lesson of kindness and consideration for those around us and with whom our lives are linked; the lesson of trust and willing co-operation with God and with each other as members of the family of God. So, then, the working out of our salvation will be a labour of love. God, through His Word and Spirit will work in us while we work out by His grace.

(RJM:39)

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor 15:58)

GOD SPEAKS!

God speaks! So begins the epistle to the Hebrews, and without the customary apostolic greeting: and properly so, for the writer's qualifications and his blessing on his readers must be left unmentioned while God is speaking. He speaks to a people whose first great leader exceedingly feared and quaked when the voice of God once shook the earth, and from whose ranks arose those mighty men of word and deed of whom the world was not worthy. He speaks to a people who had heard his voice through many centuries; to a nation which could rightly claim that to them were committed the oracles. The old prophecies had not come by the will of man for often the will of man was contrary, nor did the prophets proclaim together, but spoke at sundry times when the burden of the Lord was upon them. Being of Adamic descent they died like their hearers, yet their words have not died, and they still speak to those who listen, and appropriate quotations are made in this epistle from their writings. The passage of time has by fulfilment of their prophecies revealed that for all their frailty they are truthfully referred to as holy men of God who spake as moved by the Holy Spirit.

But a great change of procedure is announced at the opening of this epistle. God is speaking again, and the new channel of truth is the greatest He could desire or find, or man need. We all know through whom He now speaks, but the apostle, apart from speaking of Him as the Son of God, does not immediately announce His name. He first mentions some of His glories and greatness, and when he has thus prepared the minds of his Hebrew readers, he declares Him, in chapter two, to be Jesus. He is not of sinful stock as the early prophets, yet his words do not abrogate the prophecies of his predecessors, for all spoke by the Spirit's direction. But this will emerge from the comparison - that if God had of old spoken through many faithful and is now speaking through one, His Son, then He must possess outstanding qualifications and virtues. He has; and the first seven chapters of Hebrews tell, among other things, how much better, how much greater is this faithful and true witness than the stalwarts of the past. Note how in those chapters, the faithful servants of old (the very ones revered in Israel) are one by one surpassed by Jesus the Son of God.

Early in the first chapter we see the close association of the Son and His Father, so complete that He is spoken of as the reflection of the power, the character, the voice of God. But there are two facts in which the Son must necessarily differ from the Father, yet they also prove how glorious is the union of Father and Son, and they are, that it is the Son who by Himself purges our sin, and having done that great work sits down on the right hand of the majesty on high. This is the channel through whom the message of God now comes, and it will be noticed that this new prophet is also Priest and King. He excels all previous holders of these offices in that he possesses the power of an endless life, enough to fit Him for all Israel's and the world's many needs. That He holds this immortality is seen in this chapter by His gaining by inheritance a more excellent name than the angels.

The remainder of the first chapter has as its theme the proving of the Son's superiority to the angels, and ample quotation is given from the voices of the past, which look forward to His coming and faithful performance of His Divine mission; these in turn seal the old writers as prophets of God. The apostle propounds the question - to which of the angels said He at any time, “thou art my Son, this day I have begotten thee.” No answer is given, for there is none. His superiority to angels is so marked that the apostle uses that strong figure of speech - erotesis - where the unanswered question is more telling than any reply. Further quotations show the Son's work in the beginning of laying the foundations of the universe. Some of the work erected on those foundations will perish, but the founder will endure and bear a righteous sceptre in the coming kingdom.

Not to angels is assigned the great work of subduing the future habitable, affirms chapter two, yet it reasons that if the word once spoken by the angels was accompanied by severe penalties, we ought to give more earnest heed to the words which first began to be spoken by this new Voice of God, which God Himself has confirmed by gifts of the Holy Spirit. Great indeed must be the responsibility of the hearers now that the last

and greatest voice from God is speaking! Leaving the subject of angels, the apostle mentions the superiority of the Son to man. This may be an obvious truth, yet if we recall that the Son was once of high heavenly rank and became a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death or in other words that He might redeem mankind by dying for them, then His superiority to man can never be called in question. His superiority to the devil is apparent, for by the same act of death He will render him powerless.

Then the comparison changes. Through superior to angels and man in general, He is shown as better than man in particular from chapter three forward; and the first great man in the list of worthies is Moses, one of the faithful voices of the past. It will be remembered that Moses the servant of God and of Israel, the house of God, prophesied that he himself would be succeeded by another to whom they would hearken without fail; and thus he became a testimony or illustration of those things which were to be spoken after concerning Jesus the Son. But though Moses heard the voice of God and faithfully served the words to Israel, it was necessary for the house of God to be constantly prompted to loyalty by the insistent words, "To-day if ye will hear his voice." All know that the word preached did not profit, for it was not mixed with faith in them that heard. Then the apostle mentions two more leaders in Israel, Joshua and David; yet both failed to give rest to Israel. The word of God had come to Israel through such as these at sundry times and in divers manners with but little result, and the word of God being quick and powerful spoke again and said, "They shall not enter into my rest."

It will then be reasoned that now that God is speaking by his Son, who surpasses Moses, Joshua and David, we ought to give the more earnest heed. It is as though the writer was saying, "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation and how shall we escape if we neglect?" Yet, the warning note of chapters 3 and 4 is tempered by the announcement of the new Voice of God being a faithful high priest Who was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin. So we may come boldly to the throne of grace to obtain mercy and find grace to help. But we must listen to the voice.

The mention of high priest will remind Hebrews of their first and greatest, Aaron. He did not take the honour to himself, but was specially called for the post, as was Moses called to his service. In fact, each of these leaders of old time was called to his service, and it was proper that Israel should heed them in those days when they spoke from God; but their superior has come, the princely leader of salvation, the Son, and they must listen to Him. They had looked to Aaron as model high priest even as they saw Moses the great prophet, but both are succeeded by One, in whom combines each office held by Moses, Aaron, Joshua and David. When the apostle has compared one by one the leaders of the past with their one successor they must perforce accept Messiah. Again the writer points out their responsibility (in chapter 6), but again he has comforting words to speak for he is persuaded better things of them, even though he must speak strongly.

There seems to be only one more name in Israel to which they would cling now that each of their leaders has been superseded by Jesus, and he is the father of them all and to whom were given the promises - Abraham. As we would expect the apostle shows how he too is superseded by the same one. None of them is superseded in the sense that they have been discarded by God, but the new channel of God's word and promise and deed is so much better than they, great though they were, and most worthy to be revered in Israel. Abraham received blessing from one of unknown descent and whose appointment as high priest came not in the fashion that Israel was accustomed to. Abraham gave him tithes in acknowledgement of his honour. Consider how great this man was, for he was made like unto the Son of God and he received tithes of Abraham and therefore of Levi and the whole house of Aaron, who in their turn received tithes of all Israel. Of such rank is Jesus the Son of God.

The apostle begins the eighth chapter as though the previous seven chapters are given to describing the glories of this One High Priest, for he says, "Of the things we have spoken this is the sum: We have such a high priest," greater than angels, than man, than Moses, than Joshua, than David, than Aaron and greater than Abraham. He it is through whom God now speaks, and we must give heed, for no better can ever be found.

(BSM)

"Finally, My Brethren."

"Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit ye like men, be strong, let all your things be done in love."
(1 Cor. 16:10.)

With these stirring words the Apostle Paul closes his first Epistle to the Corinthians. That there was a necessity for each exhortation is manifest from a reading of the Epistle. The members of the Corinthian Church were already in danger of falling from their steadfastness. Their pride of strength was proving a weakness; they were beginning to doubt the very essentials of the doctrine of Christ, even denying the resurrection. The Lord's people at all times have needed exhortation to steadfastness of faith and practice, and they are not to

wait until someone is specially raised up for that work, but are to exhort one another daily, and “so much the more as they see the day approaching.” We, who live in the end of the age, specially require our minds to be stirred; and we trust that our present meditation on the Apostle’s word will be a stimulus to us, to watch, to be strong, and to be steadfast in the faith.

“WATCH YE”

This may be said to be the watchword of the New Testament. Our Lord specially commanded His disciples to watchfulness, for He well knew the need for care. There are two things about which there is the injunction to watch: one *for* which we are to watch, the other *against* which we are to watch. The consecrated followers of Christ watch for the return of the Lord; as He said: “Be ye like men who watch for their Lord when he shall return from the wedding.” They were to watch, for they knew not the day nor the hour when He should return from heaven. They also watch and pray lest they enter into temptation. They know that their adversary the Devil goes about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. *Against* him they watch, as for their life; but they watch *for* their Lord, whose return means salvation.

Two great spiritual powers are presented: the Lord fighting for His Church, and Satan, its great enemy, against it, bent upon its destruction so far as that may be possible to him. Why is Satan so malignant towards the church? Why is he its deadly enemy? Because of the peculiar and special place it has in the purpose of God; and because Satan knows that, sooner or later, those who are following in the footsteps of Jesus will share with Jesus in the power of the Kingdom. He hates them for the same reasons that he hated the Lord; and for self-interest he seeks their destruction even as he sought His. Besides this, the Church has occupied a peculiar place in the world. The repository of the Truth of God, Satan has tried to so corrupt it, that the Word of God might be rendered powerless; and how well he succeeded in that, we know. Humanly speaking, the corruption of the church has largely kept the world for a thousand years in dense darkness concerning God and His purposes.

In the old days of the prophets and kings of Israel, the policy of Satan was to entice and entangle the leaders of the people; for he well knows that the majority are ever willing to follow their leaders into either good or evil; “like Master, like servant; like priest, like people,” is one of the ruling principles of this present evil world. Satan well knew that if he could bring Moses, David, or Solomon into his enticements, he could do immense damage to the people. Thus it was, when Israel had a king or leader who feared the Lord, the people also feared the Lord and were prosperous; but when a wicked king ruled over them, they followed him into idolatry and incurred the displeasure of the Lord. In the days of our Lord the Pharisees and Scribes were the leaders of the people, to the hurt of the people. Satan had blinded their eyes, and through them had blinded the eyes of the people.

It was because they were the representatives of the Jewish dispensation that our Lord bade his disciples obey the Pharisees, for they sat in Moses’ seat. “But,” he cautioned them, “beware of their doctrine, their teaching.” The time was then at hand when God would require an account of their stewardship; and very soon this stewardship was taken from them, that it might be given to those who would bring forth the fruits thereof. The Pharisees and Scribes were dismissed as unworthy, and the disciples of Christ received that honour, as Paul intimated: “We are made stewards of the mysteries of God” (1 Cor. 4:1). In turn, the truth was committed to the church, the faithful having become “the light of the world.” We, therefore, become the object of Satan’s malice and malignity.

To clearly apprehend the reason why Satan so urgently seeks our destruction, is to get strength for our fight, and to gain assurance in our walk of faith. To become aware that we are constantly in the eye and mind of the enemy, means that we perceive that Satan knows of our call to heavenly honours, - and the fact of our being tempted should encourage us, for Satan troubles but little those who do not walk with Jesus. Now that the end of the age has come, and truth is being freed from defiling errors, now that the Lord is gathering His people together preparatory to the “Harvest Home,” the great enemy is doing his utmost to defile the Lord’s people, to destroy their faith, and to make them unfaithful stewards. At this time we need to take most earnest heed to our way, for the enemy “has great wrath, knowing that his time is short.” Not only as individuals, but as communities, we need special watchfulness, for the enemy takes much interest in church affairs. He is as desirous for its destruction now, as he was when he tried to drown it in the Galilean lake.

By watching against the enemy, not being ignorant of his devices, and taking heed to our lamp, we shall endeavour to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. We shall watch against pride and all vainglory. The Corinthians rather boasted of their strength and of their liberality. They suffered a notorious evil-doer to have fellowship, instead of putting him out from amongst them. But whilst they were confident of themselves, Satan was getting an advantage, for some of them had gone wrong about the resurrection, actually denying its possibility. We need to watch both our faith and our practice. We need right doctrine as well as right living. Indeed, we cannot have one without the other; we cannot retain either unless we have both. How careful, then,

must we be to have the Truth, that we may be sanctified by it.

Our hearts should be specially guided, for *there* Satan makes particular endeavours, either by subtlety or by assault and battery. We have one safeguard, worthy indeed of the name, - "a single eye to the glory of God." Having no schemes or desires of our own we are not so liable to be tempted, and are at liberty to watch against the enemy. Two great spirit powers watch the Christian on his way: one, his Lord, watches over him for good; the other, his enemy, seeks to devour, and to destroy. One notes every desire for holiness and helps the pilgrim to attain; the other notes every little default, and marks with quick result every possible chance of harm. Because of this, the Apostle exhorts us to alertness of mind towards our enemy, and to quickness of discernment and sharp apprehension of that which would hinder the truth of Christ making free way in our heart.

"STAND FAST IN THE FAITH."

The first essential is to know the faith, to be *in* the faith, else how can one stand fast in it? What is the faith in which we must stand fast? How may we know we have it? Paul had no doubt on those points, and neither need we. He said: "if an angel from heaven preach any other gospel than that which I have preached, let him be cut off." In this Epistle to the Corinthians, Paul had just declared the gospel "wherein ye stand," - that Christ died for our sins, and that he was raised again, according to the Scriptures (1 Cor. 15: 1-5). That was the foundation upon which his good news was based upon that he built his teaching of a great anointed, the first fruits unto God. *This* is the doctrine in which he had just urged the Corinthians to remain steadfast, immovable. If we may say that the command, "Watch ye", is the watchword of the New Testament, we may also say that "Stand fast" is the special watchword of the Apostle Paul. "I live, if ye stand fast," he said to the Thessalonian Church (1 Thess. 3:8), and the thought is present and expressed in all his general epistles.

"Be ye steadfast, unmovable." What is the difference here? To be steadfast means that the word preached has appealed to the reason, that conviction has come, and, further, that the will has been put into motion. Here is a set definite purpose: the mind and the will in co-operation to hold fast that which has been proved to be good. This is in every way proper. "I believed, and therefore have I spoken," said the Psalmist; "we believe, and therefore speak," said Paul, and we echo the words. If God has blessed us with light upon our pathway, if the light of this gospel has come upon us, if our ears have heard the heavenly call, let us *assure* ourselves that there is nothing better anywhere else. Let us determine in our hearts not to turn away from the hope of the gospel.

To be steadfast in the faith means that we have realized it as such, and have accepted it; whereas, lack of steadfastness means that something has come between us and the hope we originally had; that we have allowed our sight to be dimmed by a wrong condition of heart; that something of "self" has intruded between us and the chiefest treasure we possessed. To be steadfast means patience in well doing; that the desire for excitement is being subdued, and that we are *content* with the providences designed by our Heavenly Father. To have this quality means growth in grace and in possibilities of service.

To be unmovable means that we have so rooted our conviction in the will that we will not move ourselves or be moved by others. How happy they whose faith and purpose are "fixed, unmovable, secure!" They are always a source of strength to others. But each of us must attain to this, or we are not over-corners against all that can be brought against us. Our victory will be over the seductions of the world, and over the wiles and snares of the Devil. To be unmovable does not mean to have a dull, sullen temperament, but one quickened to discern good and evil; quick to perceive the value of the Truth, and to say, "Now have I found the ground wherein, sure my Soul's anchor may remain," -there to remain though the mountains be moved into the sea.

Feeble though the Lord's people are, in Him they are strong, so strong, that *no* power can break them. No powers of evil, however fiercely hurled against them, can move them. Lack of study is one of the chief causes of failure on this line. We require constantly to attend to the concentration of our mind on the means that the Lord has provided for us. He is strong who *reads* much, and who *meditates* on the Word.

"QUIT YOU LIKE MEN."

How do men acquit themselves? Sometimes very ill indeed. But the Apostle has an ideal before him. He is thinking of a strong character - a "manly" man. There are many qualities associated with manliness, but two prominent ones will serve to illustrate - Courage, and Dignity. Courage is needed, because the fight is long and furious. The enemy is mighty and never relaxes his purpose. The Christian's walk is contrary to the course of this present evil world. The necessity for conviction and courage is apparent. But never were the sterling qualities more necessary than at present, for *now* the fight against the Truth grows furious. "Only be thou strong and very courageous," said the angel to Joshua, and we may take the word to ourselves, that we fail not in the day of battle. Dignity is another feature of a manly character. When the enemy comes in like a flood we should not get scared; nor when he attempts to attract our attention by some new thing, should we get excited.

But how frequently has it happened that something new or different has so engrossed our attention, that for

a time we have forgotten the more important things. The mature mind finds in the toys of childhood nothing to claim its attention; nor should we allow the things of the immature *mind* to divert us from our intention to become conformed to Christ-likeness. Moreover, we should keep the dignity of Christian manhood, even though attacks are made upon us. It is not always possible to keep dignified if a terrier is barking at one's heels; but in the *spiritual* world we can do this; yea, even though a roaring lion be against us, we can go on unmoved.

“BE STRONG.”

“How easy to say it, but how difficult to get strength,” says one. Strength of faith, strength of character, resolution of will, and a feeling of assurance, are the things longed for by many of the Lord's people, and their need is felt by all. How may I get strength? The Lord answers “Let him take hold my strength.” The Lord is ever the source of our strength, but its possession depends upon our faith and determination. The only way the believer can get strength is by his faith, by believing that God will be his help in every time of need. He puts faith in the promises, acts upon his faith, and then comes the necessary strength. The Lord has given us, not the spirit of fear, but the spirit of *power*: Let all feelings of fearfulness of whatever description (save the fear towards God) be put aside as of the evil one, and let us stand before God in all confidence of His acceptance.

Let us not fear concerning the Lord's work, nor concerning our own salvation. He who is for us is more than all that can be against us. The work will prosper because He has purposed it. David said: “The Lord is my light and my salvation: whom shall I fear?” When his enemies came against him, they stumbled and fell. If a *host* should arise against him, he would have no fear; and if *war* were made against him, then would he be *confident*. His confidence rose as danger increased.

Let us in these times of stress take heed to our ways. Having proved the value of Truth for ourselves, having seen its effect upon others, and perceiving that by it our hearts have been filled with joy and gladness and our lives brought into full consecration to the Lord, we cannot do better than heed the injunction - Stand fast in the Faith; Quit you like men; Be strong. Let us watch that no man beguile us; and in our watching and contention for the faith, let us obey the last part of the exhortation - “Let all your things be done in love,” and with the gentleness of Christ AMEN.

(JH: 1909)

TRUST

“God guide you in the darkness and the light
Of days unknown,
And make the path that lies before you bright
With all the joy and peace He gives His own -
The joy which is the strength of those who wait
Beside His feet,
And find - though earth be dark and desolate -
Each cross is crowned with compensation sweet.
And learn in brighter hours that still the heart
May look above
And find in His own life a better part;
A perfect happiness; a perfect love.
A peace which only comes to those who lie
At rest and still -
While all the changeful earth life passes by -
Within His Holy and unerring will.”



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A RANSOM FOR ALL

"Behold The Lamb of God!" - John 1:36.

Jesus was unapproachably distant from all who ever were honoured with a divine mission, with no predecessor and no successor in the multitude and harmony of his spiritual revelations. The Hebrews epistle opens thus: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the Prophets, hath in these last days *spoken unto us by his Son*"; a fulfilment of a promise which waited many centuries for its accomplishment.

This promise had been given in the days of Moses to Israel - "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him." (Deut. 18:18) This the Son confirmed: "I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should speak." (John 12:49) Those who heard and saw testified, "This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world." - John 6:14.

"HIS GRACIOUS WORDS"

His hearers, enthralled, "wondered at the gracious words which proceeded forth from his mouth" as he appropriated to himself the divine commission recorded by Isaiah eight centuries before: "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:17-22.)

A wondrous light burst upon sin-sick and weary humanity. He spoke forth doctrines strange for their searching character and revolutionary for their boldness, and always with the air of authority: I am the Way - the Truth - the Life - the Door - the Bread from Heaven - the Light of the World; no man cometh unto the Father except by me. A most astounding message of salvation "which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord"... "*a hope of eternal life* which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began." (Heb. 2:3; Tit. 1:2.)

It was "the word," said Peter to Cornelius, "which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all;) that word, ye know, which was published throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the holy spirit and with power; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil: for God was with him." - Acts 10: 36-38.

His deeds attracted attention and enforced awe at the mysterious power which lay in his hand and voice. He defended the weak, forgave the sinners, fed the thousands, healed the sick, raised the dead. "The people were amazed and said, Is not this the son of David?" (Matt. 12:23.) Here was a transcendent character and a Teacher without parallel, who could instruct in truth higher than man had conceived, opening vast and pure reaches of the unseen realms of knowledge.

The light of the knowledge of the glory of God shone forth from his face. The ruler Nicodemus confessed, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." (John 3:2.) "The common people heard him gladly, and would have made him king." - Mark 12:37; John 6:15.

"HE OPENED THE SCRIPTURES"

But resolutely rejecting all human exaltation he "stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem," in marvellous obedience to a greater commission entrusted him by the Father. This commission he revealed to his inner circle of disciples in words perplexing and strange: "The Son of Man must be lifted up." (John 3:14.) "The Son of Man came to give his life a ransom for many." (Mark 10:45.) "My flesh I will give for the life of the

world.” (John 6:51.) “I lay down my life for the sheep.” (John 10:15.) “This is my body, broken for you. This is my blood, shed for you.” (Matt. 26:26-28.)

But His words fell on unbelieving ears for they were incompatible with the disciples’ expectation of an immediate establishment of God’s Kingdom. They were not to comprehend until after his resurrection when he spoke to them again: “O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the Prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

Then he said to them, “These are my words which I spoke to you, while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, “Thus it is written, that Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that *repentance and forgiveness of sins* should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” -Luke 24:25-27; 44-47.

In these plain words explicitly and unqualifiedly does Christ, the central and supreme theme of all Old Testament disclosure, affirm *his atoning death* to be the one fact that gives vital significance, substance, and value to the entire body of the Inspired and Written Scriptures of that time. For God has made the Death of Christ the procuring means of Human Salvation. This, the central and cardinal fact of divine revelation, found its concentrated expression in the heralding Baptist’s sublime announcement when, pointing to the approaching Christ, he exclaimed:

“BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD, WHO TAKETH AWAY THE SIN OF THE WORLD!” -John 1:29.

“FOR THE SUFFERING OF DEATH”

We are thus brought directly to the ultimate objective in Jesus’ earthly ministry. He who had existed before the world was—who had made all things—who had left the glories of a higher nature and been made lower than the angels—whose birth, supernaturally of a virgin, was heralded by the spirit host—dedicated his life to the will of his Father, and in perfect submission to that will “emptied himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” (Phil. 2:8.) He became a man for the very purpose of “tasting death for every man.” He took on him the human nature “for the suffering of death” -the very penalty that was against our race. “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.” (2 Cor. 5:19.) “The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” (John 1:17.)

The revelation of God through the Mosaic Law resulted only in proving Jews and Gentiles as all under sin; stopping every mouth and making the world subject to divine judgment, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. But the revelation of God through Jesus Christ brought justification freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. For though “the wages of sin is death, the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” -See Rom. 3:9-24; 11:32, 6:23; Gal. 3:22.

CENTRALITY OF THE RANSOM

This doctrine of the atonement, effected by Jesus in the sacrifice of himself, is the grand touchstone by which we may determine what is Truth and what is not Truth. For in the great Plan of God for human salvation the Ransom constitutes the very central feature from which radiate all the doctrines which end in the fullness and completion of that Divine Plan. The vicarious aspect of Jesus’ death is the definite teaching of many Scriptures, for example:

Matt. 1:21: He shall save his people from their sins.

Matt. 26:28: My blood ... shed ... for the remission of sins..

Isa. 53:5: He was wounded for our transgressions.

Isa. 53:12: He bare the sin of many.

Dan. 9:24: To make an end of sins.

1 Cor. 15:3: Christ died for our sins.

Gal. 1:4: Who gave himself for our sins.

Eph. 1:7: We have redemption through his blood.

1 Tim. 1:15: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

Heb. 9:26: He was manifested to put away sin.

1 Pet. 1:19: Redeemed with the precious blood of Christ.

1 Pet. 3:18: Christ suffered for sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous.

1 Pet. 2:24: Who his own self bare our sins.

1 John 2:2: He is the propitiation for our sins.

1 John 1:7: The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all our sins.

Rev. 1:5: Washed us from our sins in his own blood.

Typically, also, the elaborate sacrificial system of the ceremonial Law of Sinai revealed the same truth. The substitution of an unoffending animal for the human offender-where nothing less than the lifeblood (Lev. 17:11) of the substituted victim sufficed for the remission of deserved penalty, with the offerer's act of laying his hand on the animal, an exercise of faith in the transfer of guilt-conveyed the fact and meaning of Atonement.

These sacrifices of Israel were intended and adapted to point onward to Him in whose death a real sacrifice was offered, in whose death a real want of mankind was met. This truth is forcefully expounded in the Book of Hebrews, particularly chapters 9 and 10-the key thought itself in 9:22: "Without shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins."-R.SV.

PHILOSOPHY OF THE RANSOM

Jesus' atonement work must not however be crudely construed as simply shedding literal blood to placate an angry Deity. We may be certain the Philosophy of the Ransom is commensurate with the lofty attributes of God. In seeking to understand the workings of Him, "whose thoughts are not our thoughts, and whose ways are not our ways," we may accept the theologian Hooker's dictum: "Let us not think that, as long as the world doth endure, the wit of man shall be able to sound the bottom of that which may be concluded out of the Scriptures."

This question as to the ability of the human mind to comprehend absolute truth need not, however, diminish our appreciation of the boundless love of God for his human creatures; in whose Plan on our behalf the "Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world"; and who "gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Students of the Scriptures are generally agreed in a Philosophy of the Ransom which magnifies the Creator; an interpretation whose pivotal truth is expressed by the Apostle in 1 Cor. 15:21, 22: "As by a *man* came death, by a *man* also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

This interpretation has been briefly stated thus: "The ransom views the matter of man's recovery from sin and death as a purchase-a redemption. The basis of this thought is the divine law, 'an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a life for a life.' (Deut. 19:21.) Adam and his entire race of thousands of millions are in dire distress through sin and its penalty. God has provided a recovery by a ransom process-purchasing back from their fallen condition."

ECONOMY OF THE RANSOM

"Our first thought naturally would be that to redeem, or purchase back, the right of humanity to life would mean that each member of Adam's race must be purchased by the life of another person, holy, harmless, unsentenced. But looking deeply into God's Plan we find that only one man was tried before the divine court-namely, Father Adam; that only Adam was sentenced to death; and that all of his children go into death, not because of their individual trial and death, but simply because Adam failed to maintain his perfection, was unable to give his children more life or rights than he possessed. And so it has been throughout the entire period from the time of Father Adam's sentence until now."

"Here we see a wonderful economic feature connected with the Divine Plan. God would not permit more than one member of the human race to be tried and sentenced to death; for his purpose from the beginning was that the sacrifice of one life should redeem the entire human race. By one man the whole trouble came; by another Man the whole trouble will be rectified."

"Thus we see the value of Jesus' death-that it was not merely for Adam, but included all his posterity. We see, too, how necessary it was that Jesus should be 'holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners'; otherwise, he, like the remainder of the race, would have been under a divine death sentence. Because all of Adam's race were involved in sin and its penalty, it was necessary to find an outsider to be the world's Redeemer; and that outsider, whether angel, cherub, the great Michael himself, the Logos, must exchange the spirit nature for the human nature in order to be a corresponding price-a ransom for the first man."

"It was not a god that sinned; hence the death of a god could not redeem. It was not a cherub that sinned; hence the death of a cherub could not redeem. It was a [perfect] man who sinned, and the ransom for him must be furnished by the death of a [perfect] man. It was for this cause that the great Logos, in carrying out the divine plan for human redemption, left the glory which he had with the Father before the world was, humbled

himself and became a man, was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour; that he, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man.”

To this agree the words of Jesus himself: “The Son of Man came . . . to give his life a ransom (*lutron-anti* a price to correspond) for many.”-Mark 10:45.

In Romans 5, verses 15-21, we read Paul’s contrast between Adam and Christ. The two great heads of the race are introduced, Adam in the Fall, Christ in the Redemption; and the results of the Fall and the results of the Redemption are shown in strong and pointed contrast. In brief, this remarkable passage teaches that Adam, the progenitor of the race, carried all his descendants with him into corruption, condemnation, and death; that Christ, the Second Adam, and constructive Head of the race, carried, *potentially*, all the race redeemed by his vicarious death, with him into regeneration, justification, and life.

OUTCOME OF THE RANSOM

The Scriptures are thus explicit in their assurance that our Redeemer bought the world with his own life, “his own precious blood.” Here is also assurance of the *unchangeableness* of divine law, which could not be broken, but instead provided redemption at so great a cost. The remission of the death penalty is not a violation of God’s justice, but its satisfaction by his love; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” (Rom. 3:26.)

We may be grateful and satisfied that the *Truth of the Atonement stands as a Fact*, clear, immovable, and supreme among the stupendous verities of Divine Disclosure, and that it is unchangeably interwoven with them all. “Mercy glorieth against judgement.” “Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.” -Jas. 2:13 ; Psalms 85:10.

This sovereignty over all will be realized in the glorious Millennium. For “God hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.” (Acts 17:31.) “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a *ransom [anti-lutron* corresponding price] for all, to be testified in due time.” (1 Tim. 2:6.)

This will be the “times of restoration” which will see the original purpose of God in the creation of man accomplished in the peopling of earth with perfect human beings, restored thus and to eternal life through Christ’s Ransom Work. Of the result of that ransom, and of the work of redemption as it shall finally be accomplished by the close of the Millennial Age, the Prophet speaking of our Lord says, “He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.”-Isa. 53:11.

In spirit, we can add our voice to that of the “ten thousand times ten thousand, and ten thousands of thousands” of angels as they rapturously proclaim:

“WORTHY IS THE LAMB THAT WAS SLAIN TO RECEIVE POWER AND RICHES, AND WISDOM, AND STRENGTH, AND HONOUR, AND GLORY, AND BLESSING,” (The Herald)

HE TOUCHED HER HAND”

“When Jesus came into Peter’s house, He saw his wife’s Another kid and sick of a fever, and He touched her hand, and the fever left her.”
(Matt. 8:14, 15)

“He touched her hand and the fever left her.”
He touched her hand as He only can;
With the wondrous skill of the great Physician,
With the tender touch of the Son of Man;
And the fever pain in the throbbing temples
Died out, with the flush on brow and cheek,
And the lips that had been so parched and burning
Trembled with thanks that she could not speak.
And the eyes where the fever light had faded
Looked up, by her grateful tears made dim;
And she rose and ministered in her household,
She rose and ministered unto Him.

“He touched her hand, and the fever left her.”
Oh, we need His touch on our fevered hands,
The cool, still touch of “the Man of sorrows,”
Who knows us, and loves us, and understands.

So many a life is one long fever!
 A fever of anxious suspense and care,
 A fever of getting, a fever of fretting,
 A fever of hurrying here and there.
 Oh! What if in winning the praise of others
 We miss at the last, the King's "Well done"?
 If our self-sought tasks in the Master's vineyard
 Yield "nothing but leaves" at the set of sun?
 "He touched her hand, and the fever left her."
 Oh, blessed touch of the Man Divine.
 So beautiful then to arise and serve Him,
 When the fever is gone from your life and mine.
 It may be the fever of restless serving
 With heart all thirsty for love and praise,
 And the eyes all aching and strained with yearning
 Toward self-set goals in the future days;
 Or it may be a fever of spirit anguish,
 Some tempest of sorrow that dies not down
 Till the cross at last is in meekness lifted,
 And the head bends low for the thorny crown;
 Or it may be a fever of pain and anger
 When the wounded spirit is hard to bear,
 And only the Lord can draw forth the arrows
 Left carelessly, cruelly, rankling there.

Whatever the fever, His touch can heal it,
 Whatever the tempest His voice can still;
 There is only joy, as we seek His pleasure,
 There is only rest, as we choose His will.
 And some day, "after life's fitful fever,"
 I think we shall say in the home on high-
 "If the hands that He touched but did His bidding
 How little it matters what else went by!"
 Ah, Lord! Thou knowest us altogether,
 Each heart's sore sickness, whatever it be;
 Touch Thou our hands! Let the fever leave us,
 And so we shall minister unto Thee.
 (Author Unknown)

PRAISE IS COMELY FOR THE UPRIGHT

"The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer." 2 Sam. 22:2

The entire chapter (2 Sam. 22) from which the text is taken is one of David's songs of praise and gratitude to God for His goodness and His loving providences, which had been so manifest toward him ever since his anointing by Samuel, the prophet, and doubtless before that as well. It calls to mind another expression in one of his psalms, "Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous; for praise is comely for the upright." (Psalm 33:1). Indeed, the writings of David, and all the prophets and apostles as well, abound in fervent expressions of praise and thanksgiving to God.

They not only praise the Lord themselves, lovingly and gratefully recounting all His mercies, but with impassioned eloquence and holy enthusiasm they call upon all the children of men, and everything that has breath, and even inanimate nature to laud and magnify His holy name. The worshippers are also bidden to bring with them to the concert of praise every musical instrument of human device; and blessed reverence exclaims, "Blessed be His glorious name forever, and let the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen and Amen." (Psalm 72:19)

As we thus consider that, by the voice of inspiration, the whole human race is called to praise and worship and thanksgiving, we are led to consider further the relationship which the spirit of praise has to the Christian or godly character. David says that it is "comely for the upright", but why so? It is because loving gratitude is one of the divinely implanted instincts of a soul bearing an image of God, and one which therefore should be cultivated. It is this element of the intelligent creature that is designed to be responsive to the divine goodness

and benevolence; and it is this element of character in mankind which makes fellowship and communion with God possible.

If the goodness of God could awaken in us no sense of grateful appreciation, if we were wholly dead to such sentiments, there could be no pleasure on God's part in manifesting His goodness to us, and there would be nothing in us to call out His love; and also nothing of all His goodness and grace would awaken love in us. But since for the divine pleasure we are and were created (Rev. 4:11), God endowed His intelligent creatures with this element of character which, being responsive to His own goodness, institutes a lively and delightful fellowship with Himself, which is the chief end of human existence, both on the side of the creature and the Creator. (Psa. 16:11, Prov. 11:20; 15:8)

It is plain therefore that the Christian's secret of a happy life lies in the cultivation of the spirit of praise, thanksgiving and loving appreciation of all the manifest goodness of God. For the cultivation of such a spirit it is necessary that we continually call to mind His acts of mercy and of grace; that in our prayers we frequently tell Him how all His goodness is remembered; how every fresh evidence of His love and care causes faith to take deeper root and makes the sense of His presence and favour more fully realised; and how through such experiences our love and joy are made to abound more and more.

We love Him because He first loved us, and every time we see some new mark of His love, our love, if we have truly appreciative hearts, is called out more and more, and we are made to rejoice in God, in whose presence is fulness of joy. It is to this end that our Lord encourages our frequent coming to Him in prayer with large requests for His favour, saying, "Ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full." (John 16:24) We note that in Israel the spirit of praise was cultivated by calling to mind and recounting what the Lord had done for them. "If I do not remember Thee", says David, "let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth." (Psa. 137:6)

So the Christian should continually call to mind the works of the Lord, especially his or her own individual experiences of the Lord's leading and care, of His deliverances from dangers and snares and from the wiles of the adversary. If we keep these things in mind and meditate upon them, our appreciation of God and His goodness grows, and the spirit of love and praise takes possession of the heart; thus we are able to rejoice in the Lord always, and in everything to give thanks. So also the soul is made to hunger and thirst after God and to realise that God alone is its satisfying portion, and to desire more and more of His fulness. Thus, as the Psalmist suggests, our prayer will be. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, do panteth my soul after Thee, O God." (Psa. 42:1)

The same principle of gratitude and praise, which reciprocates loving kindness and generosity, is that which makes human friendship and fellowship possible and delightful. In our dealings with one another, if the kindness we show awakens no sense of appreciation, receives no acknowledgement, and their repetition is expected as a matter of course, there can in the very nature of things be no such thing as fellowship. True, as Christians, we may not relax kindness and generosity on this account; for we, like our Heavenly Father, are to be kind to the unthankful as well as to the thankful (Matt 5:44-48), but when this goodness awakens no appreciation, no love, fellowship becomes impossible.

In David's thanksgiving for victories over his enemies, we observe that they were the enemies of the Lord and of His people, whom David was commissioned by God to conquer. He undertook these battles in the strength which God supplied, and the victories he properly ascribed to God, the Rock of His salvation. The words, regarded from the standpoint of the future, are also prophetic of the victories of Christ, of whom David was a type. To Him Jehovah will grant victory full and complete over all His enemies - the enemies of God, the enemies of truth and righteousness. The whole strain of thanksgiving, thus viewed in its wider application to the conquests of Christ, is eloquent in its prophecy of His glorious victory, as well as in praise to Jehovah. (1 Cor 15:27,28)

Meantime, the subject text is a blessed assurance, applicable to all the Lord's people, and it is amply verified to all those who delight themselves in the Lord, who meditate upon His goodness, and render to Him the praise that is due to His holy name-

*"The Lord is my **Rock** (upon which I may safely build my hopes); and my **Fortress** (in which I may safely hide) and my **Deliverer**" (in every time of trouble). (2 Samuel 22:2)*

"CALLED OF GOD, AS WAS AARON"

(Why Does God Seem to Favour Some More Than Others?)

"No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. So also Christ glorified not Himself to be made a high priest, but He that saith? unto Him, Thou art my Son, today have I begotten Thee." Heb. 5:4,5

The honour which no man was to take unto himself was that of Israel's high priest. Aaron was specially called by God, or favoured by God, for that important office, being typical of Christ, who also honoured not Himself to be made a High Priest, but was highly favoured by His Heavenly Father. The background to Aaron's being called by God for service is recorded in Exodus 4,7 and 28. In Exodus 28:1, we read - *"Take unto thee Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister unto Me in the priest's office.* No one had the right to enter into this high priestly office unless he had qualifications prescribed by God, who favoured Aaron no doubt because he saw in him, a Levite and worthy descendant of Abraham, one suited for His purposes in Israel. In Psalm 106:16, he is called "the saint of the Lord."

Following God's wonderful covenant promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, we find a comprehensive statement about His choice of Israel to be His particular and typical people in David's psalm of thanksgiving recorded in 1 Chron. 16:13-17 - *"O ye seed of Israel His servant, ye children of Jacob, His chosen ones, He is the Lord our God; His judgements are in all the earth. Be ye mindful always of His covenant, the word which He commanded to a thousand generations; even of the covenant which He made with Abraham, and of His oath unto Isaac, and hath confirmed the same to Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant."*

"HE CAME UNTO HIS OWN"

That the Lord continued to recognise Israel as His favoured people down the centuries to Jesus' first advent is evident from the fact that He sent John the Baptist to call them to repentance, that they might more readily accept their Messiah at the appointed time. Jesus was some six months younger than John the Baptist, thus allowing those few months of preparatory ministry by John prior to Jesus being baptised and commencing His ministry at thirty years of age. This is briefly recorded in John 1:6-17. Sadly, we read in John 1:11 that *"He came unto His own (His own nation Israel) but His own received Him not"* - that is, as a people, as a nation.

Nevertheless, that Israel belonged to God, to whom Jesus was sent, is evident when He declared on appropriate occasions - *"I am not sent, but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."* From early in His ministry, our Lord began to find the "lost sheep" who were worthy to be favoured, to be called by God. In John 1:35-42, we have an account of John introducing two of his disciples to Jesus, showing clearly that John knew his mission was to prepare those disciples who were worthy to learn from Jesus what was required for discipleship in the Christian way. John was pointing his own disciples to Jesus as though to say, There is the Lamb of God, follow Him!

We read that *"the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus"* (V.37) and later in Verses 40 - 42: *"One of the two who heard John speak and followed Him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ, and he brought him to Jesus."* To be able to detect that Jesus was the Messiah after only a few hours of teaching from Him (*"they abode with Him that day"* - V.39), shows that they were ready and worthy to be favoured with His truth, of being called by God.

FINDING AND BEING FOUND

The next day Jesus had a similar experience with two others of similar disposition to Andrew and Peter. *"The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me....Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto Him, We have found Him, of whom Moses in the Law, and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."* (Verses 43,45) What a lovely experience that must have been for those two disciples! We note how the account reads - **"Jesus findeth Philip"** **"Philip findeth Nathanael,** and saith, **We have found Jesus."**

We realise that these "findings" were not accidental. Philip and Nathanael were just waiting to be found; they were yearning and longing, no doubt, for the promised Messiah and for Jesus' message of truth; when they were found, they knew from their hearts they had found Jesus. We can readily understand why these disciples were favoured by the Lord more than Israelites in general at that time. And the Lord is still "finding" Philips and Nathanaels, as well as Marthas and Marys, who are in the right condition of heart to be found, and, when they are **found** by **Jesus** they also realise that they have **found Jesus**.

Nathanael was cautious when he heard Jesus described as "Jesus of Nazareth". "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" he asked. Philip's answer was a worthy one - "Come and see."

That is just the message that we can offer people who are cautious or in doubt. - Taste and see that the Lord and His message are good. The record of Nathanael's call continues - *"Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! Nathanael saith unto Him, Whence knoweth Thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee."* (Verse 47, 48)

CALLED TO DISCIPLESHIP

It has been said that in those days the fig trees had branches right down to the ground, almost like a tent. Possibly Nathanael had been under the fig tree praying and the Lord knew. Whatever the case, Nathanael was impressed at once - here was a man who knew what he was doing, knew his character, even before He could clearly see him. His response was - *"Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God! Thou art the king of Israel."* To this the Lord replied - *"Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? Thou shalt see greater things than these."* (Verse 49, 50) No doubt, Nathanael would go on to see the wonderful truths of the heavenly calling, and would accept them from the Lord's hand, as one called by God.

While we have this record of Jesus finding His disciples and their feeling that they had found Him, it was still necessary that their faith confidence in Him and His teachings should be consolidated and it has been suggested that the incident of decision recounted in Luke 5:1-11 may have taken place up to twelve months after our Lord had commenced His ministry. On that occasion, Peter, Andrew, James and John, although previously "found" by Jesus, committed their lives fully to be His constant, full time disciples, to become "fishers of men." From the account in Luke 5, we learn that Jesus had been teaching the people out of Peter's ship (Verses 1-3) and no doubt His message would cover the privilege (and cost) of discipleship.

The four disciples would hear this wonderful sermon which the Lord preached to the people on shore. He would speak to them of the favour of being called of God, and afterwards the miraculous haul of fish (Verse 4-7) would impress on them the reality of the Heavenly Father's power. They might well say, "Who is this One whom we have previously found? Here is God's power operating." The Lord would know that this miracle would help to confirm the hearts of these disciples once and for all, for He did not hurry anyone into His ministry. They were able to reason and the Spirit, working quietly in them even before Pentecost, would enable them to say, Here is the One we will follow for the rest of our lives.

Peter's initial reaction to the miracle is recorded in Verse 8 - *"When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."* He was overwhelmed, feeling unworthy to associate with one who could do such a thing, but the Lord knew Peter's heart and told him *"Fey,- not, from henceforth thou shalt catch men."* (Verse 10) The Lord knew that Peter would be a wonderful servant, one to be favoured, one to be honoured, one called by God. The following verse 11 tells us that *"when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all and followed Him."* How clearly we can see the reason for the Lord's favour being shown to these disciples above others.

COST OF DISCIPLESHIP

In Luke 9:57,58 we read - *"As they went in the way, a certain man said unto Him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head."* Why would Jesus present this picture to one who seemed so willing to follow Him? The Lord did not want any to think that it was an easy undertaking to follow Him; He requires all to know that being a disciple is a solemn undertaking, so that from the heart they will present their lives to Him and become real followers.

The Son of Man indeed had no place to lay His head, that is, of His own; He had no possessions of His own, no headquarters for His ministry. Nevertheless, the Lord found resting places. Israel was God's covenant people, and there were homes in Israel that delighted to have the Lord with them, because His blessings were upon them. One such was the home at Bethany of Martha, Mary and Lazarus. What a privilege it was for them to invite the Lord and His disciples to dwell with them, and to receive a blessing from His hands! But during all His ministry, He had no place of His own to rest His head.

In explanation of the sacrifice required of a follower of the Master, we have His words in Luke 9:23 - *"If anyone will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily, and follow me."* If anyone feels invited, has been so honoured, let him or her take up the cross daily and follow the Lord. Jesus needed to put these propositions before all His disciples, and the same still applies to all who would follow Him today. We must see the privilege, not "must I" but "may I" sacrifice with the Lord. What a joy a it is for those who realise the privilege of being favoured at this time above others, of being invited into God's family.

Two other instances of reasons advanced for postponement of discipleship are recounted in Verses 59-62. The Lord however could detect the minds of those who wished to follow Him and knew that, in these cases, to be detained along the lines of earthly affairs would be a serious hindrance. In all these accounts, the Lord was showing the privilege of being favoured with the invitation to the heavenly kingdom, and that it was to be appreciated above all else. *"Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness."*

"BE YE SEPARATE"

In Luke 17, we have a prophecy of our Lord concerning the time in which we are now living, and showing what was expected of those who would be favoured with the harvest truths of God's word, so that they may be His people, united to Him as individuals, free from the errors of false systems of religion. Verses 34 to 37 were given to promote a separation of the Lord's people from all such systems in this end of the Age. In each

of the three illustrations, the call to separateness is to the alert, the watchful, who can detect and appreciate the Lord's food from His storehouse of truth. The truth is their very living, these are of those favoured by God above others, because they have an appetite for spiritual truths. *"Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."*

The majority, not so favoured by God during this Gospel Age, are not forgotten by Him, as we shall see later, for God's plan provides for every human being who has ever lived. God is not selecting some to the detriment of others; but He is selective and has been choosing some in the ages past and in this Gospel Age. The favoured position of those who now are keen-eyed and alert to appreciate the truths of God's word, who seek zealously to feast on His spiritual food, (as eagles around the carcass), is helpfully illustrated in Judges 7:1-7, which describes the reduction of Gideon's army, from the original 32,000 to a mere 300.

Of the original number, 22,000 became afraid and returned home. In the Christian context, these are outside the call altogether. Of the remaining 10 000 who faced the test of drinking the water, only 300 remained for the Lord to use in demonstrating that the victory over the Midianites was His. Those who bowed down and put their mouths to the water thought of nothing else than to get a drink. Those who lapped the water were alert and keen-eyed, and would detect an enemy quickly; these would picture keen-eyed Christians, appreciative of God's truths when they find them, in contrast to the rest of the 10,000 who were wholly absorbed with the drinking of the water - taken up with material things.

"YE SEE YOUR CALLING"

The words of 1 Cor 1:26 to 29 also help us to understand God's selection during this Gospel Age. *"For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called, but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise and base things, and things which are despised, hath God chosen to bring to nought things that are; that no flesh should glory in his presence."* "You see your calling, brethren!" Do we grasp our calling as a privilege from the Lord? Is it the greatest privilege under the sun? Each Christian needs to see it in that light. The mighty, the noble, the great, are generally more or less self-sufficient, and think only of their own abilities. These are great in the world and its affairs, and are not invited to be servants of the Master. Those who are favoured by God are the humble and lowly, who feel their own weakness and know that their strength in and for the truth comes from the Lord Himself.

The scripture assures us that those whom God has not favoured during this Gospel Age are not forgotten in His plan of the ages. In Rev. 22 we have the picture of the kingdom of God set up and the blessings flowing out to all the families of the earth. The opening verses declare that "there is no more curse" for the curse of death has been overcome by the sacrifice of Christ and the resurrection of mankind has been accomplished. Verse 17 shows that the opportunity for lasting life will then be available to all, when the Bride of Christ is fully made up and reigning with Him. "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

At that time, grace will be extended to all mankind. During the Gospel Age and earlier ages, however, selection and election have been going on. God has been doing the selection. *"No one can come to me, unless the Father draw him"* were Jesus' words. God's Spirit draws to Jesus those who are worthy and who accept the privilege of walking in His steps, that they may also reign with their Lord to accomplish the blessing of all the families of the earth in the wonderful kingdom of Christ. So we can be glad that God's plan of salvation does not overlook any of the human family.

Meantime, we can rejoice that God has favoured some of mankind more than others, because it is His will. It is not because they are better in themselves than others. It is the poor of this world, the despised ones, those who are not, who are chosen to confound the mighty. **God knows whom to choose.** His Spirit can transform such poor material into vessels fit for His service now, and prepared for greater service in the kingdom to come. (EM/74)



Volume 81 No.2 MELBOURNE, MARCH / APRIL 1998 **“THE LOVE OF CHRIST CONSTRAINS US”**

“That He (the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ) would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God. “ (Eph. 3:16-19)

In these words, the apostle sets before us the extent of the love of Christ, its breadth and length and height and depth. This is one of the precious truths of God’s Word that has been brought to our attention in the last days, not only as to what Christ has already done for us in His coming into our world, His life, death and resurrection, but also as to the extensiveness of the results of that work, still to be revealed when He takes up His great power to reign. The scope of Christ’s love is, of course, a reflection of the Father’s love, for He so loved the world that He gave His Son to be its Saviour. Such an all-encompassing love can hardly fail to bring forth ‘all our heart’s deep thankfulness’.

After speaking of the extent of the love, the apostle goes on to speak of his desire that, as well as recognising its scope, they might personally come to know it, to feel it, to experience it and to rejoice in that love, which he says passes or surpasses knowledge. The context would indicate that Paul is here telling us that to really know the love of Christ we must have a first-hand experience of it in our lives. Something of this thought comes through in the testimony of Job after his long experiences and testings under Divine permission. In it all, he has learned the reality of God’s over-ruling care and can say ‘I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee.’

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

Others could tell us of the many ways in which they have come to know and be blessed by the love of Christ operative in their lives and this may well impress and move us, but until we know that love for ourselves, by personal experience, by its effect on our lives, we will not really know the love of Christ, nor will that love constrain or motivate our actions. It is therefore only to those who have tasted of that experience that Paul’s words of our title are addressed. The passage from which they are taken reads -

“Whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God, or whether we be sober, it is for your cause. For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that He died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them, and rose again. Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh; yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold all things are become new, and all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given unto us the ministry of reconciliation. “ (2 Cor. 5:13-18)

“ALL THINGS ARE BECOME NEW”

The context of Paul’s words is his concern as to the way in which he might minister the gospel to the brethren at Corinth, but his motivation and his methods, as a result of the “constraining” or “compelling” (NIV) love of Christ, are true for all of God’s children. The “love of Christ”, which the Word of God has shown us to be all-embracing, too vast for mere words to express adequately, and which we have experienced in our lives since we came to know Jesus as Saviour and Lord, is now to have a controlling power in our lives. This is, of course, in addition to a responsive love in our own lives, for how could such love as Christ’s fail to move any who have experienced it. Paul indicates how it lead him in Gal. 2:20, where he refers to “the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me”. Paul could not forget or undervalue that love and it was the momentum for his life of service.

Looking at the word “constrained”, we find that it is translated from a Greek word that basically has the thought of pressure, applied from outside, sometimes in a purely literal sense, e.g. the multitudes pressing about Jesus, but elsewhere in the sense of mental pressure. Our Lord’s words in Luke 12:50 are significant - “I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished”. How greatly I am constrained, how I must go on, He is saying, until all the necessary details of my life and sacrifice are completed.

Though a different, but related expression is used, Paul says in 1 Cor. 9:16, in relation to his preaching of the gospel, that “necessity” is laid upon him, he is constrained or bound to continue his labours for his Lord. So the apostle is speaking first-hand of the constraining or compelling or driving force of the love of Christ. The word used in our text can sometimes have the idea of “binding together”, usually to compel a desired action or situation, but the unifying effect which the love of Christ should have among the Lord’s brethren should certainly be one outcome.

OUTWARD MANIFESTATIONS

From our reading in 2 Cor. 5, we note that the apostle is making several points which are linked to the central theme of the passage, the constraining love of Christ -

Verse 14 - The love of Christ lead Him to offer up His life to redeem mankind and Paul says - “we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead”. Who died for all? *“Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?”* (Rom. 8:33-35) Our present condition -no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus -derives from His death upon the cross and His resurrection. This is the supreme exhibition of His undying, unfailing and inalienable love.

Verse 15 - The objective of this act of love on our Lord’s part was that those blessed with life in Him should no longer live for self but for their Saviour. Here is the response to the love of Christ which is the Father’s will for all His children. So Christ’s love changes our direction in life from self-centred to Christ-centred.

Verse 16 - The result of this change of direction reflects also in our relationships with others of God’s children. “Henceforth we know no one after the flesh”. This may seem strange at first, since we all are still in the flesh, still very human - our change into the full likeness of Christ awaits the faithful completion of the race set before us, even unto death. The next verse helps us to understand how we should regard one another.

Verse 17 - “If anyone be in Christ, he (or she) is a new creature, old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new”. This is the new standpoint which we are to have as we deal with one another of the Lord’s people. To be “in Christ” means that we are fully trusting in Him, have given our lives over to Him in obedience, to be used in joyful service to His glory; that we are being daily developed by the working of the Holy Spirit within us to be progressively made more and more into the likeness of our Lord.

So we are not to look on others for the faults which, if we look hard enough, we will probably detect, or think we detect, but at the heart’s desires and aspirations, conscious only too well of our own shortcomings and the charitable judgment which we ourselves so sorely need. We need to be looking to see Jesus in each dear brother and sister, and, if we do look, we will see Him there. But for each of us the very personal question is - Do others see Jesus in us?

Even the world at times may see something of Him in us if we are true to our Master. “Now when they (the Jewish rulers and others) saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were ignorant and unlearned men, they marvelled and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus”. (Acts 4:13) Is this true of us, when we are put to the test? We recall also the testimony of Stephen, seen by many of the Jewish Council, including a young man by the name of Saul - “All that sat in the Council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face, as if it had been the face of an angel”.

“Old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new”. (Verse 17) It is in this context that we are to relate to our brethren, for we are all surely seeking to walk in newness of life, that is, with our eyes fixed upon Him who is our life. Furthermore, it is in this context that we are to be fully yielded to the constraining love of Christ. This should, naturally, influence every aspect of life, dealings with family, friends, neighbours, all with whom we have needful day-to-day business, and so on, but it is vital in our relationships with the household of God, the household of faith.

LOVE ONE ANOTHER

The apostle John tells us, in effect, that the measure of our love for the brethren will be a very clear indica-

tor of the reality or otherwise and the extent of our love for God. "If a man says, I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar. For he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?" (1 John 4:20) Likewise, our appreciation of and response to the constraining love of Christ will be demonstrated in the love which we in turn show first and foremost to His followers. So we would expect the love of Christ, which has so enriched our own lives, to be reflected in our dealings with fellow Christians.

Our Master's commandment to His disciples was explicit - "A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another, as I have loved you. By this shall all know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another". (John 13:34,35) This matter of love within the family of God, among the Lord's brethren, is not something optional, and not something discriminatory - i.e. to merely love those who love us, who think as we do, who are of similar nature, interests, etc. The requirement is that we love all who are brethren in Christ, remembering His words - "One is your Master, all you are brethren". (Matt.23:8)

The love of Christ should indeed be the compelling, motivating force in every aspect of our new life in Him, expressing itself in greater love and zeal for our Master, for the brethren, for the truths of God's word and in our daily dealings with those about us. The apostles in their letters to the various churches and individual brethren give us much instruction on these lines. It is easy to be impatient even with those we love, in the natural family or in the family of God. Forbearing one another in love is the only answer. Some of us find it hard to be patient or long-suffering and need often to recall that our Heavenly Father has shown great patience and forbearance toward us.

Peace would surely be a prerequisite for unity among the brethren, for harmony, or for effective fellowship in any church or gathering of God's people. Our Saviour pronounced a special blessing upon those who actively strive for peace. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God". (Matt.5:9) Paul further tells us - "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace and things whereby we may edify one another". (Rom.14:19) "*Speaking the truth in love, (you) may grow up into Him in all things who is the Head, even Christ.*" (Eph.4: 15) "The two components - 'truth' and 'love', both need to be constantly adhered to.

So then we might ask ourselves again -

(1) Have we fully comprehended the breadth and length and depth and height of our Saviour's love, the love that constrained Him to leave the heavenly courts of glory to share our estate, to suffer and to die, not only that we might have life in Him, wonderful as this is, but that we may have a share in the blessing of all mankind in due time?

(2) Is the love of Christ the constraining, motivating, 'impelling' force in our lives as Christians, leading us on into responsive love for Him, for His service, for the Word of God? Is the love of Christ daily binding us more securely to Him, is it drawing us ever closer in love to our brothers and sisters in Christ?

Higher Ground

I'm pressing on the upward way,
New heights I'm gaining every day;
Still praying as I onward bound,
"Lord, plant my feet on higher ground."
My heart has no desire to stay,
Where doubts arise, and fears dismay;
Though some may dwell where these abound,
My constant aim is higher ground
Beyond the mist I fain would rise,
To rest beneath unclouded skies;
Above earth's, turmoil peace is found,
By those who dwell on higher ground.
I long to scale the utmost height,
Tho' rough the way and hard the fight;
My song, while climbing, shall resound,
Lord, lead me on to higher ground.

Lord, lead me up the mountainside,
I dare not climb without my Guide;
And, heaven gained, I'll gaze around,
With grateful heart from higher ground.
Lord, lift me up and let me stand,
By faith, on heaven's tableland;
Where love, and joy, and light abound,
Lord, plant my feet on higher found.

(J Oatman Jr./A R Habershon)

THE TRIAL OF YOUR FAITH

(1 Peter 1:5-8)

Though we know there must be trials, and there will be tears below,
Yet we know His glorious purpose, and His promises we know!
Only ask—"What saith the Master?" and believe His word alone,
That "from glory: unto glory" He shall lead, shall change His own.
Each Amen becomes an anthem, for we know He will fulfil,
All the purpose of His goodness, all the splendour of His will,
Only trust the living Saviour, only trust Him all the way,
And your springtime path shall brighten to the perfect summer day.

—F. R. Havergal.

The Ascent of the Mount of God

(The Necessity for Keeping Close to the Master)

(Continued from previous issue)

(Having dealt with the equipment needed by the would-be climbers - the clothing, the knapsack, the alpenstock and the cord which binds climbers to the Guide and to each other, the author now considers whether there are reasonable grounds for faith in the Guide and the ascent itself)

THE GUIDE'S QUALIFICATIONS

(1) Has Christ the necessary *experience*? Yes, our Master knows every inch of the way. He has trod it himself, for we are told "it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings" (Heb. 2: 10). Through the bitter lessons of practical experience, he is well acquainted with all the difficulties of the way. He was "in all points tempted like as we (the members of his body) are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4: 15), and thus "in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted" (Heb. 2: 18).

(2) A man may have trod the way and so have experience, but this does not necessarily imply that he is wise. Accordingly, a second necessary qualification in an efficient guide is *wisdom*, so that we may depend upon his judgment at all times and in all circumstances. Has Christ the necessary wisdom? Many tell us that the way Christ is leading us is the wrong way. They say, if you follow Christ in being humble and meek, denying yourself, giving up all earthly ambitions, and laying down your life in sacrifice, you will be very foolish. The Evolutionists tell us that man is simply evolving according to the "law of the survival of the fittest." The "law of the survival of the fittest" implies pushing others to the wall in order to succeed. There is not much comfort for the weak and helpless in that doctrine.

Some tell us that we have to depend upon a leader or the authority of the church. Surely a broken reed this to lean upon! Still others say that we should concentrate our attention on the health of our bodies and minds. Poor comfort this for those who are longing to please God and realize their own insufficiency. But it would be tedious even to enumerate all the various plans. You will find that they all direct you to yourself or to your fellow men. God's plan is best. He has given us Christ as our guide that we may follow in his steps. If you follow

him you will never be deceived, for “in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2: 3).

(3) The next thing is his *strength*. You know how a guide has to help tourists in dangerous places and to raise them when they fall. Is our guide strong enough? Yes he is mighty to save. “He is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Heb. 7: 25). Christ says: “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth” (Matt. 28: 18).

(4) Is Christ *trustworthy*? Undoubtedly he is. He has guided many already, and he will guide us too. He who, because of his love for us, suffered for our sakes to the extent of giving up his life for us, surely he will lead us to glory if we are willing; and has not our Heavenly Father said: “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee?”

Then we know he is willing to undertake the duties of the important office. We need not ask the question. “While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him (Rom. 5: 8, 9). Has not God said to us: “I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go; I will guide thee with mine eye” (Psa. 32: 8), and he has appointed Jesus the Captain of our salvation.

THE ASCENT

Let us now talk about the ascent. Do you remember the time when we were down in the depth of the valley of the shadow of death, and Christ took us by the hand and asked to be permitted to become our guide. You remember the first thing he did was to get us to cast off all the filthy rags of our own righteousness, and clothe us with the mountaineering suit, the white robe of *His* righteousness, the only covering that can protect us while climbing the mountain of God. God forbid that any of us should be so ungrateful and so foolish as to throw it off! We should surely die the second death if we did. Then he bound the knapsack of the word or wisdom of God on our shoulders, putting into this knapsack, as already said, the bread of life, the water of truth, the wine of comfort and exhortation, and the oil of joy.

You remember how we eagerly grasped with mind and heart the divine precepts and promises and the privilege of prayer, which together form the threefold cord of love, and helped to gird ourselves with it to our Master and to one another, in order that we might keep close to Him and to each other, and so make sure to gain the summit of the mountain of God. We did not at first discern all the threads that make up the three strands of this golden cord, but we are seeing them and putting them to the test day by day as we are climbing higher.

Lastly, he placed an Alpenstock in our hand, called the power of God; and he told us that it was the mercy and loving kindness of our Heavenly Father which prompted the giving of the robe, the knapsack, the cord and the alpenstock.

When we had our outfit, we began the ascent. It was necessary for us to put forth some effort; but praise the Lord, we do not require to rely upon our own strength and righteousness. His grace is sufficient for us. *When we are weak, then we are strong*. There is no power like the power of the Lord for strengthening the feeble knee.

Everyone of us can remember the beginning of the ascent. We all rejoiced at the prospect of being free from the valley of the shadow of death and of reaching the glory of the mountain top. We were full of confidence in the Lord and the power of his might. Some of us rejoiced more than others. Some of us, perhaps, had a little confidence in our own strength, though now, I trust, we have learned better. Others of us, while rejoicing, did not rejoice sufficiently, because we saw so plainly our own weaknesses and we were fearful of ever successfully climbing the dizzy height. We were looking more to self than to our guide. However, we all did rejoice and were anxious that others should rejoice with us.

Have you ever climbed a high mountain? The higher you ascend, the purer and rarer the air becomes, and when you fill your lungs with it and admire the beautiful scenery, your heart goes out to the Lord for gratitude, and you “cannot keep from singing.” That is how *we* feel. While we are ascending this high mountain of God, we feel often like bursting forth into “psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, making melody in our heart to the Lord.” “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits” (Psa. 103: 1, 2).

DIFFICULTIES

It is only when we are going along the right way that we feel like that. If we lose the way, then it is not pleasant by any means. We do not feel like singing then. But there is no reason why we should lose the way. No doubt it is narrow, but if we take a firm grasp of our alpenstock, see that our robe is unspotted, and make sure that we are firmly bound by, and are following the leading of the threefold cord of love, we shall not go astray. “Greater is he that is for us than all that be against us.” So long as we are rejoicing in the Lord, and not in self, we can feel that we are safe and that victory lies before us.

Although the path is all narrow and difficult, some parts are more difficult than others. In some places we have to force our way through thorny thickets of sneers and ridicule which tear into our flesh and make us wince. Again, we are sometimes compelled to climb over or go round rocks of distresses and perplexities. At other times we require to creep along with a great mass of affliction overhanging the narrow way, and seemingly ready to fall on us and crush us. Now and again an avalanche of tribulation comes upon us, or we may have to pass through a blinding hailstorm of persecution or a thunderstorm of trouble. But if we keep close to the Master we are quite safe.

Occasionally we find a yawning crevasse of doubt in front of us, or a bottomless precipice of despair at our side. If we look down, we get giddy and may fall. What we should do in such circumstances is to turn our eyes away from the danger and look to Jesus. We should take a firmer grip of our alpenstock and our cord of love, and with the Lord's assistance the difficulties of the way will be overcome. In all circumstances of difficulty and danger, we shall experience great comfort and be much refreshed if we open our knapsack, the Word of God, and while partaking of its contents, praise the Lord for his bountiful provision for all our needs.

Occasionally our guide seems to get out of our sight or to be too high above us and we are apt to lose heart, but if we grasp the cord and follow its leading, our faith will be rewarded. We shall see our guide once more, and we shall find that he was near us all the time and that it was only the feeling of faintness which obscured our vision.

You are aware that in some high mountains glaciers are met with. You know how the guide does in these cases? He digs out a foothold for each step of the way. That is what Christ, our guide, had to do. While at all times it is advisable, in these slippery places it is imperative that we should watch carefully for the footprints of the Master, and place our feet firmly and securely in them, step by step. If we do this, the love and power of God will sustain us, and we shall not need to fear.

Now and again we see some of our companions slip with more or less disastrous results; or we may slip ourselves, and when we do, what a fright it gives us! What discomfort and pain! What a feeling of faintness and helplessness comes over us! And how solicitous our Guide and our companions are for us! How they brace themselves and draw us up to safety again by the threefold cord of love, beseeching us to keep firm hold of it all the time! When we are very faint, our Guide hooks his alpenstock, the power of God, into our girdle, and draws us up to the place of safety. If any of us rebel and loosen our girdle we shall be in danger of death, but if we attend to the divine precepts, and take encouragement from the exceeding great and precious promises, and lay hold of the Lord by prayer, we shall soon be drawn up to the place of safety, and walk once more in the narrow way.

After we have recovered our footing, we feel shaken by the fall; our knees tremble and our head and heart feel faint, but by the help of the alpenstock and the golden cord, the cord of love, we soon regain our confidence in the Lord.

It is also at such times the privilege of some of our fellow-travellers to anoint our bruises with the oil of joy, to offer us a refreshing drink of the water of truth, and to sustain us with a small portion of the bread of life and wine of comfort and exhortation. What a glorious privilege we have in assisting each other!

REVIEW AND REFRESHING

When we have partaken of these, our first feeling is gratitude for the loving kindness of our God, and for the sympathy and help of our brethren. We thank God that we are back in the place of safety, and we show our love and appreciation to the brethren for their help. But it is right for us to reflect on the cause of our fall in order to draw from it the necessary lessons. Generally it has been neglect of some of the usual precautions, neglect of the necessity to hold the cord (precepts, promises and prayers, the three P's), or the alpenstock (the power of God), or neglect of keeping our garment unspotted, or of walking carefully in the footsteps of the Master. It may be that we have been disheartened through lack of faith. We may have been thinking more of the difficulties and dangers of the way than of the love and power and wisdom of God.

It may be, again, that the slip has been made through over-confidence in self or in a fellow traveller. It is well to have confidence in each other, to trust and love and honour one another, and this the more we see in them the likeness of the Master. But we must never be betrayed into placing more confidence in our fellow men than in God. This is an important thing, dear brethren. No matter how learned a brother may be, or how much of the spirit of Christ he may show, God forbid that we should permit ourselves, like many, to place man's word above the Word of God. We are never to worship man. "One is your Master, even Christ, all ye are brethren." Sometimes God allows leaders to make mistakes in order to test us in that way.

In times of difficulty and distress the proper thing for us to do is to feel a spirit of dependence on the Lord, the expression of which will be the language of prayer from the heart, uttered or unuttered. As the Psalmist says: "Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses" (Psa. 107: 6). The weaker we are in self, the stronger we can be in the Lord. "Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not

dismayed for I am thy God. I will strengthen thee, yea I will help thee, yea I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness, for I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee: Fear not, I will help thee” (Isa. 41: 10, 13). With promises like these in the Scriptures, and they abound there, we need not fear, however difficult the way may appear.

Sometimes we are apt to become impatient and think we are unnecessarily long in reaching the summit, or that the difficulties we are experiencing on the way are too numerous, too great or too long-continued; but to feel like that would show a want of confidence in our God. He knows what is best for our spiritual growth, and for the interests of the truth. “Wait thou upon the Lord, be of good courage, and he will strengthen thy heart; wait, I say, on the Lord” (Psa. 27; 14).

But the way is not all full of such difficulties. The Lord knows that we require breathing-spaces on the hill-side. Sometimes we get to a part where we can rest and refresh ourselves with the truth, and enjoy each other’s society for a little while— times of prosperity. We rejoice when we get to these places, but even there we should continue to watch and pray lest we enter into temptation. Satan knows that in times like these we are apt to become less careful and slip unawares. But “the Lord upholdeth all that fall and raiseth up all those that are bowed down.” “The Lord is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger and great in mercy. The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works (Psa. 145: 14, 8, 9). If we find our feet giving way under us, we should call on the Lord, for “the Lord is nigh unto all that call upon him in truth” (verse 18). We need not fear. All we require is faith.

THE PROSPECT

While we are up here near the summit of Mount Zion, we see opposite us on the other side of Jordan, the many-peaked mountain of Bashan (Psa. 68: 15,16, Rotherham). Christendom has thought to establish the mountain of God on earth by its own wisdom and power; but we know by the sure word of prophecy that it will soon fall. As we look, we see the foundations shaking and that mountain beginning to move; and all thinking men see the same. But while men’s hearts are “ failing them for fear and for looking after those things that are coming on the earth,” we are not moved, for the rock on which we are standing will never be shaken. Mount Zion is “ the hill which God desireth to dwell in, yea, the Lord will dwell in it for ever.” It will never be moved.

As we see the fulfilment of prophecy and realize that the time is at hand for the great earthquake, our hearts are sore for those brethren who are still in bondage. We long for them to strike off their chains with the Lord’s help, and to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and this longing makes us more and more zealous in our endeavours to obey the Lord’s request: “Gather my saints together unto me, those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice” (Psa. 50: 5),

Soon we shall reach the summit where the wedding supper is being prepared, for our Guide is to be our Bridegroom. Soon the Bride will have made herself ready, and the marriage of the Lamb will be celebrated. Let us pray for one another and so serve one another, that we all may be found worthy to be members of the Bride. Then when we are united with Christ in glory, drinking the wine anew with him in his and our kingdom, we shall be close, very close to the Master, and that for ever. Only a few years more and our climbing will be over. With some of us it may be only a few days or weeks. Pray the Lord that we shall all be faithful unto death so that we may get the crown of life (immortality), and never be separated from Jesus.

Remember, dear brethren, that the Lord is faithful who has promised. If we become separated from Christ, the separation will be due entirely to our own wilfulness, *nothing else*. As the Apostle declares: “ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.”

These trials must come to us, for it is only through much tribulation that we can enter the Kingdom; but if our faith is firm, *that faith which worketh by love*, these trials instead of separating us from the love of Christ, will make us see our own weakness and draw us the closer to him. As the Apostle goes on to say: “Nay, in all things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8: 35-39). AMEN.

(John Edgar, 1909)

GOD’S MERCY

There’s a wideness in God’s mercy,
Like the wideness of the sea;
There’s a kindness in His justice,

Though severe His judgements be.
Search the Scriptures, search and see
Wisdom's wondrous harmony.

For the love of God is broader
Than the measure of man's mind;
And the heart of the Eternal
Is most wonderfully kind.
Search the Scriptures, search and see
God's great kindness unto thee.

WORKERS AND WINNERS

Keep striving; the winners are those who have striven
And fought for the prize that no idler has won;
To the hands of the steadfast alone it is given,
And before it is gained there is work to be done.

Keep climbing; the earnest and faithful have scaled
The height where the pathway was rough to the feet;
But the faint-hearted faltered, and faltering, failed,
And sank down by the wayside in helpless defeat.

Keep hoping; the clouds hide the sun for a time,
But sooner or later they scatter and flee,
And the path glows like gold to the toilers who climb
To the heights where men look over landscape and sea.

Keep onward; right on, till the prize is attained;
Front the future with courage, and obstacles fall.
By those, and those only, the victory's gained
Who look not to self but to God above all

(Anon)

“CHRIST, OUR PASSOVER”

(1 Cor. 5:7)

“For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” (1 Cor 5:7, 8)

THE ANTITYPICAL LAMB

In Jesus' day the time had come for the fulfilment of the antitype of the Passover. Jesus Himself was to be the Passover Lamb. By faith the merit of His sacrifice, His blood, was to be sprinkled upon the doorposts of His people's hearts, and His flesh, the merit of His earthly perfection, was to be eaten or appropriated by them.

Jesus, the Lamb of God, the antitypical Passover Lamb, was slain over nineteen centuries ago on the exact anniversary of the killing of the typical lamb. The sacrifice of Jesus needs not to be repeated, for by faith we all sprinkle the same blood today, in our hearts we feed upon the merit of the same sacrifice; we have the bitter herbs of trial and drink of His cup -sharing the Master's spirit and its reward of suffering for righteousness' sake.

Not many have appreciated these privileges during all the centuries, in all only a “little flock”. Nor are there

many who envy their present experiences or appreciate how great will be their reward and blessings in the life to come. Then, instead of suffering with Christ, they shall reign with Him in glory, honour and immortality.

“IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME”

Jesus, when about to begin the fulfilment of the type by dying as the antitypical Passover Lamb, instituted for His followers an annual remembrance, which in their minds would take the place of the type and continually remind them of the Antitype. Instead of the literal flesh of the lamb, our Master used bread, and for the blood, the fruit of the vine. Instead of any further commemoration of the type, He directed that these symbols be taken in remembrance of the Antitype, “the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world.”

Our Lord, as a Jew, was obligated to keep the typical Passover, eating of the literal lamb, etc., first, but after that final passover supper, He instituted with the bread and the fruit of the vine His substitutionary memorial of Himself, saying, “Take, eat, this is my body. And He took the cup, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, and they all drank of it. And He said, Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new in the Kingdom of God” - that is, until His coming in power and great glory to receive the Church as His elect Bride and joint-heirs in His kingdom, to shower blessings richly upon Israel and through them upon the whole world of mankind.

“THE HOUR IS COME”

The hour for the betrayal was drawing near. The Master knew by some power unknown to us who would betray Him. Broaching this matter to the twelve, He said, “One of you shall betray me.” Each replied, ‘Is it I?’ Even Judas brazenly challenged the Master’s knowledge of his deceitful course, and said, “Is it I?” The answer was, “It is as you have said - you are the betrayer.” The Divine program was thus carried out and the scriptures were fulfilled, including the declaration that Jesus should be sold for thirty pieces of silver, marking the Divine fore-knowledge.

“IN MY FATHER’S KINGDOM”

In giving the disciples the bread, which represented His flesh, and the cup, which represented His blood, the Master pictorially offered them justification and sanctification, and, as Paul explained, He did more than this - He offered them a participation with Himself in the sufferings of the present and in the glories of the future. (1 Cor 10:16,17; Matt 26:29) The antitype of the cup in its higher sense will be the new joys of the Kingdom which all the faithful in Christ will share with the great King of Glory, when He shall take unto Himself His great power and reign. (P.P. 3/4)

IN REMEMBRANCE”

In memory of the Saviour’s love,
We keep this simple feast,
Where every consecrated heart
Is made a welcome guest.
By faith we take the bread of life,
Which this doth symbolise,
This cup in token of the blood,
His costly sacrifice.
This cup shall e’er recall the hour,
When Thou didst set us free;
Soon with new joy in kingdom power
We’ll drink it, Lord, with Thee.
What rapturous joy shall then be ours
For ever, , with Thee!
Clothed with our resurrection powers,
Thine endless praise shall be.



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THE WIDENESS OF GOD'S MERCY

(God's Plan for the Salvation of Mankind)

The careful and reverent student of the sacred Scriptures will find, in the light now due to the household of faith, that the Word of God presents a complete and systematic plan for the salvation and development of the human race, which for ages has been a success in its gradual development, and which in due time will be gloriously completed. The past six thousand years of human history have been necessary to work out that plan to its present degree of development, and one thousand years more will witness its full consummation in the restitution of every willing member of the race to the original likeness of God, and their establishment in righteousness, with the eternal ages of glory and blessing before them.

CHRIST THE CENTRE OF THE PLAN

Such is the scope of God's plan which He formed before the foundation of the world, to be wrought out in Christ, who is the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending, the First and the Last of Jehovah's direct creation - His only begotten Son - Rev. 22:13; John 1:4; Col. 1:13. "By Him were all things made, and without Him was not anything made that was made." "He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature. By Him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible; whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities or powers; all things were created by Him and for Him; and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist." (John 1:3; Col. 1:15-17) In Him also "we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins." -Col. 1:14.

God, having thus honoured His Son by making Him His instrument or agent for the accomplishment of all His grand designs, declared to men: "This is My Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him." He "hath exalted Him to be a Prince and a Saviour," and "would have all men honour the Son (as the Father's agent and representative) even as they honour the Father." (Matt. 17:5; Acts 5:31; John 5:23.) Nor does the Son claim higher honour than to be the Father's agent and messenger, "the messenger of the (Jehovah's) covenant" (Mal. 3:1); for He says: "I came not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me," and "My Father is greater than I." (John 6:38; 5:30; 4:34; 14:28.) To us, as to the Apostle, "there is one God, the Father, of Whom are all things; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by Whom are all things; and we by him." - I. Cor. 8:6.

MAN IN GOD'S IMAGE

After the creation of the angels came the creation of man, a being adapted to live on the earth, and to be its lord and king. Man, as well as the angels, was created in the divine image - that is, with faculties of reason, conscience, etc., capable of discerning right and wrong. Man as king of earth, and perfect, as created, was only "a little lower than the angels" (Heb. 2:7, 9), and that little consisted in his being limited by his nature to the earth, while the angelic nature, being spiritual, has a wider range for observation and hence a broader plane for reasoning. To be an image of God implies freedom of choice or will with respect to one's own conduct. With such freedom man was originally endowed by his Creator, and the alternatives of good and evil were placed before him as a necessity to his trial for lasting life, though not without warning on God's part as to the blessed results of righteousness and the deadly results of evil.

On account of man's inexperience, implicit obedience to God's will was required of him for his safety and protection, as well as for a test of his loyalty to his rightful Lord and Sovereign. Nevertheless, God, by divine intuition, foresaw the course that Adam would take and the fall of the whole race with him into death, and also the lessons which that experience with sin and death might be overruled to teach them when, in due time, through the merit of Christ's sacrifice, He would grant them remission of sins upon their repentance and turn to righteousness. He, therefore, determined to let man take his chosen course, and to inflict on him its just

penalty, and then, in due time, to deliver him from it with a great salvation.

GOD'S FOREKNOWLEDGE GUIDED

God foresaw that, even with good intentions, man's limited knowledge and experience would continually offer temptations to doubt the wisdom of divine arrangements, if not to disobey them. He, therefore, embraced this opportunity to convey to all of His creatures, as well as to man, a fuller conception of Himself, in order that they might the more fully and heartily worship and obey Him. As a revelation and illustration of His attributes -Justice, Wisdom, Power and Love - God placed His human creation - perfect though inexperienced, and but slightly informed respecting His Creator's attributes - on trial, in order that he might gain a valuable experience, yet foreknowing that although in every respect fairly tried, he would, in the use of his own free will, fall into sin. But God did not purpose to abandon His disobedient and death-deserving creature to eternal ruin, but provided a way of redemption whereby He might be just and yet the justifier of the truly penitent and believing (Rom. 3:26). Thus the painful experience gained under the reign of sin and death might eventually, under this overruling influence of divine providence, serve the more firmly to establish them in righteousness and willing loyalty to God.

The trial in Eden was a test of obedience, or loyalty to God. The fruit of the forbidden tree was good (for all the trees were good) and was desirable to make one wise; and had they proved their loyalty to God by obedience, probably the restriction would in due time have been removed. Knowledge is a blessing only to those who are subject to the divine will. This, God had arranged that man should acquire by experience, and angels by example. The penalty of man's disobedience was death - "In the day that thou eatest thereof, dying, thou shalt die." The penalty was fulfilled to the letter; the dying began as soon as the penalty was pronounced, when they were cast out of Eden and restrained from eating life-sustaining fruits; and it was completed within the thousand-year day, as predicted. (2 Pet. 3:8) The penalty, death, being gradually and not suddenly inflicted, left the condemned pair free to propagate their species, yet subject to the weakness and all the penalty under which they themselves were placed.

THE FALL OF MAN

Thus, by one man's disobedience, sin entered into the world, and death by (as a result of) sin; and thus death passed upon all men, because all are sinners and imperfect by heredity. -Rom. 5:12.

Sin, and death, its penalty, by thus gaining control of Adam, controlled the world, and reigned from Adam to Moses - with but few divine promises to illuminate the dark way. Then "the law came by Moses," offering lasting life to anyone who would observe it in every particular. But in their fallen condition none of the condemned race was able to obey it, and by it to gain the reward of life. As God had designed, however, the law did serve a purpose; it served to show the helplessness of man for his own justification. Also it served to point to another, the holy, harmless undefiled Lamb of God, whose sacrifice, as Adam's substitute or Redeemer, satisfied the claims of justice and bought the world from the slavery of sin and death. This made possible the gospel offer of forgiveness and lasting life, not through our righteousness in keeping God's law (which is impossible by reason of weakness of the flesh), but by our acceptance of Christ as our Saviour, and of his ransom-sacrifice as the satisfaction for our sins before God.

DIVINE TIMES AND SEASONS

It might be supposed that the work of blessing the world should have begun at once when the sacrifice for sin was accepted by the Father, as signified by the giving of the spirit of adoption at Pentecost; but not so. Another feature of the divine plan had first to be accomplished, viz.: The selection and development of the Church to be joint heirs with Christ in His glory and kingdom and work of blessing the world. This was from the beginning a part of the divine plan; and therefore, the glorious reign and work of blessing the world could not begin at Christ's resurrection, nor at Pentecost, but had to be delayed until the selection of all its tried and faithful members could be accomplished. Or, to state it otherwise, the Father's appointed time for blessing the world is during the seventh thousand years, and had it not been for His purpose to select the Church, the "bride" or "body" of Christ, to share with Him in the work of blessing the race, there need not have been two advents of our Lord. One would have been sufficient; for He could have come now, in the end of the sixth thousand years, could have redeemed all and at once begun the great work of blessing and restoring mankind. He came to redeem the world previous to the appointed time of blessing, so as to leave time, before that day, for the selection of His bride from among the redeemed race.

As the occasion of man's fall became God's opportunity for exhibiting to all His creatures His wonderful character from every standpoint - His Justice, His Wisdom, His Power and His Love - so it also became an opportunity for the testing in all points of His only begotten Son. This was preparatory to His yet higher exaltation (Phil. 2:8-10) to the Divine nature, with all which that implies of glory, honour and immortality, and of position next to the Father, that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father. The same occasion, as prearranged of God, also makes possible the calling, selection and trial of the Gospel Church, now soon to be

completed and made joint-inheritors, with our Lord and Saviour, of glory, honour and immortality, and like Him to be exalted far above men and angels, even to the Divine nature. -2 Pet. 1:4.

REVEALING DIVINE CHARACTER

Only the justice of God's character has yet been made manifest to the world, and much of its glory is sadly beclouded by human tradition. God's love for His creatures, the wisdom of His plan of salvation, and His power to save, are as yet but partially revealed, and by but a few indeed. God's justice has been revealed to all for the past six thousand years in the reign of death, the penalty which He prescribed for sin. God's love began to be revealed at Christ's first advent, but, not seeing all of the plan, few rightly appreciated the love. Nevertheless, "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him." (1 John 4:9) The wisdom of the Lord's plan will not be appreciated until the Sun of Righteousness has arisen, revealing those features of His plan which then will bring blessings to all the billions which His justice condemned, and which His love redeemed. But the power of God will not be seen in its fullness until well on in the Millennial Day. Although partially revealed in the work of creation, the grandest and fullest exhibition remains to be shown in the resurrection from death of those redeemed ones who, accepting of the gracious provisions of His love, bow in glad submission to all His just requirements.

It is a mistake made by many to suppose that Jehovah's justice and His love are ever in conflict with each other. Both are perfect - His love never desires or attempts what His justice does not endorse; His justice and His love must both approve every act for which his power is exercised. With men, because of lack of wisdom and power, love and justice often conflict. Man's love often has gracious designs which he has not the wisdom or power to accomplish except by violating justice. We must gauge our views by the infinite and stay close to the revelation He makes of His plans, not seeking to make plans of our own for God. God's plan, when clearly seen, fully vindicates His justice as well as His love. The plan of redemption devised by divine wisdom is the essence of unfathomable love based upon uncompromising justice, and will be fully accomplished by divine power.

The first act of God's love was to provide a ransom for Adam, and thus for all his race, since it was by his transgression that all fell into sin and death. Until the ransom was given nothing was done in the way of saving the world; promises and types of coming salvation were made, but nothing more could be done. God had rendered a just sentence, and the penalty could not be set aside; it had to be met. before Adam and his family could be released from the death sentence by a resurrection, the life of another man not under the sentence had to be paid as its corresponding price, that God might be just in justifying and accepting back to harmony and life all who believe in Jesus and turn unto God in his name. (Acts 4:12.) Having accepted Christ as the ransom of all such, the Apostle assures us that now "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." - 1 John 1:9.

RECONCILIATION FOR BELIEVERS

Thus we see, from God's own declaration, that Christ died for our sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, that He ascended up on high, and there appearing in the presence of God on our behalf presented the price of our redemption and became Lord of all, both the living and the dead. There is therefore no longer any legal hindrance in the way of the return of believers to fellowship with God, and to all the blessings and privileges lost under the penalty of the first transgression. The only difficulties remaining are on man's part. In his fallen condition his mind is sick as well as his body. He inclines to believe falsely, and is disinclined to believe in so great a salvation, such "good tidings of great joy which shall be unto all people." Besides, he is weak through the fall, and does those things which he often does not at heart approve, and leaves undone much that at heart he really desires to do, and there is no help in himself. Some assistance in overcoming sinward tendencies must reach him or else the cancellation of past sin and opportunity for reconciliation will be a valueless offer.

THE CHURCH IN GLORY

This necessity, which we recognise, is fully met in those features of the Divine plan which are yet to be fulfilled. He who redeemed all is appointed to be both King and Judge of all; for God "hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained," Jesus Christ. (Acts 17:31.) That is, He will righteously grant the world a new, individual trial for eternal life, having cancelled the sentence of the first trial by the propitiatory sacrifice of His Son.

The redeemed, tried and glorified Church, the faithful bride of Christ, is to share with her Lord in this great work, as kings and priests and judges. (Rev. 5:10; I Cor. 6:2, 3.) As kings they will rule the world in righteousness, enforcing and establishing order and justice and truth; as priests they will teach the people, and through the merit of the one sacrifice for sins forgive the penitent, and cleanse and help them out of their weaknesses

-mental, moral, and physical; as judges they will judge the measure of the guilt of all in respect to their course in the future as well as in their past lives, judging not by the hearing of the ear, nor by the sight of the eye, but by an infallible judgement for which they will be abundantly qualified by their exaltation to the Divine nature.

While the promise of God to the Church is a change of nature from human to divine, to be effected at the second advent of her Lord, as the completion of His resurrection - the first resurrection (2 Peter 1:4; I. Cor. 15:50-53; Phil. 3:10-11; Rev. 20:6) - the provision of God's plans for the world at large is quite different, viz. a "restitution" or restoration to all the grand qualities and powers of the human nature (an earthly likeness of the divine), now so sadly blurred and defaced by the six thousand years of slavery to sin and death.

THE WORLD'S BLESSING

Rightly to appreciate human restitution, it must be remembered that every excellent quality exhibited among mankind is but an imperfect exhibition of what belongs to each perfect man or woman, whether it be logical acuteness, mathematical precision, aesthetic taste, art, wit, eloquence, poetic imagination, music, or any other intellectual grace of moral refinement. These, to a higher degree than we have ever seen them exhibited by any fallen being, will, in the process of restitution, become, as at first designed by the Creator, the endowments of each obedient member of the human family. With the restitution of perfect mental and moral balance to man, the original king of earth, will come also a blessing to all his subjects - the beasts of the field, the fowl of heaven, and the fish of the sea (Psa. 8:6-8); and the ordering of the earth itself is likewise promised.

The "times of restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:19-21) are, we believe the Scriptures to teach, just at the door. Soon the last members of the body of Christ will have finished their course, and then, with their glorious Head and all the other members of the body, they will shine forth as the sun for the blessing of the entire redeemed race.

(P.P 4/4)

The Ascent of the Mount of God

(The Necessity for Keeping Close to the Master)

It is his subject is of primary importance to us. 1 Whatever may be the stage we have reached in our journey, the one thing needful for all of us is to keep close to the Master, because by doing so, we shall become more like him, and more and more sure of reaching the summit of the mountain of God. We are a nation of mountain climbers. I am not referring to an earthly nation; I mean the nation whose citizenship is in heaven, the holy nation, those who are redeemed to God by the blood of the Lamb out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation; and who are to be made unto our God kings and priests and to reign on the earth (Rev. 5:9,10)

The mountain we are climbing is the mountain of God, Mount Zion, and our Guide is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is our Master as well as our Guide, for he bought us with his own precious blood.

As mountaineers we are to adopt the usual methods of mountain climbing. We shall require a guide, mountaineering clothes, a knapsack, an alpenstock, and we must have a stout cord to bind us to our Guide and to one another. All these are necessary for climbing the narrow way which in this Gospel Age is the only way, and we will consider them first.

THE EQUIPMENT NEEDED

The first thing that is necessary is to take off the filthy rags of our own righteousness (Isa. 64:6), and put on Christ's robe of righteousness. Without it, we can never hope to attain the summit. The other garments which we require are mentioned in the third chapter of the Epistle to the Colossians. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on the things of the earth. For ye are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God." To this end the Apostle exhorts us to *put off* anger, wrath, malice, etc., seeing we have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man. "*Put on*, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering, forbearing one another and forgiving one another." These additional things, the graces of the spirit, we must begin to put on even at the commencement of the ascent, and we shall require to put on more and more of them as we go up the mountain side. (Col. 3:1-13)

But there is something additional. The 14th verse continues, "And above all these things." This word "above" does not mean more important than," as might be implied in the Authorized Version. The Diaglott translates it "besides," but that is certainly incorrect. The Greek word is "epi" and means "upon". What we require is a girdle to bind the various garments together, and this girdle is love. "Above (or upon) all these things, put on *love*, which is the bond (or girdle) of perfectness." This girdle is essential. It binds and keeps right all the other graces. The other parts of our mountaineering outfit are the alpenstock and the knapsack. The former represents the power of God, and the latter the Word of God. The knapsack contains the *bread of*

life, the *water* of truth, the *wine* of comfort and exhortation, and the *oil* of joy for our mourning. Thus in our outfit the four attributes of God's character are all represented, the wisdom of God by the knapsack, the justice of God by the robe of righteousness, the power of God by the alpenstock, and the love of God by the girdle.

THE GIRDLE OF LOVE

The girdle not only binds together the various graces of the spirit of which it is the chief, but the same girdle of love also binds us to Christ our guide, and to one another. If we were to attempt to ascend this mountain alone, we should find it impossible. We must have our Guide with us, and probably also some fellow-travellers. In Eccl. 4:9-12, we read: "Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labour: for if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him that is alone when he falleth, for he hath not another to help him up." If we attempt to go up alone, and fall, we should not be able to raise ourselves, but when we have the Lord beside us, he will help us up, and then both he and we shall have a good reward for our labour. "Again, if two lie together, then they have heat; but how can one be warm alone." The reason why the nominal Christian is lukewarm, is because he has not the Lord with him, "And if one prevail against him" - supposing Satan or one of his agents were to attack us when we are alone, he would prevail against us, - but "two shall withstand him," my Lord and I together. "And a three-fold cord is not quickly broken." I am not sure what Solomon meant by this cord which is not easily broken, but probably it is the cord of love, the bond of perfect love, the bond of perfectness, which binds us to Christ and to our fellow-travellers, and by which we are enabled to retain our footing and ascend the mountain of God.

The wise man says that this cord is threefold. Cords are composed of a great number of threads gathered into strands, then these strands are woven tightly round each other. The girdle of perfectness which binds the graces of the spirit and keeps us close to the Master, is composed of three strands woven round one another, and it appears that these three strands are the precepts of God, the promises of God, and the prayers of the saints, the three "P's," we might call them. We cannot succeed with any one of these alone, nor even with two; we must have all the three interwoven with each other, and operating in unison in order to keep us close to the Master, and enable us to reach the summit of the mountain. If we examine these three strands, the precepts, the promises and the prayers, we shall find that there is love in every thread, and so the whole girdle is the cord of love.

All the *precepts* of God, individually and collectively, are love. Love is the fulfilling of the law. Again who can study the many exceeding great and precious *promises* of God without perceiving that they all represent love, the love of God for us, drawing out our love for him!

And then, what are the *prayers* of the saints but love? Is it not our love for, as well as our trust in God and his Truth, that brings out our prayers to him for ourselves and for our brethren, and do not our Heavenly Father's answers to our prayers increase our love and our trust.

THE PRECEPTS OF GOD

The precepts of God are also the precepts of Christ. Jesus said, "If a man love me he will keep my words; and my Father will love him and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me" (John 14:23,24). The way to keep close to the Master is to love him and keep his words (precepts). Remember that "Love is the fulfilling of the law." This forms an important test by which we may decide whether we have properly grasped and followed the leading of the divine precepts. If we are striving to understand and obey some particular precept and the result of obeying it is love, we may feel sure we are right. But if the result is not love, then we are wrong, either in our interpretation of the precept, or in our method of giving effect to it.

Let me give you an example. You will find it in John 13:14, 15. "If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." Nothing could be more explicit than that. It may be claimed that if we do not wash one another's feet, we are not obeying the Lord. In the East, where Jesus spoke these words, the people wore sandals, and their feet soon became hot and dusty. Hence, the custom was, when anyone arrived at a house, for one of the servants to take off the sandals and wash the traveller's feet. It must have been soothing and refreshing. That is what Jesus did for his disciples, and what he asked them to do for one another.

This humble service must have been appreciated, especially because of the love and humility which prompted it. But supposing we in the West were to attempt to carry out this injunction according to the letter, the result would not be love, we should simply be a nuisance. This clearly proves that in this instance, we should do wrong to obey Christ according to the letter. Our obedience to this precept should be according to the spirit, that is to say, we ought to wash one another's feet in the sense of humbly and lovingly serving one another, "in honour preferring one another." "Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant" (Matt. 20:27).

Of all Christ's precepts the one to which he drew special attention, was the "new commandment." The old commandment was to love our neighbours as ourselves. The new commandment is to love the brethren as Christ loved us, that is to say, more than ourselves, to "lay down our lives for the brethren" (John 13:34; I John 3:16). This means that we must give time, talents, influence, energies, at the expense of our comfort, health and life, for our brethren in Christ. This was not asked of the Jews, nor will it be asked of the world in the Age to follow this, but it is asked of us who desire to be followers of Christ Jesus.

But while endeavouring to bear one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ, we must be careful to respect each others' liberty of conscience. We must judge not, that we be not judged. "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up, for God is able to make him stand. Let us not, therefore, judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way" (Rom. 14:4-13). The law of love demands that we should seek the truth and obey it ourselves, and do our best to tell it meekly and lovingly to others, but it also demands that we should neither endeavour to force our opinions on others nor despise or speak ill of them, should they fail to think and act as we do. This is one of the chief tests that the brethren are undergoing in this evil day. Let us pray for one another that we shall humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God.

THE DIVINE PROMISES

So far we have considered only one of the strands of the cord of love which keeps us close to the Master and one another. May we all be able to say with the Master, "I delight to do thy will, O my God, yea, thy law is within my heart," not within my head only, but deeper down within my heart.

Woven closely round this strand there is another, the bond of *the divine promises*, without which the other would be insufficient. If we were to trust merely to our endeavours to obey God's precepts we should be like Israel under the Law. That which was ordained unto life would be found to be unto death; but, thanks be to God, we are not under the Law but under Grace. The promises of God are so interwoven with his precepts that we find it difficult, impossible in fact, to separate them. I advise you, dear brethren, not to make the attempt. One without the other will prove of no avail to us. Both of them represent love, and the one helps the other.

The threads of this strand are numerous and of different kinds. We are learning and appreciating them more as we ascend the mountain of God.

(1) Many of the promises are for the purpose of assuring us that *God does not expect perfection of conduct* on our part. "He knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust" (Psa. 103:14). With the precepts not to sin, we have the promise of the covering merit of our Redeemer's blood. With the precepts bidding us suffer and die with Christ, we have the promise that we are "accepted in the Beloved," accepted in Christ, not accepted for ourselves.

(2) Knowing our various weaknesses and our tendency to lack of zeal, our Heavenly Father has given us many promises which have for their object *the rousing of our flagging energies and the exciting of our hopes*. Coupled with the precept to be faithful unto death, there is the gracious promise that a crown of life will be given to us. The prospect of this great joy should stir us up to greater zeal and faithfulness. Again, we are told to overcome evil with good, and for our encouragement we are promised, if overcomers, power over the nations and a seat on the throne with Christ.

(1) Still others of the promises are for the sake of *giving us comfort and peace now in the midst of trials and tribulation, enabling us to realize that God is protecting us*. Amongst these are such glorious promises as: "All things work together for good to those who love God, to them who are called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28); and the parting legacy of our Lord Jesus: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27). The world's idea of the right method of securing peace is by so arranging everything that there will be financial, social and political prosperity. That is why the great armies and navies are maintained, and why laws are passed and everything possible is done to secure good trade and increase the confidence of the people in the government.

But with all its efforts, though the kings and statesmen are crying "Peace, peace," there is no peace. On the contrary, unrest and discontent are on the increase. But Jesus said: "Not as the world giveth, give I unto you." Christ's method of giving peace is referred to indirectly in John 16:33. "These words I have spoken unto you that in me ye may have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." The Lord's method is not by granting earthly prosperity, but by permitting trials and difficulties to come upon us. The purpose is to enable us to realize our own weakness, so that we may learn to place entire reliance on the Lord and not on self. When we are able to say with the Apostle. "I have learnt in whatsoever

state I am in therewith to be content,” then the peace of God will rule in our heart, and we shall be of good cheer, realizing that Christ has overcome the world, and that we are “accepted in the Beloved.”

We are also assured that we shall never be tempted above that we are able to bear; that the weaker we are the more strength the Lord will use on our behalf, and that the victory does not depend upon our strength, nor on our personal righteousness, but upon our faith. We have God’s word also that he will finish the good work which he has begun in us, provided only that we retain our faith.

These are only a few among the many “exceeding great and precious promises whereby we might become partakers of the divine nature.” Like the precepts, they all spell the same word, - LOVE. They show the love of God for us, and draw out our love for him.

THE PRAYERS OF SAINTS

The third strand is composed of *the prayers of the saints*. If we were to trust to the other two strands alone, the cord would snap. God has so arranged his plan that the prayers of the saints are just as essential as the precepts and the promises. The three strands are all necessary to form this cord of love, and “a threefold cord is not quickly broken.”

Possibly God could have arranged matters differently, so that whether we prayed or not, we should prosper spiritually, but he has not done so.

(1) One reason is that *prayer brings home to us our dependence upon him*, the creator and sustainer of all things, and the giver of every good and perfect gift. It is only he who humbles himself under the mighty hand of God who will be exalted in due time.

Another reason is that *by prayer we are brought into direct communion with the Lord*. That is one of the most precious reasons why God instituted prayer. Our hearts should be full of thankfulness to him that we are permitted to draw near with the endearing name “Father” on our lips.

(2) Still another reason is that we may pray for one another. This *strengthens our sympathy with the brethren* in their trials and difficulties. Nothing binds us closer together than our prayers for the brethren and the knowledge that they are praying for us. We ought to make daily use of this privilege and not only so, but we ought to let the others know that we are praying for them. It encourages them.

(1) A fourth reason why *God has instituted prayer is in order that we might try to search out his will*, so that we may pray according to it. He knows what is best for us. John gives us the blessed assurance that if we ask anything according to God’s will, he hears us, and if we know that he hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desire of him (1 John 5:14,15). That is the full assurance of faith. When we search what is God’s will concerning us, we find that “This is the will of God, even our sanctification.” Our prayers should not therefore be so much for temporal earthly things, as for eternal spiritual things. God will supply the temporal necessities without our asking. He wants us to be more concerned about our spiritual needs.

(4) Again, *by earnest prayer we show our desire for the things we ask, and so our hearts and minds are brought into the proper attitude to receive them*.

If we get a thing without asking for it we are apt not to appreciate it, but if we ask for it, especially if we ask again and again for it, not only does this show that we really want it, but *our desire for it is increased*.

(1) Lastly, when sooner or later our prayer is answered in the Lord’s way, and the Lord’s way is always best for him and for us, *our faith is strengthened in the loving-kindness of our God, and in the power of his might*.

Cornelius was a beautiful example of the power of prayer. He was the first Gentile to be received into the body of Christ. Till that time the Jews were exclusively favoured with the opportunity of becoming partakers of the High Calling, while the Gentiles were “strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.” When the angel of the Lord was sending Peter to Cornelius in order that Cornelius might receive the Holy Spirit and be privileged to become a partaker of the High Calling, he said to Cornelius: “Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God.”

Having considered these points; the clothing, the knapsack, the alpenstock, and the cord which binds us to Christ and to one another, we shall now consider whether we have reasonable grounds for faith in our Guide.

(J. Edgar, 1909) (To be concluded)

THE YEAR BEFORE US

Another new year is upon us, another year of discipleship in the School of Christ, another year to praise our God and to declare His glory as we have opportunity, not only in word but also, and more importantly, in our

lives. We do not know we cannot know, what the future holds for each one of us, but we do know who holds the future in His hands, So it is the best, indeed the only way, for us to commit our lives afresh into His keeping, trusting in His love and wisdom for another year.

We are a privileged people, for our Heavenly Father has seen fit to reveal to us, in advance of the rest of mankind, something of His glory, not only as exhibited in His majesty and power, but also in His character of loving kindness and tender mercy. *"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shone in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."* (2 Cor 4:6) *"You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that you should show forth the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvellous light."* (1 Peter 2:9)

The glory of God has been revealed in some measure throughout the ages and the apostle Paul tells us that it should be evident in His creation. More particularly, it was declared through God's prophets to His people Israel, though not recognised by the many. The Psalmist, however, a man after God's own heart was moved to exclaim: *"The heavens are telling the glory of God, and the firmament proclaims His handiwork. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words, their voice is not heard. Yet their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world."* (Psalm 19:1-4 ASV)

But it is only in the final manifestation of God's glory in the sending of His beloved Son that it has been fully declared, though again it is as yet only to those with the eyes of the faith that it is revealed. The beloved apostle John who saw and heard and walked with the Master records: *"The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."* (John 1:14)

All those who followed with Jesus through the years of His earthly ministry indeed heard His gracious words, saw His miracles and His acts of healing and compassion to the sick, the sad and the downtrodden, and the inspired words of the Evangelists recount to us what they had experienced or learnt of that glory, the very image of the

Father's glory. But still, it is only by the eye of faith and the illumination of the Holy Spirit that we can in measure comprehend that glory.

Such a manifestation of God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ is indeed a precious treasure, but it is not given just for the gratification of the recipient, but represents to each one both a privilege and a responsibility.

(1) It should lead to heartfelt and reverent appreciation of God's glory, His might and majesty, and above all His glorious character of love.

(2) It should lead to fervent desire to grow into the image of His glory as portrayed in our Saviour and perfect Pattern.

(1) It should lead to consistent zeal to show forth His praises, whose glory has shone into our hearts.

(4) It should lead to deep longing for that time when God's glory will be made known to all mankind, as pictured so beautifully for us by many of the O.T. prophets and by the Revelator.

How blessed we are to know that soon earth's clouds of trouble will part and the great Sun of Righteousness will arise with healing in His beams for all people, the glory of God will be shed abroad to all nations and God's promise will be fulfilled: *"I will make the place of my feet glorious!"* (Isaiah 60: 13 .)

May the new year find each follower of Jesus more and more praising God for the light of His glory so far received, more and more seeking to be changed into the perfect likeness of His Son, more and more showing forth His praises and looking for that day when the *"earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."* (Hab. 2:14)

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Happy, because He loves thee!
Happy, because He lives!
Bright with that deepest gladness
Which only Jesus gives.
Happy, because He guides thee,
Because He cares for thee;
Happy, ever so happy,
Thus may thy New Year be!

(F.R.H.)



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IF GOD SO LOVED US

(1 JOHN 4:11)

Christmas is especially the season of love, as we ‘....remember again the events surrounding the birth of our Saviour as the Babe of Bethlehem. So it is good for us to turn our thoughts briefly in simple meditation on - The love of God in Christ Jesus brought anew to our minds at this season - The response which that love should and does evoke in our hearts - The gracious qualities which that love should be displaying in our lives. Our meditation might well centre on the following three beautiful New Testament scriptures, two from the beloved apostle John, whom we might call the “expert” on love and the third from the apostle Paul, the great expositor of the character and qualities of love.

(1) 1 John 4:19 - “We love Him, because He first loved us.”

(2) 1 John 4:11,12 - “Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No one has seen God at any time; if we love another, God dwells in us, and His love is perfected in us.”

(3) 1 Cor 13:13 - “And now abide faith, hope, love these three; but the greatest of these is love.”

HE FIRST LOVED US

The first two passages tell us that the Christian’s love is a responsive love. Because we have seen and appreciated the expression of God’s boundless love in the gift of His dear Son, our hearts go out to Him in gratitude and love. It is just this which separates the true message of the gospel from every other message. We might well fear, possibly reverence, a God of justice, of wisdom and of power, but it is only a God whose great heart of love is shown to us who could command our love in return.

“We love him because he first loved us”, says the beloved Apostle John. When did this love begin? Two Scriptures tell us- Rom. 5:8- “while we were yet sinners”, and Eph. 2:4,5- “even when we were dead in sins.” But His love goes back even before the foundation of the world, for we read in Eph. 1: 4, that “He hath chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.”

God’s love in fact shines out throughout all His eternal plans and purposes before and in creation, but most of all in the gift of His Son, the Saviour of the World. For God so loved the world (not only believers of this age, but all mankind) that He gave His only begotten Son that all might have life. God’s will is not that any should perish, but all come to a saving knowledge of the truth in Jesus Christ-1 Tim. 2:4 John 3:16

How true to our own experience are the words of Jer. 31:3. Though spoken by the prophet to Israel, they are even more true of us in this age- “I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee.” “Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.” Our love toward God is responsive, grateful love-a returning of thanks and appreciation for His love and goodness to us. But here the thought widens-our response of love should also flow out to others who are similarly rejoicing in God’s love. Such love will be a measure of the reality and depth of our own love toward God as the Apostle John reasons in 1 John 4:20, 21.

IF GOD SO LOVED US

If God so loved us? Is there any doubt about God’s love? No, this is not the “if” of uncertainty, but the “if” of challenge. God’s love is truly the great certainty of life, demonstrated for all time at Bethlehem and Calvary. The Apostle is saying to us all-I have just reminded you that it was God who sent His only Son into the world so that you might have life through Him. In recognition of the vastness of His love, how can you do other than

show your thankful response to Him and also to those whom He has also loved?

But why should we love the brethren? Firstly, as we have seen, it should be the answer of our hearts to God's love-the principle of "freely ye have received, freely" give would surely apply here. Conversely, lack of love to others must certainly point to faulty appreciation of what God in love has been and has done for us.

Secondly, we are now members of a family, and our Father's love should permeate **all** the members of that family. Or taking Paul's figure of various parts of a body to represent Christ's followers- "if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it"-1 Cor. 12:26.

But last, and by no means least, this is our Master's will- "a new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" -John 13:34,35. What a standard of love is called for here-love like our Saviour's for His disciples! If God so loved us-if Christ so loved us-what a challenge to Christian Love on our part this poses. How should this love for the Lord's brethren be displayed? Like every other Scriptural instruction, it needs practical application-in deed as well as in word as the Apostle makes clear in 1 John 3:16-18.

LOVE IN ACTION

The writer to the Hebrews says we should provoke one another to love and good works-what a happy combination this is- love expressed in kindness and concern for others and also in practical ways as need arises. We need to watch constantly to see and seize opportunities to show our love in whatever is the right and best way for each occasion.

But it is left for the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Corinthians to fully illustrate the qualities and pre-eminence of love. It would be virtually an impossible undertaking to define, as it were, the undefinable - but he goes about the task by describing how love acts in relation firstly to others and then to all circumstances of Christian experience.

In Galatians, Paul lists love as the first of the fruits of God's Holy Spirit, and in Colossians he calls it the bond of perfectness-that which rounds out and blesses all other Christian graces. Peter also proclaims the pre-eminence of love in the lists of Christian qualities which we should strive diligently to add on to faith. Truly, love is the crowning glory of Christian character.

Now abideth faith, hope, love-these three but the greatest of these is love. In these words, the Apostle sums up his endeavours to portray the practical characteristics of love-the more excellent way. In his list of these in 1 Cor. 13, he gives 11 separate expressions of love toward others, 4 all-embracing aspects of love, and, finally, sums up with the permanence, perfectness and pre-eminence of love.

PERSONAL APPLICATION

Like many other New Testament Scriptures, this portion listing the qualities of love is one for personal application. We need each to examine ourselves as to whether we are progressively and consistently exhibiting more and more of these qualities of love. A quick personal check-up may well be profitable as we face a new year of service for the Master.

1. Love suffers long - do we always seek to be patient with others?
2. Love is kind - are we always eager for others' welfare?
3. Love is not envious - are we glad when others receive blessings?
4. Love does not boast - are we ready to be self-effacing?
5. Love is not puffed up - are we mindful that all we have is of God's grace?
6. Love is courteous - are we gracious at all times to all people?
7. Love seeks not its own - is our chief concern for others?
8. Love is even tempered - do we seek to be understanding towards others?
9. Love thinks no evil - do we harbour wrongs or rather cast them behind us?
10. Love rejoices not in iniquity - are we anxious to hear only the best about others?
11. Love rejoices in the truth - is our joy in all that is pure and good?

All these graces of love are specially directed towards others, all spring from the same Holy Spirit, the first and greatest fruit of which is love. If love is the keynote of our lives, all these gracious qualities should be evident. If they are not, there is urgent need for prayerful attention to those areas where we are falling short. But love goes beyond even these qualities-love is the all-prevailing means by which the believer can meet all

the circumstances of life - for love, says the Apostle, **Bears** all things, love **Believes** all things, love **Hopes** all things, love **Endures** all things.

All these graces of love are of course the expression of perfect love, as we have seen only in our heavenly Father through and in our Saviour. The development of this sort of love is what should be taking place daily in our lives, the key to growth being love for and obedience to His Word. "Whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him"- 1 John 2:5.

So at this season especially, we can rejoice in the immeasurable love of God, that love which brought our Saviour from above to die on Calvary. May our desire then be that of the Apostle for his Thessalonian brethren- 1 Thess. 3:12, 13- "The Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all, to the end He may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, at the coming of Jesus Christ with all His saints." "For now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love."

(P.P. 69/1)

The Spirit of Power

"Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you" (Acts 1.8)

This was the promise which restored the disciples' faith just before our Lord's Ascension. For five or six weeks since his death they had been in a condition of perplexity, not quite sure what was going to happen or in which way they would continue the work they had been doing in these three years past. "*Tarry ye in Jerusalem*" He had said "*until ye be endued with power from high*" (Luke 24.49). That expression must have been associated in their minds with the promised coming of the Holy Spirit: "*ye shall be baptised with the Holy Spirit not many days hence*" (Acts 1.5), for Jesus had made it plain to them that after his departure they would experience the presence of the Holy Spirit in a manner previously unknown to them. "*The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.*" (John 14.26).

Now this association of the Holy Spirit of God with the idea of power or energy - the word is *dunamis* which means energy actively exerted and is the basis of our word dynamic-was a very familiar one to the disciples. They knew from their reading of the Law and the Prophets that the Holy Spirit is the power that executes the mighty works of creation, gives life and vitality to all living things, conferred upon God's warriors of olden time superhuman physical strength whereby they wrought great works in his Cause, inspired his prophets with visions and dreams and knowledge of coming things beyond the ability of men to discover unaided.

"YE SHALL RECEIVE POWER"

They knew all this, and now, inconspicuous and untalented men that they were, they themselves became recipients of this mysterious ability to perform great and wonderful works which patently they could never have done in their own natural strength. "*Ye shall receive power*"; the reality of that experience is attested by the manner in which this group of untutored and inexperienced men set out after Pentecost to preach Christ and his Kingdom against the formidable opposition mounted against them. By the power of the Spirit they spoke in many tongues to men of many nations, withstood the threatenings of the authorities who sought to suppress their work, and in no uncertain fashion gave witness to the fact of the Resurrection.

A few weeks earlier they had all been in hiding in fear for their lives; now they stood before the people preaching the new faith and defying the authorities to stop them. "*Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye; for we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard*" (Acts 4. 19, 20). That was the reaction of Peter and John to those who sat in judgement upon them, and there was nothing their judges could do about it.

This is the Holy Spirit. Invisible but all-powerful, it effects the stupendous works of creation, bringing all things into existence, giving light amid darkness, illuminating people's minds and making them understand things which could not otherwise take shape in human thought. The vehicle of all life, this power initiates new life in the hearts of believers, sustaining them in the vicissitudes of human existence, bringing them through the transition of death into a new environment, conferring upon them new bodies in which life is renewed and continues. There is nothing in space and time but is controlled by this supreme and all-embracing power, the Holy Spirit of God.

THE POWER OF GOD

This is the true doctrine of the Holy Spirit. The power of God, operating to create and sustain all things, living and non living, to convey his commands and fulfil his Will, this is the Holy Spirit. The ultimate source

of the Holy Spirit in God the Eternal none can understand. How it is that God is, and that we exist, and know that we exist, that external to our own being and personality there is a material universe which we can see and hear and feel, we do not know. The mysteries of God and of existence are too great to comprehend. But we must accept and believe in this Divine energy pulsating through all that God has made and reaching out to the extremity of his creation, effective in the performance of his will, whether it be in the physical process of material creation, or the instruction and enlightenment of those to whom He has given life. That Divine Energy which has its centre and source in God is the outward evidence to man that God is, that the things that happen in space and time have their origin in, and derive their reality from, Eternal Deity.

Scientific men are devoting a great deal of their time nowadays to investigating the source of the energy which drives the Universe. One fruit of their labours has been the atomic bomb, which produces and dissipates an enormous amount of energy in a fraction of time by "splitting the atom". Atoms are microscopic "piece parts" of which all material things are made and there are millions of atoms in a grain of dust, but atoms themselves are made of even more microscopic parts and when some of those parts are separated there is a tremendous release of energy. This occurs continuously in the sun and it is from the sun that the earth derives the energy to keep it going. We feel that energy as heat, and we see it as light, but it is itself invisible.

Every day the sun lifts forty thousand gallons of water from the ocean for each man, woman and child now living on the earth, carries it across the sky and drops it as rain so that the processes of life can continue. In the centre of the sun an atom divides and sets free a quantity of energy-scientists call it radiation. That radiation travels through space at the speed of light and when it reaches the earth it is seen as light. It falls upon a head of wheat growing in the field and sets in motion a series of changes whereby the plant takes a little of the surrounding air and a little moisture from the ground and out of them produces the material substances of the wheat grain. But there is more in that grain than came from the air and the ground. That radiation which travelled from the sun has also been transformed into part of the substance of that wheat grain. The light of the sun, winging its way to earth, in a very real sense enters into man to support his life.

THE VEHICLE OF LIFE

So is the Holy Spirit, Divine energy extending into all places of God's dominion, all-powerful in executing his will. Perhaps this is nowhere better shown than in the opening verses of Genesis. *"In the beginning the earth was without form and void, and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, 'Let there be light, and there was light'".* The temptation to interpret those words in terms of modern science is strong indeed. The word "moved" in this text means to flutter or undulate and "waters" is, not the seas, but "tehom", the primeval abyss. Sir James Jeans was the first to point out how accurately this expression fits modern knowledge of the nature of light, a cyclic or undulatory series of "waves" of many frequencies. These two initial verses in Genesis might well picture the momentous happening at the dawn of time when the Holy Spirit of God began to operate in the primeval nothingness to initiate the complex system of radiation and matter which constitutes the material universe-and at that time, in an instant, there was light!

In precisely the same manner the Holy Spirit is the vehicle of life, whether upon this earth or anywhere else. The ancients knew this. Speaking of the living creatures of the earth, the Psalmist says *"Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created, and thou renewest the face of the earth"*. (Psa. 104. 30) *"If he set his heart upon man"* says Elihu in Job 34. 14-15. *"If he gather to himself his spirit and his breath, all flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again into dust."* The power which makes life possible in any organism, from man downwards, is the Holy Spirit. The historians of the Old Testament recognised this when they credited the possession of apparently superhuman power to the influence of the Spirit, as in the case of Samson or Jephthah or others of whom it is said that the Spirit of the Lord came upon them and they performed mighty deeds. Whether in Old Testament or New Testament, the idea behind the expression Holy Spirit is that of Divine power, Divine energy, operating in creation to the accomplishment of the Divine purpose.

MANIFEST IN OUR LORD

Nowhere is this more evident than in the case of our Lord during his sojourn on earth at his First Advent. The power of the Holy Spirit, which is of the Father, was possessed and exercised by the Son. Of his exalted position before coming to earth the writer to the Hebrews says that He upheld all things by the word of his power. (Heb. 1.3). In other words, creation was maintained and directed by his command in the power of the Spirit. And that power was his even during the temporary period of his humanity. Of Jesus, it is declared that the Father *"gave not the Spirit by measure"* unto him (Jno.3.34): in other words, He possessed the power of the Spirit to an unlimited degree and that was manifested in one, out of many aspects, in the works of healing which he performed. *"The power of the Lord was present to heal them"* says Luke (Luke 5.17)

In the three instances when it is said that "virtue" went out of him to heal the afflicted, that word "virtue" is this same word *dunamis*, power, that same Holy Spirit by which all his works were done. This close association of the Holy Spirit with the Son is an important element of Christian doctrine and it is very plainly indicat-

ed in the Book of Revelation. In the “throne scene” of the fourth chapter there are “seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God” (better, the sevenfold Spirit of God). But in the fifth chapter the One like a sacrificial lamb standing before the throne has “seven eyes which are the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth” and this corresponds with the headstone, which is Christ, of Zech. 3. 8 to 4. 10, where likewise are the seven eyes, “the eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro through the whole earth”. The “seven spirits” of course allude to the Holy Spirit’s function of universal surveillance and operation “to and fro through the whole earth”.

The union and distinction between the Father, the Son and the Spirit is indicated in Rev. 1.4-5 where the salutation comes from the Eternal, and from the “seven spirits”, and from Jesus Christ. The unity of the Son and the Spirit is shown in Rev. 3.1 “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches” and repeated seven times in chapters two and three. The Millennial invitation “The Spirit and the Bride say, Come” (Rev.22.17) is the proclamation of the Lord and his Church and here again Jesus calls himself “the Spirit”. As though anticipating this, the Apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthians thirty years before John saw the visions of Revelation, announced the same truth. The Lord, he says, is the Spirit, and by the power of the Spirit we are being transformed into an image of the glory of the Lord. (2 Cor. 3. 17-18).

RESURRECTION POWER

But the greatest manifestation of the power of the Holy Spirit is seen in resurrection. The work of the Spirit in material creation, in the development and sustaining of life, in the illuminating of believing minds, in the transformation of imperfect, deathbound men and women to the deathless glory of Divine sonship, all this is eclipsed in the revealed Word of God by the greatest exhibition of power of all time, the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. “The surpassing greatness of his power” says Paul “The energising of his mighty strength which he exerted in Christ, raising him from the dead and seating him at his own right hand in the heaven” (Eph. 1. 19-20). The death and resurrection of the Son of God still has elements which are difficult for us to understand, but that a mighty operation of the Holy Spirit was responsible for the empty tomb and the entry into celestial glory of him who died upon the Cross is incontrovertible.

The Apostle indicates that a similar direction action by the Father will effect the “change” to celestial conditions of those who follow the Lord to the end of the way. “God hath both raised up the Lord and will also raise up us by his own power”-dunamis-(1Cor. 6. 14). Divine energy will go forth to translate the life that is adapted to this world into another world, into another order of existence, with a new and different body adapted to the new environment. Like all changes, this change will require energy; that energy emanates from the Holy Spirit of God.

In the final age of this world’s probation God will pour out his Spirit upon all flesh (Joel 2. 28). Isaiah saw something of this and he described the coming day when “the Spirit is poured upon us from on high” and the result will be peace and quietness and assurance for ever (Isa. 32. 15-18). Thus is pictured a period in human history when the power of God in active operation for world conversion and the rehabilitation of the planet will be so outwardly manifest that none can deny it. The wonders of present day scientific achievements are as nothing to the marvels of Divine creation and the achievements of the future, to be brought within man’s reach and understanding when he learns to co-operate with Divine power instead of fighting against it. The eyes of the Lord going to and fro through all the earth will find only peace and quietness and assurance for ever. For God said, long ago, in his immeasurable wisdom and foresight, “My Spirit shall not always strive with man”.

(B.S.M.)

Eternal Love

One there is above all others,
Well deserves the name of Friend;
His is love beyond all others,
Costly, free, and knows no end.
They who once His kindness prove,
Find it everlasting love.

(John Newman)

“We Would See Jesus”

Life has its battle grounds, where fierce conflicts are waged against opposing forces. Life has its fords and crossing places, where we go over from one great experience to another. Life has its mills, where are ground out the product of a greater love and a serener trust. And life has its gardens of peace, where one can sit be-

neath the blossoming boughs and rejoice in the warblings of the feathered songsters of the place.

And it was one of the gardens of peace that Jesus found in a certain home in Bethany. It was for Him a little oasis in the world's desert. We know not what took Him there on the occasion of his first visit, but we are told that he conceived a love for Lazarus and his sisters, Mary and Martha.

There were many homes that might have entertained the Master, but they failed to do so. They failed to see their opportunity. It has been said that opportunity knocks once at every door. We do not know. But we do know that it can be turned away. It does not insist on entrance. It just comes. In appearance it may not even seem prepossessing, but it is Opportunity nonetheless, and it has precious jewels to give to those who can receive it.

Much has been said on the subject of Mary and Martha. No doubt they were both very good women. During one of our Lord's visits to their home it would seem that Martha was occupied with the housework more than was necessary. Consequently she was missing a thing of great value. Mary saw something of this and desired it. Yet at a later time Martha manifested great faith in Jesus, and we can believe that in her heart she was his true friend to the last.

There were times when Jesus needed comfort and refreshment, just as his followers do. The world is a hard, stern place in which to live. We do not refer to the natural world, but to the world of affairs that man has reared. There are times when the heart grows weary with the incessant struggle with the inclement elements, and when we yearn to step out of it all for ever so brief a span. Then perchance we think of the home of a friend, one who will understand and whose words will buoy us up and cheer us along life's way. For a true friend is a priceless possession in a darksome world.

Mary and Martha appeal to us as being the friends of Jesus. And the Master did not have many friends on this earth. The people did not understand Him. He had been called with a calling that they knew nothing of. They failed to discern the temple wherein He dwelt. And little did they know that the dome of that temple reached up to the very skies. The thoughts of Jesus soared far above the selfish schemes and ambitions of men. He was in the world, and yet the world saw him not for what he was. ,

And the world sees him not for what he is today. Yet the world needs to see Him more than it needs anything else. To see Jesus is the highest vision that God can grant to man. And if we belong to the favoured few who see Him - his friends under all conditions of life - we have a source of joy that the sum total of the world's hardships cannot remove from us.

Suppose that by pressing a magic button we could transfer ourselves from this modern sphere of existence to the little town of Bethany over nineteen centuries ago. Here we are in the home of Lazarus, And here is Jesus, travel worn and weary, yet able to speak as never man spake. And what is the Master talking about? Is it politics? Is it about the recent arrest of some criminal? Is it about the affairs that make up the Roman world? Is it about any one of a thousand things that frequently engage our conversation when we meet together?

Evidently not. It is something higher than these things that so completely chains the attention of Mary. Jesus must have spoken some beautiful words in that quiet home. We are not given the discourse. But it must have contained something about His Father, something about salvation's mighty plan. How our Lord must have loved to speak of these matters to those who had the heart and mind to receive them! Ah, yes! here in this simple abode we see Jesus - not in the palaces of the great, but with the meek and lowly of heart, with those who possessed the capacity for faith and love.

But the spell is broken. We are back again in our modern world. Men are clamoring for dollars and cents. Pride and selfishness are turning human hearts to stone. Nations have bought upon the scene the grim terrors of war. Darkness covers the earth and gross darkness the people. Wild beasts of destruction have been unleashed! Oh! that we might see Jesus with the human eye. Oh! that we might hear the tender accents of His voice. "The world is waiting for the sunrise" - a sunrise to be brought to men by Him. Poor world! Poor human hearts that by the million are breaking. O golden Day of God, with your unspeakable plenitude of joy! Come soon! Come soon!

But while we cannot see Jesus with the natural eye we can see him in a higher sense, even with the eye of faith. We see his tenderness, his compassion, his love. And there are times when his presence seems so real that other things just fade away. But for the most part the vision of his face is reposeful and calm, and, as we reach out in the darkness and touch his hand, he speaks to us in a still small voice, yet with words of strength and assurance that drive all our fears away.

We would see Jesus with a still closer and truer vision. Ere long the thunders of the world shall crash, and the billows of human passion shall surge upon the land, But "there is a river the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the dwelling place of the tabernacles of the Most High. God is in the midst of her; she

shall not be moved. God shall help her, and that right early.” Let us then look up above the blackness and the gloom, and we shall see a star, and now while we gaze and gaze upon it, it assumes a form. It comes nearer and nearer. And now there can be no doubt about it - it is indeed the very Christ, the Son of God, Ah! yes, He is looking on, and he knows that the world’s approaching change is even now at the doors.

And soon this Mighty One shall wield the rod of his power over a boundless domain. No more then shall the pale spectre of death stalk about the land. No more shall rivers of blood flow because of devastating wars. No more shall the gaunt hand of famine lay millions in the tomb. No more shall the sons of toil be exploited by the plutocrat and the profiteer. One country shall arise to catch the beams of glory poured forth by the Sun of Righteousness, and that country shall be the world. One people shall dwell therein in freedom, in happiness and in life, and that people shall be mankind. One law shall shine forth in a mundane paradise to eternally safeguard the interests of the human family, and that shall be the law of Love. And upon a new foundation shall be built a new world - the theme of all God’s ancient prophets - to reflect the radiance of righteousness, joy, and peace forever more. That is what the vision of the Christ will mean to the sons of men.

We would see Jesus “When morning gilds the skies,” before we start in on the tasks and duties of the day. We would see Him in the evening when night clothes the earth in sable robes, and we want to feel the assurance that his guardian angel will be with us during the hours of sleep. We would see Him when temptation assails us, and receive the overcoming power that he promised to his own. We would see Him when trouble like a gloomy cloud has settled down, and the flail of anguish beats upon the heart. We would see him every day, and under all the vicissitudes of the years.

Then *let* us see Him. Let us take care that nothing robs us of our heavenly vision. Let us follow the example of Mary of Bethany, and sit at His feet. Let us enjoy the good portion that cannot be taken from us while our hearts are right. Over two thousand years of sorrows, and over the world’s dark sea of death, let us see the Master’s face smiling upon us in love, and let us hear his words, pure and tender and sweet as when he uttered them so long ago: “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.” And, “Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the Kingdom.”

(The Herald)

THE CHRISTIAN’S WALK

The Christian’s walk, of course, means his or her course of conduct, including thoughts and words and acts. In his letter to the Ephesians, the apostle Paul indicates very clearly what this walk or course of life of every Christian should be, outlining it in seven different ways.

1. NOT ACCORDING TO THIS WORLD (Eph. 2:2) The new creation should walk not according to the course of this world, not according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit which now works in the children of disobedience. This is the walk of the world, the walk of evildoers, the walk of the children of wrath; it is the very opposite of the walk of the children of the light.

2. IN GOOD WORKS (Eph. 2:10) The new creation should walk in good works, “for we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them.”

3. WORTHY OF THEIR CALLING (Eph. 4:1) The new creation should walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called. Their vocation is the very highest of all; they are the representatives of their Lord and Master; they bear His name, and should seek in everything to glorify it and never to dishonour it. What we do, what we say, what we think, even our general appearance, deportment and where we are seen, all reflect more or less upon the great King whose ambassadors we are. Our vocation is that of servants of God, and no earthly vocation should be permitted in any degree to hinder or lessen the influence or the service which we have undertaken as children of God, as joint-heirs with Jesus Christ our Lord, as prospective members of His Bride.

4. NOT AS OTHER GENTILES (Eph. 4:17) The new creation should not merely refrain from the sins and immoralities of natural mankind, but are to allow our Master’s spirit and example to pervade all life’s interests. We are to refrain from following foolish or worldly fashions, from being influenced by any worldly spirit. We are to have the spirit of the Lord, the spirit of a sound mind to direct us in all our joys, in our sorrows, in all our undertakings. Indeed, whatever we undertake we are to do to the glory of God; we are not to be influenced by the spirit of the world, but on the contrary are to set a proper example in all matters -in gentleness, kindness, patience, faithfulness to our Lord and to our duty.

The walk of the world is on the broad road; the walk of the new creation is on the narrow path. As we progress in Christian experience, we find this narrow path getting further and further away from the broad road

which the world is travelling. Whoever try to keep pace with the world will surely soon find themselves leaving the narrow path or otherwise disadvantaging themselves as new creatures.

5. IN LOVE (Eph. 5:2) The new creation's words, their deeds, everything with which they are connected, are to be governed by the law of the new creation - love. "Love is the fulfilling of the law." "A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another, as I have loved you." In compliance with this law of love and our Lord's glorious example, the apostle says that we ought to so love one another as to be willing to lay down our lives for the brethren. We should be ready to take any opportunity of service for the brethren, especially along the lines of their spiritual or higher interests as new creatures.

"Love worketh no ill to his neighbour", would not take any advantage to deceive him or injure him in any way. Love would not prompt to speak evil of his neighbour, but with the scriptural injunction would "speak evil of no man". Love would do so from principle because it is right; but, furthermore, would not wish to do anything that would be harmful to another's interests, to their welfare, but rather to do something to their credit or blessing. Love, as we progressively walk in it, ultimately brings us to that blessed condition where we can love our enemies and be glad of the privilege to do good to them.

6. AS CHILDREN OF LIGHT (Eph. 5:8) The new creation's course in life should always be directed towards those things which are just, pure, noble, loving, kind, those things which are in harmony with the Divine character and Word, those things which prove of greatest blessing to neighbours and to friends. As children of light, every day and year should see progress; our light should be shining more clearly and accomplishing the greater good. We should not be ashamed of the light, but set it on a candlestick, that it may give light to all in the house, to every member of the household of faith. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven." (Matt. 5:16)

7. CIRCUMSPECTLY (Eph. 5:15) The new creation is to look carefully around at every step. Christians cannot afford to live carelessly. As they look around and realise the various pitfalls and snares, not only will they seek to make straight paths for their feet lest that which is lame be turned out of the way, but additionally will seek Divine aid and counsel and guidance, so that they make no mistakes, that every step be such as will have Divine approval and glorify God in their bodies and spirits, which are His.

The circumspectness of our walk as new creatures is all the more necessary because our adversary, the devil, is specially on the alert to ensnare us, and our tests are permitted to be more severe as we come nearer to the goal. We should walk circumspectly also because we profess to be of the new creation, begotten by the Holy Spirit, not of the world but separate from it, and because our lights so shining are a reproof to the world. To walk circumspectly is to hearken to the instructions of God's Word and to the leadings of the Holy Spirit - thus to walk carefully, and in so doing to develop that character which is most pleasing to our Lord and Head.

(P.P. 15/7)

"As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him, and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving." Colossians 2:6, 7.

"O for a closer walk with God, a calm and heavenly frame
A light to shine upon the road, that leads me to the Lamb." (Isaac Smith)

Prayer

I know not by what methods rare,
But this I know - God answers prayer.
I know not when He sends the word
That tells us fervent prayer is heard.
I know it cometh soon or late;
Therefore we need to pray and wait.
I know not if the blessings sought
Will come in just the guise I thought.
I leave my prayers with Him alone



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CREATION'S EARNEST EXPECTATION

"We know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.....for the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God." Romans 8:22, 19.

"I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come." Haggai 2:7.

Thus the apostle and the prophet refer to the 1 woes of earth and the great remedy which God has provided, and which is soon to be applied. None experienced in life or acquainted with history will dispute the correctness of the apostle's statement. The declaration of the prophet that God will eventually establish a reign of righteousness in the earth which, when realised, will indeed fulfil all the earnest expectation, the eager longing, of all mankind, is borne out by the testimony of every prophet and apostle (Acts 3:19-21), and cannot, therefore, be disputed by any who acknowledge the inspiration of the Bible.

The cause of all creation's groaning and pain is sin; for all the moral as well as the physical degradation which directly or indirectly causes the pain and groaning of humanity is part of the wages of sin. Humanity is thus under a blight, and suffers both individually and as a whole. Its own imperfect and often unjust governments, as well as its aches and pains of body and mind, are the natural consequences of its blemished, fallen condition. Although mankind can do something toward general improvement, their efforts are at best but feeble and spasmodic; they are utterly incapable of releasing themselves from their difficulties. Their varying successes - but on the whole futile efforts -for the past six thousand years prove this conclusively.

They have never yet, in all the centuries they have had for experiment, succeeded in establishing a perfect government; nor have they silenced the groans and wiped away the tears of the race, nor lifted it up, physically or mentally, or morally, to the image of God, in which they were created, as represented in Adam. Diseases of every description still prey upon them physically. There are still burning fevers, wasting ulcers, frightful cancers, loathsome skin and poisonous blood diseases; and there are sightless eyes, deaf ears, dumb tongues, broken backs and limbs, and other physical diseases and deformities. Mentally, their condition is often worse: some are crazed; others are partially so; and in all the race not one is perfectly balanced. Morally their condition is no less deplorable; selfishness, and greed, and pride, and love of display, and hatred and malice, and evil speaking, and deceit, and envy, and contention, and war, and bloodshed, wring agonising groans from the lips of millions; and desolate widows and helpless orphans and broken-hearted mothers and grief-stricken fathers, and disappointed friends, still weep over the graves of buried hopes and fond ambitions.

A RAY OF HOPE

Truly, it is a groaning creation still; and yet, as the apostle suggests, it is not hopeless; it is waiting for something, it knows not exactly what- a panacea for sickness, and pain, and sorrow, and death, and a just and righteous government, which will lift up the poorest and meanest from the mire of ignorance and squalor, to comfort and happiness and a share of life's luxuries. It is looking forward to 'a good time coming,' 'a golden age,' of which even heathen poets and philosophers have dreamed and sung in glowing terms. Some, catching a strain from the divine inspiration, though unconscious of how it will be brought about, sing of the blessed Millennium-

*"When, man to man united,
And every wrong thing righted,
The whole world shall be lighted
As Eden was of old."*

But what heathen poets and philosophers, and all mankind have longed and vaguely hoped for -but have proved themselves utterly incapable of bringing about, with all their statecraft, and priest-craft, and multiplied religious ceremonies, and forms of godliness without the power - God, through His prophets, has clearly and definitely foretold will come. Further, He has shown exactly how it is to be brought about - that it is to come to pass through the agency of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Messenger of Jehovah, who over nineteen centuries ago redeemed the world, giving His life as the ransom price for the life of the world; and who will shortly set up His Millennial Kingdom and establish His authority over the redeemed world. He will not oppress the people to exalt Himself, as human rulers have done; but will bless "all the families of the earth" through a wise and righteous administration.-Gen. 22:18; Gal. 3:8, 16; Psalms. 9:8; Isaiah. 32:1.

Our Lord Jesus, by the grace of God, "tasted death for every man," and thus secured the right to give lasting life to all who shall prove themselves worthy of it. The object of His Millennial reign will be to so instruct, train, and discipline men as to enable them to become worthy of lasting life, on the original conditions - perfection and obedience. To this end He will first "rule with a rod of iron" (Psalms. 2:9) - with power and force, causing in the overthrow of present imperfect, selfish, proud, and unjust systems, "a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation" (Daniel. 12:1). Then He will "fill the earth with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." (Habakkuk. 2:14.) He will restrain and humble the wicked and the selfish, and bless and lift up the meek and those seeking righteousness (Zephaniah. 2:3; Matthew. 5:5) ; finally making an end of sin and all its train of evils, by destroying (completely and forever) all who then, with full knowledge and appreciation, still love sin; and by bestowing upon all who shall then love righteousness "the gift of God," everlasting life. - Romans. 6:23.

WHY THE DELAY?

All this would seem reasonable to thinking people but for two conditions. One is, that another and an unscriptural view has for centuries predominated, and the people have been instructed from infancy in that direction. The second condition is, that so long a period has elapsed before the establishment of His Kingdom as the remedy for sin and its disorders. Yet so convinced are people of the propriety of such a divine rulership that, regardless of facts and scripture, some claim that Christ is now reigning over and ruling the world. Yet if informed in the world's history, and candid, all must admit that earth's government has not been, nor is it yet, a rule of righteousness such as the prophets predicted of the reign of Christ (Isaiah. 32:1) On the contrary, it is manifest that the kingdoms of this world are all under the power, and subject to the manipulations of the invisible "prince of this world," Satan, who takes advantage of the darkness of human ignorance, superstition and depravity to rule men through their passions and prejudices.

Humanity has indeed made some noble efforts at self government, but the unseen and unrecognised powers of darkness have been more than a match for its efforts, and have succeeded in keeping in power a majority who are not lovers of righteousness. Nor can we hope for better than present results so long as selfishness is the rule of action.

People naturally wonder that God has not long since exerted His great power (His Kingdom power and authority) to suppress sin and to lift mankind out of its present state of ignorance, superstition, grovelling depravity, disease and death. But they reason that God's future dealings should be judged by the past, and since six thousand years have passed without such an interposition, they think we cannot expect such a rule or Kingdom in the future, believing that all things must continue as they now are, and have been from the foundation of the world.-2 Peter. 3:4.

But what reply can be made to this objection? To answer: It can be show that the Scriptures teach that God has not only promised such a Kingdom for the purpose of blessing the world, but that He also foretold the long period intervening, in which evil has been permitted. They also show good and sufficient reasons for the six thousand years' delay. This, clearly seen, should remove every obstacle to belief in the promised Millennial Kingdom. Yet, in examining the reasons for the delay of the reign of righteousness, let us not forget that it is only as measured by the shortness of the present life that six thousand years seem long. With God, "A thousand years are but as yesterday."-Psalms. 90:4.

THE CALL OF THE CHURCH

The long delay and its purposes are clearly marked in the Scriptures. Over four thousand years after the first promise of deliverance, the redemption was accomplished. Some two thousand more fill the measure of the Gospel age, for the selection and development of the Gospel church. The whole long six thousand years were designed to give the race a necessary experience with the dreadful effects of sin, its exceeding sinfulness, and the firmness of that justice which will by no means clear the guilty violators of God's just and holy law - an experience which will be of inestimable value to all; and to all eternity. By contrast, it will lead to such an appreciation of righteousness, during Christ's Millennial reign, as to make it, when realised, what the prophet predicted - "The desire of all nations."

The delay, from the time of the Calvary-redemption, to the Millennial age, while it served this purpose to the world, served also and particularly a further purpose - the development of the Church, a "little flock" of believers in and followers of Christ, sharers of His reproach in the present time, and thereby chosen and counted worthy to share His spiritual kingdom and glory and His Millennial work - to reign with Him as joint-heirs of the promised kingdom of God for the blessing of all the families of the earth.-Gen. 28:14; Gal. 3:16, 29.

The selection of this company, as individuals, has been in process during the entire Gospel age now closing, though, as a class, they were foreknown from the foundation of the world. (Eph. 1:4) That is, God predetermined to exalt to this kingdom honour and restitution work a certain class, each of whom should meet predetermined conditions; and the Gospel age of some two thousand years was appointed as the time for developing, testing and selecting the individuals who should make up that class. The election of these individuals is not arbitrary, but according to fitness; the qualifications being, first, justification by faith in Christ; then meekness and devotedness to God's service, at the cost of self-sacrifice, even unto death. Many (justified believers) were "called" or invited to share these kingdom honours, but only those, a faithful few, will be selected or chosen. These are they who "are called, and chosen, and faithful" (Rev. 17:14)

During the Millennial age, Christ's power will be exercised to prevent deceptions, to clear away ignorance, to strengthen the weak and to lead and restore to sight those now blinded by the god of this world. (2 Cor. 4:4) A thousand enticements to sin which appeal specially to the depraved appetites of the fallen race now, will not be tolerated when the new, heavenly rule is established. But the Gospel church - the kingdom class - is called and tested during this age, while evil is permitted to hold sway, in order that their testing may be like that of gold tried in the fire. This company will be complete when the present age ends, and the control of earth will then be entrusted to them, under and in co-operation with the Lord Jesus, then the King of Kings.-1 Cor. 6:2.

LOOKING FOR THE KINGDOM

No student of the Bible can have overlooked the fact that the constant theme of our Lord and His apostles was the coming kingdom of God. The Jewish people, as a nation, had for centuries expected Messiah's coming to be the ruler of the world; and they naturally expected that as He was to come of their nation they would be His soldiers, co-workers, and joint-heirs in that kingdom. They knew themselves to be the natural seed of Abraham, and inferred that they were indispensable to God's plan. They saw not that spiritual children of God, of the faith and loyalty of Abraham were meant.

The real greatness of the promised kingdom and its work of blessing was not appreciated by Israel; they expected a kingdom similar to the kingdoms of this world; that Messiah, as a fleshly being of the seed of Abraham, would establish His Kingdom at Jerusalem, and that his glory would be the earthly glory of purple, and fine linen, and gold, and silver, and the usual accompaniments of earthly royalty. Their pride and ambition longed for the time when this promised King should exalt Himself above the Caesars, and exalt them above all the nations of the earth. Hence their rejection of Him who came humbly, born in a manger, with no assumption of titles, or earthly honours, or influence, or even friends; and yet came proclaiming the kingdom of heaven at hand and Himself the promised King.

So thoroughly impressed upon the Jewish mind was the thought that Messiah's coming meant the establishment of a kingdom of righteousness, that several times the "common people" would have taken Christ by force to make Him king; but He withdrew that their ardour might cool, knowing that all those who shouted "Hosanna to the Son (and heir) of David" were not of those whom the Father designed should be the joint-heirs with Him of that kingdom. He knew, too, that the Father's time for His exaltation to power had not yet come, and that first He must die to purchase those whom He was afterward to reign over - to whom he might therefore restore the original blessings and favours lost to all through Adam's failure.-Rom. 5:12-19.

Like others, the twelve apostles held this hope of the kingdom and believed Christ to be the promised Messiah, the King of kings. Our Lord Jesus, so far from ever contradicting their ideas, always encouraged them, and told them that they should yet sit with Him in His throne. But He explained that first He must suffer many things and be rejected of that generation (people), even as it had been written in the prophets, "Thus it behoved Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead;" Also he said to them: O, slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken; was it not needful for Messiah to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?-Luke 24:25,26.

THE NOBLEMAN'S RETURN

One of our Lord's parables, given just before His crucifixion, was for the very purpose of teaching His apostles that the expected kingdom would be deferred until His second coming. It is introduced thus: "And He spoke this parable unto them because they thought that the Kingdom of God would be manifested immediately." (Luke 19:11,27.) That parable represents the Gospel age as the period in which Christ, "the Nobleman," went "into a far country" (heaven) to receive for Himself a kingdom and to be invested with

authority. The parable also shows that during the absence of the Nobleman, the opponents of His rule are in the majority and hold sway; they even declare that they do not desire Him to come and establish His kingdom, preferring to be let alone as they are- “They sent an embassy after him, saying, We do not desire this man’s rule.”

The parable shows too, the proper attitude of those who love the Nobleman. To His servants He entrusted certain talents - here represented as ten pounds, all of which could, during His absence, be utilised in His service - saying to them, “Trade herewith till I come.” (R.V.) Obedient to this command, they are to use their various talents to forward the interests of His coming kingdom. And finally, the parable shows that the Nobleman will surely return with full power, and that He will use it to reward, with a share in the kingdom, those faithful to Him, and to destroy all opposed to His rule of righteousness. Thank God, there is good reason to believe that many now enemies to the King of kings will not remain such when present misconceptions are cured by the increased knowledge of the King’s character, plan and kingdom, then to be afforded to all, for which we pray, “Thy kingdom come!”

THE DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS

When Christ’s Kingdom has come, it will indeed be “the desire of all nations.” It will be just what all men need. At first it will rule with a rod of iron, dashing the now tottering kingdoms of this world in pieces like a potter’s vessel (Psa. 2:9), breaking up civil, social and religious systems of tyranny and oppression, putting down all authority and power opposed to it, humbling the proud and high-minded, and finally teaching all the world to be still and know that the Lord’s Anointed has taken the dominion. (Psa. 46:10.) Then the blessing of His peaceful reign will begin to be experienced. Truth and equity will be established on a sure and permanent footing; “justice will be laid to the line, and righteousness to the plummet (Isa. 28:17); and the great restitution work will progress grandly to its glorious consummation. There will be sweeping moral reforms, great educational and philanthropic enterprises, wonderful cures from every disease and deformity, mental and physical. There will be awakenings also from death, and a grand reorganisation of society under the new order of the Kingdom of God. All the world’s bitter experience during the 6000 years past will prove valuable lessons on the exceeding sinfulness of sin; helping mankind to appreciate the new rule of righteousness, and to live in everlasting conformity to the perfect will of God, and thus to accept God’s gift of everlasting life, designed for all who will receive it on His conditions of love and loyalty and obedience to Him. Then, “Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”-Rev. 22:17.

Such being the grand object of our Lord’s return and the establishment of His Kingdom, we believe with the prophet, that it will be “The desire of all nations;” and with the apostle that the earnest expectation of the creature longs, though ignorantly, for the coming revelation of the sons of God -the overcoming Church exalted with her Lord.

THE CHURCH’S HOPE

A clearer knowledge of the world’s hope should and does increase the Church’s appreciation of God’s loving arrangement for His creatures. It adds new lustre to the Church’s hope when we realise that the glorious object of the call and discipline of the Church in this Gospel age is for the development of characters which, being proved loyal to God and to righteousness and truth, will be associated with Christ, in the Messianic age now dawning, in the great and grand work of uplifting whosoever will of mankind from ignorance and sin and degradation to God’s likeness and favour and love. The apostle declares “He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself.” (1 John 3:3.) It is a hope that helps onward to God and holiness.

“Think it Not Strange”

Think it not strange, beloved,
When fiercely burns the fiery flame!
Think it not strange, but praise His name,
Who counts you worthy to partake
Of painful sufferings for His sake.
Nor think it strange
When loved ones scornful from you turn,
The truth reject, the message spurn;
Consider Him who thus endured,
And immortality secured!
Think it not strange, beloved,

If sometimes every door seems closed,
And all your efforts be opposed,
But calmly wait in patience till
The Master shall reveal His will.

Nor think it strange
When darker grows the "narrow way",
Press on, your Master soon shall say,
Enough, My child, you have well done,
Come, enter in, the prize is won!

FAITHFUL BRANCHES OF THE TRUE VINE

"I am the vine, ye are the branches; he that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit."
John 15:5.

Beautiful indeed are the diversified illustrations of Christian life and experience made use of by our Lord in His wonderful words of life. To Him many things in nature were fitting symbols of God's designs in the higher realms of His purposes - the natural law finding a larger expression in the spiritual world. The things not seen were thus brought within the scope of our comprehension by the things which are seen. Hence "the Kingdom of heaven" in some of its many aspects, is likened unto a net, a field, a lost treasure, a wandering sheep. Each illustration employed contains its own particular lesson, and all combined furnish us with a diverse picture of the works of God. What a wide field for study is thus opened up to us, in which the man of God may find "doctrine," "reproof," "correction," and "instruction in righteousness."

The grapevine, as used in the chapter from which our text is taken, is full of significance. Here, we have the real facts of Christian experience clearly set forth. What better illustration could be used to teach so many of these important facts than the vine and its branches. The need of a complete unity with the only possible source of life and fruitfulness is clearly portrayed. The vine is ever saying to its numerous branches, "Without me ye can do nothing." Its very nature and characteristics proclaim its very special need of the care of a husbandman, without whom its ultimate end must be destruction as a useless cumberer of the ground.

In its creation the vine and branches were designed to attain marvellous ends, producing, it is claimed, one of the most perfect fruits found in the earth, containing an unusually large amount of the important elements needed in the human body. But to attain this great end the most drastic treatment in the way of pruning and training was foreordained to be its salvation. These are some of the lessons Jesus would teach us by this illustration. The ultimate objective is "much fruit," if we are branches in Him as the Vine, and separation from Him will eventually mean fruitlessness. This abundant fruitage He assures us is within the bounds of possibility for all who truly abide in Him.

It is not difficult to understand that a branch must derive its life from the vine upon which and out of which it grows. The life-giving juices which the vine draws from the earth giving it life and leaves, must run out into the branches also. A branch can not bear even leaves unless its unity with the vine is real, "no more can ye," says Jesus, unless "Ye abide in me." Until there is on the part of the Christian a real union of heart and life with Christ the Vine, there can be nothing, no true faith, no real joy or experience in spiritual things, no true delight in the Word of God, and no intimate communion with God; therefore nothing of the evidences of eternal life will be found. This law in nature and in grace is immutable; hence the importance of the lesson before us.

PARTAKERS OF THE VINE

But if the illustration emphasises the fact that "much fruit" must be found on each branch as evidence of its continued place in the vine, there is nevertheless abundant assurance given that no impossibility is demanded. The Husbandman is One thoroughly competent to produce such an abundant fruitage, for He can never fail in His undertakings, and the Vine is a source of inexhaustible supply, never diminished however much the branches may draw the vitality needed to produce "much fruit." The giving out of this vitality does not impoverish Him, nor withholding make Him richer.

The branches can never overdraw the strength of the One who has said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." On the contrary, He so desires us to be strong, vigorous, fruitful branches that He urges us to partake freely of the life He so delights to impart. As God in ancient days has said to his people, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it," so Jesus is ever saying to His followers, "Open thy heart and life wide to me, and I will fill it with "much fruit" whereby God will be glorified." He is able "to make all grace abound toward you," says the Apostle, "that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound in every good work." (2 Cor. 9:8.) Truly, then, if we would bear much fruit to His praise,

“what more can he say than to us he has said” to assure us that in us and for us “He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.”-Eph. 3:20.

Our Lord’s illustration teaches most certainly that the branch partakes very definitely of the vine on which and out of which it grows. Its origin is in the vine, and it conforms strictly to God’s law of creation - every “fruit tree yielding fruit after its kind.” The vine feeds the branch with the same nourishment with which it is itself sustained. Thus the branch bears an identical likeness to its parent vine. Is there on the vine a peculiar kind of bark and form of leaf, so is there on the branch. There is the same kind of wood fibre, the same colour and texture, the same juices flowing through all. The vine imparts life to the branch and is at the same time reproducing itself in that branch, thus emphatically making it a partaker of its own nature. It is the simple principle of like producing like.

CHRIST, THE TRUE VINE

Christ is indeed the true vine, and his members unquestionably should partake of His nature. When He imparts to us a new spiritual life, does He not promise to thereby give us of His own characteristics? Christ’s people, members of His body should be Christlike, for “if any man have not the spirit of Christ he is none of his.” And what are some of these outstanding characteristics, which if manifested in us give evidence of our being in the relation of branches to the vine? For answer, the Apostle would say, “We have the mind of Christ,” and again, “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.” (1 Cor.2:16, Phil. 2:5)

To have the mind of Christ would surely, be to have the spirit or disposition of Christ. It would therefore mean Christ living in us, controlling our lives, possessing our hearts, and reproducing His likeness, His nature in us. Thus the promises embraced in Peter’s statement would include promises pertaining to this life in its daily round of work and warfare, as well as such promises which in their very nature cannot be fulfilled until after the second veil is passed. Meeting the conditions underlying all those promises will little by little result to us in increasing measures of the spirit or disposition of Christ.

NEW LIFE

Possessing the life of Christ in our hearts will reveal that new springs of action are operating in us. New tastes and desires are kindled in our hearts and we become more and more copies of God’s dear Son. Is there in Christ a delight in holiness? So is there in the true Christian a consuming desire to be holy as God is holy. Is there in Christ a spirit of love? So is there in the Christian; his life will reflect that love in word and deed if he be really in Christ. Is there in Christ a spirit of meekness? So will there be in His disciple the adorning of a meek and quiet spirit. Is there in Christ a great desire for the salvation and blessing of others? So there will be in the disciple; for contact with Jesus must bring us into perfect accord with His spirit of love and consideration for others. Is there in Christ a desire for intimate communion with God? So is there in the true disciple; for such true union with Christ begets an ever increasing longing for close communion with the Father. Is there in Christ a definite hatred of sin? So is there in the Christian united to Him; for it is impossible to be in union with Christ and at the same time in connivance with sin.

Thus the new life which the Vine imparts to us and which constitutes one a Christian, is a life begotten of God, and therefore must of necessity bear the nature of Christ. God begets children in his own likeness. No amount of grace would make a Christian omnipotent or omniscient; yet grace will nevertheless make us like Christ. The Christian who really abides in Christ, and draws his life from Christ, as a branch from the vine, may surely expect to have a Christlike love, a Christlike patience, a Christlike meekness, a Christlike compassion, and a Christlike delight in all the will of God. As a branch of the true vine, he will assuredly resemble Christ.

FEEDING ON THE VINE

The more we feed on Christ the more of His character we possess. The branch feeds upon the vine always. In a sense, and an important sense, we must likewise feed on Christ, for so He has said, “I am the living Bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.” And again, “As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.”-John 6:51, 57.

Surely the branch no more feeds upon the vine, than does the believer on Christ. And how may we feed upon Christ? We feed upon him in our faith appropriation of His redemptive work on our behalf. “Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us,” and we feast upon him as the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world. The great doctrines of the cross of Christ are food to the Christian alive to spiritual things. In the cross of Christ he glories. To the cross he clings, and to its foot he yearns to bring all who need its saving power. We feed upon Christ as we ponder over and personally assimilate His words of life. And in this we may properly include all Scripture.

The doctrines and the promises alike of God’s word cheer and strengthen the Christian’s heart. Did David

not have this in his mind when he said, "O how I love thy law: it is my meditation all the day." And had not the poet been feeding on Christ in this way when he wrote for saints to sing:

How firm a foundation ye saints of the Lord

Is laid for your faith in His excellent Word!

What more can He say than to you He hath said?

You, who unto Jesus for refuge have fled.

Have not saints throughout the Age, when their faith needed to be nourished and strengthened, turned away from men, and found cheer and comfort, and faith to endure, in the Saviour's own words. Over and over again no voice but His could comfort, none other could say, "Come unto me and I will give you rest." And as the Spirit has brought to remembrance whatsoever things he hath spoken, the green pastures and quiet waters have brought peace and joy.

We feed upon Christ at the throne of heavenly grace. Through Him alone we have access to God, therefore in our prayer life we are but appropriating the things freely given us by God through Christ. And what a feast this is! When we come thus, ransomed by his precious blood, we come into communion with God our Father, and with Jesus our beloved Head, and there we rise above the world into the realm of that which is pure and holy, and there hold converse with Father and Son in intimate fellowship. In this way we draw from the true Vine spiritual food for our spiritual life. And what blessings attend the faithful use of this means of approaching strength from the vine.

When we take into our hands the emblems of a suffering Saviour, Gethsemane and Calvary are brought again to view. The compassion of our dying Lord is then well calculated to excite our love and gratitude, and to awaken in our hearts resolutions to live a life wholly dedicated to Him who loved us so. That scene of agony which bought us from death, and opened up to us such inestimable privileges as our "great salvation" makes possible to us in this day of exceptional grace, surely must bestir us to an overwhelming gratitude, and cause us to cry out, "I will take the cup of salvation" and henceforth live wholly for Him who loved me so. Let Him impart to me His "life more abundant."

Surely in all these things we feed upon Christ. And as we thus feed upon Him, we partake more and more of His image, and thus manifest to others more and more of His likeness.

BRINGING FORTH FRUIT

How important, then, is the question, How much of the character of Christ do we really possess? - especially if we have enjoyed years of this close relationship to Christ, having, as we have surely had, this privilege of drawing life and vitality from the inexhaustible Vine. How very much of likeness we ought now to bear to the Vine of which we have been the branches these many years. Certainly we ought to possess unmistakable likeness to Christ now, if the relationship has been all that it should have been.

If some one should give us a branch taken from a grapevine and ask us from what it had been taken, we would have no difficulty in deciding whence it came. There would be the leaves, the wood and the fruit, all of which would remind us at once of the vine on which it grew. So the life and character of the Christian should remind others of Christ. If we desire to draw others to Him, we must show them the attractions of Christ. As His followers we should become more and more partakers of His nature or character and thus show that we have been with Him and learned of Him. Our own sinful nature must be repressed, and the character of Christ increasingly exhibited in our lives. Being the professed people of God, we can in this way show to others something of the love and beauty of our adorable Redeemer.

By abiding in Christ, and drawing from Him large supplies of spiritual life, we, will increase in those graces of which He is the source, increase in our resemblance of Him, will exhibit more of His character, and thus verify His own precious words of promise. "He that abideth in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit."

("The Herald")

O, Soul of Mine

O, soul of mine, be calm, be still,

Submit thyself to God;

In all thy ways yield to His will,

Nor faint beneath the rod.

O, soul of mine, like potter's clay

Within the Master's hand,

O let Him mould thee day by day,

Till faultless thou shalt stand.
O, soul of mine, have faith, believe,
Nor count the cost of strife,
Fight on, faint not, thou shalt receive
At last the Crown of Life.
(Alice M Ripper)

HE GIVETH QUIETNESS

When He giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?" Who but He, the 'God of all comfort,' can give quietness in the midst of tumults which rise upon the soul like sudden storms upon the sea? Like ocean mariners in peril, we cry unto Him, and He bringeth us to the desired haven - blessed haven - of quietness and peace in God.

What is the cry which brings this answer of peace? It is not a prayer that all occasion for disturbance shall be removed, for it is not always the divine will to bring peace to the human spirit in that way; it is not always the best way. But there is a cry which never fails to bring the quietness in which none can 'make trouble.' It is a prayer for sweet, trustful, loving acquiescence in the will of God.

'May thy will, not mine, be done;
May thy will and mine be one;
Peace I ask - but peace must be;
Lord, in being one with Thee.'

What is it which disturbs my spirit? Is it anxiety about my work, my finances, my reputation, my friends? Suppose my Father in heaven should hear my prayer and remove every apparent cause for unrest in regard to one or all of these matters to-day. That would not give settled peace, for in a life so full of uncertainties as this, new occasions of anxiety would probably arise tomorrow.

But if I say, 'Lord, let each one of these matters which concern my peace of mind so closely be under Thy control; order all entirely according to Thy will, for Thou art my Father and my Friend; Thy will is that Thy children should have the very best in all things; and Thou knowest what is best for me,' what a place of rest is that! How the sense of too heavy responsibility rolls off; how the distracting care is shifted from the heart too weak to bear it to the strong shoulder upon which the government of all things rightfully and easily rests.

If this experience of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God, of great price, is not realised at once, we must not be discouraged. It is not only of a great price as to value, but it often costs a great price to gain it.

It follows successive battles, often repeated self surrender, and multiplied trials in which the unfailing care and love of God have been clearly manifested. We were watching the sea waters under the north-east wind; how disturbed and dark they were! Suddenly, with a fierceness that seemed cruel, the rain fell in torrents, and the unresisting waters grew perfectly calm as under an overwhelming surprise. When the storm had passed, the setting sun shone gloriously, and the quiet waters were beautiful in the colours of rose and gold.

Nature has its spiritual correspondences. Surprise comes upon surprise, sudden, overwhelming. The spirit which once tossed restlessly in chafing winds of lesser trials sinks in sweet submission under heavier griefs. We learn that even in the storm God was there, and at last His conscious love, His abiding presence, His unvarying peace - the beauty of Godlikeness - glorify the character and life. - Selected.



Volume 80 No.4 MELBOURNE, JULY/AUGUST 1997 GOD'S HOLY TEMPLE

"The temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" 1 Cor 3:17

GOD'S EARTHLY DWELLING

The usual Hebrew term applied to the Jewish temple was "heykal", which signifies a royal residence. It was also often qualified by the term "kodesh", sanctuary, to indicate its sacredness as the visible dwelling place of Jehovah among His people. The same significance also attached to the movable tent or sanctuary of Israel, the tabernacle in the wilderness. The idea thus visibly expressed was that God was in the midst of His people, as He said, "And there will I meet with the children of Israel, and the tabernacle shall be sanctified by my glory. And I will sanctify the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar: I will sanctify also both Aaron and his sons, to minister to Me in the priest's office. And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God."—Exod. 29: 43-45.

In fulfilment of this promise, as soon as the tabernacle was finished, the glory of the Lord filled it, as we read:—"So Moses finished the work. Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle... The cloud of the Lord was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night: in the sight of all the house of Israel throughout all their journeys."—Exod. 40: 33-38

So also at the dedication of Solomon's temple there was the same divine recognition of this more permanent structure:—"So was ended all the work that King Solomon made for the house of the Lord. And Solomon brought in the things which David and his father had dedicated, even the silver and the gold and the vessels did he put among the treasures of the house of the Lord... And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the Lord so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord."—1 Kings: 7:51, 8:10, 11.

The idea conveyed by the several accounts of this glory of the Lord, as it appeared in the tabernacle, in the temple, on Mount Sinai, and as it guided and protected Israel in coming out of Egypt, is that of exceeding brightness, enveloped and usually concealed by a thick cloud, from which, on special occasions, it shone forth. Thus we read, "And the glory of the Lord abode upon Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days... And the sight of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel."—Exod. 24: 16,17

GOD'S SPIRITUAL DWELLING

But the tabernacle and the temple of God, built by divine direction and under the divine supervision, and thus honoured with the visible, typical manifestations of the Divine presence and glory, were only types of that grander tabernacle, not made with hands, of which fleshly Israel could have no conception, and of that holy temple which should by and by eclipse the grandeur of the earthly temple with all the gold and precious stones that adorn it. Let us, then, look away from, or, rather, let us look through the typical temple of God to its antitype. The apostles tell us that the gospel church, both individually and collectively, constitute the antitypical temple:—"For the temple of God • is holy, which temple ye are."

Considering the matter first in its individual application, we hear Paul say to the consecrated people of God, "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? 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"—1 Cor. 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16. Thus every faithful, consecrated child of God in whom God, by His Holy Spirit, dwells, is a temple of God, a royal residence of the King of Kings, a holy sanctuary. This high privilege is ours through Christ, who first redeemed us by His

precious blood, and thus made us eligible for the call of God to be thus sanctified and set apart wholly to His use—"for a habitation of God through the Spirit."

It was to this that our Lord also referred, saying, "If a man love Me, he will keep My words; and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him and make our abode with him. The Comforter which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."—John 14: 23,26. Thus each individual saint becomes "a habitation of God" through the Spirit, a holy temple, a royal residence.

How precious is the thought, how great the condescension of our God in thus honouring His chosen ones who believe and trust in Him and are fully consecrated to His will and service. "Ye are the temple of the living God"; and "Ye are not in the flesh (in the old carnal condition), but in the spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you."—Rom. 8:9. And if the Spirit of God dwell in us, it is to sanctify and glorify these temples of His, that even now we should show forth the praises of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.

SANCTITY OF GOD'S TEMPLE

It is in this view of our relationship to God that Paul would impress upon our minds the sanctity of these temples of the Holy Spirit, saying, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man destroy the temple of God, him will God destroy." That is if, after he has been made partaker of the Holy Spirit, and consequently through the enlightening and guiding influences of that Spirit has tasted the good word of God and the powers (privileges of divine instruction, etc.) of the coming age he should stifle all these blessed influences, refusing to be further led by the Spirit of God, and turn again, either suddenly or gradually, to the spirit of the world, such a one is destroying his spiritual life—destroying the temple of God, which was holy and consecrated to God. The judgement against all such is, "Him will God destroy." The Lord has "no pleasure" in any who "draw back" from such high privileges. "But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation.... We are not of them who draw back unto destruction, but of them which believe to the saving of the soul."—Heb. 6: 4-9; 10:38,39

It was in allusion to this same thing that our Lord, addressing His disciples, said "Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life, shall preserve it"; and that Paul also said, "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye, through the spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."—Luke 17:33; Rom. 8:13. It is to those who appreciate the sanctity of these temples of God that all the blessings of divine grace belong; for God shall dwell in them and walk in them, and His glory shall be manifested in them and to them. It is their blessed privilege, in reverent humility, to realise the condescending favour of God in recognising them as His temples, and making His abode with them, and to profit by all the hallowed influences of His presence and favour.

If indeed these bodies of ours are the temple of the Holy Spirit, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness? How ought these mortal bodies to be quickened by His Spirit that dwelleth in us, quickened into active and diligent service, and to the bringing forth of all the fruits of holiness?—2 Peter 3: 11; Rom. 8:11.

But while the saints are thus individually the temples of God, they also collectively constitute the great temple in which Peter likens each individual to a living stone, and Christ to the chief or foundation corner stone, "To whom coming, as unto a living stone... ye also, as living stones are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."—1 Peter 2:5. Paul also refers to this same thought, saying, "Ye are of the house of God, and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets (the foundation of hope in which they trusted, and which they pointed out to us), Jesus Christ being the foundation corner stone of it; in whom all the building fitly framed together, groweth unto a holy temple for the Lord: in whom ye also are built together for a habitation of God through the Spirit." Eph. 2:19-22.

A HABITATION OF GOD

The foundation of this building of God is laid in the heavens, not on earth, and all the other living stones built upon this foundation are drawn and cemented to it by heavenly and not earthly attractions. "Ye are God's building", both individually and collectively, consecrated children of God who have become the habitation of God through the Spirit; ye are the temple of God, Howbeit, though now it is but a tabernacle in the flesh, and though in this tabernacle we often groan, being burdened, we know that when this tabernacle is destroyed we have a building of God, "a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."—2 Cor. 5: 1-2.

Though the church, like the tabernacle in the wilderness, is now a habitation of God, owned by Him, and blessed by His presence, and filled with a large measure of His glory, yet enveloped as it generally is by clouds of trouble, etc., which hide the glory from others (except as occasionally manifested), it is not always to be a moving tent with its glory concealed. By and by her glory will be manifested without the enveloping cloud—"She shall shine forth as the sun."—Matt 13:43. The prophet Isaiah joyfully anticipates that blessed time

when the finished temple of God shall displace the present tabernacle, saying “Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee... and His glory shall be seen upon thee. And the nations shall come to thy light and kings to the brightness of the rising.”—Isaiah 60: 1-3

LIVING STONES

What a hope is thus set before the faithful ones, who, as living stones, come to Christ to be built upon this foundation! From the eloquent imagery of prophets and apostles we catch the inspiration of that holy joy which shall be fully realised when all the living stones of the glorious spiritual temple of God shall noiselessly come together without the sound of a hammer—in the first resurrection, and when the headstone shall crown this glorious building of God, amid shouting of “Grace, grace unto it.”—Zech. 4:7. What tongue can tell or pen portray the glory to be revealed in the saints by and by? What plummet can sound or line measure the wealth of blessing that will flow to redeemed humanity from the glorified temple of God?

Mindful of this inspiring theme, let us once more return to the thought which the apostle would impress upon the minds and hearts of all God’s people; viz., the sanctity of the temple of God, “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God. and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man destroy the temple of God, him will God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.”

If the Spirit of God does not dwell in us, then we are not of those addressed, “for if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.” Those who have that Spirit are led in the paths of righteousness and truth. Not only so, but those who have and who are led by the Spirit of God have therein an earnest or pledge of their future inheritance. As the children of God, the apostle tells us, “After that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory.”—Eph. 1: 13,14.

Our present divine recognition as children of God is the surest evidence we can have of His recognition when we shall have finished our course. If to-day we have His manifest approval and fellowship, and if these mortal bodies are quickened into loving, active zeal both to know and to do the will of God, we may also look forward with joyful anticipation to that blessed time when we shall see the Lord and be like Him.

(P.P. 6/27)

TRANSFORMED BY INSIGHT

“We all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image.”—2 Cor. 3:18

The outstanding characteristic of a Christian is this unveiled frankness before God so that the life becomes a mirror for other lives. By being filled with the Spirit we are transformed, and by beholding we become mirrors. You always know when a man has been beholding the glory of God, you feel in your inner spirit that he is the mirror of the Lord’s own character, Beware of anything which would sully that mirror in you; it is nearly always a good thing, but the good that is not the best.

The golden rule for your life and mine is this concentrated keeping of the life open towards God. Let everything else on earth go by the board, saving that one thing. The rush of other things always tends to obscure this concentration on God. We have to maintain ourselves in the place of beholding, keeping the life absolutely spiritual all the way through. Let other things come and go as they may, let other people criticise as they will, but never allow anything to obscure the life that is hid with Christ in God. Never be hurried out of the relationship of abiding in Him. It is the one thing that is apt to fluctuate but it ought not to. The severest discipline of a Christian’s life is to learn now to keep “beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord.”

“Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him.”—Psa. 37:7.

Stay still in the Hand of the Potter,

Lie low ‘neath His wonderful touch. He shapeth and mouldeth in mercy

The clay that He loveth so much;

Surrender thyself to His working,

The curve and the hollow He wills,

Nor shrink from the pain and the pressure

For the vessel He fashions, He fills.

The Power of God unto Salvation

(Romans 1:16,17)

The book of Acts recounts the extensive missionary activities of the apostle Paul and the reactions he received to the message of the gospel which had been entrusted to him, following his arrest by the Lord Jesus on the Damascus Road and his conversion from persecutor to chosen vessel of the Lord. Some of his hearers embraced the message and churches were established in various towns, but against this, he experienced much fierce opposition and persecution, particularly at the hands of his own nation. A list of his trials and difficulties is given in 2 Corinthians 11, and if ever anyone was, humanly speaking, entitled to despair and doubt his cause, the apostle might well have been.

Nevertheless, we read in Acts 20:24, his fearless words as he was about to part from the brethren at Ephesus for the last time. *"None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God."* At that stage, Paul had not visited Rome, but he had long planned to do so, God willing. In his letter to the brethren in the city, he again confirmed his determination not to be hindered by any circumstances from the preaching of the fullness of the gospel in that place. His words, the text from which our title is taken, read - *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, The just shall live by faith."* (Romans 1:16,17)

A SAVING POWER

Something of the comprehensiveness of the gospel is to be seen in these verses, but it is further bought out by the apostle in his writings and in his farewell words to the Ephesian brethren. *"You....know how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shown you publicly and from house to house, testifying.... repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all, for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God"* (Acts 20:20-27) So we begin to realise the scope of the gospel, but first that it is the power of God unto salvation. This is then the object of the preaching of the gospel by Paul and by those who have followed right down to our day, namely, that men and women of all races and ages might find salvation from the penalty and power of sin and death.

At this time, which we call the gospel age, this is a selective rather than an all-inclusive work- that awaits a later time. But in this manifesto, as we might call our text verses, Paul clearly has more in mind than the moment of turning away from the past life and the acceptance of Christ as Saviour. This experience is fittingly referred to as "being saved" or "receiving salvation"; it is certainly a demonstration of gospel power, and Paul states by way of personal testimony that his call and commissioning by the risen Lord was only by the effectual working of God's power in him. (Eph. 3:7) This power, no doubt, had had some earlier but unrealised effect on Saul, as he then was, as he saw the faith and courage of those whom he was persecuting and especially in the steadfast testimony of Stephen, but on the Damascus Road it changed him for all time.

The Christian experience, however, does not end at the point of "being saved"; this is in reality a beginning and the apostle's words in Phil. 2:12,13 remind us that our salvation is a lifelong process, which needs our full co-operation with our Heavenly Father, whose workmanship we are. *"Wherefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed... work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do His good pleasure."* This process in each believer's life is again a demonstration of God's power unto salvation as daily, yielded to His will we are being developed into the likeness of His dear Son.

AN OUTWORKING PRAYER

When this process is complete, and only then, will each one enter into the experience of full and final salvation, to His praise. This does not imply any deficiency in our original step of salvation by faith in the Saviour, but the outworking of it to its ultimate completion. In another picture, we are spoken of as begotten of God here but entering into fullness of life beyond the veil of death and entry into the presence and joy of our Lord. How fitting for our day are Paul's words in Romans 13:11-14- *"Knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep, for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light.... Put on the Lord Jesus and make no provision for the fleshly appetites."*

It is important for every child of God to grow both in grace and knowledge and the apostle had to take his Hebrew readers to task because they had not gone on to the stronger meat of the Word, and were still such as needed milk. But at the time of our first acceptance of Christ, the simple facts of human need and of God's gracious provision are, in essence and in that context, the personal gospel message. What must I do to be saved? asked the Philipian gaoler. In reply, Paul pointed him directly to the only way of salvation - "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." (Acts 16:30,31)

But the gospel message which Paul and the other apostles preached goes on from that point and reaches into every aspect of Christian life and hope and doctrine. Its power unto salvation is expressed in many ways, all essential to progress and growth in Christ. First, it is a resurrecting or new life giving power, but it is also a keeping power, a faith-building power, a witnessing power and a power that is at work in the heart and life of every true Christian. Paul, in one of his lovely prayers for the brethren, prays that they may come to know *"What is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead."* (Eph. 1:19-21) This is the power which lifts up the sinner out of the dying condition into new life.

A LIFE GIVING POWER

The Psalmist's words seem to foreshadow this experience - *"I waited patiently for the Lord and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up out of a horrible pit, and out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And He put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God; many shall see it and fear, and trust in the Lord."* (Psa. 40:1-3) An interesting point here is that David saw that God's work in him would also be a witness to others; this should also be so for the Christian...Paul's desire was that this life-giving power be continually operative in his own life and in Phil. 3:10, he lists those things which he particularly longed to know, or rather to experience firsthand and to the full with Christ - the power of His resurrection, the fellowship of His sufferings and conformity unto His death. All these are comprehended in the fullness of the gospel of Christ, and represent the power of God unto salvation to every believer.

Looking further ahead, we realise that the gospel is ultimately to bless all the willing of mankind, and we read in Gal. 3:8 that its first preaching was to Abraham. *"And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel to Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed."* We who live in what we term the Gospel Age are, after Christ, the firstfruits unto God of that promise and the outworking of God's power in us, in preparation for a part in the future work of blessing all mankind, which is at the heart of the gospel, is the present phase of the gospel.

However, God's purposes also encompass His dealings with the faithful characters of old, and with the nation of Israel, as well as with the Church of this present era. All are comprehended in the context of the promise to Abraham and all will have a role in its ultimate fulfilment, For it is only at the final culmination of all God's plans, which Paul describes as "the dispensation of the fullness of times", that God's power unto salvation and its final sublime results will be seen in their perfection. Only the ultimate blessing of all nations as promised to Abraham so long ago can and will bring in "the desire of all nations".

A SUSTAINING POWER

Returning to the theme of present personal salvation, we find that the gospel message does not leave the new Christian to his or her own devices once Christ has become Saviour and Lord. The power of God unto salvation is also a keeping and sustaining power. The apostle Peter tells his readers (1 Peter 1:5) that they *"are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time."* Here he brings in also the third phase of our salvation as we might call it, the final culmination, but he assures us that the keeping power of God is effectual all along the way. Again, in 2 Thess. 1:11, the apostle Paul, in another of his prayers for the brethren, asks that *"God would count you worthy of this calling and fulfil all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power"*, while in Eph. 3:20, he assures us that God *"Is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us."*

The gospel is then not only the saving power of God, but the keeping, upbuilding and sustaining power of God. Another interesting aspect of God's power at work in His children is given in 2 Cor. 4:7 - *"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."* The wonderful illumination of the gospel of God's glory is not given to us that we may be exalted but that, in our weakness, His power working in us and through us may be manifest, and be a witness to others. In the days of the early church, it was recorded that it was with great power that the apostles gave witness of the resurrection of Jesus. Such witness came not only by their own power but by the power of God and of the gospel which they lived and preached.

To the world in general, the gospel is still foolishness or devoid of interest, even as it was in the apostles' day, possibly more so in these times of materialism and licence. Brethren in various parts are seeking to present a message of hope and comfort, a message of challenge and invitation for any listening ear or receptive heart. But it is only as the power of God reaches out and strikes a chord in one here or one there that there will be any fruitage. This need not deter us, nevertheless, from taking such opportunities as present themselves to give witness to the gospel. This requires much careful thought as to the best message to offer in today's world, for there are many fanciful and false messages being presented from allegedly Christian sources, as well as non-Christian ones.

A WITNESSING POWER

The apostle in his day evidently was concerned about the Corinthian church and especially how he should approach them. His resolve is surely the pattern for all who would present the gospel as God's power unto salvation. *"My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power; that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."* (1 Cor. 2:4, 5) This points out the deficiency of much preaching today - it is in human wisdom, not in divine power. *"Unless the Lord build the house, they labour in vain who build it. Unless the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh in vain."* (Psalm 127:1) This principle is true of all Christian endeavour.

The Gospel, as the power of God unto salvation, should then be freely working in all His people, assuring them in trial, developing them in character and in understanding, as they come more fully to comprehend the lengths and breadths and heights and depths of the divine love and mercy. It should be revealing more clearly the richness of the provision which God has made, not just for themselves, but for all mankind. Indeed, anything less than this could not qualify as the blessing of all nations as promised in the gospel preached to Abraham or in the angelic message to the shepherds - glad tidings of great joy to all people. As we assimilate such a plan, we can understand the Psalmist's cry - "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, it is high, I cannot attain unto it." (Psa. 139:6)

This precious gospel, in all its fullness, this gospel of which the beloved apostle was not ashamed, it is our privilege to proclaim, not only in word but in life and action. There can be only one foundation, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, as set forth in the Word of God. He alone is the only hope for the Lord's people of this present age, for all God's faithful ones of old, for His ancient people "Beloved for the fathers' sakes" and for mankind in general. His finished work alone assures resurrection of all in their graves, restitution of all things as foretold by all God's holy prophets, salvation and blessing for all mankind in His due time. This gospel, alone, is the power of God unto salvation!

So the apostle's words of our text challenge each one of the Lord's people today. Can we say with him - "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto *my* salvation"? Are we daily rejoicing in it? Are we seeking to proclaim it, as we have opportunity? Are we striving, in His power, to live it?

Peace

When the heart has found God's own peace, the peace which knows no explanation and surpasses all our dreams, it has passed beyond the pale of agony to the quietness of a strong repose. Peace is life plus God. It is God handling life for us: God dealing with our affairs for us: God interpreting life's experiences for us. Such peace is beyond our understanding, but not beyond our living.

Saved to serve

O Lord, I pray,
That for this day
I may not swerve
By foot or hand
From Thy command
Not to be served, but to serve.
This too, I pray
That for this day
No love of ease
Nor pride prevent
My good intent,
Not to be pleased, but to please.
And if I may,
I'd have this day
Strength from above
To set my heart
In Heavenly art

Not to be loved,

but to love.

Melchisedec - King and Priest

Three verses in Genesis (14:18-20) contain all that the Divine Mind has seen fit to record historically of this remarkable personage. Melchisedec, the King of righteousness, ruler of Salem, “priest of the Most High God”, appears in this incident for a moment then suddenly vanishes. In all ages, his name, which in itself commands respectful awe, and the silence observed respecting his origin or history, have been a favourite subject for speculation.

Around this personage tradition has gathered many legends which have no credibility in themselves and no foundation in history. The words of our record are these: “And Melchisedec King of Salem brought forth bread and wine, and he was priest of God Most High. And he blessed him and said, Blessed be Abram of God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth, and blessed be God Most High, who hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him a tenth of all.”

The presence of Melchisedec, “priest of the Most High God”, in the midst of the probably heathen population of Salem, is perplexing. Who he was, of what family or nation, is left in utter obscurity. This illustrious personage comes forth in the page of history for one brief moment, and then his name is heard no more for a thousand years, when it is found in the Book of Psalms (Ps. 110); a thousand years more pass before it occurs in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

CHRIST PREFIGURED

Though the historic account of this remarkable personage is very brief, it is not in the literal history, but rather in the inspired commentary upon the three verses in Genesis referred to previously, that much richness of detail in spiritual wisdom has been set before us; proving this meagre account to have been divinely recorded to preserve just the salient facts proposed, and even teach wonderful lessons in the deliberate omission of some details.

In the Epistle to the Hebrews, one great subject is the priestly office of the Lord Jesus. Chapters 4,8,9, and 10 are mainly occupied with showing Him to be the great Antitype of the Aaronic Priesthood. But even it, with all its details and ceremonies, fails to show fully the glory of the priesthood of Christ. Therefore the prophetic allusion of Psalm 110 is taken up as a text, the burden of which is to exalt yet further the official glory of Christ by showing the superiority of the Melchisedec to the Aaronic Priesthood, and that Christ is a Priest forever, after the order of Melchisedec.

THE EXALTED ONE (PSALM 110)

This Psalm, where next we find Melchisedec mentioned, is wonderfully dramatic and impressive. From beginning to end it celebrates a single mysterious Hero. The Psalmist portrays Jehovah himself as addressing this great unnamed One, bidding Him to be seated at His right hand until He shall put His foes beneath His feet. That this Psalm is Messianic is a foregone conclusion by reason of the solemn quotation of it as such by Jesus himself.

But, apart from this, its very terms make it impossible to imagine such an honour as being invited to sit on Jehovah's right hand applied to any other person. It is here in the description of the exaltation of God's Son and His subsequent triumph over all enemies, that the significant statement is made in verse 4: “The Lord has sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a Priest forever after the order of Melchisedec.”

At once, the brief history of Abraham's superior assumes a new importance; so much so, in fact, that we find the entire 7th chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews devoted to an exegesis of Abraham's mysterious contemporary. Though the inspired and eloquent writer of this epistle our attention is called not only to the general resemblance between Melchisedec and Messiah, but to see the likeness of verification in a number of details.

A SUPERIOR PRIESTHOOD

Throughout this chapter, the argument is devoted to proving the superiority of Melchisedec's priesthood to that of Aaron in seven particulars:

- (1) Because even Abraham paid him tithes.
- (2) Because even the yet unborn Levi may be said to have paid tithes in the person of Abraham.
- (1) Because it is the superior who gives the blessing, and Abraham was blessed by Melchisedec.
- (4) Because the Aaronic priests die, but Melchisedec stands as a type of undying priesthood.

- (5) Because the permanence of his priesthood implied the abrogation of the whole Law, on which the Levitic Priesthood was grounded.
- (6) Because it was founded on the swearing of an oath (Ps. 110:4), which was not the case with the Levitic priests.
- (7) Because the Levitic priests were necessarily many, requiring to be constantly replenished to fill up the ravages made in their ranks by death; but this priesthood, because of Christ's eternal permanence, is intransmissible; whence also "He is able to save to the uttermost those who through Him approach to God, seeing that He ever liveth to intercede for them."

SUCH A HIGH PRIEST

Having thus shown by these many particulars the immeasurable superiority of the Melchisedec Priesthood and thus teaching the important truth that this transference of priesthood involved the entire abrogation of the Mosaic system in due time, the inspired writer adds a weighty summary in the concluding words of the chapter: "For such a High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself. For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, *which was since the Law*, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore."—Hebrews 7:26-28.

PRIEST AND THE KING

In the second verse of this illuminating chapter, the name Melchisedec is shown to be more properly a title conveying two meanings, "King of Righteousness," and also "King of Salem," which is King of Peace. Thus in the combination in one person of the two offices of priest and king is shown the most prominent superiority of the Melchisedec over the Aaronic Priesthood. His was a "*Royal Priesthood*"

In Israel, the priest was of the tribe of Levi, the king of the tribe of Judah. Hence, so long as our Lord was upon the earth, He could not be a priest (Heb. 8:4; 7:13; 14). His priesthood began in resurrection. Death could not come in to interrupt even for a day this new order of priesthood; it is "after the power of an endless life" (Heb. 7:16).

Thus in heaven, Jesus, the risen son of God, is invested with the new and surpassingly glorious order of priesthood, "a Priest upon his throne" (Zech 6:13). He shall one day be revealed as the "King of Kings" to sway the sceptre of universal dominion, whilst as the great Melchisedec, He shall come forth with all the blessings of the New Covenant-shadowed forth in the "bread and wine"—to comfort and to strengthen Abraham's ultimate seed, restored humanity.

That which appears most prominently in the Aaronic Priesthood is the offering of gifts *to* God; that which is presented in the Melchisedec Priesthood is the *bringing forth of gifts from God*. In both these characters our Lord Jesus appears. He is the true Aaron appearing before God in the presentation of the one offering which He accomplished on Calvary; but He is also the true Melchisedec bringing forth and dispensing to His people the fruits of His death and resurrection. He breaks the bread; He pours the wine. Ascended up on high, He received gifts for men, even for those now rebellious, and freely and gloriously did he lavish those gifts at Pentecost and after it, and will do so during his Millennial reign.

RIGHTEOUSNESS AND PEACE

It is significant, and attention is directed to the fact in Hebrews 7:2, that Melchisedec is *first* King of Righteousness and *after that* also King of Peace. This is always the divine order. It could not be otherwise, for "peace at any price" is not God's principle. Righteousness must first be considered, and all the claims of perfect righteousness owned and honoured before peace could be proclaimed. Thus the Gospel of Peace is based upon the righteousness of God.

The Lord Jesus, the true Melchisedec, in securing peace for guilty and condemned sinners, first "suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust." He "made peace by the blood of His cross." On the day of His resurrection, He greeted His trembling disciples with the glad salutation. "Peace be unto you," and having so said, as if to show the righteous ground of peace, as if to declare that first He was "King of Righteousness", "He showed them His hands and his side."

Thus it is written, "the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever" (Isa. 32:17). "Righteousness and peace kissed each other" at the cross of Christ, and are eternally united for us in His glorious person as our Melchisedec priest. "Justice and judgement are the habitation of Thy throne: Mercy and truth shall go before Thy face" (Ps. 89:14). In accordance with this great divine

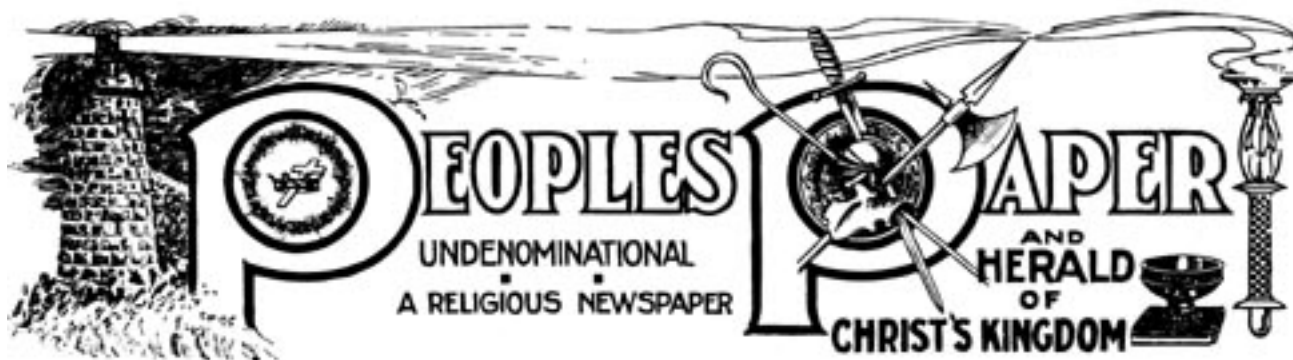
principle of righteousness being first, it is written: "The Kingdom of God is righteousness and *peace and joy* in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 14:17). So also "the wisdom that cometh down from above is first pure, *then* peaceable."- James 3:17.

OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST

Melchisedec steps onto the stage, and steps off. Of what went before or of what came after, we are in ignorance; but while he stood there in the King's Dale, his holy city of Salem in the background, Abraham and his followers before him rendering willing tribute, and as he ministered bread and wine and raised his hands in blessing, he typified One who in the power of an endless life, abiding a priest continually, is abundantly able to save those who come unto God by Him.

The priesthood of Aaron was a dying priesthood, and it could picture only sacrifice and suffering, things which one day must pass away for ever. They could never rightfully picture the everlasting glory of Christ. "*But this man,*" triumphantly now, "*because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood.*" The glory of this wonderful type will be fully revealed when Christ, the Prophet, Priest and King, accompanied by His glorified Church, comes forth to meet mankind, bearing bread and wine, and in the beautiful surroundings of the "King's Dale" gives them His blessing-the blessing of the Most High God.

Herald/BSM (adapted)



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“KEEP THY HEART”

“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.” Prov. 4:23.

THE HEART is what we really are, not what we appear to be or perhaps would like to have others believe that we are. The Apostle Peter contrasts the outward adornment with what he refers to as “The hidden man of the heart.” (1 Pet. 3:4) It is the heart we are to keep; for God looks on the heart, not on the outward man. In other words, God sees us as we really are; and if we keep our hearts, He will note that and bless us accordingly. In Proverbs 23:6,7 we read: “Eat thou not the bread of him that hath an evil eye, neither desire thou his dainty meats: for as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee.”

“MY HEART IS FIXED”

Psalms 57:7 reads, “My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed.” Here the marginal translation suggests the word prepared instead of fixed. We are to be prepared for all emergencies **in** our Christian lives, for we know not the details of the way which is before us. If we are properly prepared by our trust in God and in His promises for us, we will not be afraid of evil tidings. When we are passing through adversity and trials of various sorts, we will not be afraid of the outcome, because we will be assured that the Lord will be with us and continue to guide and strengthen us in all these difficult situations. How important it is that our hearts be prepared - through study of the Word, through fellowship with the Lord’s people, through prayer, and by all the means of grace which He has provided.

“AN EVIL HEART OF UNBELIEF”

Hebrews 3:12-15 reads, “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.” This admonition follows a statement by Paul in which he reminds us that many of the ancient Israelites did have unbelieving hearts. It was because of this that they failed to receive the inheritance which God had promised to them. Surely it is important for us to remember this example of unbelief and the loss to which it led. Paul explains that an unbelieving heart leads to a departing from the living God. In other words, it means that one does not have full confidence in His Word, setting it aside and misinterpreting its meaning in keeping with worldly and fleshly ambitions.

To have an unbelieving heart leads to a hardening of one’s attitude toward the Lord through the deceitfulness of sin. May we ever remember that all of God’s precious promises to us are conditional upon our obedience to Him, and that we are actually made partakers of Christ “if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.”

Let us continue, then, to draw near to God “with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for He is faithful that promised).” (Heb. 10:22,23) God has promised to do this for us if our hearts are pure before Him- “the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him.” - 2 Chron. 16:9

“CREATE IN ME A CLEAN HEART”

Imperfections of the heart can be partially removed through a proper and sincere use of the Word of God. Paul wrote, “The Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” (Heb 4:12) If we are sincere in our use of the Word of God, we will find that it is indeed very exacting in setting forth the will of God for us. It will seem that many times when we read the Scriptures

directing the way in which we should walk, the Lord has directed us to these certain texts in order that we may be properly corrected - corrected in matters which we would perhaps hesitate to discuss with others. We should be thankful indeed that the Lord, as a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart, is assisting us through His Word in the perfecting of ourselves as new creatures in Christ Jesus.

How fortunate it is that the Lord does guide in this manner! We could not depend upon even our best intentions to accomplish what needs to be accomplished, because, as we read in Jeremiah 17:9, the human heart is "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." In other words, we could be deceived in our own hearts without the help of the Lord. Only by the Lord's help can our hearts be purified and kept pure.

In Psalm 51:10 we read, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." Here the marginal translation reads "constant spirit." Our hearts need to be established, not wavering. We know that just as the Lord is the same yesterday, today and forever, we should endeavor likewise to remain constant in our devotion to Him and in our steadfast endeavor to know and to do His will. And we have the assurance of His Word, over and over again, that He will help us as we cooperate with Him through obedience to His word.

THE TEST OF LOVE

James gives us an example of the evil results of a deceived heart. He wrote, "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain." (James 1:26) Here is a very strong warning against the improper use of our tongues. We may think that our words to one another and to the world are not important, and that we can give vent to our feelings any time it seems good to us to do so and the Lord will not take this into account. But if that becomes our attitude we are deceiving our own hearts, for what it means is that our religion is really vain.

The final test in keeping our hearts pure before the Lord is the test of love. The Apostle John wrote, "Let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him." (1 John 3:18,19) Just as we know, for example, that if we do not bridle our tongues we are deceiving our hearts, we also know that if our love is true and full and sincere, our hearts may be assured that the Lord is caring for us, loving us and approving us both now and, if we continue faithful, approving us finally; and we will hear that welcome, "Well done, good and faithful servant...enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

(The Dawn)

Transformed

Through a cloud of earthly senses	Oh, my Saviour, in Thy mercy
Bursts upon my raptured sight	As I gaze with unveiled face,
Such a vision of my Saviour	Let me see as in a mirror,
In His glory and His might,	All Thy brightness, all Thy grace.
In His justice and His wisdom,	So in looking, so in longing,
In His tender, watchful care,	Shall my homely features glow
Manifested in my Saviour,	With the radiance of Thy glory,
Rich in blessing everywhere.	And Thy matchless beauty show.

Oh, it thrills with love and longing	All my days be crowned with gladness,
Every fibre of my soul,	From the centre of my heart,
To be with Thee, in Thy presence,	Praise to Thee that in the blessing
While the countless ages roll.	Thou wilt let me have a part.
Then a voice, "This be the pattern,	So then, in a faithful service,
See that thou in all thy ways	For Thy loving service sake,
Make according to the pattern,	Changed from glory unto glory,
To My glory and My praise."	I shall in Thy likeness wake.

Thou the pattern, blessed Saviour,	I shall see Thee in Thy beauty,
How can I a copy be	I shall in Thy beauty shine,
Of that gracious, sweet perfection	All the loving, all the longing,

Manifested, Lord, in Thee?
“Keep thine eyes upon the pattern,
Look not thou aside, behind,
And beholding but My glory,
Thou shalt be transformed in mind.”
(Carrie Beatty)

Merged in purest love divine.
Satisfied with the full sweetness
Of the bliss of heaven above,
All my future spent in blessing,
All my being lost in love.

“FROM GLORY TO GLORY” (2 COR. 3:18)

(Convention address)

There are some verses of scripture that seem to jump out and capture our attention. We can perceive that there are a message and an understanding in the words that are not immediately apparent, but that there is a wealth of meaning hidden there that some diligent searching will uncover. Such a verse is the one that contains the title of this address, viz. 2 Corinthians 3:18.

A useful starting point to begin the search is to consider the literary construction of this verse. Paul uses the same construction a number of times, such as -

***Romans 1:17: “For therein (referring to the gospel of Christ) is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, The just shall live by faith.” (AV)*

***2 Cor. 2:15,16: “For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life.” (RSV)*

The construction of his argument is the same in all of these verses. It begins with one factor or quality, the exercise of which leads on to a heightened and deeper expression of it. By the exercise of whatever faith we have, we are lead to a fuller development of that faith. By the offering of our sanctified life to God, we confirm to those who are in the way of death and judgement that their conduct and life will lead to death, whereas to those who are in the way of life, it leads them to follow closer after life and on to eternal life.

TRANSFORMING GLORY

So in a similar way is the meaning of our text verse. The glory that we see in the message that was given in the gracious words that fell from the lips of our Master leads on to transform our own lives so that we gloriously radiate His own graciousness. The concept given in these words is quite remarkable. As we look at others and their outward appearance, and at ourselves, more wrinkles and grey hairs become more manifest, but, more importantly, we surely see in others the working of the Spirit, even though perhaps we fail to appreciate what a great work is being done to transform our lives.

But first let us consider the whole context in which the text verse is set, reading from verse 7 of 2 Cor. 3 to give the setting in which this transforming glory is placed. The subject is introduced by Paul defending himself against suggestions that he needed letters of recommendation rather than the recommendation of his preaching that had been effective in bringing them to God. From that, Paul rapidly moves on to contrast the ministry of Moses with the ministry of the gospel which he was preaching.

“Now if the dispensation of death, carved in letters of stone, came with such splendour that the Israelites could not look at Moses’ face because of its brightness, fading as this was, will not the dispensation of the Spirit be attended with greater splendour? For if there was splendour in the dispensation of condemnation, the dispensation of splendour has come to have no splendour at all, because of the splendour which surpasses it. For if what faded away came with splendour, what is permanent must have much more splendour

“Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, not like Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not see the end of the fading splendour. But their minds were hardened, for to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their minds, but when a man turns to the Lord the veil is removed. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into His likeness from one degree of glory to another, for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.”

TWO DISPENSATIONS

From the historical account of Moses going up the mountain to receive the Law Covenant, Paul draws a number of lessons that we may not have expected. First of all, he makes some contrasts between the two dispensations -

****The *one* was engraved in writing on stone, the *other* was not in a writing but of the spirit.**

****The *one* was a ministration of death, while in the *other* the spirit makes alive.**

****The *one* brings with it condemnation which awaits those who transgress, while the *other* has righteousness as its object and result, and as its characteristic attribute a law written in the heart bringing righteousness and peace and joy.**

****The *one* was transient and failing , while the *other* is permanent.**

****The *one* was linked with the face of Moses on which was placed a veil, while the *other* shines in the face of Jesus Christ. (2 Cor.4:6)**

****The *one* had a veil that hid the fading splendour and transitory glory of the law, while the *other* is mirrored in the face of Jesus Christ and there is no need to cover it with a veil in case it should fade. (There is nothing hidden, the full and complete character of the Lord is laid before our sight; Paul states clearly that he has not held back any thing of the whole counsel of God. Acts 20:27)**

****With the *one* the veil is used as a symbol of the barrier that lies over the Jewish heart and prevents their seeing the true purpose of the law which was passing through a period of extinction, while the *other* is able to change us into the likeness of the Lord.**

A FADING GLORY

As in his other letters, Paul is constantly changing the meaning of his metaphor, in this case the metaphor of the veil. For a start, we need to amend the translation as given in the Authorised Version, the Revised Standard Version reading being better. It is sometimes thought for instance that Moses put the veil over his face so that the people of Israel were not blinded by the glorious light, but a correction to the translation shows that this was not so. Exodus 34:29-38 (RSV) reads-

*“When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, (he) did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God. And when Aaron and all the people of Israel saw Moses, they were afraid to come near him.....(v.33) And **when** in AV should be corrected) he had finished speaking with them, he put a veil on his face; but whenever Moses went in before the Lord to speak with Him, he took the veil off, until he came out; and the people of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses’ face shone; and Moses would put the veil upon his face again until he went to speak with Him,”*

What is clear from this account is that the people saw the radiant brightness of Moses’ face (Paul’s words agree with this) and it was only after speaking to the people that he put a veil over his face. The lesson that Paul draws from these facts is that Moses put the veil over his face so that they **might not see the end, the fading away, of that transitory glory**. What the Jews of Paul’s day could not stand was the changing of the existing order. They could not abide the thought that their illustrious past should fade away and be replaced by a new order.

OTHER LESSONS

Paul also uses the metaphor of the veil that covered Moses’ face to teach a number of other lessons.

****The veil is used as a symbol of the *unbelief* of the Jews. There has to be a change in Verse 14 and it emphasises this fact. The word ‘veil’ in the AV is in italics, which indicates that it is supplied. The sense of the verse is that it is the ‘old covenant’ (testament in AV) that is meant as taken away in Christ.**

****The veil is used as a figure of the blinding of the world in general by the influence of Satan. How needful it is for us to have our eyes opened to the glory of the gospel message. The commission given to Paul by the risen Jesus was “to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they (the Gentiles) may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me” Acts 26:18. This is a similar figure of speech, but brings out the point that the opening of our eyes, in the figure, is not our doing but is of God who calls us.**

****The veil is used in a metaphor showing the glorious transforming light of the gospel. (V18). “But we all, with *unveiled* face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory....” A couple of changes from the AV are again necessary, substituting the word ‘unveiled’ for “open” and ‘mirror’ for “glass”, although strictly in the latter case, the word used is a verb rather than a noun. We see the glory of the Lord “mirrored”. This reminds us of the reference in 1 Cor. 13:12 to seeing through a glass darkly, and it suggests the thought that we do not see the glory of the Lord directly, but a reflection. On**

the other hand, we are like Moses, who, when he went in before the Lord removed the veil and spoke face to face.

“WE BEHELD HIS GLORY”

The grand conclusion of the metaphor of the light that shone from the face of Moses and the veil that he used to hide the fading glory is in 2 Cor. 4:6- *“For it is God....who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.”* The subject of this picture is the glory of God, though the remembrance of Moses is still much in Paul’s mind. It is only in Christ that the glory is revealed, and this leads us to the question as to what were the things that revealed God’s glory in Christ.

The apostle John’s testimony is that *“we beheld His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father... and from His fullness have we all received, grace upon grace.”* John 1:14,16. The glory of Jesus is seen in the outstanding beauty of His character. How often He was moved with compassion for others! His love overcame any feeling of revulsion towards those who were physically or morally corrupt. He touched the loathsome leper with an intimate touch of loving kindness. Unlike the Pharisee, He did not spurn the touch of the penitent woman. The thoughtless crowds that thronged about Him did not irritate Him, they rather excited his pity. He fed the five thousand lest, tired and weary, they should faint on the way home. He was never too hurried and never too tired to help others, at all times and under every circumstances.

He treated all ranks of men with equal courtesy and gentleness, whether nobleman or beggar. He stood and waited for blind Bartimaeus who cried after Him. He stopped to speak to and went to lodge with Zacchaeus, the publican, despised by his fellow Jews. He addressed as “daughter” the woman with the issue who touched Him secretly in the crowd, and His treatment of the woman taken in adultery was in marked contrast to the rough and heartless treatment of her accusers. He was tired, hungry and thirsty as He sat by the well waiting for his disciples to return with food from the city. Yet He exerted Himself to converse with the woman of Samaria, not only to her surprise, but to the astonishment of His disciples.

In Jesus was perfected the love that suffers long and is kind. Nothing could ruffle His composure or cause Him to show annoyance. On one occasion He had been so continuously besieged by people needing healing that He and His disciples had no time to eat. They were forced to retire to the desert for a little privacy and rest. On reaching this quiet haven, however, they found the people crowding about them as greatly as before. But Jesus showed no signs of impatience, His love seeking not its own was not easily provoked. In His compassion He saw and supplied their need of help and instruction. *“For even Christ pleased not Himself suffering the just for the unjust that He might bring us to God.”*

Strength and humility were blended together perfectly in the glory of Christ’s character. He knew that His words were established and conclusive, yet He patiently endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself and His authority, for many tried to discountenance Him at every opportunity. He was the only-begotten Son of God with the power to work miracles as no other, yet He entertained no exaggerated opinion of Himself. His disciples thought He was too exalted and important to bother with little children and they tried to send them away, but Jesus was indignant at their rough indifference.

He was not too proud to let others help Him; many women ministered to Him of their substance. In washing His disciples’ feet He demonstrated His humility and proved beyond question that He had come to serve others and not to be “ministered unto”. His kindness was often to those who were unthankful and it must have been with sadness that He asked the one thankful leper, “Were not ten healed, where are the nine?”

Jesus claimed “I am the truth”, for His every thought, word and deed would bear the full blaze of God’s light. Although the multitudes flocked to hear Him preaching, He would not misrepresent His message to advance His cause and He often drove away would-be followers by His fearless speaking. He was gracious in His teaching but He did not water down the truth in any way. He could be stern in rebuking blasphemy and hypocrisy for He was too true and holy to gloss over sin, yet He was never inconsiderate for the feelings of others.

“WITH UNVEILED FACE”

We could go on describing how in all His actions Jesus illuminated the glory of God, but hearing and reading about all that was accomplished by Him, recorded by those who were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, brings us back to our text verse - *“And we all, as with unveiled face we continue to behold as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are constantly being transfigured into His image in ever increasing splendour, from one degree of glory to another”.*

As we look at and ponder the meaning of the actions of Jesus and as this enters into the heart, it has a transforming influence on our lives. In the figure we see the glory as if we were looking into a mirror, but not only do we see this mirrored glory but it also has the power to transfigure us. This is expressed in other words by “growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ”. 2 Peter 3:18. This growth is not by

our own efforts - like the flowers and the trees, we must be subject to a transforming influence from without ourselves but which works within us.

If this transforming work is going on, then we need to judge our brethren by a different standard. *"Therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view".* 2 Cor 5:16. To know others from a human point of view is to know them by the outward accidents and circumstances of their lives, their wealth, rank, culture, knowledge. Paul had ceased to judge a person by those standards and we should do likewise. The question should be whether that person was, by their own act and choice, claiming the place which the death of Christ had secured for him or her and was living in Him as a new creature.

FROM GLORY TO GLORY

To summarise, the apostle first contrasts the transient glory of the old law covenant arrangements given through Moses, (which things are done away in Christ,) with the lasting and surpassing glory mirrored for us in the face of Jesus Christ. Moses put a veil over his face so that the fading glory of the former might not be seen, but we all, with unveiled face, can freely exercise our faculty of spiritual vision. As we contemplate the love and work of Christ, as we consider His gentleness and noble character, as we allow His example of obedience to the Father's will to be our model of conduct, so shall we then be transformed into His image from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord. (CG.96/7)

Enticements and Tests

"For we have not a High Priest unable to sympathize with our weaknesses; but one having been tried in all respects like ourselves, apart from sin." "A disciple is not above his teacher; but everyone fully qualified shall be as his teacher." (Heb. 4:15; Luke 6:40, Diaglott.)

The world of mankind has its temptations and I trials, and so also have nominal Christians; but we shall confine our remarks to the temptations and trials of those who have left all to follow Jesus, those who have consecrated themselves and become pupils in the School of Christ, and have thereby submitted themselves to be tested in all points like their teacher. Everyone of these is to be perfected by the same means as his Master.

(1) ENTICEMENTS

Strong's definition of the word "temptation" is -"an enticement to do evil," or - "a test". A temptation may mean, therefore, an enticement to do evil, or it may mean a test, that is, a means for determining the strength, quality, or quantity of a substance. Thus a temptation might be anything which would entice to evil and thereby test or try the strength of will to do the right; or it might be a test to prove the quantity or quality of the elements of the Christian character without any thought of enticement. All enticements or allurements are tests, but all tests are not enticements or allurements. For instance, to fail in business would be a test but not an enticement.

Satan is the great Tempter who is permitted to attend to the former; and our Heavenly Father will see to it that we get the latter in order that our characters may be fully developed and perfected. Our enticements come from Satan, but our trials from God. Even Jesus "was tempted in all points like as we are." We need not think that we have temptations which Jesus never had. Let us look at the temptations of Jesus in order that we may know the lines upon which our temptations may come.

The Apostle states that Jesus was tempted in all points like his followers, and, additionally, that he thereby became able to help those who are tempted: - "In all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour (nourish) them that are tempted" (Heb. 2:17, 18).

JESUS' TEMPTATIONS

In view of this thought let us consider Jesus' temptations in the wilderness that we may know what to expect. These particulars are given us in the 4th chapter of Matthew, with which we are all familiar:-

1. To make stones into bread. A severe test, because Jesus was very hungry.
2. To cast himself down from the Temple.
3. To worship the Devil by co-operating with him.

Our temptations are similar to our Lord's: -

1. Enticements to misuse the Divine blessing of Truth, by using it for our own aggrandizement. To use spiritual power in the interest of our natural or fleshly desires. Although Paul was given the power to heal the sick, he did not use this power for his own benefit nor for the benefit of the Church. Even though he asked God three times to remove his "thorn in the flesh," the Lord did not remove it, but said "My grace is sufficient

for thee.” When Timothy was ill, Paul did not cure him miraculously, but advised him to take a little wine for his stomach’s sake.

2. Enticements to throw ourselves into unnecessary danger, trusting that God will uphold us. We are not to presume upon our Father’s goodness.

We are not to tempt God, although we know that if duty should lead us into danger, he will deliver us. Let us not be afraid. God has promised to keep those who trust in him so long as they are obedient; and, when enticed to tempt God, let us resist as Jesus did by giving a “thus saith the Lord.”

3. Enticements to worship Satan by co-operating with him. He does his best to get us to do this. He entices us to grasp, before the time, and by another way, those things which our Heavenly Father has promised us. The end does not justify the means. God’s work must be done in God’s way and in God’s time. We must get things in a legitimate way. “If a man strive for the mastery, yet is he not crowned unless he strive lawfully” (2 Tim. 2:5).

“COUNT IT ALL JOY”

When we are undergoing testing in any of these ways, let us remember “This is the way the Master went, should not the servant tread it still?” We are not to feel discouraged when passing through these experiences, but, as the Apostle James expresses it, “Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations.” We cannot do this easily. It is hard for the flesh, but still the Apostle says we “must count it all joy.” Why? Because we know that by the testing of our faith our patience is developed, and that the man who endures temptation is blessed. But when any man is tempted along the line of enticement, let him not say that he is tempted of God, because God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man with evil. When God asked Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, he tempted him not by enticing him to do wrong, but by testing his loyalty. It was a test of Abraham’s faith in God. Likewise, it is a trial for us to give up all, to present out bodies a living sacrifice; yet it is not too great a test, but only a *reasonable* service.

When we have a temptation to do evil, this does not imply sin; it is the yielding to the temptation which brings forth sin. The Apostle reminds us that there hath no temptation taken us but such as is common to man, but God is faithful who will not allow us to be tempted above what we are able to bear (1 Cor. 10:13). It should be a very comforting thought to know that we can measure our development according to the degree of our temptations or trials.

If a great trial comes upon us, we may look upon it as a sign of the approval of God, because if he permits a great trial he knows that we are able to endure it. Only to the strong will he give great trials, and therefore if we get a great temptation, let us thank the Lord and count it all joy.

In 2 Pet. 2:9 we read - “The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation,” - not : “The Lord knoweth how to keep you from going into temptation.” If we are godly, we may rest assured that he knows the best means for our deliverance when the temptation has had the desired effect, then he will deliver us as the Scriptures state.

(2) TESTS

Let us now consider the second portion of our subject concerning the trials or testings of those who are followers of Jesus. Professor Strong defines the Greek word translated “trial” as “a testing”, which implies trustworthiness. Nuttall’s Dictionary explains the word “trial” as a means to prove the genuineness of anything by experiments. The verb form is translated “prove” in Romans 12:2, “Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds, that ye may *prove* what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” Also in 1 Cor. 11:28, it is translated by the word “examine.” “Let a man *examine* himself, and so let him eat.”

We have the thought fairly before our minds that, besides being subjected to enticements, we must also undergo tests or trials, so that we may prove certain things by the transforming influence of the new mind. Also we must put ourselves through an examination, or our Heavenly Father will give us the necessary tests or trials. To illustrate. When a chemist wants to find out the quantity and quality of the component parts of a substance, he subjects the substance to a process of testing. So, when God wants to know how much love we have, he sends us a trial of our Love, - our Love for him, for the Brethren, and for the Truth. So also with the other fruits and graces of the Spirit. These trials are to demonstrate the extent of our love, so that our Father may show us that sometimes we have not so much Love as we thought we had, and thereby have an opportunity to correct ourselves. Love is represented as a cloak to cover a multitude of sins, - not our own, but the sins or transgressions of others. How often and to what extent do we use this mantle of Love?

The next fruit of the spirit is joy. Will this be tested? Oh yes! We shall be tested as to the amount we possess of that joy which rejoices at the blessing and prosperity of others. All people can rejoice when they are

receiving personal pleasure, but it is more difficult and praiseworthy to rejoice when others receive honour or blessing.

The joy of the world is a selfish joy, and it is possible for us also to look for selfish pleasure, but our rejoicing should be in the Lord. We must come to the meetings to meet the Lord and not for the selfish joy of meeting those we like. Let us not be selfish, but rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Jehovah will apply searching tests upon us if we are true children, and nothing will escape His notice. "His eyes behold, his eyelids *try* the children of men: the Lord *trieth* the righteous" (Psa. 11:4, 5).

"SEARCH ME, O GOD"

These tests are only for those who have presented themselves for that purpose, those who *desire* testings. At one time we did not desire them, but we are coming to more and more appreciate the value of temptations and trials. We are now better able to say with the Psalmist: "Examine me, O Lord, and prove me: try my reins and my heart." "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me and know my thoughts: and see if there be a way of perverseness in me" (Psa, 26:2; 139:23, 24). We must not think it an extraordinary thing when we are tested. "Beloved, think it not *strange* concerning the fiery trial which is to try you as if some *strange* thing happened unto you, but rejoice inasmuch as you are counted worthy to take part in Christ's sufferings." "Think it not strange!" says the Apostle. Evidently there was a reason for this. Some of us may have thought that the fiery trials should be for others and not for ourselves; but the Apostle tells us that these fiery trials were intended for *us*. This thought was forcefully driven home to my mind when I was looking up the meaning of the word "strange". I found it to mean "belonging to another." Therefore, I now see that whatever trial shall fall to my lot, I must not think of it as "belonging to another," but as belonging to *me*, sent to me by my Heavenly Father. Let us get the thought before our minds that, by our consecration we have entered the School of Christ. The object of our entrance is that we may learn the various lessons set before us; and periodically we shall be tested or examined as to our progress. We shall each have our final examination - our Gethsemane experience - that will determine as to whether we have reached the standard as set before us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. Everyone who gets into the "pass list" will have been conformed to the image of God's dear Son.

In the meantime, let us pay great attention to our arithmetic, adding to our faith, fortitude, etc, and multiplying grace and peace. Also, we need to attend to our grammar, the proper use of words or the art of speaking correctly. Our teacher directs us that when any curse us, we should speak blessed words about them, when they despitefully use us we should pray for them, and that we should rejoice because we are counted worthy to suffer like Jesus. Just as Jesus' testing in Gethsemane was most severe, so we may expect the most severe trials at the end of the way, - but *let us count it all joy!*

In olden times people said: "I love my friends but hate my enemies." But Jesus, the great Schoolmaster, has come and taught us to love our enemies. Let us learn our grammar under our Schoolmaster's supervision. We may see some who are failing in their final examination, their final test. Surely we should not quarrel with any in the School of Christ who may be tearing up their examination papers. Let us be sorry for them and treat them kindly, and let us realize that "The Disciple is not above his Master," but that everyone who becomes fully qualified will require to be perfected by the same means as his Master. Amen.

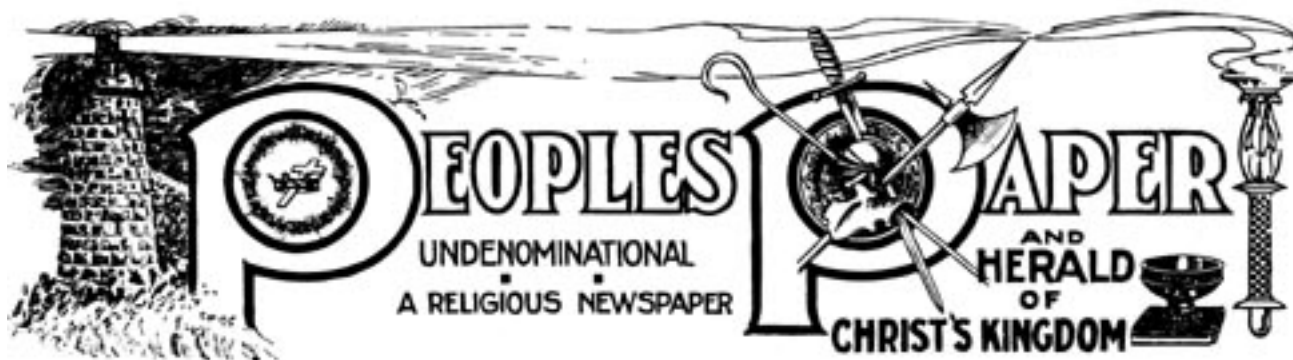
(1909 Convention Report)

A HEART CONFORMED

O for a heart more like my God,
From imperfection free;
A heart conformed unto Thy Word,
And pleasing, Lord, to Thee.

A heart resigned, submissive, meek,
My great Redeemer's throne,
Where only Christ is heard to speak,
Where Jesus reigns alone.

A humble, lowly, contrite heart,
Believing, true and clean,
Which neither life nor death can part



Volume 80 No.2 MELBOURNE, MARCH/APRIL 1997 IN MEMORY OF THE SAVIOUR'S LOVE

(Memorial Address)

Each year it is our privilege and joy to gather at the table of the Lord and in a special way, the way indeed which He Himself appointed, to remember Him. This service of memorial is in itself a simple one but very full of meaning to each who in faith and sincerity takes part. Not only is it an occasion of remembrance of our Saviour's life of obedience even unto death and of all that entails not only for us but eventually for all mankind, but a time for review and renewal of our own consecration vows as a sign of our continued willingness and desire to be identified with our Master in daily following Him.

THE UPPER ROOM

Let us briefly recall the events of that final passover evening which our Lord spent with His disciples nearly two thousand years ago. Along with the women who followed and ministered to Him, and others who had been drawn to this marvellous teacher, the disciples had heard His gracious words, had seen His mighty acts, had marvelled as He boldly rebuked the false religionists of His day and had come to realise something of His perfect character. The twelve whom He had specially chosen had sojourned with Him for some three and a half years and had no doubt previously shared with Him in the Jewish Passover service; but this year as the season approached He had been talking of going up to Jerusalem and there being arrested, tried and put to death, but to rise again on the third day.

These sayings were hard for them to come to terms with, as they made ready for what was to be their final passover with their Master, whose own sentiments are shown in His words recorded by Luke: *"With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer, for I say unto you, I will not eat any more thereof until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God."* (Luke 22:15,16) This was to be a special occasion, foreshadowing His own death as the **Lamb of God**, yet our Lord could look through and beyond even that to that great

THE PASSOVER

As we look back, we see how the beautiful and detailed type of Israel's Passover was about to be gloriously fulfilled in the Lamb of God, in that One in their midst whom the disciples had come to love and respect so much as their Master and Friend. How beautifully, indeed, in all its facets the Passover of Israel pointed forward to "Christ our Passover" as Paul describes our Saviour in 1Cor. 5:7. We note the various features from Exodus 12 -

****The lamb was to be specially selected and must be without blemish.** How well this pictures our Lord as Peter reminds us in 1 Peter 1:18, 19 - *"Forasmuch as ye were not redeemed with corruptible things ... but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."* From the following verse, we note that He was foreordained for this purpose before the foundation of the world in God's eternal plans.

****The lamb was to be slain.** We recall the apostle's words in Heb. 9:22 that *"without the shedding of blood there is no remission"* and John the Baptist's words - *"Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world."* (John 1:29)

****The blood of the slain lamb was to be sprinkled on the lintel and sideposts of each household in Israel to secure the safety of those within - a beautiful picture of the saving and cleansing blood of our Saviour sprinkled on the believing heart.** Paul tells us that God has accepted us in the Beloved, in whom we have redemption or deliverance through His (Jesus') blood. (Eph. 1:6, 7)

As for Israel, there is no other place of safety for the Lord's people than "under the blood". Furthermore,

while the sprinkling of the blood on the doorposts was important for all the Israelites, it was critical for the firstborn of each household - it was in fact a matter of life or death for these. This points to believers of this Gospel Age who are spoken of as “first-fruits unto God” in James 1:18 and as the “church of the firstborn” in Heb. 12:23. These have been called by God for special service and are on trial now for life and the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus. If faithful, they are to be *“priests of God and of Christ and reign with Him a thousand years.”* (Rev. 20:6)

How fitting then are the apostle’s words to the Corinthians and to each of us - *“For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”* (1 Cor 5:7,8) Here Paul points us to the ongoing nature of our feasting upon our Saviour, remembering all that He has done for us, especially at this Memorial season but also each day of the year. The Israelites were instructed that at each year’s remembrance of their deliverance from Egypt, their children were to have the story of their deliverance recounted to them and the significance of the occasion explained. There was to be not only a remembering of the event but a proclaiming of its meaning.

“IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME”

So too we pause awhile each year to meditate upon the means of our deliverance from sin and death, upon its resultant blessings, upon our own privileges and responsibilities, and to recall again its cost to our dear Saviour and our Heavenly Father. To remember Him in the simple way that He set forth was our Saviour’s specific wish and command and the apostle Paul tells us that each time we partake of the bread and the cup, which represent His broken body and shed blood, we show forth our Lord’s death till He comes. So not only do we remember all that He has done for us, His perfect obedience even unto death, the death of the cross, but we proclaim the grand message of redemption in His blood, eventually to flow on to all people.

As we prepare to partake of what has fittingly been termed “this simple feast” - simple in form but profound in meaning - let us reflect upon the deliverance which it commemorates, upon the privileges of fellowship with our Saviour in His death and with others of like precious faith, upon our personal consecration to follow in His steps of obedience, sacrifice and service. Once more we stand, as it were, where our Christian life began - at the foot of the cross of Christ. Again, we confess with the apostle - *“God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world.”* (Gal. 6:14)

Our presence with others of the Lord’s people on such occasions is firstly an act of loving obedience to our Master, for when He instituted this service of memorial in the presence of His nearest and dearest friends, His clear and loving words to them and to all who have followed after were simply - *“This do in remembrance of me.”* There are no penalties set down for not doing so, but there are rich blessings for all who love Him and gladly accept His invitation, and who strive to obey His words in this and in all matters of discipleship. So amid the solemnity of the occasion, there is an inner joy which attends obedience to the will of Him whom “yet unseen we love” and the sense of fellowship in this service with all who are likewise seeking to follow Him.

PARTICIPATION

Our taking part in this service is a recognition of the great price with which our deliverance has been bought, and each of us should be daily mindful of the so great love of God shown in the gift of His dear Son and of the Son’s willing obedience. For in a special way, this annual remembrance points us again to the very heart of all God’s plans and purposes, to that which is central to the standing in God’s sight of every Christian and to that on which the ultimate blessing of all mankind depends. In showing forth His death, we proclaim that we are relying solely and fully on the perfect redemption which by His death our Saviour has purchased for us. We are confessing that in ourselves we have nothing to offer to God of our own, that there is no other way to Him than the way of the cross and that there is no name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved, other than the precious name of Jesus.

But even as we remember His suffering and death, let us not overlook that we are also witnessing a victory. As we read: *“and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”* Phil. 2:8-11. And again: *“we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour, that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man.”* Heb. 2:9.

Further, this service unites all who love and trust in the Saviour with Him and all who are His. This is

beautifully brought out by the Apostle Paul in 1 Cor. 10:16: *“The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread.”* The word translated “communion” has the thought of sharing or participation, and we are reminded that we have the privilege of suffering with Jesus, of taking up the cross daily, having been baptised into the likeness of His death. *“To you it is given on behalf of Christ not only to believe on Him but to suffer for His sake.” Phil. 1:29.* Paul’s great desire was to *“know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death.” Phil. 3:10.* “It is our privilege also to follow our Saviour, to share in His sufferings now and later in His glory, now in obedience and faithfulness, in the age to come in the work of blessing all mankind.

REVIEW AND RENEWAL

As each year we reflect again on the realities which the emblems represent to us in life and salvation, in blessed communion with our dear Lord here and now but even more so when we are changed into His perfect likeness in the heavenly home, who is worthy to come to this table of the Lord? How thankful we may be that it is in His righteousness and by reason of our appropriation by faith of the merit of His perfect sacrifice that we may come confidently in response to His invitation - *“This do in remembrance of me.”* A life lived to His praise should certainly be our daily objective but the measure of our attainment is not what is required of those who come to His table.

Personal achievement or worth is not what the apostle is speaking of when he refers to partaking worthily or unworthily; if it were, none would qualify. Rather it is the recognition of our dear Lord’s body broken for us personally, our acknowledgement of all that He has done for us that is so important, to see in the emblems what He endured, to confess again our total dependence on Him and the merit of His blood, to appreciate even more fully the gracious call of God to be identified with our Saviour and with all His faithful ones now, that by and by we may be glorified together.

So as each Memorial season comes around, it is good for us all to review and renew our consecration to follow in our Saviour’s steps. The apostle’s instruction is to examine ourselves and then, in full assurance of faith and renewed commitment to His service, to partake of the bread and the cup gladly and with gratitude, in remembrance of Him. Let us also, as our Saviour did on that night so long ago, look forward joyfully to that glorious time when with all God’s faithful children we shall drink the new wine of rejoicing with our Master in the kingdom.

- THE PRAYER OF A BELIEVING HEART (Psalm 139)

“Any small thoughts that we may have of God are magnificently transcended by this psalm; yet for all its height and depth it remains intensely personal from first to last.” (D Kidner)

It has been written: “Not only do many readers fail to appreciate the glorious poetry of the psalms, but they also read them too casually to perceive the *structural beauty* which many of them possess.” The last words are particularly applicable to Psalm 139. This psalm has 24 verses comprising 4 stanzas of 6 verses each. The first 6 verses display God’s *omniscience* (infinite knowledge); the second 6 verses His *omnipresence*; the third 6 verses His *omnipotence*; and in the last 6 verses we have the psalmist’s own reactions to these elevated thoughts, bringing him to utter his adoration and fervent supplication toward God.

DIVINE OMNISCIENCE

The comprehensiveness of God’s *omniscience*, as it concerns us individually, is wonderfully detailed:

Our hearts: “O Lord, thou hast searched me” (‘my heart’ as in v.23) - verse 1.

Our thoughts: “Thou understandest my thought afar off” - verse 2.

Our actions: “Thou . . . art acquainted with all my ways” - verse 3.

Our words: “Not a word in my tongue but . . . thou knowest it altogether” - verse 4.

This first stanza comprehends all aspects of our activities: Our downsitting when the day’s work is over; our uprising after a night’s sleep; our journeys from place to place. (“Thou compassest my path”). Nevertheless God lovingly sets limitations on our lives. “Behind and before hast thou shut me in, and hast laid on me thine outspread hand” (Roth). This but enhances the completeness of our Father’s knowledge of us. He knows all the movements we can make and limits them, and as the psalmist thus brings the wonder of the Divine omniscience into full light - comprehending as it does our hearts, our thinking, our actions and our words - it is not surprising that he exclaims: “Too wonderful is thy knowledge for me, inaccessible! I cannot attain to it”.

(Roth).

DIVINE OMNIPRESENCE

The psalm now turns to Divine *omnipresence*. By this quality, we do *not* believe, as do Pantheists, that everything created is literally a part of God. Indeed, the psalmist shows that this was not his view, for in verse seven he clearly indicates that he is concerned with the *spirit* of God. The Divine Being may be likened to the sun, and His spirit to the rays of the sun. We frequently speak of the “sun being in a room” of our dwelling, but what we mean is that the *effects* of the sun are there - in light, in warmth, and in health-giving power. So it is with God and His spirit.

David now proceeds to put a question to the test, whether by *distance* he can hide himself from God. The answer given is No; whether it be the distant height or the distant depth, or even the distant breadth. He says: “If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there”; “If I spread out sheol as my couch, behold thee!” (Roth.); “If I take the wings of the morning (to the sunrise, and therefore to the east); and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea” (a reference to the Mediterranean Sea, and therefore to the west). David is only *testing* the question (“Whither shall I go from thy spirit?”) in all the forms his thought can appreciate. He does not say he *wishes* to escape; in fact, he almost implies that he does not, for he assumes the love of the Omnipotent One: “Even there shall thy hand lead me and thy right hand shall hold me”.

Having tested the question of escape from God by means of “distance”, David propounds the question whether by means of *darkness* such escape were possible. Again he concludes No. Darkness is no darkness to Jehovah God, for “the darkness and the light are both alike to thee”. So height, depth, east, west, light, darkness, God is present by His spirit in them all.

DIVINE OMNIPOTENCE

The third group of six verses (13-18) is descriptive of Divine *omnipotence*. Verse 13 commences with “For . . .”, that is to say, “Because . . .”, and leads to this concept: “Thou hast such intimate knowledge of me as neither change of activity, nor distance, nor darkness can obstruct, because thou didst fashion me; because I am Thy child; because Thou hast created me. Thou didst originate the first rudiments of my being. Thou didst weave me together. Thou didst construct my bony framework, and skilfully imparted the whole variegated web-work of my nerves and blood vessels”. At least three times in verses 13 to 16 Jehovah’s handiwork in creating the human frame is affirmed.

To sum up the psalmist’s words: God knows me thoroughly because He made me. This is precisely what he says. David sees the human race originally brought forth out of the underparts of the earth. (Man was formed “of the dust of the ground”). So the individual is at birth brought forth from the maternal concealment corresponding thereto. This is not to say that even God, at our first birth, brought a clean thing out of an unclean; but it is to say, that our first birth, with all its drawbacks, lays a foundation for the second; a second birth whose very object will be to bring a clean thing out of an unclean. The first creation was followed by condemnation; the second is brought about by salvation through Christ.

In verse 2, the word translated “thought” really means “purpose”, so that in now considering verse 17, we must read it thus: “How precious also are thy purposes unto me, O God”. God has more than thoughts about us; He has benevolent designs. Although this was a *personal* confession of David’s, every Christian believer should make a similar declaration. David does not say, nor should we say: “Because I am a good man, therefore are thy purposes to me so precious”. The position for us is rather: “Because I love Thee and because I have been called by Thee according to Thy purpose in Christ, therefore all things fall within Thy plan for me and I see them as precious.”

David sees God’s thoughts, purposes, dealings concerning him as *innumerable*, and it would appear that when he adds: “When I awake, I am still with thee”, while he may be expressing his own conviction, he is certainly putting words into our mouths, having reference to *resurrection* to a higher life. J.B. Rotherham translates: “I awake -my continued being is with thee”, and in a note this translator adds that “continued being” is literally “my continuance”. When the psalmist says “with thee”, the meaning is more than he is *thinking* of God; rather, the words mean “in company with thee” or “in thy presence”. There are parallels for considering “awake” to have a richer meaning than “to awaken from literal sleep”. Isa. 26:19 reads: “*Awake* and sing, ye that dwell in the dust”, and Psa. 17:15 has “As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied when I *awake*, with thy likeness”. The God who purposes to bestow on the faithful immortality, will He not also “purpose” to prepare them for that great inheritance? Has He not “purposed” their redemption and sanctification through the necessary discipline of suffering, and eventually “purposed” their victory? So that we may well exclaim: “How numerous Thy purposes leading me up to the Great Awakening -the first resurrection!”

“SEARCH ME, O GOD”

Finally, we consider the fourth stanza of the psalm (verses 19-24). David has reflected on the Divine attributes of omniscience, omnipresence and omnipotence, and now he reflects on God's holiness. Verses 19 and 20 have been literally translated: "Oh! if thou wouldest smite the wicked, O God! (Ye men of violence depart from me) for they rebel against thee with wicked deeds, and lift up against thee vainly". Although David utters strong words about sin in others, he also expresses intense concern about sin in himself. He does not propose to slay the wicked himself; rather he commits them to the judgment of God; He judges not, that he himself be not judged; and in verses 23 and 24 he is on his knees, baring his own heart before His Maker: "Search me. O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked (hurtful) way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting". For us the way everlasting leads up to and through the Great Awakening, to our life more abundant that shall abide to the ages.

(F.G.M. 78)

"EVEN YOUR SANCTIFICATION"

"As He who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation, because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy." 1 Peter 1:15,16

"For this is the will of God, even your sanctification." 1 Thess. 4:3.

These words of the Apostles Peter and Paul are I addressed to consecrated Christians. They are an exhortation to full development as God's children, to full setting apart for God. It is not sufficient to make a profession of consecration, to promise to live a sanctified life merely; it is of utmost importance to fulfil our vows to the Lord, to day by day fulfil our vow of consecration. It is not sufficient that we become branches in the true Vine; we must bear the fruitage of the Spirit. Having come into Christ through faith and consecration we must allow His Spirit to dwell in us and cause us to become fully set apart for the Master's use. The word sanctification means a setting apart to holy service. God is holy; and any instrument that He would use and recognize must also be holy. So He says to us: Be ye holy, for I am holy."

THE CALL

But how can we who were sinful by nature be holy? It is through faith in Christ as our Saviour that we are justified as Paul says, in 1 Cor. 6:11: "Ye are washed ye are sanctified, ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our God." It is faith in Christ that brings us into a condition of peace with God, as we read in Rom. 5:1. Then, to the justified believer comes the call of consecration to God. This means to devote ourselves and all our talents and powers of mind and body to the Lord, as we have it expressed in Rom. 12:1. The only way to attain to holiness of character now is to become footstep followers of our Lord Jesus Christ. We must take up our cross daily and renounce the world and all its attractions; we must give up our own will, lay aside our own preferences and accept heartily the will and way of the Lord as set before us in His Word and exemplified in the life of Christ.

God purposes to use the Church in a special way in the Age to come. The Scriptures tell us that the overcoming Church of this Gospel Age will be kings and priests and they will, with Christ their Lord and Head, reign over the earth for 1000 years, for the purpose of blessing mankind, and bringing the willing and obedient back into harmony with God. The world will then be called into holiness. They will be required to become holy before they can be pleasing to the Father or have fellowship with Him.

The setting apart of the Church during the Gospel Age is different from the setting apart to righteousness which will be the world's experience during the Millennial Age. The Church's setting apart, or sanctification, requires the grace of God in large measure, for they are called to a sacrificial death. That they may be able to sacrifice themselves, a special provision for the covering of their blemishes is necessary. The righteousness of Christ is imputed to the believers. We are made acceptable in the Beloved. We have no righteousness, no perfection apart from Christ. Only as we abide in Him by living faith and active obedience can our sanctification progress. We must trust our Lord not only for grace and mercy to make us acceptable to the Father at the commencement of our consecration, but we must also trust God to supply us with the help of His Spirit which comes to us through our union with Christ, and which will enable us to finish our course and become wholly sanctified.

THE MEANS

The words of the Apostle (1 Pet. 1:2) state the means whereby our sanctification is effected. It is through the sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. We need first of all the imputation of Christ's righteousness to make our sacrifice acceptable to God; next, we need the help of the Holy Spirit by which we are begotten to newness of life and hope; then we need to nourish the new mind by feeding upon the Word of God, and we need the application of the blood of Christ daily to cleanse us from the defilement of the world, and the shortcomings and failures of thought, word and deed which come upon us because of the weakness of our flesh. (1 John 1:7, 9.)

Our perfection at the present time is a reckoned one, not actual. Before we reach that condition of actual perfection of holiness in the resurrection we must be tested as to our loyalty to God. There are certain difficulties to overcome. The difficulty with our setting apart at this time lies in the fact that it means to go contrary to our own preferences, because of the present disordered condition of things in the world in which we live, a condition which is manifested in ourselves as human beings. Hence, the sanctification for which God now calls is the doing of His will under unfavourable circumstances, within and without. Those who do His will under these unfavourable circumstances have set before them the high reward of becoming joined in heirship with Christ in His Kingdom, sharers of His glory and power.

Our sanctification begins at the time when we consecrate ourselves to the Lord. Having accepted us through Christ, God imparts to us His Spirit and brings us into the anointed Body. (2 Cor. 1:21, 22) The sanctification is to progress more and more. It is for this that Paul prays:—"The very God of peace sanctify you wholly." (1 Thess. 5:23.) As we progress, our sanctification should take in a broader and deeper scope. We are to "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Day by day the Lord shows us more fully His will, and so we want to manifest more of that earnest desire of heart that longs to know and do His will.

DEVELOPMENT

The Christian way leads onwards to fullness of character development. Our daily experiences are testing our hearts; and this is by the will of the Lord. He knows that if our hearts are loyal we will do the best we can to control our flesh; and it is our earnest endeavour to walk faithfully in the narrow way, that He is watching to see. After we have been set apart, sanctified, as a babe in Christ, we gradually become sanctified on a larger scale. We become developed in this process of sanctification, growing more and more like our Lord.

As we come in daily contact with the world of mankind we should seek to do them good. Our Lord always endeavoured to do good and bless those with whom He came in contact. So also the Apostle says: "Do good to all men as you have opportunity, especially to the household of faith." We are to "lay down our lives for the brethren"; seeking to build one another up in our most holy faith; and to encourage each other along in the narrow way.

As followers of Christ, our greatest work is in ourselves - subduing our own flesh, conquering and uprooting the earth-ward tendencies, and resolutely training them heavenward. This is a matter that requires great patience and perseverance. Only in the Lord's strength can we hope to succeed in this great work of ruling our own spirit - of mortifying the earthly tendencies of our flesh and setting our minds, our affections, on the heavenly things. (Col. 3:1, 2.)

TWO ASPECTS

There are two parts to sanctification. The first part is our own, and the second part belongs to God. He sanctifies only those who sanctify themselves - "Sanctify yourselves and I will sanctify you." We must first give up our own will and accept His will, setting ourselves apart for the Lord. In such He is pleased to do a great work. The initial part of that work is the begetting of the Holy Spirit. This makes of us New Creatures in Christ, members of the Anointed Body. Our sanctification is thus begun.

We are then prepared to grow, and not until then; for before that time there is no embryo New Creature, the new life has not even begun. But after we receive the new will, the will to do God's will, we are ready to make progress, both in grace and in knowledge. Having now come into the family of God, we are to learn of Him as obedient children. We are to study the Word of God that thus we may know what is the will of God for us. The Lord's people must be inducted into a knowledge of God's glorious character and of His will concerning us, His children. Through this knowledge we shall be enabled to grow up into the likeness of our Lord and Head - the Pattern furnished us by the Father.

Thus the work of development leads into all the avenues of our being. "This is the will of God, even your sanctification" - your complete setting apart for God's use and service. The Spirit of the Lord is to abound in us. The influence of the precious promises and of words of counsel have more and more a sanctifying effect upon our hearts and lives. This leads us to a still deeper appreciation of God and His love and of those who are His. Thus we grow in grace, in further knowledge, and in all the precious fruits of the Holy Spirit - "Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control. Against such there is no law." (Gal. 5:22, 23.) This is the complete sanctification which God purposes to accomplish in all those who set themselves apart for Him, providing that they keep their sacrifice firmly bound to the altar until it is wholly consumed.

When we fully consecrate ourselves to the Lord, we become disciples of Christ; we are in the school of Christ - the condition represented in the tabernacle by the Holy. We have the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit and we are able to see and appreciate the spiritual things. Gradually we come to appreciate more fully the great hope of our calling, and we come to love and appreciate the great attributes of God - His wisdom and

justice and love. We learn also of our own frailties and shortcomings, we see where we are lacking and this causes us to seek for mercy and grace to enable us to overcome our weaknesses and to put on more and more of the Lord's character-likeness.

THE WORD OF GOD

The more we absorb and assimilate the Word of God, the stronger we shall be in character. To the faithful, the Apostle Peter assures us, the Lord will minister "an abundant entrance into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Whoever neglects to use the means provided for his development cannot progress properly. The sanctifying power of the Word and of prayer must accomplish their designed work in us; otherwise, we shall never gain the promised reward of the faithful overcomer.

All the instruction which we receive from the Lord comes to us through the written Word. "The Word of God is sufficient," declares the Apostle, "that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Tim. 3:15-17.) Again declares the same Apostle: "Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word." (Eph. 5:25, 26.) Let us keep close to the written Word "which is able to make us wise unto salvation."

As we contemplate the things that are lovely as embodied in Christ, and the things that are pure and holy and beautiful as shown in the Bible, we are changed little by little into the same blessed likeness, from glory to glory. Let this good work of sanctification go on until every grace adorns the spotless robe of imputed righteousness given us by our Father through Christ. Let us mark well the love of the Master. Let us consider Christ, His gentleness, His patience, His meekness, His zeal, His self-sacrificing spirit. Keeping the example of Christ and the great hope of our calling well before our minds will greatly assist us in our progress toward the mark for the prize. (Col. 1:23; 2: 6, 7.)

(P.P. 12/41)

Millennial Kingdom Prospects

"And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. "-Rev. 21:1-5.

GOD'S ALL-EMBRACING PLANS

Just as Scripture distinguishes between the saved and the lost, and between different classes of the one and of the other, so it also distinguishes between the future portion of the Church of Christ, that of the Jewish people, and that of the nations of the earth. Too many in their thoughts of the future leave out this last; the destiny of the Church of this dispensation figures so largely in their anticipations, that they seem almost to forget that "the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the *world*," and to lose sight of the blessed prospect that, not only is the present Church to be saved out of the ruined world to become the Eve of the second Adam, but that the ruined earth itself is yet to be renewed, and to become the happy home of saved nations, who participate in the results of redemption.

The narrowness which sees nothing but the salvation of the Church of this dispensation is born of human selfishness, and not of Divine love; it is founded not on the teaching of Scripture, but on tradition and prejudice. The Bible in this [the Book of Revelation], its last revelation on the subject, plainly teaches that, while the peculiar glories of the Church are hers, and hers alone, that while the special privileges of the natural seed of Abraham belong to Israel, and to Israel only, there is yet a blessed future awaiting mankind also under the gracious government of Immanuel; that one of the effects of the completed work of Christ will be to place the saved nations of the eternal Kingdom in a restored paradise, completely delivered from the tempter, and so established in righteousness that the Holy One can take up his abode among them for ever. "He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death; neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

The salvation of the Church of this dispensation is not the whole result of the death of Christ. There is to be in addition the establishment for ever of a kingdom of God, in which His will shall be as fully done by men on earth as it is now done by angels in heaven. The consummation, for which we daily pray, is destined to come at last; and holy and happy service, without a flaw and without an interruption, is yet to be rendered to God, not merely by the glorified saints of the new Jerusalem, but by redeemed nations on the earth, who walk for ever in the light of the celestial city.

Such is the sublime vista of the future of our race, and of our earth in the eternal ages, with which Scripture closes.

“I MAKE ALL THINGS NEW”

The human race are God’s children by creation -the work of His hands - and His plan with reference to them is clearly revealed in His Word. Paul says that the first man (who was a sample of what the race will be when perfect) was of the earth, earthy; and his posterity, with the exception of the Gospel Church, will in the resurrection still be earthy, human, adapted to the earth. (1 Cor. 15:38,44) David declares that man was made only a little lower than the angels, and crowned with glory, honour, dominion, etc. (Psalm 8:4-8) And Peter, our Lord, and all the prophets since the world began, declare that the human race is to be restored to that glorious perfection, and is again to have dominion over earth, as its representative, Adam, had -- Acts 3:19-21.

It is this portion that God has elected to give to the human race. And what a glorious portion! Close your eyes for a moment to the scenes of misery and woe, degradation and sorrow that yet prevail on account of sin, and picture before your mental vision the glory of the perfect earth. Not a stain of sin mars the harmony and peace of a perfect society; not a bitter thought, not an unkind look or word; love, welling up from every heart, meets a kindred response in every other heart, and benevolence marks every act. There sickness shall be no more; not an ache nor a pain, nor any evidence of decay - not even the fear of such things. Think of all the pictures of comparative health and beauty of human form and feature that you have ever seen, and know that perfect humanity will be of still surpassing loveliness. The inward purity and mental and moral perfection will stamp and glorify every radiant countenance. Such will earth’s society be; and weeping bereaved ones will have their tears all wiped away, when thus they realize the resurrection work complete.-Revelation 21:4.

PARADISE RESTORED

And this is the change in human society only. We call to mind also that the earth, which was “made to be inhabited” by such a race of beings, is to be a fit and pleasing abode for them, as represented in the Edenic paradise, in which the representative man was at first placed. Paradise shall be restored. The earth shall no more bring forth thorns and briers, and require the sweat of man’s face to yield his bread, but “the earth shall [easily and naturally] yield her increase.” “The desert shall blossom as the rose”; the lower animal creation will be perfect, willing, and obedient servants; nature with all its pleasing variety will call to man from every direction to seek and know the glory and power and love of God; and mind and heart will rejoice in **Him**.

The restless desire for something new, that now prevails, is not a natural but an abnormal condition, due to our imperfection, and to our present unsatisfactory surroundings. It is not Godlike restlessly to crave something new. Most things are old to God; and He rejoices most in those things which are old and perfect. So will it be with man when restored to the image of God. The perfect man will not know or appreciate fully, and hence will not prefer, the glory of spiritual being, being of a different nature, just as fishes and birds, for the same reason, prefer and enjoy each their own nature and element most.

Man will be so absorbed and enraptured with the glory that surrounds him on the human plane that he will have no aspiration to, nor preference for, another nature or other conditions than those possessed. A glance at the present experience of the Church will illustrate this. “How hardly,” with what difficulty, shall those who are rich in this world’s goods enter into the Kingdom of God. The few good things possessed even under the present reign of evil and death, so captivate the human nature that we need special help from God to keep our eye and purpose fixed on the spiritual promises.

HEIRS OF THE KINGDOM

That the Christian Church, the Body of Christ, is an exception to God’s general plan for mankind, is evident from the statement that its selection was determined in the divine plan before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4, 5), at which time God not only foresaw the fall of the race into sin, but also predetermined the justification, the sanctification and the glorification of this class, which, during the Gospel Age, He has been calling out of the world to be conformed to the image of His Son, to be partakers of the divine nature and to be fellow-heirs with Christ Jesus of the Millennial Kingdom for the establishment of universal righteousness and peace.-Romans 8:28-31.



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“HITHERTO HATH THE LORD HELPED US”

(A New Year Reflection)

Faithful followers of Jesus Christ realise the wisdom of pausing at the passing of another milestone and at the dawn of a new year to take account of their spiritual welfare and progress, their failures and successes; to reflect anew and the more earnestly, if possible, on the great objective before them, and also upon those issues that are inseparably linked with their solemn covenant to walk with their Saviour in the Narrow Way. No happier reflections can they have than that the Divine leadings and counsel have been theirs thus far. All such can say with zest, “All the way my Saviour leads me, what have I to ask beside!”

PAST BLESSINGS

Thus those who have been blessed with the richest favours of grace Divine, in that knowledge of their high and exalted calling, have a never-failing cause for the most profound gratitude - for therein they realise their unspeakable privilege and heritage as sons, heirs of God “to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled and that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven” for the called, and chosen, and faithful, according to His purpose. In addition to all these blessings of hope and promise, there has been the happy realisation during all the year past that though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death (as the Psalmist aptly represents the present life), our blessed Shepherd’s rod and staff have been our comfort and our safeguard.

How often has the friendly crook of the Shepherd stayed us from wandering off into bypaths and kept us in the Narrow Way! How His chastening rod has, from time to time, aroused us from dreamy lethargy and urged us on our way! Glancing now at humanity at large, what a distressed and troubled world we find! But though this hour is one of unprecedented fear, disturbance and disorder throughout the earth, and one of peculiar trial to the Saints of God, it is nevertheless a time also for “lifting up the head” for the faithful with special rejoicing that the Lord has imparted to these, the knowledge of the significance of these days-through special illuminated prophecies that are none other than those uttered by the ancient Hebrew prophets, as also by our Lord and the Apostles. Being thus informed out of our Holy Oracles that there are movements of vast importance in the Realm Above, looking toward world-redemption and “Thy Kingdom come,” the Lord’s Children “fear no evil” from the world’s present dark outlook.

It is well to remember that our dear Saviour, well knowing from the beginning of the Age that the journey of the narrow way was to be a difficult and lonely one, said to His disciples, “Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” Indeed, all His footstep followers have had need for just such a comforting assurance. Their pilgrimage through the wilderness of this world was to be a stormy one; they were to be in the midst of devouring adversaries; their numbers were ever to be small, truly “a little flock,” and often they would seem to be without strength, with ever-increasing afflictive sorrows as they drew near to the end of the Age.

FAITHFUL ENDURANCE

The Saints of this present time are even more vitally concerned with regard to the voice of the Good Shepherd and in paying careful heed there to. Jesus said of this hour, “He who patiently endures to the end will be saved.” (Matt. 24:13, Diaglott.) Such language can have but one meaning: “He that cheerfully, in the spirit of full surrender, endures faithfully unto the end of his pilgrimage will be of the saved Elect.” From this point of view, what courage, what fortitude, what overcoming faith will be required to survive the sorrows and the ravages of these days-fierce assaults upon faith, and meeting the cunning strategies of the Evil One.

Hence at such a time as this when there are greater and more difficult trials upon the people of God than in any other era of the Church’s history, the Lord has opened before His faithful ones, still clearer views of the

Truth-the heavenly crown, and the celestial glories, honours, privileges and other untold riches, that these may give renewed strength to the mind and offset the depressing influence of trials and distressing tribulations more or less instigated by the Evil One. The humble obedient ones, having their eyes of faith and their hearts' affections set upon the heavenly treasures, need not the support of earthly relationships, nor the glamour and fascination of the crowd, nor any external manifestations which are often deceptive and illusive.

The faithful Saints of God are "not afraid" of any evil consequences from the smallness of their numbers nor from their loneliness and isolation, because, knowing their Father's plans, they realise they must go the way of their Master, of whom it was written that, "He trod the winepress alone." Truly then, "Be of good cheer," speaks our Divine Lord! Fear not anything. "Be not afraid; help is nigh." Moreover, "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in Me." Again, "In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength."

As for the Christian's sorrows and sufferings, surely all those who truly walk by faith realise with the Apostle Paul, "None of those things move me!" For if truly loyal to the Lord, none of the reverses, discouragements, misfortunes, loss of friendships, ignominy and shame, can deter us from our faithfulness to him. There are many persuasive but delusive voices speaking at the present time, scattering a multitude of misrepresentations, fictitious interpretations and impressions-and all of this permitted by an unerring Wisdom for a short time.

MORE EARNEST HEED

Hence the last chapter of the career and sufferings of the Christ is not yet written! The time is drawing nigh when it shall be. Then, with all the dust and smoke of present fabrications, subterfuge and subtle strategies of the Evil One cleared away, many things will be seen in altogether a different light - in their true light! Are we willing to wait? Can we watch with Christ "one hour"?-for He declares that, "Then (in due time) shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

In view of such a promise, can we not well afford to "give the more earnest" and patient heed to all the spiritual treasures contemplated in our glorious faith, and so walk before the Lord in all sincerity, devotion, lowliness and humbleness of mind! In these days of many hard trials and fiery ordeals, when God's children are torn and tempest-tossed perhaps as never before, it is eminently important for all to have clearly before the mind what has been and is the vital issue and the real mission of the Church on earth.

WALKING IN THE LIGHT

That which has been of the greatest importance to the Church all along through the Age has not been altered in any sense since the Apostolic Era. In those primitive days the twelve apostles sounded the Gospel trumpet of inspired counsel; it was not an "uncertain sound,"-but one that was definite and clear. None has sounded the keynote for the entire Church more clearly than the Apostle Peter in his inspiring admonition: "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things (complete the development of the image of Christ), ye shall never fall." (2 Pet.1:5-10.) It is this same apostle who tell us that true Christians are "A chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people," showing forth the praises of Him who hath called them "out of darkness into His marvellous light." - 1 Pet. 2:9.

The Saints are a singular people. It is part of their calling to be such. It is but the honest filling out of their profession, a trait of their citizenship in the realm beyond, to maintain that very course of life which is so unlovely in unsanctified eyes. Christians were told from the beginning that though in the world they were not of the world, The Word of the Lord, His word of Truth, of counsel and Heavenly Wisdom, directed by His Spirit has been the support and stronghold of all who have remained faithful to their covenant of sacrifice-not merely from the standpoint of the Word in theory, but the word "received into a good and honest heart," and that has resulted in the heart undergoing the transforming process, and the renewing of the Spirit.-Rom. 12:1,2.

SANCTIFIED THROUGH TRUTH

Jesus Himself, in His ministry on earth, laid the foundation for this transformation and spiritual development. Indeed, what else could He have meant when He said, "The words which I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life."? (John 6:63.) Again He said, "I am the Way the Truth and the Life." (John 14:6.) Among His last words were, "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is Truth." (John 17:17) Thus it is because the Church's sanctification is by means of, or through the truth, that their endurance of the doctrinal tests of the present time is of much importance; and we need not be surprised that the siftings and shakings of this time are more or less along the lines of one or another of the various features of the Message of Truth that have been given for the last days.

The love of Christ and submission to God's will (which come through the knowledge of the Truth), are necessary to Godliness: and whoever are attempting Godliness without striving for cultivation of these very

essential spiritual qualities will realise their efforts resulting in failure. However in looking forward to the future, we can but expect the same severe trials and tests of faith to continue until every part of our faith and character building is tried, and “the wood, hay and stubble” all consumed; for “the Day that cometh shall try every man’s work of what sort it is.” (1 Cor. 3:13) If in the past our building has stood the test, and not been destroyed, we may well rejoice; but still with trembling, remembering that the trial is not all over yet. “Be not high minded, but fear.” Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.”

SWEET FELLOWSHIP

In these days when many disturbing factors and distressing problems confront all people, including the Lord’s children, the natural and common tendency is to lean upon one another for mutual support. The world of humanity knows nothing better than this. Nor are the children of God forbidden to do so, but rather to the contrary, they are admonished in the Word to make use of all opportunities for communing with each other in the spirit.

Thus the Master promised that “Where two or three are met together in My name” etc., His presence and refreshing benediction would be there.

Where the assembling is “in My Name,” the conversation and communion take the turn, not of social themes and earthly discussions, but conversely- the fellowship and communion of the Holy Spirit is experienced. How richly this was in evidence in the primitive Church! How truly the Apostolic Epistles abound with the fragrance of this thought of the mutual helpfulness of the members of Christ! Hence the writers of those Epistles frequently concluded their letters with the kindly words, “The communion and fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, Amen

LOOKING FORWARD

None of us knows just what the future holds of disturbing factors, of afflictive sorrows and distress, but this we do know, that the old order of things of this Dispensation must pass entirely out! Hence there may be grave and darker days ahead than any that have ever been seen by the children of men; for the way of the Kingdom of Heaven must be prepared. Meantime, the remnant of the Church on earth is wending its way toward the Holy City, and all who are looking forward to an “abundant entrance” should diligently endeavour to become more and more fortified and equipped with the whole armour of God-”That ye may be able to withstand in the evil day and, having done all, to stand.” “He is faithful that calleth you, Who also will do it.”

(WOTM - abridged)

A HAPPY NEW YEAR

New mercies, new blessings, new light on thy way;
New courage, new hope, and new strength for thy day;
New notes of thanksgiving, new chords of delight;
New songs in the morning, new songs in the night.

New wine in thy chalice, new altars to raise;
New fruit for thy Master, new garments of praise;
New gifts for His treasures, new smiles from His face;
New streams from the fountain of infinite grace.

New stars for thy crown, and new tokens of love;
New gleams of the glory that waits thee above;
New light of His countenance, radiant and clear;
All this be thy joy in the happy new year!

(Author unknown)

Eternal Love

One there is above all others.

Well deserves the name of Friend;
His is love beyond all others,
Costly, free, and knows no end.
They who once His kindness prove.
Find it everlasting love.

(John Newman)

PRAYER

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts your requests to God, and the peace of God, which and minds in Christ Jesus." Phil. 4:6,7 NIV

A HUMAN INSTINCT

Mankind being created in the image of God is said to be incurably religious. "Atheists are made not born." Religion is universal and ingrained, prayer is the same, with people everywhere recognising their dependence on some higher order, no matter what their understanding of it might be. People never outgrow their need for prayer anymore than their need for air or food. Living in a precarious world, surrounded by the vast and terrifying forces of nature, inescapably death-shadowed, people in their anguish pray spontaneously.

Especially in times of crisis, the instinctive nature of prayer is disclosed, as shown by the Psalmist in Psalm 107:23-31 - *"Others went out on the sea in ships; they were merchants on the mighty waters, they saw the works of the LORD, His wonderful deeds in the deep. For He spoke and stirred up a tempest that lifted high the waves, they mounted up to the heavens and went down to the depths. In their peril their courage melted away, they reeled and staggered like drunken men, they were at their wits' end. Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, and He brought them out of their distress. He stilled the storm to a whisper, the waves of the sea were hushed. They were glad when it grew calm, and He guided them to their desired haven. Let them give thanks to the LORD for His unfailing love and His wonderful deeds for men."*

The pages of the Bible supply abundant evidence that many of the religions of the area had prayer as a way to contact their supreme being. Thus the priests of Baal called unto their gods as we read in 1 Kings 18:26-29- *"So they took the bull given them and prepared it. Then they called upon the name of Baal from morning till noon. 'O Baal, answer us!' they shouted, but there was no response, no one answered. And they danced around the altar they had made. At noon Elijah began to taunt them, 'Shout louder!' he said, 'Surely he is a god! Perhaps he is deep in thought, or busy, or travelling. Maybe he is sleeping and must be awakened.' So they shouted louder and slashed themselves with swords and spears as was their custom, until the blood flowed. Midday passed, and they continued their frantic prophesying until the time for the evening sacrifice, but there was no response, no one answered, no one paid attention"*

CHRISTIAN PRAYER

Although prayer is a universal phenomenon, it however becomes unique and commanding in Biblical faith. It is said that Christianity is the peculiar home of personal prayer. It has also been said that to be a Christian means to be one who prays. Luther remarks in his homely way that, as a shoemaker makes a shoe and a tailor makes a coat, so ought a Christian to pray. Prayer is the daily business of a Christian. Scripture nowhere offers any written defence of prayer, it simply assumes the necessity and effectiveness of praying to God, provided that certain conditions are met. It is not demanded that we must pray, there is no direct penalty if we do not pray, However, we thus lose the power of communicating with our Creator. Prayer shows the sovereignty and activity of the living God in whose hands nature is like pliable clay. Consequently it teaches that in answer to prayer God may produce events that are in harmony with His great plan, that a system of man-made laws could not produce.

If God is wise, all powerful, all good and all knowing, is prayer then not superfluous and futile? Does not the very idea of prayer imply a 'Deity of one whose mind can change'? In His omnipotence, He knows our needs just as in His goodness and omnipotence He will certainly supply our needs. Moreover, He has assuredly mapped out for all eternity the entire course of things. Why then pray? The Bible does not debate these issues, which emerge from the paradoxical relationship between human responsibility and divine sovereignty. Prayer, however, presupposes that the relationship between God and mankind is genuinely interpersonal, not the relationship of an operator and an impersonal automaton, but that between a parent and a child, friend and friend, master and servant, king and subject, creator and creature. Hence it makes God's knowledge, power and goodness the very ground of petition.

We read in Matt. 7:7-11 - *"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds and to him who knocks the door will be opened. Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him?"* Prayer becomes a channel of human creativity and development in co-operation with divine ordaining and over-ruling. Things are bought to pass only as people pray; without prayer, some things will not happen as Paul says - *"I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone, for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Saviour, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth."* (1Tim 2:1,2) Such prayer, together with its answer and all of its outworkings, is of course embraced in God's eternal counsel.

ELEMENTS OF PRAYER

Prayer has many facets to it, it is not merely reduced to petition, as some people seem to feel. Prayer cannot simply be compressed into 'getting things from God'. Prayer essentially is **communion**, a desire to enter into a conscious and intimate relationship with our Heavenly Father, who is our life. The psalmist tells us - *"O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water. I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory. Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you; I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands. My soul will be satisfied as with the richest of foods, with singing lips my mouth will praise you. On my bed I remember you; I think of you through the watches of the night. Because you are my help, I sing in the shadow of your wings. My soul clings to you, your right hand upholds me."* Psa 63:1-8 The apostle John also brings out this beautiful picture (1 John 1:3) - *"We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with His son, Jesus Christ."*

Prayer is also **adoration**, the praise of God because of His greatness and kindness. The book of Psalms is a collection of man's loving, awe-inspired praise, as, contemplating his Creator and Saviour, he is lost in wonder and amazement at the purity, pity and power of the perfect being. Again, prayer is **thanksgiving**, the outpouring of gratitude to God for his grace, mercy and loving-kindness. Psalm 103 is a classic expression of the emotion aroused by unmerited blessing. *"Praise the LORD, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise His holy name. Praise the LORD, O my soul; and forget not all his benefits; who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's."* (Verses 15) The entire psalms are indeed full of such praise.

Prayer is also **confession** as sinful man acknowledges his guilt. David's remorseful frankness in Psalm 51 voices the common experience of transgression followed by grief-stricken remorse before God - *"Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love, according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin."* (Verses 1,2) Then the prayer becomes one of **petition** as the offender beseeches cleansing as we read in Verses 9-12 - *"Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity. Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore me to the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit to sustain me."* Like the psalmist, we as Christians also feel the guilt of our sins, a sense of powerlessness which prevents us from going forward in confidence and hope. Nothing but divine grace, freely bestowed, can transform bitter self condemnation to firm self-confidence, the trembling fear to peace and trust. Prayer still further then, is petition, a plea for personal help. This was certainly bought out in the Lord's Prayer, also by Paul in Phil. 4:6, the text verse.

Prayer is also **intercession**, which we may define as petition on behalf of another, entreating for his or her good or needs. Consider Paul's burden for Israel, as we read in Romans 10:1 - *"Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved."* Paul also prayed for the various churches that he had set up, as well as for individual members that he knew. Prayer finally is **submission**, as we abandon our own desires and surrender our wills to God. This is probably prayer at its highest level, achieved when by faith we commit our lives unreservedly to the divine love, wisdom and power. The supreme illustration of such surrender is our Lord Jesus Christ who, after His struggle in the garden of Gethsemane could say - *"Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will but yours be done."* Luke 22:42. So when we as true children of God pray, we may be engaged in adoration, communion, thanksgiving, confession, petition, intercession and submission.

ATTITUDES OF PRAYER

Regardless of the type of prayer we as Christians are offering, the critical factor for all of us is our attitude. Posture, language, place or time - none of these trifles matter. In all such respects the greatest liberty is permitted as long as our hearts have the right attitude towards our Heavenly Father. In the Bible there are many

accounts of the different ways, places, and reasons for people to pray. Let us consider some examples from both the Old and the New Testaments. Firstly, kneeling is mentioned in Daniel 6:10 - *"Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened towards Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to God just as he had done before."* Standing - In Jer. 18:20 we read - *"Remember that I (Jeremiah) stood before you (Jehovah) and spoke on their behalf to turn your wrath away from them."* Sitting - 2 Samuel 7:18 records - *"Then King David went in and sat before the LORD, and he said, Who am I. O Sovereign LORD, and what is my family, that you have brought me this far?"*

God's people sometimes prayed with their hands uplifted, as we are instructed by Paul in 1 Tim. 2:8 - *"I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer."* Sometimes our prayers are silent because of situations in which we find ourselves or because this is the most appropriate way. In 1 Samuel 1:13 we read - *"Hannah was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving, but her voice was not heard."* At other times, we may have need to pray out loud as was the case in Ezekiel 11:13 - *"Then I fell face down and cried out in a loud voice, Ah, Sovereign LORD! Will you completely destroy the remnant of Israel?"*

There will be many times when we will pray alone as our Lord often did and as we read in Mark 1:35 - *"Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where He prayed."* On other occasions, as in our meetings and conventions and in our family units, we will pray together, as David shows in Psalm 35:18 - *"I will give you thanks in the great assembly, among throngs of people I will praise you."* The place where we pray is also not important. We have examples of prayers being made in many locations on the open fields, as in Gen. 24:11,12 - *"He (Eliezer) made the camels kneel down near the well outside the town; it was toward evening, the time the women go out to draw water. Then he prayed, O, LORD, God of my master Abraham, give me success today, and show kindness to my master Abraham."*

Prayer may be offered in temples, synagogues and even at the riverside, as Paul did. Acts 16:13 - *"On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there."* It may be offered on the seashore - Acts 21:5 - *"But when our time was up, we left and continued on our way. All the disciples and their wives and children accompanied us out of the city, and there on the beach we knelt to pray."* As we have seen, we have the honour and privilege from God to commune with Him wherever, whenever and for whatever reason.

"In every case should Christians pray, If near the throne of grace they'd live."

PATTERNS OF PRAYER

The intensity, freedom and effectiveness of prayer can best be seen in the lives of those who, in the Bible, have sought to live their lives in harmony with God, such as - Moses, Jacob, Elijah, David, Solomon, Paul and of course the supreme example, our Lord Jesus Christ. In our faith and practice, prayer is essential. It is carried on apart from our sacrifice, study, works and gatherings. It is a matter of continual communication with God. Prayer is not only a human activity, but is elicited and energised by the power of our Heavenly Father. Prayer is a gift from God that requires us to conscientiously desire, develop and discipline our lives. Prayer is not request for mundane happiness but rather for divine fellowship and eternal salvation. Prayer involves much more than petition and persuasion, it is adoring reverence, wonder, yearning desire, surrender, love, confidence, trust and resolve. True prayer is in spirit and in truth, as our Lord told the Samaritan Woman - John 4:24 - *"God is spirit, and His worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth."* - releasing us from all limitations of space. Thus the believing heart becomes God's temple, as Paul tells us in 1 Cor. 6:19,20 - *"Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, which is in you, which you have received from God? You are not your own, you were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body."*

When it comes to the pattern that our prayers should follow, as in every aspect of our relationship with God, our Lord Jesus Christ has left us an unsurpassed and perfect example. Peter reminds us in 1 Peter 2:21 - *"To this end you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in His steps."* Prayer occupied a place of singular importance in His own life and teaching. In time of decision and crisis He gave Himself to prayer. Thus our Lord prayed when He was baptised as we read in Luke 3:21,22 - *"When all the people were being baptised, Jesus was baptised too. And as He was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on Him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, You are my Son, whom I love, with you I am well pleased."* Our Lord also prayed before He chose the twelve apostles - Luke 6:12,13 - *"Jesus went into a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, He called His disciples to Him to choose twelve of them, whom He also designated apostles."*

Jesus prayed when He was engaged in sustained and exhausting service, as we read in Matt 14:23 - *"When He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain apart to pray, and He was there alone"*. When He was performing miracles, He called upon God, as in the case of Lazarus recorded in John 11. *"So they*

took away the stone, then Jesus looked up and said, Father I thank you that you have heard me. I know that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.” Jesus prayed when He was concerned for Simon Peter - Luke 22:31,32 - “Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail, and when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.”

When our Lord was faced with betrayal, execution and momentary divine abandonment, He turned once more to His Heavenly Father, as we read in Mark 14:32-36. *“They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to His disciples, Sit here while I pray. Going a little further, He fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from Him. ‘Abba, Father,’ He said, ‘everything is possible for you; take this cup from me, yet not what I will, but what you will.”* But the prayer most dear to all of us was the one made for His disciples there with Him, and also for all such in the future and for the ministry. This is contained in John 17, reading verses 20,21 - *“My prayer is not for them alone, I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be one in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.”*

Our Lord also prayed at times of joy, as Luke tells us (Ch. 10:21) - *“At that time, Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, I praise you, Father; Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yea, Father, for this was your good pleasure.”* He was also grateful for the food that His Heavenly Father provided for His people, as we read at the time of the Last Supper in Luke 22:17 - *“After taking the cup, He gave thanks and said, Take this and divide it among you.”* Another example was at the feeding of the five thousand (John 6:11) - *“Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish.”*

“LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY”

Prayer was such an integral part of our Lord’s life that His example has aroused in His followers a longing for the same communication and blessing that prayer has to offer, as we are told in Luke 11:1 - *“One day Jesus was praying in a certain place; when He finished, one of His disciples said to Him, Lord. Teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.”* Every kind of prayer may be found in the Gospel record - communion, adoration, thanksgiving, petition, intercession and submission, every kind except confession. With that exception, it may be said that our Lord’s model prayer in Matt 6:9-13, together with His parables and discourses on the subject, sprang from His own experience with the Father. When instructing on prayer, our Lord used examples that were well known to His disciples, such as in Matt 6:1-7 - *“Be careful not to do your ‘acts of righteousness’ before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven and when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”*

In John’s gospel also, Jesus shows us the heart attitude needed (John 14:13,14) - *“And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.”* Later in the same gospel, we see the reason why God is willing to answer our prayers. (John 16:24-27) - *“Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete. Though I have been speaking figuratively, a time is coming when I will tell you plainly about my Father. In that day you will ask in my name; I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf, no, the Father Himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God.”* Paul in the letter to the Hebrews tells of the special function of our Lord now that He is risen and sitting at the right hand of God. (Heb 7:21-26 reading in part) - *“The Lord swore and will not repent, thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec. By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament this man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them. For such a High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.” (KJV)*

PRINCIPLES OF PRAYER

Doubtless, some of the requests that we have made through life’s journey have been denied. However, we remember that fervent pleas do not go unanswered, some may be answered with a ‘not yet’, others in some strange guise or in a way we may not have expected. Sometimes we have periods in our lives when prayers seem to go unanswered, as David states in Psalm 88:13,14 - *“I cry to you for help, O LORD; in the morning my prayer comes before you. Why, O LORD, do you reject me and hide your face from me?”* Another example is in Hab. 1:2 - *“How long, O LORD, must I cry for help, but you do not listen? Or cry out to you, Violence!, but you do not save? Sometimes our prayers may be unanswered for the reason given in James 4:3 - “You ask, and receive not, because you ask amiss, that you may consume it upon your lusts.”* All importantly, it is

dependant on our having fully accepted Christ as our Saviour and having been accepted as God's children, as we read in Romans 8:14,15 - *"Those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God, for you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship by which we cry, Abba, Father."*

The following would then be the scriptural principles of effectual Christian prayer -

(1) Prayer avails only when made in faith. *"Without faith, it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him."* Heb. 11:6.

(2) Prayer avails only when it is made in the name of Jesus. *"I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father."* John 14:13.

(3) Prayer avails only when it is according to God's will. *"This is the confidence we have in approaching God; that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us; and if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have what we asked of him."* 1 John 5:14,15.

(4) Prayer avails only when offered under the power and the direction of the Holy Spirit. Not because of indifferent hearts, but because of human weakness, we may be ignorant of God's will. *"But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit."* Jude 20. Paul expands on this in Romans 8:26,27 - *"In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express, and he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance to with God's will."*

(5) Prayer avails only when we realise our own shortcomings and our need to rely on our Heavenly Father, as David tells us - Psalm 66:18-20 - *"If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened, but God has surely listened and heard my voice in prayer. Praise be to God, who has not rejected my prayer or withheld His love from me."*

(6) Prayer avails only when we have a forgiving heart the inability to forgive will hinder us in making effective intercession. Our Lord showed this in Matt. 18:21,22 - *"Peter came to Jesus and asked, Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times? Jesus answered, I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times."* This was followed by the parable of the king and his servant who was forgiven his debt but refused to forgive the debt someone owed him. When the king heard of this, he had his servant cast into gaol until he could pay in full. Jesus added - *"This is how my Heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."* Matt 18:35.

(7) Prayer avails only when made in the context of harmonious human relationships, as we read in Matt 5:23,24 - *"Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift."* In 1 Peter 3:7, the apostle urges marital harmony *"so that nothing will hinder your prayers."*

(8) Prayer avails only if made with persistence, evidence of genuine care, compassion and concern as shown in Luke 18:1-8. *"Then Jesus told His disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. He said, in a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with a plea, Grant me justice against my adversary. For some time he refused, but finally said to himself Even though I don't fear God or care about men, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually wear me out with her coming. And the Lord said, Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God bring about justice for His chosen onesI tell you, He will see that they get justice and quickly."*

(9) Prayer avails only when made with concentration and intensity as James tells us (Jas 5:16) - *"The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective,"* while Paul tells us in 1 Thess. 5:17,18 - *"Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God concerning you."*

Let us never forget the very special privilege that we have, as followers of Christ, to come before the throne of grace to communicate with our Heavenly Father, a direct link made possible by the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us pray with rejoicing hearts and give thanks for this great privilege of prayer. (RJC: 1996)



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“The Desire of all Nations”

“The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.” (Isaiah 11:9)

Assuredly our text has never yet had fulfilment, but just as surely it shall be fulfilled, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it; yea, more, hath declared that ultimately “every knee shall bow and every tongue confess” Messiah, to the glory of God the Father.

The Lord permits his people to have sunshine, cloud, and showers for their refreshment, for their development. Nevertheless, the showers of refreshing never seem to come with sufficient frequency, and we continually rejoice in the hope that “still there’s more to follow.” What a contrast, therefore, is suggested by the words of our text—a downpour of truth and grace which will produce a flood of righteousness and knowledge of the Lord worldwide and ocean-deep!

When will this be, and how will it come to pass, are the incredulous inquiries. It seems too good to be true that, after a reign of sin and death lasting for six thousand years, so wonderful a change is to be brought about! It seems too great a miracle to be expected that, after the struggle of Truth with Error, of Righteousness with Sin for long centuries, the time should ever come when Righteousness and the knowledge of God should obtain so complete a victory, so thorough a mastery of the world!

“THY KINGDOM COME”

The Scriptures answer our query and explain the entire situation. They tell us that the world’s conversion comes not by might nor by power of man, but “by my spirit, saith the Lord.” The Bible tells us that during this Gospel Age God has poured out his holy spirit upon his servants and upon his handmaids and upon these alone; but they tell us also that with the end of this Age and the dawning of the new dispensation the Lord will pour out his spirit upon all flesh. “After those days, saith the Lord, I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh.”

But what will be the cause of this change in the Divine program, which the Almighty has foreknown from of old and foretold through the prophets?

Evidently it is not a change of the Divine purpose or intent, but merely a change in the Divine operation, for “known unto the Lord are all his works, from the foundation of the world.” A lesson we all need to learn is that as, in human operations, time and order are observed, so likewise these are elements in the Divine arrangement.

THE FORMATIVE STAGES

In any construction a foundation is the first requisite, and the roof or capstone and the finishing touches mark the completion of the edifice. So in the Divine arrangement various ages mark various degrees of development in the Divine purpose and not until the finishing touches shall have been given will the glories of the architect and builder of creation’s wonderful temple be manifested. We are at present in the formative period. God has begun the great work which he prophesied of old. Messiah has come, has died for the sins of men, has risen from the dead and been highly exalted: the Church, spiritual Israel, gathered from natural Israel and from all the families of the earth, a “little flock”, has been in process of selection for well over nineteen centuries.

Soon it will be completed—the predestined number possessing the foreordained quality of character, “copies of God’s dear Son,” will have been found and tested and developed and polished and fitted and prepared for the glorious position to which they have been called as Messiah’s Bride and joint-heir in his Kingdom. Then the King and Queen of the Millennial Kingdom, being in readiness for their work, a great change in the Divine

program of earth will take place.

SATAN SHALL BE BOUND

The Scriptures most distinctly teach that we are under the reign of the “Prince of this world,” Satan, and that our Lord at his Second Coming in power and great glory will bind or restrain this strong one and overthrow his empire, which is not of Divine authorization, but built upon human weakness, ignorance, and superstition. We are distinctly told that Satan shall be bound for that thousand years (the Millennium) that he may deceive the people no more until the thousand years shall be finished.

The question naturally arises, Why did God with all power at his command so long permit Satan to deceive humanity and through their superstitions and ignorance rule them as their Prince? Why was he ever given liberty or power at all over humanity? In the light of the Scriptures we may see that as God at times has used the wrath of man to praise him, so during this period of Satan’s liberty he has not been permitted to frustrate the Divine Plan or intention but, unconsciously, has served it. Without his blinding influence the Jewish rulers would not have crucified our Lord, as Peter distinctly shows, “I know that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers” (Acts 3:17).

Likewise had it not been for the delusions of Satan the Church would not have been persecuted; the way to glory and honor and immortality and joint-heirship with Christ would not have been made the “narrow way;” the saints, the “jewels” whom the Lord is now selecting, would not have been polished and fitted and prepared for the glorious places to which the Lord has called them. Surely, then, the Lord has used the great Adversary in the accomplishing of the Divine purposes. Satan may have supposed that he was frustrating God’s plans, but just as surely he was mistaken. The Divine Word is sure which declares, “My Word that goeth forth out of my mouth shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in that whereunto I sent it.”

“THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS”

Attempting to give us glimpses of the glory that is to come the Scriptures use various figures of speech, telling us, for instance, that the present is a dark night as compared to the future, which will be a morning of joy. They declare, “Weeping may endure for the night, but joy cometh in the morning”—the Millennial morning.

Following the same figure we read, “The Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in his beams.” From this standpoint the entire six thousand years of the reign of sin from the time of Adam’s disobedience in the Garden of Eden to the time of establishment of the reign of Christ has been a night time in which darkness has covered the earth and gross darkness the people” (Isa. 60:2). The night will give place to the glorious day of his presence, the bright shining of the Sun of Righteousness.

The spirit of sleep and stupor came over the Church during the dark ages. The Lord permitted it to be so. We lost sight of the glorious things of the Restitution morning and the blessings then to come to the Church and to the world in general. These things were little preached and little believed, although most conspicuous in the Word of God. Instead we gave heed to the heathen theories and more or less mixed and combined them with the Scriptural teaching, much to our confusion.

We needed to turn back, to retrace our steps, to inquire for the old paths (Jer. 6:16), for the doctrines older than Wesley and Calvin, older than Roman Catholicism—the doctrines of Jesus and the apostles and prophets. From this standpoint, thank God, we can see light in his light and glorify his name and appreciate his Word as containing the very essence of wisdom, justice, love and power.

THE LIVING AND THE DEAD

The proposition of the Scriptures of a Millennial Age of blessing, coming through the establishing of God’s Kingdom, for which we pray, “Thy will be done in earth as it is done in heaven,” strikes people in three different ways:

First—Some, ungenerously, will be disposed to resent the thought under the supposition that it would imply a more favourable opportunity for the world in general in the next Age to come into harmony with God than the Church of the present age enjoys. To these we answer that their argument is at fault because they fail to recognize the fact that the reward to be given to the overcomers of this Gospel Age, the Church, will be a much higher one than will go to the obedient of the world in the next Age.

The reward of the Church will be a spirit nature and a share in the heavenly Kingdom with the Lord Jesus. The reward of the earthly class of faithful ones will be Restitution to the perfection of human nature lost by Adam and redeemed by our Lord Jesus. Surely those who appreciate the “high calling” to the Divine nature and joint-heirship with the Lord in his Kingdom will see that it is well worth the additional sacrifices, self denials, etc., which it will cost.

Second—Another class, generous and appreciative, offer the criticism that it seems unfair on God's part to give such a glorious Millennial opportunity to those who will be living at the time of the Second Advent and to deny it to the remainder of the race who lived previously. This also is a mistake, we answer. God's proposition is that all of the world of mankind who do not enter into the trial of this present time—the judgment or trial of the Church, the spirit-begotten ones—will have an opportunity of entering into the judgment or trial of the world for the prize of Restitution and human perfection on the earthly plane.

This blessing, this privilege, will begin with the living nations at the time of the beginning of the establishment of the Lord's Kingdom, but it will not end with them. The Scriptures declare, "All nations which thou hast made shall come and worship before thee." And again, "In thy Seed **all** the families of the earth shall be blessed."

Some of those nations and families have perished from the earth, but the Divine provision of redemption and Restitution is meant for all eventually. The Scriptures assure us of an awakening of all the sleeping millions of earth's population. "The hour is coming in which all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of Man and come forth." The Apostle tells us that they will come forth, "every man in his own order," or class; thus intimating that from the Divine standpoint there are different classes of the dead.

Thus the Scriptures assure us that the first class, the blessed and holy ones, the saintly, will alone share in the First Resurrection, and that these shall be priests unto God and reign with Christ a thousand years (Rev. 20:4). The remainder of mankind will come from the tomb in order—not all at once.

They will not come forth to be condemned. They were "condemned already" as children of Adam because of his sin. It is on that account that they were "born in sin and shapen in iniquity." It was from that sin and its sentence or condemnation that Christ died to set them free. They will come forth free from that condemnation in a judicial sense, but, nevertheless, with the weaknesses of the fall still upon them, and they will be required to cooperate with the Lord in their uplifting during that thousand years.

Note that the great King of Glory, with all power in heaven and earth, could not, if he chose, lift them at once from their degradation and all that was lost, because the gradual uplifting and their own cooperation in the Divine program, so arranged, will be the most helpful way—because the learning of righteousness by the process of climbing up out of conditions of imperfection will impress upon them its principles the more thoroughly.

Third—A third class, and they are not a few, discern at once that "true and righteous" are the Lord's ways and arrangements—that those now on trial have more advantage every way in that to them was granted so high an honor and blessing and so great a stimulus to righteousness. They recognize also that the Lord's arrangements for the world, the living and the dead, will be glorious to all, when all shall have been brought fully to an appreciation of the facts.

KNOWLEDGE OF THE LORD

To some it may appear strange that it is the knowledge of the Lord that is to fill the whole earth ocean deep—not the knowledge of mankind, not the knowledge of sin, not human philosophy—none of these are to fill the earth and to bring blessings to the world of mankind, but "the knowledge of the Lord." Well did our dear Redeemer say, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only living and true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."

Life eternal is not to be gained by a knowledge of astronomy or geology or mathematics or chemistry, etc., but by the knowledge of God. How is this? What is there so wonderful, so magnetic in the knowledge of God that it should be said that men might gain eternal life thereby? We answer that God himself is the very personification of those glorious elements of character which he demands we shall emulate, copy, seek after.

Thus our Lord Jesus said, "Be ye like unto your Father which is in heaven." Not that we can ever be exactly like him in these respects, while we have our present imperfect bodies, but his is the pattern which we must copy as best we can now and be the exact copy of by and by.

The thought is that as we *copy* our Heavenly Father's character each additional step of progress means a clearer knowledge of the Father, and only those who attain to the very perfection of love in their hearts will be able rightly, truly to know the Father or the Son. Hence to know him in the full, proper sense of the word would imply that we had attained his likeness in our hearts, and this would imply preparation for life eternal on the Divine terms.

From this standpoint our text implies that all mankind will ultimately be in that condition of the knowledge of God which will imply the perfection of their hearts, imply their acceptance to eternal life, imply that all unwilling to come to this glorious condition under the Divine opportunities will have been destroyed from amongst the people in the Second Death (Acts 3:23). How wonderful is the Divine arrangement! Blessed are our eyes, for they see and our ears that they hear and our hearts that they now respond!

*“For thus saith the Lord of hosts, yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the desire **of all nations** shall come; and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts.” Haggai 2:6,7.*

“Little in Thine Own Sight”

(Lessons from the life of King Saul)

“Then Samuel said unto Saul, Stay and I will tell you what the Lord has said to me this night; and he said unto him, Say on. And Samuel said, When you were little in your own sight, were you not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the Lord anointed you king of Israel?” (1 Samuel 15:16, 17)

The history of Saul, the son of Kish, who was selected to be king over Israel, is one of the extremely sad stories of the Bible. He is introduced to us as a noble young man, choice and goodly and tall, a head above all his fellows. He was honourable, upright, and possessed of noble qualities, and was of humble disposition. When Samuel announced to him that the Lord had indicated that he should be the king of Israel, he seemed unable to believe it. He said, “Am I not a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel, and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin, wherefore then speakest thou to me?” Then when Samuel came to present Saul as king, Saul had hidden himself in modesty.

THE FIRST FALSE STEP

How strange that such a character could so soon lose his virtue and become a despot and a gruesome murderer of innocent men! This was not all at once, however, for sin generally has its small beginnings. His first mistake was to presume to offer the sacrifice to God instead of waiting in trust and patience for the coming of Samuel to do so. For this he had his own excuse, “Because I saw that the people were scattered from me and that thou (Samuel) came not within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered at Michmash, therefore, I said the Philistines will come down upon me and I have not made supplication to the Lord. I forced myself therefore and offered a burnt offering.”

What a change had already taken place; where was the modesty that would hide from being made king? Now he assumes an office for which he had no authority. How plausible seemed the excuse, the emergency called for it, further it was an offering unto the Lord. He no doubt persuaded himself that as king he could officiate and that he was doing the right thing. How easy it is to err, to take a wrong course if we trust to our own judgment - “a man’s ways seem right in his own eyes” - but it is better to trust in the Lord and wait upon Him. He will never fail those who trust in Him. He will “not slumber or sleep” but will guard His people, even though sometimes He sees it good to test their patience and faithfulness to principle and truth. “Wait on the Lord and keep His way.”

King Saul had evidently lost some of the beauty of his character, and had become a sorrowful example of such as go before the Lord instead of, as the Psalmist puts it, “My soul, wait thou only upon God for my expectation is from Him. He only is my rock and my salvation, He is my defence, I shall not be greatly moved.” (Psalm 62:5,2)

FURTHER DISOBEDIENCE

Then a little later and a more serious fault occurs, a further disobedience to clear definite instructions. Samuel giving the message said, “Now hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the Lord....go and smite Amalek and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not, but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox, sheep, camel and ass.” Samuel seemed to know that it was necessary to emphasise, “Hearken thou to the voice of the message.” It was very plain and there could be no misunderstanding and no excuse. Nevertheless, Saul leaned again to his own understanding and spared King Agag, and the best of the sheep and oxen, etc.

He evidently persuaded himself that he had done better, perhaps more mercifully than the Lord had commanded. He met Samuel with the words, “Blessed be thou of the Lord, I have performed the commandment of the Lord.” And Samuel said, “What meaneth then the bleating of sheep and lowing of oxen which I hear?” Saul had satisfied his own mind by the thought of sacrificing these animals to the Lord. Again, he erred concerning worship, as though something he could do would be pleasing to God and Samuel had to rebuke him in the name of the Lord.

“And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams!” (1 Samuel 15:22)

GOD’S REQUIREMENTS

Saul’s condition is a sad condition to get into, and yet probably many who ought to know the truth have, like

Saul, taken their own way, trusted to their own understanding instead of seeking to know the divine will and way. Such will, as Saul did, if they continue in that way, lose God's favour and lose the spirit of the truth. How serious is this lesson for us, His people - God can do without our aid; it is but a privilege. He may grant to us that we may serve Him, but anything that we do must be done rightly, must be done in His way and in His spirit.

Let us never think that we can improve on divine instructions; let us be careful of the Word of God as it stands, and not think to add to or take away from it. What God requires of us is simple, earnest faith, implicit obedience, and then such sacrifice as a grateful heart may offer. Surely it was a great privilege that God had granted Saul when he was "little in his own eyes" to make him king of Israel, and it is a greater privilege that He has granted us, to anoint us as kings and priests unto our God, joint-heirs with Christ in His kingdom. Let us keep small in our own sight!

SAUL'S DOWNFALL

So the spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit troubled him, and he went from bad to worse until all honour was lost, and he became a jealous murderer and enquired of evil spirits. His action in slaying Ahimelek and eighty priests, because Ahimelek had given David bread (although the priest did so under the impression that David was on the king's errand), showed that he had no sense of honour or justice, and to what degradation he had fallen. So it is with those who have known the truth, if they fall away after having tasted of the good things of the age to come, and having been partakers of the Holy Spirit.

Samuel's words give the reason for Saul's downfall. It was the same reason that brought about the fall of the great Adversary - he was no longer "Little in thine own sight" instead "pride was found in thee". In Satan we have exemplified the truth that "he that exalteth himself shall be abased", but in Christ, the contrast - "he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

THE HUMBLE AND CONTRITE HEART

Saul seemed so beautiful as a young man, and some have been inclined to sympathise with him in the penalty he incurred for his failures, and to wonder how it was that David did not receive similar punishment for his misdeeds. We may however rest assured that "the Judge of all the earth will do right." Saul's errors were different from those of David. David was ever loyal to the Lord in his heart; his sin was terrible, but it was not deliberate disobedience. He was deceived by the sinfulness of sin, his mind had evidently become befogged by his lust and he did not realise the awfulness of his crime. Later there was no attempt to justify himself, but a contrite heart sought forgiveness. So he was punished and restored to divine favour.

With Saul there was the high mind which presumed to know better than the divine commands and deliberate disobedience. These lost him the continuation of the crown for his family. Further, instead of a broken and contrite heart seeking pardon, he took on a terrible, jealous, murderous spirit, and sought to kill David whom he knew the Lord intended should be king after him. He stands as a terrible example of how it is possible for a noble character to fall, and to fall so low. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

Knowing, as Saul did, that God had appointed David to succeed him as king, his action in seeking to slay David was deliberate rebellion against God, and an attempt to frustrate His purpose. How clearly Saul's course illustrates the course of Satan, and shows from what heights and to what depths one may fall who once loses the spirit of humble, loyal faithfulness to God. The way in which God dealt with David shows that He looks upon the heart, and, while the heart is true, He is ready to restore to His favour even though serious mistakes may have been made through misjudgment, or because of the frailty of human nature and present environments.

The important lesson for us all is to preserve the earnest desire to do God's will, to thus keep ourselves in God's love. The power to enable us to do so is our love for God. This will be preserved and strengthened by considering His love for us - "what great things He has done" - and what wonderful purposes He has revealed in His word, not only for the Church, but for all the willing and obedient in due time. When we consider His mighty works and His acts of wisdom, justice and love in dealing with Israel of old, we shall find our love for God is a reverential love. We recognise how little we are, how great He is, and our wonder is that He is mindful of us.

THE DIVINE CRITERIA

If we thus keep ourselves in such an attitude of humble faithfulness to God, there will not be much danger of "thinking of ourselves more highly than we ought to think." One may have a little more intellect than another, one may occupy a little better social position, another may have had better advantages of home or education, etc., but what is the shade of difference in the Divine sight? Also, though we may be a little better in some respects, we may be some degrees worse in others. What is it, then, that the Lord requires of us; is it education, money, social influence, intellect or any such things? Is it clever people that our Lord is selecting

today? No, the answer is quite to the contrary.

“Behold your invitation brethren that not many wise ones according to the flesh, not many strong ones, not many well-born, but God selected the foolish things of the world, that He may shame the wise, and God selected the weak things of the world, that He may shame the powerful, and the ignoble things of the world, and the things that are despised God selected, and things not existing that He may bring to nought the existing things, so no flesh may boast in His presence.” (1 Cor 1:26-28 Diaglott)

The Lord uses the weak things that His strength may be the more apparent. When He would deliver Israel under Gideon, He chose only three hundred men and sent the thousands to their homes so that the nation might know that it was not by their own power that the Midianites were discomfited. The Lord will not use the proud to do His work. Moses, the meekest man on earth, was most wonderfully used to deliver Israel, to lead them for forty years and to mediate the Law Covenant. Saul was chosen to be king “when he was little in his own sight”; but was rejected when he lost that disposition.

Our lord’s invitation comes down to us - *“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take me yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.” (Matt. 11:28,29)* The apostle, speaking of Jesus, says - *“Let this disposition be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who, though being in God’s form, yet did not meditate a usurpation to be like God, but divested Himself taking a bondsman’s form, having been made in the likeness of men. And being in condition as a man, He humbled Himself becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God supremely exalted Him, and freely granted to Him that name which is above every name, in order that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow” (Phil. 2:5-11 Diaglott)*

“SMALL IN OUR OWN EYES”

If we wish to know the riches of Divine grace, we must learn to be humble, to keep little in our own sight. Selfishness and pride are twins, and they are at the root of all sin and wickedness and troubles, and how often these seeds of evil are seen, even among God’s people. We are all born in sin and inherit some taint of these abominable things, but we have received the mind of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit which can overcome the natural disposition. This is not done without a struggle; the flesh wars against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh. We could of ourselves not win the fight, but it is God who will give us strength to do so, and will also work in us to will and to do His good pleasure, even our sanctification.

What dangers we shall avoid, what errors we shall escape, if we keep “little in our own sight”. It will keep us from selfishly wanting our own ways. It will keep us from being self opinionated. It will help us to rely on God’s Word, and not trust to our own understanding. It will help us to tread the way appointed instead of wandering in search of “new light”, or something by way of a change. It will help us to give a patient hearing to the earnest expressions of others’ thoughts, even though feebly expressed. It will prevent us from being critical of others, from judging, from being censorious or interfering, trying to arrange others’ concerns. It will help us to put the best constructions on the actions of others and to be sympathetic with the weak.

It will help us to be more like the Master, ready to wash one another’s feet, willing to serve in any possible way, so long as it is the Lord’s way. How much, then, depends upon keeping “small in our own eyes”! It means success or failure in our Christian course. Only if we humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God will we be exalted in due time, to reign with Christ. (P.P. 8/31)

“Unto You is Born...”

“And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, (because he was of the house and lineage of David) to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

And so it was that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered and she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night, and, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid.

And the angel said unto the, Fear not, for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people, for unto you is born this in the city of David, a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: You shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger:

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men.” Luke 24-14. ‘

I Would Keep Little, Lord

Oh, what am I that Thou should think
To offer me a throne,
So graciously to make me drink
Of truth and love, Thine own.
Oh, may I ever feel
The favour Thou dost grant,
In lifting me from miry clay
And on the Rock to plant.
Tis only if I still remain
In my own eyes so small,
That I Thy favour may retain
And thus make sure my call.
By grace I would keep little, Lord
Faithful and meek and true,
Ever love Thy will and work
Do humbly what I do.

“Are Ye Able?”

JESUS' FINAL HOURS

Some little while prior to the hour of his death, Jesus left the scenes of his usual activities in Galilee, and took his disciples along into the region of Caesarea Philippi – a town in the Northern district of Palestine, near the foot of Mount Hermon. In the quietness of this countryside retreat, Jesus, for the first time, began to tell his followers of his approaching death (Matt. 16. 21. Mark 9. 31). During this period of retirement Jesus passed through his wonderful transfiguration experience in the Holy Mount, during which the chosen three disciples saw his glory and heard the other two participants in that glory scene talk with Jesus of the “*decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem*” (Luke 9. 31). Descending from the mountain to the other waiting disciples, Jesus charged the favoured witnesses to tell no man about what they had seen “*till the Son of Man be risen again from the dead*” (Matt. 17. 9).

From that time on, as Jesus returned to Galilee, and then left for the last time those cities wherein his mightiest works had been done to go up to Jerusalem, reference to his approaching death and resurrection fell much more frequently from his lips (Mark 9. 30-32). In spite, however, of these repeated assertions, though at times they questioned among themselves what they might portend, the disciples failed entirely to comprehend what He meant. These frequent references by Jesus, however, show us that the purpose for which He had come into the world was beginning to lie heavily upon his own heart and mind. The hour of his life's mission was fast approaching, but, for all the sorrow it might entail, it was in no fearful mood that He set out to meet it (Luke 9. 51).

SHADOW OF THE CROSS

A very graphic pen-picture is given by Mark (10. 32) of the bearing and reaction, both of Jesus and his followers, as they set out on the last stage of that fateful journey to the mighty events that were to befall during the next few eventful days. “And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem, and *Jesus went before them....* and as they followed they were afraid”. Fear made them hesitant, so that they lagged behind their Master—But He, for whom these moments were so fraught with destiny, “set his face to go up” without hesitation to that ungrateful City which realised not that its own fateful hour also was fast approaching.

The shadow of the Cross lay over the life of the Man of Sorrows, from that moment of glory on Hermon's slopes till He hung between heaven and earth outside the gate and gave, meantime, solemn depth to all his words and eager expectation to his consecrated thoughts. Evidently the disciples could feel the force of this deeper solemnity and eager expectation, for Mark says “they were amazed” as Jesus led them in the way.

COST OF DISCIPLESHIP

While in this exalted mood, there came one—a rich young ruler—to ask Jesus by what means he could attain to eternal life. “Cross-bearing” and self-renunciation had been Jesus' constant theme during all this southward journey from Hermon to Judea. Hence, when this young man, so apparently in earnest, asked so direct a

question, Jesus gave him no less direct an answer. “Sell all”— and “surrender all”, said Jesus, who was now on the threshold of giving his “all” in death, that others might live.

The young man turned sorrowfully away, unable to esteem “treasure in heaven” as riches preferable to his great wealth. Inwardly sighing as the young man went his way, Jesus said *“How hardly shall they that have riches enter the kingdom of God”*—in other words, How difficult it is for anyone to make the best of both worlds!

Hearing this remark, Peter says, in effect, “Lord, how does this statement affect our position? We have not hesitated to leave all, and follow thee—What shall we have therefore, when the Kingdom, which we preach, is established?” To Peter and his brethren, Jesus then makes reply “No man who has left all—father, mother, wife, children, houses and lands—for my sake, shall lose by his sacrifice; he shall get a hundred-fold in return, and shall most certainly inherit eternal life! Moreover ye which have followed me, in that day of regeneration, when I, as the Son of Man, sit on the Throne of my Glory, shall also each sit upon his throne judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Then, they, who like the young ruler, have been “first” in this present order, if, entering at all, shall be “last” in the honours of my kingdom, and they that have been “last” (and least) shall then be “first”.

This word of assurance must have been encouraging and comforting to his little band of followers. Here was something they could readily grasp and understand. It was not enigmatic and baffling, like the references to his death and resurrection had been. And presumably they talked this matter over, both among themselves and also more privately. Most likely it was the topic of an earnest conversation beneath Zebedee’s roof, and as James and John told the story of Jesus and the ruler, a fond and doting mother resolved to ask for her sons a place and position they would scarcely have dared to ask for themselves.

ARE YE ABLE?

Threading her way, one day, through the little group of disciples, accompanied by her two sons, and with some show of respect and deference, she desired the privilege of speaking with Jesus perhaps more privately. “What is your request” asks Jesus. *“Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left in thy kingdom.”* (Matt. 20. 21).

Taking the question as the agreed utterance of sons as well as mother, Jesus looks them straight in the face, and through that to the heart, and says, “You know not what you ask! You do not know or realise what is implied or involved in this request! You may have followed me about in Galilee, and in Judea; and you may have left your boats and employment for my sake, but following me means more than all this! As I have of recent days been telling you of my death, and that I have come not merely to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom, but to die—to suffer at the hands of cruel men: I ask you now, are you prepared to follow me in all this? Are you able to drink of the Cup that I shall drink of? Are you able to be baptised with the baptism that I have already been baptised with? Will you follow me through death and humiliation and rejection, and be cut off from your people and kindred?”

“We will follow you even there—we are able!” they replied, thus expressing a deep fidelity to him, and his mission in life. “You shall drink indeed of my Cup—you shall be baptised with my baptism, but even then, I cannot grant your request to sit one on either side of me—that is not my gift. It is my Father’s prerogative to give those positions to those for whom they have been prepared by him” replied Jesus.

“Will you follow me, not knowing what place or position you will get? Will you drink of my Cup, and leave all else to the Father? Can you step out, not minding what your reward will be, only that as you share my Cup of suffering you will also share my Cup of Joy?”

No more penetrating or illuminating words, prior to the moment of this conversation, had anywhere fallen from the lips of Jesus. Up in the vicinity of Caesarea Philippi, some short time before, after Peter had made his memorable, God-given confession ‘Thou art the Christ’ Jesus had gone on to say “If any man will be my disciple, let him take up his cross and follow me” implying that every faithful follower should be accorded the privilege of ‘cross-bearing’, but never before had He linked his followers with himself in quite the same close, intimate way. “Are YOU able to drink of the Cup that I shall drink of?” Can *you* drink, as I am about to drink, of a Cup which my Father shall pour?”

DRINKING OF THE CUP

There is no mistaking the implication here. Jesus was reaching the crucial hour, and the accomplishment of the specific purpose for which He had come into this world. At a later time as the weight of tragedy and sorrow pressed more heavily on his sensitive heart, we hear him say, in the very shadows of Gethsemane... *“...the cup which my Father has given me, shall I not drink it?”* There is no mistaking what He meant in these decisive words (John 18. 11). Not Peter’s sword, nor resistance, nor flight was the way out for him in this hour of darkness. He had come into the world for this hour. He had lived his spotless life, He had faithfully

taught the Truth of God and raised the hostility of demons and men—and this was their hour and the power of darkness. But not from them did Jesus accept the issues of that dark hour.

“The Cup which my Father has given me”—that was Jesus’ view. There were no secondary causes in his life, either in his ingress or egress from this world. And yet again, when the fuller extent of the shame and humiliation that awaited him was opening up before him, in the hour of his anguish, we hear the same truth, and the same whole-hearted submission to the over-ruling hand of a Fatherly providence. “O Father, if it be possible, let this Cup....pass....from me, nevertheless not as I will”. Here the bitter cup was at his lips—and He was drinking it to its dregs. This was “the cup that I shall drink”. Jesus had lived in the shadow of this hour more particularly from his transfiguration onward, and under its solemnising power he had come by stages to Jerusalem and Gethsemane.

Knowing then, in his own mind, the ordeal which awaited him, when his hour should be fully come, we must not fail to note what his question to James and John implies. He had a Cup to drink, which was to be given him by his Father; and with the deepening sense of all this experience weighing heavier upon him, He asks, *“Are ye able to drink of the Cup that I shall drink?”* (B.S.M.)



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“For the Joy Set Before Him”

(Why Jesus Came down from Heaven)

“I am the Living Bread which came down from heaven, and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.” – John 6:51.

There are many verses of Scripture which plainly show us that Jesus had a prehuman existence in heaven with God, His Heavenly Father, before He came down to earth as “the living bread”. In the words of the risen Lord, Himself, in the message to the church of Laodicea given to John (Rev. 3:14), He is clearly described as “*the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God.*” Jesus was then the very beginning of the creation of God, away back in the far regions of eternity.

This is pictured for us in Proverbs 8:22, where we read, as though Jesus was speaking prophetically through the writer of that book, “*The LORD (Jehovah) possessed me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old.*” The basic meaning of the Hebrew word here translated “possessed” is “to create” and so, in His prehuman existence, before Jehovah’s works of old, in the very beginning of His creation, He (Jesus) was the Heavenly Father’s Logos or agent, by whom all else was created.

Both the apostles John and Paul were inspired to confirm this. In John 1:1-3 we read - “*In the beginning was the Word (Logos), and the Word was with God and the Word was a God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him and without Him was not anything made that was made.*” These words refer to the very beginning away back when the Logos Himself was brought forth, not when our planet was formed, but long before that, a time about which we are not informed in scripture.

In Col. 1:15-17, the apostle Paul supports John’s record. Speaking of our Lord, Paul says - “*Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature. For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by Him, and for Him; and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist.*” Jesus was back at the Father’s right hand when Paul wrote these words, but he confirms that He was indeed the firstborn of every creature in the distant regions of eternity.

Can we visualise the greatness of our Lord Jesus Christ as the Logos, the Lord of Creation, as the Father’s honoured agent, in those far-off ages of the past, before our world was formed? Proverbs 8:30 describes the relationship between the Logos and the Father in beautifully intimate language - “*I was beside Him, like a master workman, and I was daily His delight, rejoicing before Him always.*” (R.S.V.) A master workman He truly was, bringing into being the mighty planets of our Universe, which astronomers tell us we cannot even number.

But one of the most revealing things that we learn is that, away back there, God’s plan of creation was discussed with His only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus, as the Logos. We know this, that the Father must have revealed His plan and found complete agreement in the mind of His Son, for we read in Rev. 13:8 (R.S.V.) that Jesus was “*the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world*” in this plan of God. How could this be, what does it imply? It indicates the complete revealing of the Father’s plans to His only-begotten Son - the creation of the various planets, including our earth, the creation of the intelligent beings of the different orders in the spirit world, and then of the creation of mankind in the perfect conditions of the Garden of Eden. All these intelligent beings would be perfect, in the image of God, in their own sphere.

But it was foreknown to God that His human creation would fall and He had determined that the sentence would be death. However, He also planned in advance the redemption of Adam and all mankind condemned

in Adam, desiring evidently that His only-begotten Son, of His own freewill, should become the Redeemer of mankind, and, by so great a sacrifice as this implied, manifest His loyalty to the Father and His faith in Him. Jesus' response is well expressed in the prophetic words of Psalm 40:6-8 - *"Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened; burnt offering and sin offering thou hast not required. Then said I, Lo, I come, in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God, yea, thy law is within my heart."*

"I delight to do thy will, O my God." What a loving and grand submission to the will of the Father is here expressed; to delight in doing the Father's will to redeem the human family from death by paying their penalty in death. Here we see, first and foremost, why Jesus came down from heaven - that is, to do the Father's will, to redeem mankind from death. "Mine ears thou hast opened" - to know God's will in His program for the salvation of all mankind.

In quoting these words from the Psalmist, the apostle Paul added a further thought as we read in Hebrews 10:5 - *"Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a body hast thou prepared me."* Here we see the reference is to our Lord's human body. This was surely one of the miracles associated with the Logos being made flesh, taking human form so that He might pay the sacrifice for Adam and all condemned in Adam. In verse 6 we read - *"in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure."* God had no real pleasure in the sacrifices of animals, which were merely pictorial of Christ's great sacrifice.

From verse 9 we read - *"Then said I, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that He may establish the second."* The "first" here would be the typical or pictorial sacrifices of the animals in Israel, in which God had no real pleasure. They were taken away, rendered obsolete by the sacrifice of Christ. We recall what happened at the moment when the Lord died upon the cross - the veil of the Temple was torn in two from the top to the bottom. Israel's temple services and animal sacrifices would no longer be acceptable by God now that the real sacrifice had come. "He taketh away the first, that He may establish the second."

Returning to the phrase "a body hast thou prepared me" (v.5), we find a similar thought in John 1:14 - *"the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us."* Can we fully realise the condescension of the Logos in coming down to human estate, in having His spiritual life transferred to the Babe of Bethlehem, to take on perfect human life, "a little lower than the angels", to taste death for all mankind? The so great love of Jesus in so doing was no doubt continually prompted by the thought - "I delight to do Thy will, O God."

We realise, too, that in being made flesh He sacrificed over thirty years of immediate spiritual fellowship with His Heavenly Father, whose daily delight He was, rejoicing before Him always. But Hebrews 12:2 presents, as it were, a compensating thought in respect of our Lord's supreme sacrifice. *"Who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."* What then was the joy set before our Lord in His endurance of the cross?

Firstly, there was the joy, the pleasure, of loving to do the Father's will. **Secondly**, there was the joy in prospect that, if faithful unto death, He would be raised to the Father's right hand. In explanation, we have the words of John 10:17,18 - *"Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might receive it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself I have power to lay it down, and I have power to receive it again. This commandment have I received of my Father"*

Furthermore, the joy of returning to the Father is revealed in John 14:28, in Jesus' words to His little band of followers just prior to his crucifixion - *"Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father; for my Father is greater than I."* "If you loved me!" Of course, they loved the Lord in their own way, and loving Him they wished to keep Him. But there was a higher love implied here. "If you loved me, you would rejoice, **because** I go to the Father", to the glory He had with the Father before the world was. He was going back to the Father from whom He came, the Father to whom he was a daily delight. This was His request in His prayer to the Father - *"Now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory I had with thee before the world was."* (John 17:5)

We know that the Father not only honoured Jesus with His former glory as the Logos, but honoured Him further, exalting Him to His own, divine nature. How beautifully this is expressed by the apostle in Phil. 2:6 - *"Who being in the form of God thought not by robbery to be equal with God."* The Authorised Version here gives a wrong thought - He did not meditate to be on an equality with God at all, that was Satan's ambition, not that of our Lord Jesus. Verse 7 continues - *"But made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men."* It was necessary that He be in the likeness of men, an exact equivalent of Adam, so that He might be a corresponding price to redeem mankind.

Verse 8 reads - *"And being found in fashion as a man He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."* This was required for as it is written - *"cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree."* The nation of Israel was doubly cursed, by their law and by death in Adam. It was required of Jesus that He pay the penalty on the cross for Israel and the whole world of mankind. Verse 9 goes on -

“wherefore God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name above every name.” How beautifully, then, the apostle shows the exaltation of Jesus because of His obedience unto death as man’s Redeemer.

Thirdly, there was set before Him, in enduring the cross, the joy of redeeming from death those who would be the members of His Bride, the Church, who would be His associates in bringing God’s favour and blessings to all the rest of mankind throughout the earth in the Kingdom. In His wonderful prayer to the Father, recorded in John 17, Jesus referred particularly to these first members of the Church. Verse 6 reads - *“I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world; thine they were, and thou gavest them to me; and they have kept my word.”* These were the ones who walked with Him throughout the lengths and breadths of Palestine, preaching the Kingdom, watching the Lord perform the miracles indicating the greatness of His glory in the Kingdom time.

They saw Him raise the dead, they saw Him restore Lazarus after four days in the grave. Whether it be four days, four years or four thousand years, will make no difference to the Lord when the time comes for the glorious resurrection day. These men whom God gave to Jesus saw all these things happen; no wonder that they were convinced that this was the Christ and were willing to follow Him faithfully unto death. If we are devoted to the Lord, we today have just as much evidence that He is the one to follow as did those whom God first gave Him. In His prayer recorded in John 17, Jesus prays not only for these first ones but for all who would come to believe through their word to our day - *“that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.”* (Verse 23)

In 2 Cor. 8:9 we read - *“for ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor; that ye through His poverty might be rich.”* He who was rich, as the Logos at the Father’s right hand, left His own estate to become poor, to share mankind’s estate, so that we might be rich in the glory of the Kingdom of God. Paul further speaks of the Church, the Lord’s Bride, as *“awaiting our blessed hope, the appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify for Himself a people of His own who are zealous of good works.”* (Titus 2:13, 14 R.S.V.) These are to be a people of His own, His own disposition, His own spirit, His own ambition, ready to lay down their lives in sacrifice as He did, in accord with God’s good will.

For this joy of purifying for Himself a people of His own, Jesus came down from heaven and endured the cross, delighting to do the Father’s will. We have the apostle’s words also in Hebrews 2:9-11 - *“We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became Him, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one; for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren.”* Truly, Jesus is not ashamed to call His followers brethren, for they are all children of God, with Christ as their Head. Indeed, for the joy of having His Bride with Him in glory, Jesus endured the cross, despising the shame!

Fourthly, Jesus endured the cross for the joy of redeeming all humanity from the prison house of death. In John 12:32,33 we note Jesus’ words - *“I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This He said signifying by what death He should die.”* Jesus was first lifted up on the cross, then lifted up to the Father’s right hand. We might also note the words of John 3:14-17 - *“As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up for God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”* God so loved, Jesus so loved, that He came down from heaven to bring life, lasting life, to a world of sinners lost and ruined by the fall.

In the 53rd chapter of Isaiah, the prophet speaks of Christ’s suffering and death and in verse 11, we read - *“He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied.”* When Christ as the second Adam, with His Bride as the second Eve, have brought life to all mankind, and everyone has had a full opportunity to gain lasting life in a restored earthly paradise, He shall be satisfied indeed. For this joy set before Him, Jesus endured the cross so that He might give life to every human being who has ever lived. This will require a resurrection of all in the graves and John 5:28,29 assures us that this has been provided for in God’s all-comprehensive Plan.

The prophet Isaiah reveals further what the wonderful sacrifice of Christ will accomplish on behalf of all mankind when Christ’s Kingdom is set up and the knowledge and glory of the Lord are covering the earth as the waters cover the sea. In Isa. 52:10 we read - *“The LORD (Jehovah) hath made bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations.”* This refers to the risen Christ, the very One who came down to earth, the very One who has been exalted to the Father’s right hand. Verse 10 concludes - *“and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.”* Some of the grand blessings of that time are described very beautifully by the same prophet in Isa. 25:6-9 - blessings of life, health and victory.

But “Why Jesus Came Down From Heaven” has also a very personal application, for He did so for **each one of us individually**, in order that we might have life, and have it more abundantly. (See John 10:10) The

words of 2 Cor 5:14,15 surely speak to our hearts. Paul there says - *“For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves but unto Him who died for them, and rose again.”* What a lovely and challenging thought to keep before us each day of our Christian life. “The love of Christ constrains us” in the privilege of His service, so that we may be able, for the joy before us, to endure something of the hardness of the Christian way in the footsteps of the Master who has done so much for us.

It is surely no wonder that in the fullness of the kingdom times of blessing, the Hallelujah Chorus of Rev. 5:11-13 will sound forth from all God’s intelligent creatures, to His praise, throughout the entire universe. *“And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power; and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour; and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour; and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.”*

Jesus came down from heaven, delighting to do His Father’s will, and, having proved faithful unto death, be raised to the Father’s right hand of glory. He came down from heaven, delighting to have a chosen band of followers who would walk in His steps of self-sacrifice, and be raised to reign with Him in His Kingdom. For these, He endured the cross. But He also endured the cross for the whole human family, in order that they might be brought back to God and, as many as are willing then to obey His laws, live in the restored Garden of Eden conditions then worldwide.

Truly we can rejoice and praise God that Jesus Christ was willing to come down from heaven, to humble Himself, to be obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, so that He might pay the ransom sacrifice for us all, not only those now living, but for all who have ever lived from the days of Adam until now. Praise God for His glorious Plan of redemption. Amen. (The Voice)

HITHERTO HENCEFORTH

Hitherto the Lord hath blessed us,

Guiding all the way.

Henceforth let us trust Him fully,

Trust Him all the day.

Hitherto the Lord hath loved us.

Caring for His own.

Henceforth let us love Him better,

Live for Him alone.

Hitherto the Lord hath blessed us,

Crowning all our days.

Henceforth let us live to bless Him,

Live to show His praise.

(F R Havergal)

“HE FAILETH NOT”

Each happy morn when I awake,

This promise for the day I take,

“I’ll never leave thee, nor forsake”

He faileth not!

And when I reach that golden shore,

My trouble and my labour o’er,

I’ll sing this song for evermore,

He FAILED me not!

The Christian Pathway

(Contributed)

“Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator” (1 Pet. 4:19)

General teachings of our day largely omit mention of suffering as regards Christian faith and practice. But because the Bible in a number of places tells us to “rejoice in the Lord,” and “sing praise unto His name,” etc., it does not follow that no suffering is entailed. On the contrary we read that “All who will live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.” This has been fulfilled in the past, and so it must continue until the great millennial dawning, when Christ shall take unto Himself His great power to reign.

It would seem that the reason why so little is heard now of suffering and persecution, is that there are so few who are living “godly lives in Christ Jesus.” There appear to be rather large numbers of professing Christians who have not to contend with any persecution or suffering in their so-called Christian walk. All such, if they are honest, would be compelled to admit that the reason is that their godly life is only profession, and that their real attitude is “Be at one with the world,” instead of “Coming out and being separate.” Probably they realise quite well that it is the coming out and being separate that brings the persecution.

Therefore, when we seek for truth in Scriptural teaching, it is most important that we distinguish sharply between nominal Christianity (in name only) and truly consecrated Christians; because those who are nominal only often teach doctrines and live lives that give an altogether wrong impression of Christianity and real discipleship. One longs to expose these errors, not for the sake of sitting in judgment upon any, but in order to warn and help those who desire to be true, and who are in danger of being led into the confusion which falsity produces.

The first happening in a Christian’s life is conviction of Sin. When one becomes convicted of sin, that is, realises and is ready to admit that the life he or she has been living estranges them from God, then the Gospel message to such is “Repent and believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ that ye might be saved and your sins might be blotted out.” Christ died upon the Cross for all people. All have at one time been unsaved sinners, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. There has not been one exception, except of course, our Lord, Christ Jesus. And He, the one exception, the sinless, perfect man, died upon the cross, “The just for the unjust,” that He might reconcile us again to God. His life offered up at Calvary blots out the sin, and all who gain such understanding and gladly accept the salvation offered find peace with God.

Now, all who have gone that far, find cause for true rejoicing. It is a happy day for the one who can be brought to see that Christ was the propitiation for his or her sin, as it was indeed for the sins of the whole world. The dictionary rendering of propitiation is “act of appeasing,” or “atonement.” Sin produces enmity with God, but the Christian’s sins are appeased or atoned for by the shed blood of Jesus at Calvary. They are blotted out; the enmity is thus destroyed and we are at peace with God. Having come to that point, we are justified by faith in the blood of Jesus Christ.

Too often the preaching of God’s Word stops at this point. Most certainly we must have a good understanding of all this first; but it is far from all; indeed, it is only the beginning. Now begins the real Christian life and the test as to just how much we appreciate God’s love for us. Now is presented unto us the opportunity of presenting our bodies living sacrifices, holy, acceptable unto God, which the Apostle Paul says is our reasonable or proper service. Our life is no longer our own; it has been bought with a price. It must be laid down now, consecrated to the Master’s service and the call is to infinitely higher things than we have been concerned with hitherto. Old things pass away: all becomes new. As we hear the call of God to seek “the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus,” our chief hopes and ambitions become spiritual, heavenly, instead of carnal, worldly.

We are specially exhorted to make our calling and election sure, being reminded that not all the called are finally elected or chosen, but only those who are diligent in obeying, and remain faithful unto death. Many are called but few are chosen and given the prize of the high calling. We cannot say that there is not a lesser prize to be given to many, but now the way of the high calling is the special call and we stand as it were at the crossroads. Now assuredly is the time to stop and count the cost of setting our hand to the plough and not looking back.

Many esteem the cost too great even to heed the call. They may hear it, but instantly suppress it, giving it little consideration. Others hear and heed and begin to tread the narrow way, but when persecution arises because of the Word, they halt. Some turn quickly back: others halt so long, that often the call loses its clearness and almost without realising it, their steps are retraced back to the broad way of the world. But for those who go on in the face of all, having set their hand to the plough, determined by the grace of God never to look back, to these are the comforting words of our text applied.

History shows us what dreadful torture and persecution many of Christ’s disciples have had to endure for a witness to the truth, especially in the days of the power of Rome. Countless numbers were burned at the stake, others were thrown into a playground to be mauled by wild beasts, their dying agonies making entertainment

for thousands who gathered to watch and gloat over the victims because they would not bow the knee to the regime of a church which professed to be “The Church of God,” but which we now recognise as a part of the great system of Anti-Christ.

We can be thankful to God that we have not in our day to face the same physical torture in adherence to our faith. But persecution has not ceased. He who will be true to the Word of God will still face persecution in some measure. The true Christian, as of yore, must be still a stranger and pilgrim upon earth. Here below he has no abiding city (the treasures of his heart are not earthly things) but he seeks one to come. The so-called joys and pleasures of this world mean nothing to him (though prior to the call he may have been interested in them to some extent).

As his spiritual sight increases, he is able so to visualise heavenly things that those of the world begin to term him peculiar, just as they did with Paul when they cried, “Thou art mad, much learning hath made thee mad,” or as we have it in 1 Peter 4:4. “Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you:’ As the worldly find the truly consecrated running not to the same excess of riot as themselves, they begin to separate him from their company, speaking evil of him; taunting him as being old-fashioned, or narrow-minded, or a self-righteous hypocrite or something similar. But what say the scriptures, “Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake, for great is your reward in Heaven” (Matt. 5:11).

Of the multitudes who have come to some understanding of justification by faith in the shed blood of Jesus, quite a few appear to make the mistake of seeking to find all the blessing of such salvation in this life. They enter very largely into all the world’s pursuits, interpreting the message of salvation in the nature of licence to better enjoy the worlding’s pleasure. To know Christ means much to us here below but “If in this life only we have hope in Christ we are of all men most pitiable.” Thank God our chief ‘hope is centred in that “to come.” To follow Christ truly now, will probably bring many more persecutions, heartaches and sufferings than warm handclasps and expressions of good cheer. But our trust is not to be in men but “hope thou in God.” Just as Peter, one of our Lord’s closest followers would have hindered our Lord from the path of duty (Matthew 16:21-23), so often our well-meaning friends would hinder us from our full consecration and we must be ever on guard against the easy world conformity, the seeking to serve both God and Mammon, the impossible.

We are not, however, to suffer as evil doers and count it Christian suffering. Many times impulsively we do or say things which we ought not, and afterwards besides feeling sorry or repentant, we may have to suffer as a consequence of our action. Under such circumstances we can but admit our fault and seek to make the best of it, praying God so to guide and counsel that we might be more thoughtful in future. On such occasions we should guard against hardening our hearts, and refrain from attaching any blame to God for allowing something that was entirely our own fault. We can learn along this line from 1 Peter 2:20. “For what glory is it, if when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye take it patiently, but if when ye do well and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God:’

So, we learn from this Epistle of Peter, that to follow our Lord fully, as He commanded when he said, “He that would come after me let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me,” presents no easy road whilst we dwell or tabernacle in the flesh. It is a way in which, without doubt, we will encounter the opposition of the world, the flesh, and the devil and to such an extent that it will entail suffering for righteousness sake. It is impossible to enumerate all the ways in which that suffering might come, for the various circumstances of Christ’s followers give rise to differing experiences; but when we humble ourselves beneath the mighty hand of God, casting all our care upon Him, through Jesus, remembering that He will not suffer us to be tempted above that which we are able to bear, we can rest assured that He will work all things together for our ultimate good.

“Wherefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God commit their lives unto him in doing good, as unto a faithful Creator.”

From Glory to Glory

“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” 2 Cor 3:18

A full transformation into a likeness of character to our Heavenly Father should be the constant effort of every true child of God. It is not enough that we gain a knowledge of His plan and a pleasurable realisation of His mercy and grace towards our unworthy race, but that we joyfully tell the good news to others; it is not enough that we exert ourselves with uncommon zeal to bless others with those good tidings of great joy for all people; for we may do all these things and more, and yet, if we do not let our Heavenly Father’s goodness and grace have its due effect upon our own hearts, our knowledge, and even our good works, will profit us little.

Our main object, therefore, in studying God's Word and His character, as therein revealed, should always be to bring our own hearts and minds into closer sympathy and likeness and co-operation with His. The apostle says (1 Thess. 4:3) - *"This is the will of God, even your sanctification."* - our full setting apart, or consecration of mind and heart entirely to the Lord, that He may complete the good work of transforming us into His glorious likeness, by the operation of His Spirit through His Word, and thus fit us for the enjoyment of His abounding grace in the ages to come.

In the words of the apostle in our text, we notice particularly that the statement is made of *all* the church - *we all* are being changed from glory to glory. The inference is consequently a strong one, that those who are not being so changed are not of the class addressed. This is a solemn thought, and one that claims the most careful consideration of all the consecrated. The question with us is not - Have we made a full consecration of ourselves to the Lord? -but, having made such consecration, are we, in accordance with that consecration, fully submitting ourselves to the transforming influences of the Spirit of God, to be changed daily more and more fully to the glorious likeness of our God?

Like the apostle, then, addressing all the consecrated and faithful, we also today may say - we are all being changed from glory to glory under the moulding, fashioning influences of the Spirit of God. We can see it in each other, thank God! and we glory in it. Yesterday the mallet of divine providence struck a blow upon that member of the Body of Christ, and an unsightly pride fell off; he or she looks so much more beautiful today, because they did not resist the blow, but gracefully submitted to it. The day before, we saw another under the wearing, painful, polishing process, to which he or she patiently submitted, and oh, how they shine today! From day to day we see each other studiously contemplating the divine pattern and striving to copy it; and how we note the softening, refining and beautifying effect upon all such! So the Spirit of God is at work upon all who fully submit themselves to His will.

But while the mallet and chisel and the polishing sand of divine providence do a very necessary part of the transforming work, by relieving us of many of the old and stubborn infirmities of the flesh, which cannot be so fully eradicated by the gentler influences of the Spirit, the apostle points us to the specially appointed means for our transformation in the careful and constant contemplation of the glory of God as revealed in His Word, and also in His blessed Ambassador, Jesus Christ, saying - *"We all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory."*

"With open face" would signify without any intervening veil of prejudice or fear or superstition, but with simplicity of heart and mind. So we behold the glory (the glorious character) of the Lord - not with actual vision, but as in a glass, as reflected in His Word and as exemplified in His living Word, Jesus Christ. To aid us in this study we are promised the blessed influences of the Spirit of the Lord, to guide us into all truth and show us things to come.

As we look into this mirror, what a glorious vision we have of the divine justice, which we promptly recognise as the very foundation of God's throne (Psa. 97:2), as well as the foundation of all our present and future security. If we could not recognise the justice of God, we could have no assurance that His gracious promises would ever be fulfilled; for we could say - Perhaps He will change His mind. On the contrary, we can say - He changeth not, and whatsoever He saith shall surely come to pass. See with what inflexible justice the sentence upon our sinful race has been executed! Generation after generation, for over sixty centuries, has witnessed it; and no power in heaven or earth could revoke that sentence until the claims of justice had been fully met by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Herein we read not only our rightful condemnation as a race of sinners, but also our final, complete and glorious deliverance, because *"God is just to forgive us our sins"* (1 John 1:9), since the precious blood of Christ redeemed us from the curse of death.

While we thus read justice in the character of God, and mark with what scrupulous care He regards and respects this principle in all His dealings with His creatures, we see how He would have us respect the same principle in all our dealings. Thus we are lead to consider what is the exact line of justice in this and that and the other transaction; and to remember also that this must be the underlying principle in all our conduct; or, in other words, that we must be just before we can be generous. This principle should, therefore, be very marked in the character of every Christian.

Next we mark the love and mercy of God. The death sentence upon our fallen race was a most merciful sentence. It was equivalent to saying - "See, I have of my own free favour granted you life and all its blessings to be enjoyed forever on condition of its proper use; but now, since you have abused my favour, I take it away and you shall return to the dust whence you came. True, in the process of dying and of bringing forth a dying race to share the penalty, the mercy of God is not so manifest to the unthinking; but those who see the plan of God discover in all this, not the decree of a merciless tyrant, but a merciful wisdom, only faintly disclosed in the promise that the seed of the woman shall in due time crush evil effectually -bruise the serpent's head - and deliver the entire race once generated in sin, by afterward regenerating all who will to life and its blessed privileges. In this mercy, in all its multiplied forms, we see the verification of the statement that *"God is*

love.” Thus we learn to be loving and merciful and kind both to the thankful and also to the unthankful.

We mark also our Heavenly Father’s bountiful providence and His tender care for all His creatures, for even the sparrows are clothed and fed, and the lilies are arrayed in glory. Here we learn precious lessons of divine benevolence and grace. Thus, through all the catalogue of moral and intellectual graces which go to make up a glorious character, we see in the mirror of the divine Word the model for our imitation; and in contemplation of all that is lovely, as embodied in Him, and of all that is pure and holy and beautiful, we are changed little by little in the course of years to the same blessed likeness - from glory to glory.

So be it; let the good work go on until every grace adorns the spotless robe of our imputed righteousness, received by faith in the blessed Son of God, whose earthly life was a perfect illustration of the Father’s character, so that He could say - *“He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.”* Let us, therefore, mark well the love of Christ, the gentleness, the patience, the faithfulness, the zeal, the personal integrity and the self-sacrificing spirit. Mark well, then imitate His example and shine in His likeness.

The apostle adds (2 Cor. 4:7) that the fact that we thus hold this treasure of a transformed mind in these defective vessels proves the excellency of the power of God, and not of us. So, by constant yielding to the influences of the Spirit of God, we may show forth the praises of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvellous light. (1 Peter 2:9) Oh, let our efforts and prayers continually be that these poor earthen vessels may more and more show forth the praises of our God! Let them be clean in body and mind; let no evil communications proceed out of the mouth; and let no actions unworthy of the children of God dishonour these living temples of the Holy Spirit.

Mountains of the Bible

“And He went as He was wont to the Mount of Olives.” (Luke 22;39)

Mountains are Nature’s monuments, Like islands they dwell apart, and like them they give asylum from a noisy and irreverent world. In their silence many a meditative spirit has found leisure for the longest thought, and in their Patmoslike seclusion the brightest visions and largest projects have evolved; whilst by a sort of over-mastering attraction they have usually drawn to themselves the most memorable incidents which variegate our human history.

As they are the natural haunts of the highest spirits, and the appropriate scenes of the most signal occurrences, so they are the noblest cenotaphs. Far off they arrest the eye; and though their hoary chronicle tells its legend of the past, their heaven-pointing elevations convey the spirit onward towards eternity.

We do not wonder that excited fancy has sought relics of the Ark on the top of Ararat; and in the grim solitude of Sinai, it is solemn to remember and easy to believe that the voice of God has spoken here. Elijah has made Carmel all his own and the death of Moses must be ever Pisgah’s diadem. The words of Jesus seem still to linger on the hills of Galilee, their lilies forbidding “thought for raiment”, and their little birds twittering “no thought for tomorrow”, whilst every grassy tuft and scented flower is breathing its own beatitude.

But though heavenly wisdom spoke on that mountainside, and excellent glory lighted on the top of Tabor, there is another height to which discipleship reverts with fonder memory, and which it treads with softer step - that mountain where beyond any place in Palestine “God was manifest in flesh” - where the great Intercessor was wont to pray, where Jesus wept over Jerusalem, on whose slopes He blessed the apostle band, and sent His message of mercy to mankind - the mountain at whose base lay Bethany and Gethsemane - on whose gentle turf His feet last stood - the Sabbatic, pensive and expectant Mount of Olives.



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Approaching Mount Zion

"For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." – Hebrews 11:10

The original purpose of the Epistle to the 1 Hebrews was to strengthen the faith and renew the zeal of a group of Hebrew converts who had let these things slip, and who, therefore, again needed to be reminded of the sure foundation of faith upon which their hopes, as followers of the Master, were built. Very carefully, therefore, the apostle points out to these Hebrews the manner in which their relationship to Jesus, as the Messiah, was the divinely arranged sequence to the prophecies and types of the Old Testament. Thus, God had spoken to His chosen people in times past. He had now spoken to them again, and the proof was that the message was fully harmonious with that of the past, being but a further revelation of the Messianic purpose as previously outlined through the prophets.

When "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners 'spoke' in time past unto the fathers by the prophets," He spoke in terms of covenants, of a Kingdom, of sacrifices, of a tabernacle, of a law, of a priesthood, etc. So the apostle would have these Hebrew Christians realize that God was still speaking in the same manner, only on a much grander scale and higher plane; just as the antitype is always so much superior to the type. Truly, if these Hebrews could but grasp the reality of the thought that God was actually speaking to them, even as He spoke to their fathers in the past, it should do much to help them in holding fast to the profession of their faith without wavering.

Now just as the tabernacle, and the priesthood, and the covenants, and the typical sacrifices, were all very sacred things in the mind of every devout Hebrew, and would need to have a proper place in his faith structure as a Christian, so the city of Jerusalem with its capitol hill of Zion also was very sacred to every Israelite. Just as the Hebrew captives in Babylon wept when they remembered Zion, so these Hebrew Christians of the Gospel dispensation could not be thoroughly satisfied that they had done the right thing in espousing the cause of Christ, unless they could be made to see that their sacred Zion of old was being superseded by a better and more enduring Zion, a heavenly Zion.

"CITY" SYMBOLIZES KINGDOM

In ancient times, when the population of the earth was small, each community of people known as a city, was usually a separate kingdom with its own king and governmental arrangement. Indeed, the word "city" is derived from the same root as "civic," "civil," "civilization," etc. A civic government is a local city government. This word in all its forms, has the thought of that which is under control, or being governed. Thus we think of "civilized" people as those who have respect for law and order.

When, therefore, the apostle tells us that Abraham looked for a "city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God," we are to understand that it was a divine government that Abraham looked for—a Kingdom that would be of heavenly origin, and through which the God of heaven would fulfil His promise to bless all the families of the earth. Frequently, those ancient cities were composed largely of the descendants of one man. They were a sort of family or tribal arrangement. So when God told Abraham that through his seed all the families of the earth were to be blessed, it really meant that all the kingdoms, or "cities" of the earth would be blessed, in that they were to come under the protectorate of a divinely instituted government.

Just how much Abraham understood of this future Kingdom arrangement, we do not know. From the apostle's words we are justified in supposing that the promises made to the patriarch inspired him with a hope of some sort of a coming Kingdom, and it was this same Messianic Kingdom hope that formed such a basic element in the entire national life of typical Israel. Later, God, through the prophet Micah, amplified the thought of such a hope by explaining that in the last days, all nations shall go up to this Kingdom of the Lord – this Kingdom in which the law shall go forth from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem—Micah

4:1-4.

“In the days of these kings shall the *God of heaven set up a Kingdom.*” was the reassuring promise recorded by Daniel. (Dan. 2:44.) This golden thread of promise runs through all the prophecies of the Old Testament. This Kingdom hope was God-inspired, and no religion, no system of theology, can be of God if it lacks this fundamental theme of the prophets. It was for this reason that the enlarged hopes of the Gospel age were introduced by the message, “The Kingdom of heaven is at hand.” No matter how great a prophet Jesus may have been, He could not be the one sent of God unless His message was in harmony with the voice of God as it had been uttered by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. And the message of Jesus *was* in full accord with all the testimony of the law and the prophets. He had come to be the great King sent by the God of heaven to establish that “city” for which Abraham “looked”, and for which all the true people of God from Abraham’s day until now have looked and longed.

THE KINGDOM MESSAGE

Those today, who claim to be “truth” people, will do well to place a proper value on the Kingdom message. If we lose sight of the Kingdom as the great objective to which all of God’s work in every age has been leading, then our conception of God and His purposes in and for us becomes shallow indeed. So it was that Paul, in setting things in order for those early Christians, reminded them of the great importance of the Kingdom hope and assured them, also, that, in espousing the cause of Christ, they had not lost that hope, but by faith had entered into the reality of that which was typified by literal Zion. “But ye are come unto (or are approaching unto) mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.” writes the apostle.—Hebrews 12:22.

The actual functioning of the Messianic Kingdom for the blessing of the people is still future, yet in the apostle’s day it was “at hand” in the sense that the future joint-heirs with the Messiah were already being selected. While Abraham “looked for a city,” the church have approached unto, or are approaching unto, that city. In Hebrews 12:28 the apostle adds, “Wherefore we receiving a Kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.” It was Abraham’s privilege to *look* for the Kingdom, but it is our privilege to receive it; although, before we can reign therein as joint-heirs with Christ, we must prove our worthiness by being faithful even unto death.—Rev. 2:10.

This is one of the important lessons of the book of Hebrews: namely, that having heard the voice of God speaking to us through the truth, we should give all diligence to hearken thereunto, and to obey. The apostle says: “See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused Him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven.” (Heb. 12:25.) In the typical age, God’s voice was heard in no uncertain tones. Back there, His voice “shook the earth,” the apostle explains. Referring to the time when the Law Covenant was inaugurated, Paul explains that there was “fire” and “blackness” and “darkness” and a “trumpet” and the “voice of words.” Even Moses said, “I exceedingly fear and quake.”—Heb. 12:18-21.

Certainly, there could be no doubt in the mind of any Israelite during those momentous happenings that God was speaking. So far as the experiences at Mt. Sinai were concerned, it was a time of sight, more than of faith. Although we are now living in the age of faith, yet the apostle points out that *God is still speaking* to His people, and that grave responsibilities are attached to the hearing of His voice. How are we able to identify the voice of God as He speaks to His people in this age? The apostle shows that it is distinguished by the fact that it still proclaims the great truths of the Kingdom, the covenants, the sacrifices, the priesthood, etc. In other words, so far as the truth of the divine plan is concerned, the voice of God today, is the same as it has been in all ages, the only difference being that the message it proclaims reveals a further development in the divine program.

THE KINGDOM PROSPECT

How wonderful is the hope of the church! How encouraging to realize that God is speaking to His people today just as surely as He spoke to them at Mt. Sinai! In order to emphasize this point, the apostle compares the hope of the church with the blessings of those who took part in that great demonstration at Sinai. Involved in that experience back there were the Levites (who had been substituted for the firstborns of Israel), the priest, angels, Moses the mediator, the blood of sprinkling, and, most important of all, God, the judge of all. But all of that, the apostle shows, was merely typical. It was a wonderful experience for all those who had had an active part in it; but not nearly so wonderful as the antitype.

“But ye are come unto Mt. Sion,” the apostle says, not a literal mountain, but to the real mountain Kingdom of God. Those to whom God speaks in this age are blessed with the glorious vision of the antitypical Mt. Sion. Let us mark this point well. There is much that is good in practically all the religious teachings of the various churches, that has produced much that is ennobling in the way of high standards of righteousness, and even along the line of full surrender to God. But, to those who have actually heard the voice of God, there has been

revealed this glorious vision of Mt. Sion, which, in brief, symbolizes the hope of joint-heirship with Jesus in the long-promised Messianic Kingdom. Those who have not heard this message, have not heard the voice of God, have not “come unto Mt. Sion.” Heb. 12:22.

“Unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.” This “city” symbolism is a little more comprehensive than that of Mt. Zion. Mt. Zion illustrates more particularly the government feature of the Messianic Kingdom—“the law shall go forth of Zion.” (Micah 4:2.); whereas the “city,” the “heavenly Jerusalem,” includes the entire Kingdom arrangements. Zion was the capitol hill of the typical Jerusalem; and, in reality, it is only as we consider the combined symbolism of Zion together with Jerusalem, that we get the full beauty of the picture. Thus Paul groups “Zion” with the “city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.”

So the prophet declares that not only shall the “law go forth out of Zion,” but, also, that the word of the Lord shall go forth “from Jerusalem.” It is a heavenly Jerusalem, not because every phase of the new Kingdom will be spiritual, but because it is of heavenly origin. “The God of heaven shall set up a Kingdom,” says Daniel. (Dan. 2:44.) John saw this city for which Abraham looked, “coming from God out of heaven.” (Rev. 21:2.) Actually, the Kingdom is designed to function on the earth—“Thy Kingdom come; They will be done, *in earth.*” (Matt. 6:10.) The rulers in this “city” will be divine beings, hence for this reason also, it is properly called a “heavenly Jerusalem.”

MINISTERING SPIRITS

“And to an innumerable company of angels.” Just what the angels had to do with the inauguration of the old Law Covenant, the Scriptures do not reveal; but, evidently, they had some important part in connection therewith. In Hebrews 2:2 we read, “For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward,” etc. In Acts 7:53, Stephen is recorded as saying of the Jews, “Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it.” Although the “world to come” will not be in subjection to angels, the apostle tells us (Heb. 2:5), yet they have no small part in connection with the preparatory work of that Kingdom. “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” the apostle asks—Heb. 1:14.

In what sense then has the church approached unto an “innumerable company of angels”? Evidently, it is in that we are able to see, by faith, that their service is contributing to the Kingdom preparations. The thought of approaching these various things, as illustrated by Moses and the Israelites approaching Mt. Sinai, is not that of actually being a part of everything involved, but rather of seeing, or having them loom up before our spiritual vision. As one approaches a literal mountain, the outlines are, at first, very indistinct; but as he gets nearer, he is able to see many of the details. Abraham “looked” for the city, but he wasn’t near enough to it so that it could be said that he approached unto it. But with the church it is different: we see the mountain, and now, at this end of the age, are able to discern many of its details. And another thing we see is that the angels have been made “ministering spirits,” doing their share in helping us to make our calling and election sure. Doubtless, when we actually enter into the Kingdom, we will find that this “innumerable company of angels” will have additional important functions to perform in connection with that heavenly city.

“To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven.” Heb. 12:23. The entire church of the firstborn was not complete in the apostle’s day; indeed, only Jesus, the Head of that church, had been glorified. Hence, the mere fact that Paul mentions these various things is not to be understood to mean that they had become as yet realities. No, the thought merely is that now, by faith, we see that there is to be a church of the firstborn; and we see, also, that upon the condition of faithfulness we may become a part of that church. Yes, we see this as a part of “the prospect which is so transporting,” and, seeing it, we are incited to strain every nerve in an effort to attain a lasting position in it.

“And to God, the Judge of all.” (Heb. 12:23.) It is rather striking that Paul should remind us at this point that God is the Judge of all. He has just told us that the church of the firstborn is made up of those whose names are written in heaven; and, perhaps, he wants us to ever remember that God is the Judge as to whose names are worthy of being enrolled in that heavenly ledger. Whether, or not, this is the intended connection, it certainly is important on our part to refrain from attempting to decide who, among the professed followers of the Master, are actually the ones chosen to be with the Lamb on Mount Zion.

A VISION OF GOD

How meaningless would be our vision as we approach antitypical Zion, if we did not see God as the very centre of the entire arrangement! It is in the Kingdom picture—and only there—that the true God reveals Himself in all His glorious beauty. Due to the image of God implanted in man, some may be able to visualize God to a limited extent; but such a vision is more in the nature of what one’s best judgement indicates that God *should be*; but those who are “come unto Mount Zion,” and coming, see the outlines of the Messianic Kingdom arrangements planned by the “God of heaven,” actually see God as He is. Yes, they see Him as a God of love—a God who is ever active in providing blessings for His creatures. They see Him as a God of

justice and mercy. They see Him as One who sacrificed the dearest treasure of His heart—His only begotten Son—in order that His rebellious creature, man, might be given an opportunity to repent and be reconciled to Him and live.

Yes, the apostle would have the Hebrews realize that, in coming to Mt. Zion and to the city of the living God, they were coming, also, to the “God who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets (Heb. 1:1.) that He was the same God, carrying out the same divine plan—a plan that involved, antitypically, a tabernacle, a priesthood, a Kingdom, a Covenant, and better sacrifices. How important it was for the Hebrews not to lose sight of this glorious God; and how important it is for us not to lose sight of Him! What would be the value of all our Bible study, of our coming to a better understanding of the types and shadows—indeed, of our knowledge of any part of the plan of God—if we lose sight of God. Indeed, our chief object in seeking a clearer vision of His Word of truth, should be that of seeing and knowing “God, the Judge of all,” more perfectly.

“And to the spirits of just men made perfect.” (Heb. 12:23.) This statement, evidently, is a reference to the resurrected ancient worthies. The Great Company is properly included in the “church of the firstborn,” because the firstborn of Israel were later represented by the whole Levitical tribe, made up of priests—type of the “Little Flock”—and the Levites in general—type of the Great Company. Both of these classes are to be in the heavenly phase of the Kingdom; but the “spirits of just *ones* (according to the Greek) made perfect,” is evidently another class.

In the 11th chapter, the apostle tells us about this class, of how they suffered because of their faithfulness to the Messianic promises of God. He says that they died in faith not having received the fulfilment of the promises. They “received not the promise.” (Heb. 11:39.) They “looked” for the city, but saw no evidence of its coming. The Greek here translated “promise” has the thought of evidence, or token, or assurance. It is the same Greek word that is used in chapter 6, verse 15, where Paul says that after Abraham endured he obtained the “promise.” God made a promise (a different Greek word) to Abraham before this, but after he had passed the test, God gave the patriarch a token, a fuller assurance that what had been promised would be fulfilled; that is, He confirmed it with His oath.

THE ANCIENT WORTHIES

But, so far as any outward evidence of the Messianic Kingdom was concerned, the ancient worthies had none. They died in faith without receiving this blessing. “God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.” (Heb. 11:40.) Now, as we approach unto the glorious city for which they looked, we see the position they are to occupy in it. By faith, we see these just ones “made perfect,” even as the apostle says they were to be: and we see, furthermore, that their being made perfect must await the full glorification of the church of the firstborn ones.

“And to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant.” (Heb. 12:24.) How incomplete our vision of the approaching mountain, if we did not see Jesus, the Mediator of the New Covenant. This does not mean that the New Covenant became operative at the first advent, any more than our vision of the resurrected ancient worthies, means that their resurrection took place prior to the time that this epistle to the Hebrews was written. Paul is merely summarizing all the glorious features of the divine plan that have been brought in prospect before us through the truth—that glorious panorama of divine arrangements in which we see God and Jesus and the glorified church and the great company, and the resurrected ancient worthies and the angels, who are ministering spirits, and the heavenly phase of the kingdom and the complete Kingdom: in fact, in a general way, all that had been foretold and illustrated by God during the preceding ages.

As we approach unto this antitypical mountain, we see Jesus, the One chosen by God to be the Mediator of the New Covenant. Moses, the mediator of the Law Covenant, was very closely identified with the events at Sinai. The Hebrews had been accustomed to seeing him in everything which was connected with their worship of God. But now, these converted Hebrews were to see One better than Moses. In approaching the antitypical Sinai, they were to see Jesus. Not merely as a man, nor even as a divine personality alone, but Jesus as the Mediator of the New Covenant. Only as the Hebrews could see God and Jesus in their relationship to the divine plan could they be blessed with the real vision of these divine personalities.

“And to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.” Those who are not yet approaching unto Mount Zion, have no particular use for the blood of Jesus. The shedding of blood in the typical sacrifices is looked upon by them as being uncalled for and barbaric. But not so with those who are blessed with a vision of the divine plan. Not only do they see God and Jesus in this vision, but they see the beauty and the necessity of the blood—the blood of Christ which cleanseth us from all sin.

There was a literal sprinkling of blood at the time the Law Covenant was inaugurated. We observe that the blood in the type was typical of Jesus’ blood; that while the church are co-sacrificers with Him, yet it is His life, or blood, that is the acceptable part of their sacrifice. It is Jesus’ blood that seals the New Covenant. It is

Jesus' blood that the apostle speaks of as the "blood of sprinkling." When the New Covenant is inaugurated, the literal blood of Jesus of course, will not be sprinkled over the people. The thought is that the people will be accepted as parties to that covenant because of the merit of His blood. It is that same blood which makes possible our preparation to be able ministers of that New Covenant.

Thus, in both senses, as we approach Mount Zion, we see and recognize the value of the blood "that speaketh better things than that of Abel." Seeing this should help to keep us humble before God. To be so highly favored in seeing this vision of truth might tend toward pride did we not see, also, that without the blood of Christ we could have no share whatever in the picture, no longer see "Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith;" and have no basis for our hope of Kingdom blessings.—Heb. 12:2.

THE VOICE OF GOD

Next follows the admonition: (Heb. 12:25.) "See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh." The apostle's thought seems, clearly, to be that the precious doctrines of the divine plan pertaining to the Kingdom and its hopes—hopes that are based upon the ransom, and which will be realized through Jesus, and in association with Him as the church of the firstborn, and in "the spirits of just men made perfect"—constitute the voice of God speaking to His people during this Gospel age. Let us, then, give more careful attention to this voice, by taking more earnest heed unto the doctrines!

It seems quite possible to refuse Him who is thus speaking to His people simply by taking a disinterested attitude toward the doctrines of the divine plan. The God that spoke to the fathers through the prophets is now speaking to us by His Son. He reveals Himself and reveals His Son through the doctrines. When we treat the doctrines lightly, we are treating God and Jesus lightly. We have heard the voice of God speaking to us through the truth. Through this glorious array of precious doctrines, we have been brought face to face with God. We have thus seen and have learned to love His glorious character. We have been inspired with the desire to be like Him, and to be like His beloved Son. We have heard His voice saying to us that, if faithful, we may be actually like Him because it is His plan to exalt us to the divine nature.

All these glorious facts loom up before us as we approach unto Mount Zion. May we never permit anything, neither the vain philosophies of men—conjured up by ourselves or others—nor yet the "doctrines of devils," to mar our vision of the glorious outlook that is ours, nor dull the sweetness of the voice of God which we hear as we approach our antitypical Mount Zion. The apostle tells us that in the type God's voice shook the earth; but that now, heaven, also, is to be shaken, not the literal heaven, of course, but the symbolic—the heavenly phase of the new Kingdom in its preparatory stage.

From this Kingdom, everything not in full harmony with God must be removed ere it begins to function in power and great glory. Every period of the age has been a testing time for God's true people; but now, in the end of the age, in the "evil day," the tests seemingly are more severe than ever. Shall we be able to stand? Shall we keep our place among those who are marching to Zion in spite of the shaking and falling that is going on all around us? If so, it will be only because we "Refuse not Him that speaketh," and "hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering." Let us then, brethren, 'Give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip (margin, run out as leaking vessels)."—Heb. 12:25; 10:23; 2:1.

God Loveth Thee

God loveth thee - then be content;
Whate'er thou hast, His love hath sent;
Come pain or pleasure, good or ill,
His love is round about thee still.
Then murmur not, nor anxious be.
Rest thou in peace, God loveth thee!

Samuel: Judge and Prophet

"Only fear Jehovah, and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider how great things He hath done for you." -1 Samuel 12:1-5, 20-25.

Samuel the Prophet stands out on the pages of sacred history a very noble character—very similar in many respects to Moses. He had served the Lord and the people faithfully for a long period, and then, at the urgent request of the people, and with God's assent, he had anointed Saul their king. The latter had been received rather half-heartedly, but the battle with the Ammonites and the great victory which the Lord granted to His people on that occasion united their hearts to Saul who had been the visible leader in that victory and

Samuel perceived that the right time had come for a public coronation of the king, and the formal transfer of allegiance to him as the Lord's representative in the temporal affairs of the nation. Accordingly, a general convocation of the people was called to meet at Gilgal—one of the several prominent places for public gatherings—one of the places at which Samuel was in the habit of holding court when, as a kind of supreme judge, he went at different seasons of the year to various parts of the territory of Israel to hear and to decide causes and differences which the elders of the tribes could not adjudicate satisfactorily.

OBEDIENCE

Upon the assembling of the people, the Prophet Samuel opened his address (vs. 1-5) by calling upon God and the people to witness to his own rectitude of character in all of his dealings with them for the many years in which he had served them; to his justice in seeking to decide their various questions righteously; to his honesty, in that he never received even the smallest bribe, nor permitted anything to vitiate his judgement; neither had he been an oppressor of his people, but had always sought their good. With united voice the people concurred in the excellence and purity of his administration—a wonderful tribute, one which would be almost inconceivable in our day, in which we find that even the best and noblest officials are sure to have enemies, traducers, backbiters, slanderers.

We are not to suppose that Samuel was merely eulogizing his own administration, but are, rather, to attribute to such a noble character a nobler object. He wished to make a lasting impression with this address and this transfer of authority to King Saul; and, to make his words more impressive and more effective in the interests of his successor and in the interests of the Lord's people, he impressed upon his hearers the fact that his entire life had been one of devotion, and that they might well understand that his words now were in full accord with all the course of his previous life. They would thus realize that he had their best interests at heart, that he was thoroughly loyal to the Lord, and that his example, as well as his advice, would be beneficial to them. Perhaps, too, he would thus set before the people a standard of what they might look for and hope for from their new king, and set before the king a standard of the ideal after which he should pattern his rule.

Next, he called attention to God's faithfulness to them in the centuries past, from the time that he adopted them as His people and made a covenant with them through Moses and became their heavenly King. He recounted to the people the many deliverances which the Lord had wrought for them through various agents whom He had raised up. He would not wish them to think of the recent victory over the Ammonites as being the only one; but he desired that they recognize it, in common with all previous victories, as from the Lord by whatsoever hand they were effected. He would have them discern that they exercised great ingratitude in forgetting that the Lord had all this time been their King, and in preferring an earthly king to the government He had established. Nevertheless, now that God had granted their request and given them an earthly king, they must not fail to recognize that he was only the representative of their real King, the heavenly One. Otherwise, their condition would be deplorable in every way. They had the king of their choice and God had set him over them: let the matter thus stand, and from this new standpoint they should go on to make the best of their condition; and to do this, would be to give close attention to the commandments of the Lord.

Obedience to the Lord would bring blessings both to the people and to their king, and disobedience and rebellion or any measure of irreverence toward the Lord and His commandments would bring upon them Divine disfavor and injury. Not that the Lord would vindictively render evil for evil, but the hand of the Lord would be against them in the same sense that the current of the river is against the persons who attempt to go contrary to it. Divine justice has its steady flow. It is irrepressible; it opposes anything that comes against it, and favors anything that goes in harmony with it.

We can recognize something of this principle in various laws of nature, as, for instance, gravitation. Let us also recognize that the principles of Divine government operate in a very similar manner. As fire burns the evil or the good when they come in contact with it, and as the law of gravitation operates in respect to all, whether good or bad, who come into the line of its influence, so the principles of Divine justice operate automatically.

ENCOURAGEMENT

Samuel proceeded to do a miracle before the people—to cause a thunder shower in the middle of harvest. In Palestine they have the early and the latter rains. The spring rains usually end in April, and the fall rains begin in October or November. A writer on the subject says, "In ordinary seasons, from the cessation of the showers in spring until their commencement in October or November, rain never falls, and the sky is usually serene." The wheat harvest which the Prophet pointed out to them as just in order must have been the first of June and, hence, nothing could have been further from the expectation of the people than a thunder shower at that time. The bringing of it at the Prophet's announcement, was to remind the people how completely their affairs and interests were in Divine power. They were to discern that the recent victory need not have been theirs except as the Lord had been pleased to favor them and grant them the victory; and that simply by bringing unfavourable showers upon their harvest, the entire fruitage of their labors of many months might be quick-

ly spoiled and they be reduced to starvation, and in that way become more thoroughly subdued than by any foreign invasion. The Prophet calls their attention to the wickedness of their course in the rejection of God as their King, and to this power of God, which could easily be exercised did He wish to requite them according to their dealings with Him.

The people saw the point. They discerned that if it were to rain a few days they would lose their all: they recognized that they were wholly in the power of God, and entreated Samuel to pray for them, confessing not only the wrongs they had done in seeking a king, but also their sins: "We have added unto our sins."

As the Lord's mouthpiece, the Prophet assured the people that they need not fear God's taking vengeance upon them, notwithstanding their wrong course. On the contrary, they should more fully than ever determine to turn to the Lord whole-heartedly, and let their mistake and the trials and difficulties that would come to them as a result of it prove a blessing to them in drawing their hearts nearer and nearer to the Lord; their true King, who never sought anything but their highest welfare. So it should be with us. If at any time we find that we have taken a wrong course which is irretrievable, we may expect it to bring the disappointments as the Lord foretold; but He may permit it to bring, as well, some blessings in the way of contrition of heart, and humility toward the Lord, and greater zeal, watchfulness, and faithfulness for the future. Thus, even some of the blunders of life may become stepping-stones to higher planes of grace and truth.

The sentiment of verse 22 is very beautiful, and, doubtless, was very encouraging to the Israelites in assuring them of God's continued love and favor toward them because of His having adopted them as His people. Applying this verse to spiritual Israel, we may take great comfort from it, too. If it was a favor to natural Israel to be adopted as the Lord's peculiar people, as the house of servants, how much greater is the blessing to spiritual Israel, adopted of the Lord as the house of sons under the chief Son, Jesus; "whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end!" (Heb. 3:6.) It is well that the Lord's people be called upon to fear, to reverence, the Lord; but if the Scriptures were entirely made up of commands and reproofs, the Lord's people would all surely have been discouraged long ago. On the contrary, with the reproofs and corrections, the Lord gives us very precious testimonies respecting His love and mercy, His goodness and long suffering kindness, to encourage us.

All the members of the Body of Christ laboring against the course of this world and against public opinion, and against the weaknesses of their own flesh, and against the great adversary Satan, need spiritual encouragement—assurances that the Lord is for them. The Apostle points out, saying, "If God be for us who can be against us?"—what will all the opposition against us amount to if God be on our side? He again encourages us with precious words, reminding us of the unchangeableness of God and the fact that He has already done great things for us and is preparing to do still greater things, while we were yet sinners Christ died for the ungodly, much more shall His favor be with us now that we are adopted into His family and are seeking to walk in His ways as members of the Body of Christ.

FAITHFULNESS

The grandeur of the Prophet's character shines out in the twenty-third verse again: He seems to have none of the petty animosities which some smaller creatures might have under the circumstances, and was a patriot to the core of His heart, as well as a faithful representative and ambassador of the Lord and mediator of His people. He says, practically: "Nothing that you have done toward me—rejecting me in choosing King Saul—shall in any manner or degree hinder my love for you and my prayers on your behalf. God forbid that it should! I should consider this a sin against the Lord who has placed me as a kind of representative of Him to you, and of you to Him; and I certainly would be failing of my duty and privilege did I neglect this important office of mediator. You may rely upon it that I not only will refrain from pleading against you with the Lord, but that I will petition Him on your behalf."

The nobility of Samuel's course may well be copied by the Lord's people under various circumstances in life. When those who are near and dear to us flag in their love and devotion, they need all the more our sympathy and our prayers; and, as our dear Master showed us, even our enemies are to be prayed for and have our good wishes—that the Lord would grant them in His providence such opening of understanding, such experiences as in Divine wisdom would be for their highest welfare to bring them into full accord with Himself, and thus back into harmony with us and all who are in harmony with Him. The Prophet indicates that although he was ceasing to be their judge and ruler, he would not cease to be their instructor in the good and right way so long as the Lord's providences might permit him to serve them, and so long as they would accept his aid.

Returning, however, to the principal point of his instructions, he points out that reverence for the Lord serving Him in truth with all their heart, was not only a proper course, but a course which would bring them the Lord's blessing. And as a help to our flagging zeal, we should continually remind ourselves of the Lord's great blessings to us. As we learn to appreciate the goodness of the Lord, if rightly disposed at all, the influence will be to strengthen us and to make us more loyal to Him. Failing to seek with our whole heart the

Lord's service after we have become His people and entered into covenant relationship with Him, receiving of His favors and blessings in this life, and also, by promise, in the life to come, would mean wickedness which, persevered in, will surely bring destruction. Faithfulness to God should be the key-note of all our desires. "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer."—Psa. 19:14. ("The Herald")

The Completeness of the Body

The Church is the "one body" of Christ, and all 1 Christians are individual members of that body. No one liveth to himself, no one dieth to himself; when one member suffers all members suffer with it. It is one of the sins of a self-sufficient age to deny the unity and completeness of Christ's body, and to set up tests of unity other than those which He has appointed. In the natural body each member united with the head has vital union with every other member connected with the same head.

The basis of true Christian unity is union with Jesus Christ who is the Head of the body. Men lay down as the basis of their unity, union with some human leader through the doctrines which he has proclaimed or the forms which he has instituted. They are united by external observances, by laws, forms, rites, and bands. Their union is the union of staves in a barrel; Christ's union is the union of branches in a vine. Their union is that of bones in a skeleton, joined and wired together, but destitute of vital energy; the union of Christ and His people is the union of the members of a body, joined together by those ligaments which every joint supplieth, and pervaded by the energy of a common life.

The unity which Christ inaugurated embraces the whole family of God. It includes every one who has vital connection with the great Head of the Church. Men's schemes are too narrow for this, and include only those persons who coincide in opinions, who agree in forms, who are trimmed according to a certain pattern, or shaped in conformity to certain human standards. Christ bids us to receive one another as He has received us. The fact that we have passed from death unto life, and we are united to Christ the living Head, is proof that we are united to His people.

If our fellowship is with the Father and with the Son Jesus Christ, it is also with one another. Men, however, restrict their fellowship; and hence, while Christ's Church is inclusive and wide reaching, their churches are narrow, and shut out more Christians than they shut in. The results of this are grievous to God's people who are thus excluded from union with saints, but still more grievous to those who exclude them.

How often we see churches crippled and helpless for lack of the labor and sympathy of Christian brethren who stand by their side ready and willing to be helpers in their toils, but are excluded by some party Shibboleth, or by some unscriptural name or form. How often we see men and women shut away from their proper field of Christian effort, simply because they cannot accept the unscriptural statements and arrangements, which others presume to impose before they receive them to their fellowship. Some toil in weariness, and bring themselves to the borders of the grave, that they may do work which others would willingly and wisely do, who are not permitted to participate in the labor. Thus they virtually say to God's children: "You may be members of Christ's body, but we have no need of you or your services."

The Apostle has taught us that no member of the body can be spared from its place and its proper work, without serious injury. No one can separate himself or herself from the body of Christ without harm; nor can any portion of Christians separate themselves from others who love the Lord, or exclude other Christians from their fellowship, without doing themselves great injury.

The union of true Christians springs from a higher than human source; and their adaption to each other for mutual helpfulness is so complete and perfect that any separation must work harm both to those who cause it and to those who endure it. The feet may say, We are strong we have no need of the eyes, we carry the body, and the eyes are mere useless gazers. But when the eyes are gone, and the feet are groping and floundering in the ditch, the folly of this decision is most manifest.

So whenever any of the Lord's children in their inexperience and self-sufficiency think themselves able to dispense with the presence, the service, and the loving fellowship of others of the children of the Lord, they may find sooner or later, by their weakness, inefficiency, and a thousand calamities and troubles that may come upon them, they have overestimated their own powers, and have put away from them those members which God hath set in the body, that they might abide together in the unity of love and in mutual helpfulness.

All down through the age comes our Savior's parting prayer for His disciples, that "they all may be one," and the hearts of the truly regenerate yearn and long for this unity. Deeper than the names and forms and creeds of men, throbs that inward, divine and universal life which Christ imparted, and which makes His children one. — *Selected.*



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The High Calling of God

(Phil. 3:14)

The usual thought is that there is only the one calling of God to repentance and the reward of heaven. It is generally thought that Abraham, Moses, David and others of that early time are all in heaven—that all the faithful under the Jewish Law age were rewarded by going to heaven.

Of course, our Lord definitely denied such teaching when He said, “No man hath ascended up to heaven.” (John 3:13.) In Acts 2:34 we read, “David is not ascended into the heavens.” No, there was no promise to any of the ancient worthies of a heavenly reward. The hope of spiritual life in heaven with the Lord is for the church only, to whom our Lord says, “I go to prepare a place for you and if I go, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also.” (John 14:2, 3.) In harmony with this the Apostle Paul (Heb. 11:39, 40) speaking of the faithful prior to that time says, “These all died in faith, not having received the promise, God having provided some better thing for us” (the church).

This agrees too with our Lord’s words, “The law and the prophets were until John; since then the kingdom of God is preached,” and “Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist; notwithstanding, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.” (Luke 16:16; Matt. 11:11.) Yes, the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. (John 1:17.)

The callings of God are not confined to this Gospel Age. In Rom. 11:29 the Apostle speaks of the *gifts and callings* of God. God called Abraham to leave Ur of Chaldea where paganism had its birth and thrived; he was called into a new country and God used him to declare the gospel. It is recorded that “the gospel was preached to Abraham.” (Gal. 3:8.) In the great promise made to Abraham there is indicated an earthly seed and also a heavenly seed. “Thy seed shall be as the stars of heaven and as the sand on the seashore.” (Gen. 22:17.)

The Lord provided wonderful pictures in Abraham, Isaac and Jacob for our edification as the Apostle Paul informs us. There was the picture of Sarah representing the gospel of grace, and Hagar, the servant, representing the Law Covenant. Ishmael represented Israel in bondage under the Law, and Isaac represented the church of Christ under grace—“We, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.” Isaac also was a picture of Christ. Abraham offered him as a burnt offering but his hand was stayed from slaying Isaac by an angel and the ram was offered as for him. God gave His only begotten Son as the Lamb of God to take away the sins of the world.

Then Isaac must have a bride and there is the beautiful picture of Genesis 24,—the calling and choosing of Rebekah to be the wife of Isaac. What a wonderful picture this is of the “high calling of God,” the call to be members of the Bride class—the Bride of Christ. No one was ever offered the privilege of becoming a member of this Bride class prior to the first advent of Christ. John the Baptist, the last of the prophets, did not have this privilege. He had, however, the privilege of introducing the Bridegroom to Israel. He said (John 3:28, 29), “I am not the Christ. . . He that hath the Bride is the Bridegroom; but the friend of the Bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the Bridegroom’s voice; this my joy therefore is fulfilled.”

This privilege of being called of God to be the Bride class was first offered to the nation of Israel exclusively, as Paul mentions in Romans 10th and 11th chapters. It was because of their failure through unbelief and their rejection of Messiah that they were cast off and the wonderful privilege of the “high calling of God in Christ Jesus” became available to believers of the Gentiles. “Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded.” (Rom. 11:7.) God then turned to the Gentiles to make up the number of the elect.

There is a definite number to be chosen as indicated in the Lord's parable of the Great Supper, Luke 14:16-24, also in Rom. 11:25-27, which shows that afterwards all Israel shall be saved—blindness will pass away and Divine favour will restore the nation to the Holy Land and use it as the earthly representative of the Kingdom of God for the blessing of all nations.

So there are different callings of God in the different ages. Israel only was called to be a holy nation unto the Lord during the Jewish age. (Amos 3:2, Psalms 33:12; 147: 19, 20.) "The law and the prophets were until John, since then the kingdom of heaven is preached." Israel had been an earthly kingdom of the Lord—"David sat upon the throne of the Lord." The preaching of Jesus was "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." It was opened up at Pentecost. Since then God has been taking out from the Gentiles a people for His name. (1 Peter 2:4-10.)

How different is the high calling of God to anything prior to the Gospel Age. Up to the beginning of the Gospel Age there was no promise of heavenly inheritance nor of spiritual life; all the promises to the ancients from Genesis to Malachi were concerning earthly things. Now all the promises to the church, to those begotten of the Holy Spirit, called to be members in Christ, are spiritual; no earthly prosperity is promised. Earthly things are to be forsaken or used in the Lord's service and we are promised persecution and tribulation to assist us in forming a character like Christ's, and to help us to "count lightly the things of the earth, esteeming them only of trifling worth." To become like Christ in character, in heart, mind and disposition is the mark to be reached in order to gain the prize of the high calling of God.

Shall we ask, why is God making this selection, inviting just a "little flock to whom it is the Father's good pleasure to give the kingdom"? Some say that everyone is invited but they will not come. Does it not say "whosoever will" may come? Yes, we find a text like that in the last chapter of the Bible, but let us not forget that there are different callings of God, different invitations, and if we turn to Rev. 22:17 we shall see that the wide invitation to "whosoever will" refers to a time when the church, the Bride of Christ, is perfected, glorified and reigning with her Lord, and the work of lifting up and blessing all nations begins—that is the time when Christ will win the world and bring in lasting righteousness and peace. That is the Divine purpose in first choosing the church, the "stars of heaven" class of the promise to Abraham. It was stated that Abraham's seed should bless all the families of the earth, and the apostles make this plain in Gal. 3:16, 29; Acts 15:14-17, and Rom. 8:19-22, etc.

The Lord is choosing a class that shall rejoice to do such work in the Kingdom Age, those who have faith and will gladly surrender their own wills and do God's will. So there has been a selection going on. In the days when Jesus was preaching on earth He spoke plainly to His disciples, but He spoke to the hypocritical Pharisees always in parables. He explained the reason for this; they were not the kind of people He wanted; they were selfish and proud, so He said He spoke in parables to them that hearing they might not understand lest they should repent and be converted. They were not suitable to be members of His Bride class. It will be remembered how careful Abraham was when he sent his servant to choose a bride for Isaac. "Thou shalt not take a wife unto my son from among the Canaanites." Then, Eliezer did not make the offer to just anyone even in the household of Bethuel; he was directed by God.

What a privilege it is to be invited. Jesus said, "No man can come unto me except it be given unto him of my Father," Again, "No man can come unto me except the Father which sent me draw him,"—call him or invite him. (John 6:65; 6:44.)

How does the Father draw or invite, and how do we know we are invited? It is by the Holy Spirit operating through the Word of truth and through God's people. We are influenced by surrounding circumstances and conditions and come in contact with the message of the Gospel. The seed (the Word of God) takes lodgment in the good ground of our hearts and we feel after God and learn to "love Him because He first loved us," and will learn more of His will. We realise a peace of heart and mind through faith in Christ; we are justified by faith and realise forgiveness and mercy. Then we do not stop here, for we realise a drawing to come nearer. We have reached the Court of the Tabernacle condition. But we came there so as to go on nearer to the Holy of Holies, or in other words, we hear the Apostle's word—"I beseech you brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice." (Rom. 12:1.)

Having taken this step we receive the Holy Spirit, and can understand the deeper things of God—we become new creatures and find the transforming of our minds progressing so that we come to understand more clearly God's will for us. This is the beginning of the race for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Peter, then, reminds us that we should be "diligent to make our calling and election sure." (2 Peter 1:10.) This reminds us of Psalm 45:13, 14 where the "raiment of needlework" describes the characteristics of the Bride.

So we see the purpose of the narrow way to life at the present time; what is necessary on our part; what God has promised to do; how we may know that we are called and are in the way; how God will work in us and has promised grace and strength whilst we are covered with the robe of righteousness. ("The Voice")

Millennial Truth PART 2 - THE LAST DAY

(Part 1 of this article, entitled "HOPE FOR ALL MANKIND", appeared in the previous issue of "People's Paper" - March/April 1996)

Let us now look at some of the various titles that apply to the Millennium, and the thoughts that they convey to us. The parable of the sheep and the goats gives us a lead - this parable shows the judging work of that age, and one of its titles is "The Day of Judgement", not a twenty four hour day, as some believe, but the same one thousand year day. The apostle Paul preached this coming day to the Athenians on Mars Hill (Acts 17:31) - *"Because He hath appointed a day, in which He will **judge** the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead."*

Here we are given the nature of the judgement, i.e. a righteous judgement. We are told that Jesus is the Judge; this confirms our Lord's own words in John 5:22 - *"For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgement unto the Son"* - and in verses 28, 29 - *"Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation"* "Resurrection to judgement" is the correct rendering of the Greek for these final words and most translations, other than the KJV, put it in this way or similarly.

This day is resurrection day, the time when all those in the prison-house of death will be brought back. Those receiving a resurrection to judgement will then be given an opportunity for everlasting life if obedient to the laws of the kingdom in that one thousand year judgement day. We can link this in with our Master's words in John 12: 47, 48 - *"If any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not; for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him; the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."* Jesus, as we see, did not come to judge the world at the time of His first advent.

The "last day" He referred to is again the great, one thousand year Millennial Judgement Day. We think of the words of Martha in John 11:24 - *"Martha saith unto Him (Jesus), I know that he (Lazarus) shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day."* The term "last day" means the last day in God's program for the rehabilitation of this planet and its people. Ever since the fall in Eden, this work has been quietly progressing behind the scenes, quite unknown to the world in general.

We could liken the Plan of God to a great drama in three parts, part one from Eden to our Lord's first advent, approximately four one thousand year days, during which time a class was being selected to be "princes in all the earth", as we read in Psalm 45:16 - *"Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth."*

These are usually referred to as the "ancient worthies" and we read of many of them in Hebrews 11.

Part two of this great drama runs from Christ's first advent to the start of the Millennium, approximately two one thousand year days. These days were set aside for the selection of the Church, those who are to reign with Christ over the Kingdom on this last day, as we see from Rev. 20:4 - *"And I saw thrones and they sat upon them, and judgement was given unto them; and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and who had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years."*

So then six days of the divine restoration program have elapsed and one day remains, which is the last day. Looking at it this way makes it easier to understand the meaning of the term - Last Day. Act One of the drama was the longest, stretching over four days. Act Two was two days long, just half the time. Act Three, just one day in length, is again half the time of the previous act. While Act Three is shortest in length of time, it could be regarded as the greatest in the amount of wonderful work to be accomplished in it. The two previous acts have been a preparatory work, a preparation for the last great act. We could say that God has been selecting the members of His Government, on its various levels, to take part in the Millennial Age work.

The apostle Peter draws our attention again to this same judgement day in 2 Peter 3:7, 8 - *"But the heavens and earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgement and perdition of ungodly men, But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."* It is made very clear here that this Judgement Day is one thousand years long. Peter considers it important that we understand this; he does not wish us to remain ignorant of it, but despite his admonition many in fact are still ignorant of it.

We find an interesting statement in 2 Peter 2:9 - *"The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgement to be punished."* We know that all evil deeds will bring a recompense, but the Greek word here for 'punished' is *kolazo* and also carries the additional thought of 'restraint'. Vine's Greek Dictionary says it primarily denotes 'to curtail, prune, dock, check, restrain, punish'. We find a similar thought in Isa. 30:21 - *"And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee,*

saying, *This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.*"

In the Millennial Day, all evil will be restrained; nothing will be allowed to hurt or harm, as we are told in Isa. 11:9 - *"They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."* This same period is spoken of in Isa. 26:9 - *"With my soul have I desired Thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek Thee early; for when Thy judgements are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness."* The whole Millennial Day will be a time of learning God's ways and unlearning the old unrighteous ways. This verse further shows that the Judgement Day could not be one of twenty four hours only.

There is a further interesting statement in Isa. 1:26 - *"I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning; afterward thou shalt be called, the city of righteousness, the faithful city."* The Heavenly Father is the Supreme Judge over all, but He has delegated the judging work to Jesus Christ, as we saw before. This is well put by the apostle Paul in Rom 2:16 - *"In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel."* Jesus then appoints the Church to share in the judging work as Paul again says in 1 Cor. 6:2 (part) - *"Do you not know that the saints shall judge the world?"* The Ancient Worthies, the Princes in all the earth, will also have a part in the judging process as we see in Isa. 32:1. - *"Behold, a King shall reign in righteousness, and Princes shall rule in judgment."*

The King here could be a reference to Jesus and the Church. The Judges that we saw mentioned before in Isa. 1:26 would seem to refer to the Ancient Worthies. It is Israel's judges that are to be restored - this is an allusion back to the period of the judges in Israel. When we think of a judge and judgment, we picture a judge sitting on a bench and handing down a sentence, but that is not the thought being presented here. The work of the judges in Israel is an illustration of the Millennial Age work. By examining the book of Judges, we find that when a judge was appointed, he delivered the people from their oppressors and brought them peace - this will be exactly the work of the Millennial Age. Notice once more the harmony of all these scriptures.

Another title applied to the Millennium is "The Times of Restitution". We read in Acts 3:21, speaking of Jesus - *"Whom the heavens must receive until the **times of restitution of all things**, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began."* Some translations render the word as 'restoration', and this has much the same meaning. This work takes place after our Lord returns. He has remained in heaven through the centuries of the Gospel Age, as we note from 1 Peter 3:22 - *Who has gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him.*

His return ushers in "The Times of Restitution". Restitution means to restore something to what it was before. What then is to be restored in the restitution times? Surely many things, for we notice again that it says "restitution of ALL things". Could there be a thought that during the Gospel Age there has been in effect a restoration of those who have been called to make up the Church? But now it is to be a restoration of ALL Things!

(1) Restitution to Health The apostles Peter and John had just healed a lame man and such a miraculous event would have caused quite a crowd to gather. The apostles were not slow to take advantage of the situation and to preach Christ and the Plan of God. We find the details in Acts 3:7, 8 - *"And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up; and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength, and he leaping up, stood, and walked, and entered into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God."* Here was a small illustration of the Restitution work of the Millennium. Let us note Isa. 35:6 - *"Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing; for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert."* Even the terminology is the same - "the lame man shall leap".

In that wonderful future Day, there will be no deformed people, no deaf, dumb or blind, no sickness or illness of any kind, as we read in Isa. 33:24 - *"And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick; the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity."* In that Day, there is to be complete restoration to the perfect health originally enjoyed by Adam and Eve.

(2) Restitution of the planet itself Through bad management, indiscriminate clearing of forests and so on, vast areas of the earth have been turned into deserts, and have become uninhabitable. These will all be restored to make space for the millions returning from the grave, as in Isa. 35:1, 7 - *"The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose; and the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water; in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes."* In part, this work may already have commenced in Israel, Egypt, and other places. We would expect it to be so, because it seems that we are now living in the "day of preparation", preparation for the kingdom, as mentioned in Nahum 2:3.

The whole earth has become very polluted with poisonous chemicals of many different kinds, sprays, artificial fertilisers, fluorocarbons, lead, mercury and many unnatural substances. The times of restitution will correct all this, and the environment will be returned to pristine condition. Isa. 66:1 says - *"Thus saith the*

Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool.” Then Isa. 60:13 - *“The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together; to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place **of my feet glorious.**”* God’s footstool, that is, the whole earth, is to be made glorious, like the pattern that God gave in the Garden of Eden.

(3) Restitution to life No matter how glorious man’s earthly home were made, without life he could enjoy it for only a brief period. By the end of the Millennium, death will be a thing of the past, as we are told in 1 Cor. 15:25, 26 - *“For He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet; the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.”* Mankind will then be restored to everlasting life, as enjoyed by Adam and Eve before they sinned. Rev. 21:4 says - *“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away.”*

(4) Restitution of Israel The return of the Jewish people to their homeland has been prophesied by many of God’s holy prophets; the bringing of them back again from out of all the nations where they have been scattered is foretold in many scriptures. This is a restitution work that we can see in the process of being fulfilled. Of the many scriptures there are on the subject, let us quote just one, that in Amos 9:14, 15 - *“I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no **more** be pulled up out **of** their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God.”*

(5) Restitution of mankind to perfection There is one more important work to be accomplished. As we saw, Adam was originally created in God’s likeness, that is, His character-likeness, or in other words - perfect. We remember our Lord’s words to His followers in Matt. 5:48 - *“Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.”* The words of the Master here are instructions to the Church, but by the end of the Millennium, all those eligible to inherit the earth will have been brought back to the character-likeness of their Creator. Everlasting life on a restored earth would be of little value, if there was still violence and evil abroad as there is today, so we can see that this is a vital part of the Millennial work.

Let us now consider some scriptures related to our part in this great restitution work of the Millennium, firstly Jesus’ words to His disciples in Luke 22:29 - *“I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me”*, then the record of John the Revelator in Rev. 21:9, 10 and 21:2 -

(A) *“There came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither; I will show you the Bride, the Lamb’s wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God.”*

(B) *“And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”*

This great city, the New Jerusalem, is a symbol of the glorified Church beyond the veil. Why is the Church pictured by the city of Jerusalem? Because Jerusalem typifies the Millennial Age government. King David established his government on Mount Zion in Jerusalem. He reigned over God’s kingdom; he was directly appointed by God, so therefore his rule typifies the coming Millennial Age kingdom. Jesus sits on David’s throne as we are told in Luke 1:32 concerning Jesus - *“He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David.”*

The capital city of a country symbolises its government. We often hear the expression that London, Washington or Canberra says this or that, meaning that the statement comes from the government of the country. We see then that the New Jerusalem coming down to earth would mean their authority coming down to earth - the commencement of the Millennial Age reign.

Why is Christ not mentioned here, we might ask. In fact, He is, for we are told that the New Jerusalem is adorned as a Bride for her Husband. We are told in the scriptures that the man, that is the husband, is the head of the wife and that this relationship pictures that between Christ and the Church. (Eph. 5:23) That would be the picture that we have presented here, the Husband Jesus is the Head of the Bride, the Head of the New Jerusalem, the Head of God’s government ruling over the earth.

It is said of Abraham in Hebrews 11:10 - *“For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.”* This was the city which Abraham looked for, he longed for the time when God’s righteous government would be ruling over the earth. At the present time, we are being prepared to make us suitable material so that we might be worthy to have a position in God’s government under our Head and Master, Jesus Christ. What a privilege, what a thrilling and exciting prospect we have before us! This is Millennial Truth.

May this glorious prospect of having a part in assisting the whole groaning creation up the Highway of

Holiness in the age to come stimulate us to greater zeal in the service of our Lord and of the brethren, here and now, while we continue to pray - *"Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven!"* Amen.

Faith and Gratitude

(Convention Address)

"Many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet, and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian." Luke 4:27

I would like to recall for you the Biblical story of a certain Syrian who had an incurable illness. We would all feel sympathy toward close friends who are going through some kind of physical disability and especially so towards any who fall victims to incurable illnesses. And in these days, the media inform us about new, incurable, previously unknown illnesses and diseases all too often.

One such disease, which is mentioned in both the Old and New Testaments, is leprosy. The Old Testament sets out the ways of treating lepers and leprosy in Israel, while in the New Testament we read about people suffering from this disease and how they sought a cure from our Lord Jesus. Our story, however, relates to an Old Testament case of this disease, and it is recorded in 2 Kings 5:1-18.

During the reign of the Assyrian king, Shalmaneser II, in about the 9th Century B.C., Israel and Syria had agreed to permit a mutual exchange between their countries, but Israel's allies had certain reservations about its Syrian neighbours. This was due to frequent raids by small groups of Syrian bandits, so it was only natural that Jehoram, the reigning king in Israel, did not trust his neighbours.

We are told that Naaman, the captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man, honourable, highly respected, a mighty man of valour, but he had fallen victim to the dreadful disease of leprosy. This was an incurable skin disease and in that respect as dreadful a sickness as cancer. The organs of the body are attacked by leprosy and disintegrate, the illness progresses and affects further different parts of the body as well.

In the early stages there is no pain but the final stages are extremely painful. Leprosy usually starts as a swollen wound which progressively develops affecting the eyes and vocal cords, the hands, the feet and finally the whole body, ending in mental imbalance, sleepiness and ultimately death. The historian Josephus writes the "lepers were officially treated as diseased and considered as dead."

In the case of Naaman the leper, we are not told how far his leprosy had progressed, but we are told that he continued to fulfil a very important and responsible role for the Syrian army. So we can only deduce that his leprosy was in the comparatively early stages of development, though the signs and symptoms of it were evident to all the people around him.

In time, a little Israelite maiden noticed it. She was a humble housemaid to Naaman's wife, but she was so full of sympathy for her master that she suggested a way in which he might seek a cure for his illness. Her kind nature could not look indifferently at the sufferings of another human being. She was a God-fearing Israelite girl and believed in the power of God's prophet Elisha to heal her master, Naaman, whom she respected and considered worthy of being healed.

Naaman was a man of high military standing in the Syrian army, yet he accepted the maiden's modest suggestion, the suggestion of a humble servant who was often in the presence of her lord. Naaman's reaction was positive. When God offers His divine help, He always uses godly people who have the character of a quiet, humble and modest disposition, and this can be a lesson for us.

Let us ask ourselves, How often do we accept the good suggestions and opinions of our brothers and sisters in Christ? Do we accept their advice and reminders willingly? or with joy? Or do we go on our guard with a reflex action of rejection? or even with a certain amount of anger? - a negative reaction. Our brothers and sisters in Christ, our wives, husbands, parents, even our children and all with whom we have daily interaction well know our characters and often only too well what advice we have need of. Do we always listen to and appreciate their suggestions? Especially when we are tired after our day's work and our nearest and dearest one gives us good advice, it may not always meet with our positive reaction.

When we ourselves are giving advice and suggestions to others, let us always do so in a godly spirit, with quietness and humbleness. The offering of advice and suggestions has to be always in the proper spirit, in the proper way, also at the appropriate time, at the right place and to the right person. It is always a delicate undertaking and difficult to carry through satisfactorily, but by the correct study of God's word and in a spirit of love and humility, we can come to the right way of giving others advice and reminders. *"A man hath joy in the answer of his mouth; and a word in season, how good is it!" Prov. 15:23.*

Returning to the story of Naaman's leprosy, we find that the intervention of the king of Syria did not bring about the expected results. The king of Israel did not agree to receive the Syrian general, suspecting that in

Naaman's case there was some kind of political provocation or even some trap that would possibly lead to war.

At that time, the prophet in Israel was the renowned prophet Elisha, and when he learnt of Naaman's case, he offered his help. However, we are told that, when Naaman the leper stood in Elisha's doorway, the prophet did not receive him personally but instead greeted him through a messenger, who gave directions that would rid Naaman of his leprosy. Naaman was not impressed with the welcome he received in Israel, when neither the king nor even the prophet personally received him. He had expectations of a grand welcome with a feast and full honours - a royal performance! Yet here he was met with what sounded to him to be ridiculous advice of very doubtful value.

After these surprising events, Naaman became very angry and, turning away in a rage, prepared his belongings as well as his escort for the return journey to Syria. His servants desperately tried to persuade him to reconsider his rash decision - evidently the Syrian general was sympathetic towards his servants and received respect from them, for they all wished that he be cured of his disease. He must have been approachable and good towards his servants, as they were not afraid to question his decision and were eventually able to change his mind. It is rather remarkable, indeed, that a man of such high standing, having a responsible position and authority, could still humbly yield to the suggestions and advice of his servants.

Let us once again recall the lesson of accepting advice and suggestions that come not necessarily from high ranking lines of authority but remember that sometimes it is that quiet and humble voice at our side which can reveal itself as the genuine voice of God.

In accordance with Elisha's advice, Naaman therefore dipped himself in the river Jordan. After the first dip, there was no change; when he dipped a second time, again there was no change. The third and fourth dips likewise brought no improvement. After the fifth and sixth dips, there was still no improvement. But after he had dipped himself the seventh time in Jordan, the body of Naaman the leper was cured! It was faith that had lead to his being healed; after the seventh dipping of his body in Jordan, Naaman was the recipient of a great blessing, the blessing of being restored to health!

We recall that the number seven in the Bible symbolises or represents perfection, and we can find for ourselves a valuable lesson from this story of Naaman. If we desire the promises and blessings of God, our faith in them must always be perfect and complete as well. Our obedience to God, our baptism into death with Jesus Christ, must also be wholehearted, they must be perfect and complete.

The example of Naaman's faith was mentioned by Jesus in His sermon to the dwellers in Nazareth, and we read in Luke 4:27 - *"and there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian."* The dwellers in Nazareth, from where our Saviour came, did not receive Jesus properly; they knew Him from His birth as the son of Joseph and Mary; they had observed Him growing up in the power of God; and they had also heard that He performed many miracles in neighbouring Capernaum. But when our Lord Jesus came to where He had previously lived, they rejected Him, even planning to destroy Him.

Maybe this event should lead us to examine our own behaviour. Have we become indifferent to our consecration, in that it now lacks excitement and has become commonplace? Perhaps our elders no longer enjoy the appreciation they previously received from us? Are their voices the same as they were, or has even the tone now become rather monotonous to us? We have so many talks on tape to listen to and so many topics to choose from - why should we be bothered to go to meetings, to get up early, to wash and dress, to hurry to get there on time? Surely, God is everywhere - could we not lay a little longer in bed, and so, half asleep, listen to an address of our liking?

The apostle Paul, in 1 Cor. 6:12, says - *"All things are lawful for me, but not all things are expedient."* Many of us have been "in the truth" for 10 or more years, others 20, 30, 40 or 50 years. Maybe we are proud of our achievement - born and raised in a Christian home, next to the Bible - but maybe we have become used to and complacent about our meetings. Maybe we are coming just to satisfy others, or to fulfil the requests of our parents? or maybe even God? whom we cannot possibly deceive for He knows our heart's condition only too well.

Dear brethren, let us treasure the precious truth which we have been so privileged to receive. Let us refresh ourselves every day with the Divine promises for it is only through them that we can become partakers of the divine nature. Let us respect our brethren, our elders, and how much of their lives they have sacrificed in order to provide us with necessary spiritual food.

In Israel there were many lepers, these were classified as unclean. 2 Kings 7:3 mentions four leprous men at the entrance of the gate of the city; but the prophet did not heal these, as they did not possess faith. From Luke's account, we learn of another ten lepers, who came to Jesus requesting that their leprosy be cured. (Luke 17: 12-19) By a miracle, Jesus cured them all, but only one came back to Jesus to offer his thanks for

being given back his health. Amazingly, he was not a Hebrew but a Samaritan, yet he was so full of gratitude to our Lord. His behaviour reminds us of that of Naaman the leper, for he did not depart immediately to his home after being cured but, instead, returned to the prophet Elisha and offered a gift of high value.

“And he (Naaman) returned to the man of God (Elisha); he and all his company, and came and stood before him, and he said, Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel: now therefore, I pray thee, take a blessing of thy servant. But he said, As the LORD liveth, before whom I stand, I will receive none. And he urged him to take it, but he refused.” 2 Kings 5:15, 16.

Naaman's character could be a wonderful example for us to follow, both in respect of his gratitude towards Elisha as well as his adoration of the God of Israel. Let us reflect for a moment, how much we should be grateful to our Heavenly Father, who has healed us from the “leprosy” of our sin and forgiven us all our sins. For through faith in the precious blood of our Lord Jesus, we have received forgiveness for all our transgressions, we have been washed clean from the “leprosy” of our sins. The apostle Paul reminds us of the gratitude we owe to God and of our fitting response to His divine goodness in Romans 12:1 - *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service.”*

As already mentioned, in Biblical symbolism leprosy typifies sin, and the wages of sin. We may remember well the story of Moses' sister, Miriam whom God made to become a leper as a result of her rebellious spirit towards her brother. Her improper attitude of murmuring against Moses was accounted as a sin against the Almighty Himself and it was only because of the prayer of Moses that Miriam's sin was forgiven and her leprosy removed.

After analysing the story of Naaman the leper as regards Naaman and his character, let us now turn our attention to Elisha. His was a noble character, it did not permit him to accept any reward from the rich general, who was fully prepared to reward him well. Acceptance of Naaman's offer would represent Elisha as selling God's power, symbolically speaking it would indicate that God's power was a marketable commodity. The prophet Elisha knew well that the gifts of God are not for sale and this aspect of his character should be a trait of our characters also, as we impart to others spiritual services. *“Freely you have received, freely give!” Matt. 10:8.*

In 2 Kings 5:20-27, we learn what happened after Naaman had been cured. Elisha's servant Gehazi had a different heart and mind from that of Elisha; earthly things and material benefits occupied an important place in his heart and for material gain he twice allowed himself to lie. We recall what happened - the leprosy of Naaman came upon Elisha's servant as a result of his sin. Gehazi had been exposed to Elisha's work every day yet in all the time he had not learnt anything, he did not appreciate the prophet's gift, the gift of the power of God. In 2 Cor. 6:1, Paul warns us with the words - *“And working together with Him, we entreat also that you receive not the grace of God in vain.”*

Finally, let us recall the noble and full of gratitude behaviour of the cured Syrian general. After being cured of his leprosy, Naaman made a request that he be allowed to take away a little of the soil of Israel. This soil he planned to keep somewhere close to him, so that on it, on holy ground, he could bend his knees before the true God who had restored his life. It seems certain that, to the end of his life, this man was constantly filled with gratitude to God for the grace he had received.

“Heal me, O Jehovah, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved; for Thou art my praise.” Jer. 17:14. This same healing and salvation I wish for all brothers and sisters and for myself also.

(TZ: 1/96)



Volume 79 No. 2 MELBOURNE, MARCH/APRIL 1996 “THIS DO IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME”

As each year comes around, the Lord's people ..have the privilege of gathering together to celebrate the memorial of the death of Jesus, their Saviour. It is profitable at such times to recall the solemn occasion when our Lord Himself instituted the simple way in which all who trust implicitly in His sacrifice for their salvation from sin may remember that sacrifice, given on their behalf but in God's due time to benefit all mankind.

This is evidently the reason why it is God's will for His people to commemorate the death of Jesus, for it is essential that we always keep before our minds the necessity for Jesus' death and the fact that, only because of His death, we are now privileged to enjoy the hope of life through Him. Let us go briefly back to the typical arrangement that the Israelites were instructed to carry out in relation to the Passover; these instructions are recorded in Exodus 12.

The record tells us how the nation of Israel was delivered from the bondage of Egypt and particularly about the passing over of the firstborns of Israel during the plague of death which came upon Egypt, and which, as the last of the plagues, finally compelled Pharaoh to release the Israelites from compulsory servitude. For the Israelites to be spared from this plague of death, they were instructed to take a lamb for a sacrifice and sprinkle the blood upon the doorposts and lintels of their houses, so that their houses would be “passed over” on that night.

“Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year; you shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats; and you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening, and they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it.” (Exodus 12:5-7)

“For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgement: I am the LORD. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where you are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt. And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and you shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; you shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever.” (Exodus 12:12-14)

The two points that attract our attention here are first, the “lamb”, and second, the “first borns”. The lamb was to be a male of the first year, without blemish, and it was to be killed on the 14th of Nisan. The Israelites were commanded to celebrate this memorial of the passover each year and it was for this purpose that the Lord and His disciples assembled in the upper room on that day, as recorded in the New Testament gospel accounts.

It was on this day (14th Nisan) that Jesus was crucified, thus identifying Him as the antitype of the lamb, without blemish, that was slain. John the Baptist who heralded the presence of our Lord at His first advent said of Jesus, “Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.” John 1:29 The apostle Paul also speaks of Jesus as the Lamb of God in 1 Cor.5:7,8 - “For even Christ our passover (our passover lamb) is sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and • truth.”

We note from Exodus 12:12 that only the firstborns were in danger of death, but the deliverance of all the Israelites was dependent upon their salvation. This was also typical of the “church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven” of whom we read in Hebrews 12:23. It is the church of the firstborn alone that is being spared (passed over) during this gospel age. These have the blood of the Lamb - Jesus sprinkled not on the doorposts of their houses but upon their hearts, as we read in Hebrews 10:22 - “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed

with pure water”

“Forasmuch as you know that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot.” 1 Peter 1:18,19. So, indeed, as we come together on these memorial occasions, we look unto Jesus as the “Lamb of God”. In Exodus 12, we noted that the lamb must be totally without blemish; so Jesus was the perfect One, “holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners.”

In the prophetic words of Isaiah 53:7, Jesus is described as being “brought as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.” When Philip drew near to the man of Ethiopia, he was reading this and the following verse of the chapter. The account in Acts 8 quotes it thus - “In his humiliation his judgement was taken away; and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth.” Our Lord did not resist those who were intent on taking His life. At his trial before Pilate, He said - “You could have no power at all against me, except it were given to you from above.”

Jesus further declared that no man took His life from Him, but He laid it down Himself, that is, He voluntarily gave his life in accordance with the Father’s will. “No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received from my Father.” John 10:18. Again the Psalmist speaking prophetically of our Lord declares - “Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart.” Psalm 40:7,8.

With this in mind, we rejoice to think of the great love of our Lord in giving His life so that we can, during this present age, have life through His sacrifice. We rejoice also in the so great love of the Father who gave His only-begotten Son to be our Redeemer, and we know in God’s due time this love will reach out to all mankind. “There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all to be testified in due time.” 1 Timothy 2:5,6.

An account of the institution by Jesus of the memorial of His death is given in Matthew 26; in verse 26 we read - “As they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it and broke it, and gave it to His disciples, and said, Take, eat, this is my body.” Evidently, when the passover supper was over, Jesus took some of the unleavened bread that was left and instituted a new memorial, a memorial that was to be kept in remembrance of Him. He was the antitypical Lamb that had been chosen three and a half years earlier to fulfil the picture seen in Exodus 12.

So when Jesus took bread and said, “Take, eat, this is my body” He meant that is represented His body. This pure and unfermented bread represented our Lord’s sinless flesh; leaven being a type or picture of sin was expressly forbidden to be used at the Passover season. Here it is good to read from John 6 -

“The bread of life is He which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. Then said they unto Him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.” Verses 33-35.

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life. I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven; If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever.” Verses 47-51.

Jesus freely sacrificed His life for us. It was because our Lord was holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners - free from sin, that He was able to become the Redeemer of Adam and his race. We can see that it was the pure undefiled nature of Jesus that He laid down and this we are privileged to partake of by faith. This opens up for us the way to eternal life.

The Matthew account of the institution of the memorial of His death continues- “And He (Jesus) took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it.” Matt. 26:27. The fruit of the vine, of which we partake, represents our Saviour’s life given for us, His human life, His soul poured out unto death on our behalf and of our recognition of His great sacrifice for us. By faith in that sacrifice, we are justified in the sight of our Father in heaven.

In 1 Cor. 10:16,17 the apostle Paul presents an additional significance to the taking of the emblems of bread and wine. “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread.” The Diaglott translation renders it - “Is it not a participation of the blood of the Anointed Oneis it not a participation of the body of the Anointed One?”

This illustrates the great grace of God, that He is willing to receive us and make us joint-heirs with our Lord and Saviour if we have His spirit. That spirit which actuated Jesus was one of entire devotion to His Father’s will, even unto death, as we read in Hebrews 10:7 - “Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me,

to do Thy will, O God.” The same spirit must be in all those whom the Father accepts as members of the Body of Christ. Jesus made this clear, when answering the mother of two of His disciples who came to Him seeking prominent places in the kingdom for them.

His answer, recorded in Matt. 20:22,23 reads - *“Jesus answered and said, You know not what you ask. Are you able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of and be baptised with the baptism that I am baptised with? They say unto Him, We are able. And He saith unto them, You shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptised with the baptism that I am baptised with, but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give.”* This is what Paul is pointing out to us, that our Lord is the true bread which came down from heaven and that we are invited to be participants in the one loaf and in due time accepted by our Father for a place in the kingdom.

As the apostle indicates, when we break this bread together as a memorial, not only do we symbolise our Lord’s broken body but in a wider sense the breaking or the laying down of the lives of the members of the Church. The cup of the fruit of the vine symbolises the sacrificial life of Jesus, but it also teaches us that in becoming His disciples we accept His invitation to share His cup. Paul in Romans 12:1 again presents the thought in different words - *“I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, your reasonable service.”*

All the Lord’s people will have trials and temptations along the way and these will test us as to our being overcomers, as our Lord overcame. We should rejoice to be counted worthy to suffer reproaches for the name of Christ and to do what we can in the service of His truth. We feel at times that we can do so little but the hymn writer’s words remind us -

And so beside Thy sacrifice,
I would lay down my little all.
Tis lean and small, I must confess,
I would that it were not so small.
But then I know, Thou dost accept
My grateful offering unto Thee.
For, Lord, tis love that doth it prompt,
And love is incense sweet to Thee.

We are not to become discouraged but realise that whatever we do, if it is done in the right spirit, as unto the Lord, it will be counted in as part of that sacrifice we have pledged to make. Satan is ever active to discourage the Lord’s people. He succeeded in causing the fall of Judas through selfishness into betraying the Lord with a kiss. We remember how that Peter also, at this time, eager to serve the Lord but still impulsive and through momentary weakness led into denying his Lord, needed Jesus’ help and prayers.

We hear the Lord’s words of comfort and reassurance to Peter - *“I have prayed for you that your faith fail not.”* Luke 22:32. To remember this always may be of special help to us, as no doubt it was to Peter. He failed and denied his Master three times, but the Lord forgave him and later on he became one of the greatest of the apostles of the Lord. May this be also a lesson for us; let us search our hearts and rid them of all “leaven” and determine by faith to overcome any failings in our own lives.

As we read again the account of the last hours of our Lord’s life, it makes us sad to think of the ignominy and shame to which He was subjected. We recall His betrayal by one He had loved, His mock trial at the hands of the Jewish chief priests and the Roman governor, even the loneliness when even His own disciples forsook Him and fled, then the bearing of the cross on the way to Calvary and the anguish of the cross.

Gethsemane can I forget,
Or there Thy conflict see,
Thine agony and deep distress
And not remember Thee?

In calling to mind these sombre events, let us also remember that it was for the joy set before Him that our Lord endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now set down on the right hand of God. This joy is foretold in Jesus’ words in Matt. 26:29, where we read - *“I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”* Let us thank the Lord for this great hope; may it be an inspiration to each of us to serve the Lord acceptably and partake of the cup of joy with Him in the kingdom. Amen.

(Memorial Address JBH;1984)

Chosen Lessons

Psalm 25:12

In the way that He shall choose
He will teach us;
Not a lesson we shall lose,
All shall reach us.
Strange and difficult indeed
We may find it,
But the blessing that we need
Is behind it.
All the lessons He shall send
Are the sweetest,
And His training in the end
Is completest.

(F.R.H.)

Millennial Truth

PART 1 - HOPE FOR ALL MANKIND

We often speak of the Plan of God, or the Divine Plan of the Ages; a basic and fundamental part of that plan is the doctrine of Millennial Truth, the millennial hope for all mankind. If we do not understand about the millennial age and the great work that is then to be accomplished, we do not really understand the whole Plan of God.

The Gospel Age believer's hope is a Heavenly one, as it says in Phil. 3:20 - "*our citizenship is in heaven*" (NIV) As such, we have a deep appreciation of our calling and the great privilege that we have been offered. But it is also a great joy to us to know that, in the fullness of time, the Plan of God will afford an opportunity for all of Adam's family to benefit - during the Gospel Age a Heavenly calling, during the Millennial Age an opportunity for all the willing and obedient to live forever on a perfect earth, restored like the Garden of Eden.

How wonderful to know that those who have not come in under the High Calling arrangement will have this hope. This is truly a Plan that brings honour and glory to our Heavenly Father. Indeed it is only by an understanding of His Plan that we can fully appreciate the character and love of our great Creator. We might apply the words of the Master to ourselves - "*Blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear*" Matt. 13:16.

It would seem that once the apostles and early Christian fathers fell asleep, the understanding of Millennial truth was lost sight of by the many, and it is only during the last hundred years or so that the gospel of the Millennial Age kingdom has again been preached to any extent. We think of our Lord's words in Matt. 24:14 - "*This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.*"

Mainly during the centuries of the gospel age, it has been the heavenly phase of the kingdom that has been preached; now at the end of the age, many voices are proclaiming that the earthly phase is near at hand. It would seem that this is what our Lord had in mind - it is after the gospel of the millennial kingdom is preached in all the world for a witness that the end comes. We can take our cue from the prayer that Jesus taught His disciples to pray - "*When you pray, say, Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.*" Luke 11:2.

This most certainly has never been achieved as yet. From a worldly point of view, there would seem little hope of its ever being achieved. With each passing year, conditions on earth deteriorate further. Will God's will ever be done on earth as it is in heaven? The answer to that question is "most certainly!", there has never been any doubt. We could not imagine for a moment that Jesus would ask His followers to pray for something that was out of harmony with the Plan of God, something that never could be accomplished. The Millennial Age will surely and fully accomplish it.

We have a very clear definition of just what comprises the gospel in God's words to Abraham, as quoted in

Gal. 3:8 - *"The scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed."* As we know, it is not until the Millennium that all the nations are to be blessed. The Lord's people of the Gospel Age are the first to receive the blessing of Abraham, then, as part of the seed of blessing, we will assist in dispensing the blessing to all the world in the next age.

As already noted, the gospel of the Kingdom has been widely proclaimed over the past one hundred years or so from the platform, on radio, television and the printed page and there would be few in the western world who have not heard of the coming thousand year kingdom. We cannot tell just how many believed the message, but we remember that it is being preached as a witness. When those who heard awake from the sleep of death on the resurrection morning, in the kingdom, it will not come as a surprise, they will recall that they had been told about it.

To us, it is surprising that there are still many who cannot accept and appreciate the truth of the earthly phase of the kingdom, for we have a great wealth of evidence for it from God's word in both the Old and New Testaments. We are familiar with these scriptures, but as the apostle says in 2 Peter 1:12 - *"I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though you know them, and are established in the present truth."* We are all leaky vessels and need to be put in remembrance of these things from time to time. Also, we love to think about, and talk about, these precious truths that are so dear to our hearts.

Some would tell us that at our Lord's return this planet will be burnt up. Let us see what the scriptures say, realising that they can also quote scripture to support their view, but only by giving a literal application to symbolic passages. To do this, of course, makes it impossible to harmonise the scriptures, or to make sense out of the Bible. A good place to start any enquiry is always the beginning, in our case that is back at the time of the creation of our first parents and their placement in the Garden of Eden.

God created a beautiful garden with every kind of luscious fruit, with flowering trees, no doubt with sweet-smelling flowers and shrubs, everything that was pleasing to the senses and appetising to the palate - paradise conditions. He created the first man and woman, perfect in every respect, mentally and physically, no doubt, the most handsome man and beautiful woman to have walked this earth. We are told in Gen. 1:31 - *"God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day."* Very good would mean that everything was perfect.

Let us now look at God's instructions to our first parents in Gen. 1:27,28 - *"So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him, male and female created He them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air; and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth."*

Note that the Hebrew text says *fill* the earth, rather than *replenish* it. This passage clearly shows God's purpose for the great bulk of the human family, which was, that this planet be fully populated with happy, healthy, perfect people, created in His own character-likeness, a character of love, towards each other and towards their Creator.

Our Heavenly Father has supreme power and we can have absolute faith that what He has planned will be fulfilled to the letter. We have confirmation of this again in Isa. 45:18 - *"For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God Himself that formed the earth and made it; He created it not in vain, He formed it to be inhabited; I am the LORD, and there is none else."* If the earth were to be destroyed, that would mean that it was created in vain. The wise man, Solomon, says in Eccl. 1:4 - *"One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh; but the earth abideth forever."* Such passages reaffirm God's instructions to Adam and Eve to be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth.

Through the disobedience of our first parents, all of their descendants have, to a greater or lesser extent, developed sinful tendencies. Before they can finally inherit the restored earth, they must be brought back to the character-likeness in which mankind was originally created. Those who are proud and arrogant, puffed up with their own importance, will need to learn a new way, must become meek, as we are told in both the Old and New Testaments. Psalm 37:11 reads - *"The meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace."* (See also Matt. 5:5) What a blessing for this strife and war torn world it will be to experience an abundance of peace, what a change it will mean from the conditions that have existed for much of its history.

Let us now consider a passage of scripture which shows the accomplishment and final fulfilment of all that these scriptures have foretold, namely, the parable of the sheep and goats recorded in Matt. 25:31-46. In the parable, a contrast is being made between those pictured as sheep and goats. The nature of the latter, the goats, is stub: born and willful, not easily lead; these picture those who prove incorrigible, who have not profited from the favour shown to them and have wilfully refused to amend their ways. Any who fall in to that category will not be allowed to live on into the ages of eternity.

It is not God's desire that any should have to be destroyed, rather He desires that all should come to repentance, as we are told in 2 Peter 3:9 - *"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness; but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."* If this is God's desire, could He not bring it to pass? We cannot doubt that He could, but only by violating His own plan, that is, by taking away mankind's freedom of choice and taking control of their minds.

In the Millenium, God will virtually say to mankind, just as He did to Israel, as recounted in Deut. 30:15 - *"See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil."* In effect, God will be saying, the choice is yours, accept all the help that is being offered to you, learn and obey my perfect ways, and receive everlasting life; or, if unwilling to do so, go your own way and reject the offer of life.

The nature of the sheep is directly in contrast to that of the goats. The sheep are meek, docile, easily led. How fittingly they picture the meek who are to inherit the earth. *"He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the king say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."* (Matt. 25:33,34) This is Millennial truth; here we are shown the great work of that age completed, the meek have inherited the earth and it is now filled and permanently inhabited, just as God intended it to be.

From this passage, it would seem that the Garden of Eden previewed the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world for mankind. As we saw before, God's instruction to Adam and Eve was to fill the earth and subdue it. (Gen. 1:28) Subduing the rest of the earth was man's part of the work; God had started it and the Garden of Eden was the pattern to follow. God does not do for man the works that he can do for himself. We all have a far greater appreciation of those things which we are able to create for ourselves, the work of our own hands. So it will be in the Millenium - God will provide the suitable climate, all the instruction and help required, the assistance of the Holy Spirit, mankind will do the work.

We need to note particularly the first verse of the parable of the sheep and goats, because this gives us the time setting. The verse reads - *"When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory."* This shows clearly that the parable refers to the judging of the world, not of the Church. When Christ sits on the throne of His glory, the Church is already complete at that time and sharing His reign. (Rev. 3:21) - *"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne."*

Many see the selection of the Church as an end in itself, they can see no others being saved. On the surface, our Lord's words in Matt. 7:13,14 might seem to support that view. The verses read - *"Enter ye in at the strait gate, for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be who go in thereat; because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."* Compared to earth's billions, there have indeed been but few saved during the Gospel Age.

The strait gate and the narrow way are the entrance to the High Calling. Those so called have been given exceeding great and precious promises; to qualify for this high position that has been offered, we must prove our faithfulness under difficult and adverse conditions, indeed a narrow way. We can contrast this narrow way with the highway of holiness of Isa. 35:8 - *"A highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The Way of Holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those, the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein."*

What a contrast we have here, a great highway made so easy that even fools shall not stray. Here we have two passages that are totally contrary to each other; on one hand an extremely hard and difficult way, so difficult in fact that few can find it, on the other hand a highway leading to life, so easy that all who wish to, may find it with ease. It is only by an understanding of Millennial truth that we can make consistent sense of these passages. If we read the whole of Isaiah 35, we see that it is a Millennial setting. When we place these passages in their right time periods, they are completely harmonious.

But what about the broad way that leads to destruction and the many that go in that way? We must bear in mind that only the Church is being saved during the Gospel Age, these alone have passed from death unto life by accepting Jesus Christ as their Saviour. All others die in the lost condition; their death would be eternal, except for the grace of God in giving His only-begotten Son as a Ransom sacrifice, guaranteeing a resurrection for all.

Translators would naturally tend to translate Matt. 7:13, 14 according to their own understanding of the Plan of God, and as we know, Greek words can have different shades of meaning according to their settings. The Greek word used for "destruction" in these verses is "apoleia", for which Young's Concordance gives just one meaning, that is, "loss". Vine's Greek Dictionary gives several meanings, but he commences his comments by saying "the word indicates loss of well-being, not loss of being". This may well be the thought here, rather than destruction.

Jesus' words here seem clear, He is simply saying that during the Gospel Age the bulk of mankind remain

in the lost condition, and only a few are in the saved condition. The lost will be found in that future Millennial Day. (Convention Address - JGT:1995)

(Part 2 of this article - MILLENNIAL TRUTH -THE LAST DAY - will appear in a later issue of Peoples Paper.)

A Preview of the Kingdom

Close your eyes for a moment to the scenes of misery and woe, degradation and sorrow that yet prevail on account of sin, and picture before your mental vision the glory of the perfect earth. Not a stain of sin mars the harmony and peace of a perfect society: not a bitter thought, not an unkind look or word; love, welling up from every heart, meets a kindred response in every other heart, and benevolence marks every act. There sickness shall be no more; not an ache nor a pain, nor any evidence of decay—not even the fear of such things. Think of all the pictures of comparative health and beauty of human form and feature that you have ever seen, and know that perfect humanity will be of still surpassing loveliness. The inward purity and mental and moral perfection will stamp and glorify every radiant countenance. Such will earth's society be; and weeping bereaved ones will have their tears all wiped away, when thus they realize the resurrection work complete.—Revelation 21:4.

Christ our Example

“For even hereunto were you called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps.” 1 Peter 2:21.

THE WAY OF THE CROSS

It is the same apostle Peter whose words are quoted above who urges upon his Christian brethren that they “give all diligence” to make their calling and election sure. It is also he who, in that same epistle, admonishes, *“If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf.” 1 Peter 4:16.* Indeed, the disesteem, the frowns, the reproaches of the world - humanity around us (and even of professing brethren) still may cast their shadows across the pathway of the sacrificial Christ; for darkness, spiritual blindness, still afflicts the children of men, while they wait for that “morning without clouds”. Are we distressed and troubled in spirit because we cannot have our friends and acquaintances understand why we have chosen “the way of the cross”? We have only to remember that it is a most difficult thing, indeed impossible for the natural man to understand why those accepted into Divine favour should be called to a life of sacrifice, trial and suffering. In order to understand this matter, it is necessary to take God's viewpoint; and this cannot be accepted unless one has faith based upon knowledge of the Divine plans and purposes.

How clear it is that all through the Gospel Age the Lord's invitation to this High Calling has been extended chiefly to those in humbler walks of life. Those who have access to the splendours, riches and luxuries of this world are generally so engrossed and overcharged with these that they have no ear for the heavenly treasures, as saith our blessed Lord, *“How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!” (Mark 10:23)* In the footsteps of our Saviour by way of the cross is, in substance, the sum of the Christian's Calling as he or she journeys through this world.

Truly the narrow way is seen to be a way of death, yet leading to life, as our Master declared, *“Narrow is the way that leadeth unto life” (Matt. 7:14)* But in order that it shall terminate in life to us, the power, influences and agencies of life must work in us. These all centre in the office and work of the Holy Spirit; for by this we are begotten again unto the hope of life with Christ as partakers of His glory and throne. Thus, while in the narrow way of self-sacrifice and self-denial, the disciple of Christ is undergoing the death process of the various earthly human propensities - desires, aspirations, affections, etc.; meantime, the Spirit of God, through the Truth, is quickening, making alive, those heavenly propensities - desires, aspirations, affections, that belong to the new life. (Col. 3:1-4) This is the process of regeneration or making alive, as it is also the sanctification - setting apart through the begetting of the Holy Spirit. (Titus 3:5)

FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT

It is in view of the present urgent necessity of sober watchfulness and attention to the Will of God regarding us that the apostle Paul calls upon all who are to any extent intoxicated and stupefied by the spirit of the world, saying, *“Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.” Eph. 5:14.* Put away self-will, cleanse your hearts of secret pride, and awake to the issues of this solemn hour, of being filled with the Spirit of God, and of looking to Him for the light that will surely follow, with its blessed, invigorating and health-giving influences. That the Lord's disciplinary providences are an important factor in the process of Christian development and the maturing of the spiritual character, we are fully assured. The Divine purpose is to bring us into close personal touch with our Master, so that there is constant reliance upon Him.

The faithful disciple of Christ is earnestly entreated to give ALL diligence in the devotion of the mind, the heart with all its longings and affections, in the direction of encouraging and building up the “inner man” in

all those qualities of the spiritual likeness of Christ. (2 Peter 1:5-7) It is in this connection that the disciple is warned against the intrusions of the world and its spirit, for yielding to these adverse influences is sure to result in retarding the work of the Spirit and in repressing the spiritual life. Says the beloved John, *"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."* 1 John 2:15,16.

The experiences, failures and trials of God's people throughout the Age teach us that, only as they give strict adherence to the apostle's foregoing advice, will they be sure of being kept in a state of safety and nearness to the Lord. To yield to the spirit of the world in any degree, or to enter into its schemes, its plans, its methods, is sure to expose the Christian to the influence and power of the worldly spirit.

KEPT BY THE POWER OF GOD

No devout student of the sacred Word can fail to be familiar with the many solemn assurances that the Christian's walk through this world is ever and always in contact with severe testings and fiery buffetings of the adversary. The apostle Peter says again, *"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you. But rejoice, inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may be glad also with exceeding joy."* 1 Peter 4:12,13. Some very edifying thoughts in this connection have been left to us, and these follow.

"It is worthy of notice here that special reference is made, not to the tests of intellectual belief brought about by the presentation of false doctrine, but to reproaches and persecution for Christ's sake, either for adherence to His doctrines or conformity to His righteousness, for the apostle adds, *"If you are reproached for **the name of Christ**, happy are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you."* He warns us to take heed only that we suffer not as evil-doers, *"yet if any man suffer as a Christian (that is, either for loyalty to Christian principles or Christian doctrine) let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf"* 1 Peter 4:14,16.

"The prophet Daniel also says that particularly in this time of the end, *"many shall be purified and made white and tried"*; and Malachi compares the trials of this time to the "refiner's fire" and to "fuller's soap", which are designed to **refine** and **purify** the Lord's people. The apostle Paul urges that we fight the good fight of faith, and patiently endure afflictions to the end. (1 Tim. 6:12, 2 Tim. 2:3) and many are the words of consolation and blessed comfort offered by the Psalmist and others to the tempest-tossed and suffering people of God. See Psa. 77:1-14, 116:1-14, 34:19, 31:24, 2 Thes. 3:3.

"Are you then, dear Brother or Sister, hard pressed on every side with temptations to doubt that God's protection, love and care are yours, that His precious promises belong to you? Have you grown discouraged and disheartened? Do the foes seem too many and too strong for you? Do the reproaches come with crushing weight, and do the clouds hang heavy over your seemingly defenceless head? Ah, it is just here that FAITH must claim her victory! Is it not promised, *"This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."* 1 John 5:4? It is your faith that is on trial now.

"In calmer days when the sun of favour shone brightly upon you, you were quietly laying the foundation of a knowledge of the Truth, and rearing the superstructure of Christian character. Now you are in the furnace to be proved: summon therefore all your courage; fortify your patience; nerve yourself to endurance; hold fast to your hope; call to mind the promises, they are still yours; and *"cast not away your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward."* Heb. 10:35. *"In quietness and confidence shall be your strength."* Isa. 30:15. *"Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him"* (Psa. 37:7) and faith has gained her victory.

"Then in due time the Lord's hand will be recognised in making all things work together for good to you according to His promise. The **proof of your faith**, says Peter, *"is more precious than gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire."* 1 Peter 1:7." (R1823)

LIGHT ON THE PATH

The sun never sets in the land of delight,
Where love's glorious impress is given;
And brighter we shine as we walk in the light
On the pathway that leads up to heaven.
The burdens of earth-life are lighter today
As we lean on His life-giving Word -

For the joy of the Lord is our strength on the way,
And His smile is our precious reward.
Our praises ascend as sweet music to join,
Then mingle and swell round the throne,
From the fetters of earth to love all Divine,
That seals us forever His own.
We're waiting to hear it, the summons to come,
To share in the glory prepared;
Whether waking or sleeping, we'll reach to our home,
With each broken tie healed and restored.

(Author unknown)

NOW I TRUST HIM

And now I trust Him for His grace
Which meets so perfectly my place;
And peace through every trial flows,
Because I know that Jesus knows.

(F.R.H.)



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THE CHRISTIAN'S NEW YEAR

"So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom" Psal.90:12

"Christians, in numbering their days, do not do so with a doleful or disconsolate sentiment, although they do so with sobriety. They count the days as they go as so many blessings, so many privileges, so many opportunities to *'show forth the praises of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvellous light'*, to render assistance to others in the pilgrim journey, and to develop in themselves more and more of the character pleasing in the sight of God - to become more and more a copy of God's dear Son." (Manna-5 January)

The above text and quotation are a most appropriate exhortation and encouragement for Christians in their daily walk in the pilgrim way. The Psalmist's words indicate an earnest desire to so "weigh out" or "appoint" his days, so that his heart, his intentions, his being may be fully applied to and guided by the wisdom that comes from above.

What could be more fitting for every child of God, as another new year is entered upon, than to take this same attitude and continually seek for the guidance of the Lord in ordering our days that our hearts may be so applied unto wisdom, the divine wisdom, that we may be vessels *"unto honour, sanctified and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work."* 2 Timothy 2:21.

This matter of "numbering our days" is earnestly stressed by the apostle Paul when he declares - *"See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil."* Ephesians 5:15,16. If the days were evil in Paul's time, what can be said of this present time? Truly since Adam and Eve's expulsion from Eden there has been a reign of evil over the earth, but at certain periods conditions have been even more terrible than others- for instance, in the days of Noah, when God saw the necessity to send the great flood, because *"the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."* Genesis 6:5.

Our Lord used these very "days of Noah" to describe the conditions on the earth at the close of "this present evil world", the period which the Lord's people generally agree has been reached and which is also to be the end of the Gospel Age - "the days of the Son of Man". This being so, there would seem no doubt that we are living at the time of which Paul writes to Timothy - *"In the last days, perilous times shall come for men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived."* 2 Timothy 3:1-13

Surely, then, there is a great need today for "redeeming the time, because the days are evil". There are no doubt numerous ways in which the time may be redeemed, and it is for all the Lord's people to review their lives and determine in what ways some improvement in their own development and service for other brethren may be possible. "So teach us to number our days" should be the earnest prayer of every consecrated child of God, and, if at first the applying of the heart unto wisdom does not bring forth great fruitage, the course must be persevered in, so that by the Lord's grace further progress in the peaceable fruits of righteousness will be made by each true branch in the Vine.

The past year has again been a momentous one in many respects and events have confirmed the faith of God's people that we are living in the very days spoken of by the prophet Nahum as *"the day of His preparation"*, when the various elements of both the symbolic heavens and earth are being prepared for the greatest time of trouble the world has seen. Paul described this same period in 1 Thess. 5, indicating that earth's troubles would come in spasms, as has been the case particularly in recent decades, until finally prolonged

travail results in a new order of things for humanity as a whole.

As a personal message of encouragement to the saints, Paid adds - "*But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief*". 1 Thess. 5:4. How favoured, indeed, are God's children of this present time, for while they live in perilous times, with subtle temptations and dangers all around, yet they can look beyond the present conditions to the blessings that God has in store not just for them but for all mankind. Meanwhile they have the assurance that - "*If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him freely give us all things?*" Romans 8:31,32

Faith may firmly trust Him, come what may, not just for the coming year, but to journey's end for every child of God. May 1996 be a year of blessing and growth in grace for each one of us. Amen.

"As we review the leading of Divine providence during the year that is past, let God's goodness and mercy stimulate our faith and confidence in Him as respects the new incoming year. A proper retrospect on the part of the children of God will enable us not only to render thanks for the past, but to look up and lift up our heads, realising that our deliverance is nearer than when we first believed, and that He that began a good work in us is both able and willing to complete it, if we will but continue to submit our wills, our lives, our all, to His wisdom and loving care." (Manna-30 December)

The Apostle Paul and "His" Gospel

"According to my gospel." - 2 Timothy 2:8

If any one word could be used to describe Paul's influence in the Church, it would be the word "progress," and we shall not do wrong if we think of him as the "Apostle of Progress." Indeed our Lord himself indicated this at the time of his selection to the Apostolic office, when he said: "He is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel." - Acts 9:15.

To him was allotted not only the stupendous task of freeing the Church of Christ from the Jewish wrapping which had served as its cradle, but of extending the witness to the uttermost parts of the earth. Through his preaching men turned not only from Moses to Christ, but from Pagan idolatry to the worship of the one true God. As another has said: "He was the travelled ambassador of Christ, who snatched Christianity from the hands of a local faction and turned it into a universal faith, whose powerful word shook all the gods from Cyprus to Gibraltar, who turned the tide of history and thought."

THE MAN HIMSELF

It is to his Epistles we must turn if we would really know Paul. While we might, from other sources, especially the Book of Acts, have learned what he *did* and *suffered*, yet apart from his Epistles we should have very little idea of what he *was*. But in them we meet the man himself.

This is most important, for, as is well known, while abstract truth, discussed from an academic standpoint, might result in very exact theology, it is only what has been termed "truth through personality," that is to say, truth which has become part of the very life of the one presenting it, that gets very far in the remoulding of other people's lives. One whose life is not in harmony with his teachings, even though his theology might be excellent, is apt to remind us of sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal; so also will another who, speaking beyond his depth, talks parrot-fashion of things of which he little knows the meaning. But when one has had written into his own life and experience the truths the Apostle brings to our attention in his letters, he suggests to us the spirit and power of God.

Thus it is that while truth which is written with pen and ink merely, may mean much, truth which is written in the lives of men and women, means much more. Once it was that God wrote his law on tables of *stone*; in a day not far distant, if we understand the signs of the times correctly, the writing is to be done in the *hearts* of the people, with gloriously different results (Exod. 32:15, 16; 34:1; 2 Cor. 3:3; Heb. 8:10; 10:16). Jesus himself not only preached important truths, *He personified truth*. "I am the way, the truth, and the life." - John 14:6.

So, in lesser measure, was it with the Apostle Paul. When he appeared before men, he narrated the *outward* facts of his conversion. He told them of the light which he had seen, above the brightness of the noonday sun; he mentioned the voice which he had heard speaking with him: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" (Acts 9:4; 22:7; 26:14). But in his letters we find his *inner* life laid bare - lived over again for us, and brought before our mind's eye in a word-picture. We have in them not merely instructions on how to live the Christ-life; we have what is of still more value to us - a cross section of that life as he lived it.

It is not possible, of course, but if without violating confidence, we could "listen-in" to the private prayers

of one who walks close to the Lord, it would mean infinitely more to us than any discourse such as one might give us on the subject, "How to pray." But in his Epistles we may actually "listen-in" to the heart struggles of the Apostle, as he grapples for himself with the problems that for ages had baffled mankind. Here we see this great seeker after righteousness discovering through personal experience how God could be just and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus (Rom. 3:26). We are given an opportunity to see how the Apostle became a New Creature (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15), and how that New Creature grew. Here we have his thought processes and may see, not alone the happy conclusions he reached, but what is of equal importance, how he reached them.

For example: when he bears Israel witness, as he does, that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge (Rom. 10:2), the mere statement of this fact might leave us measurably unmoved. When we realize, however, that he is speaking of the zeal he himself used to have, we begin to understand his earnestness, and his words take on a new significance.

When he discusses the believer's baptism, and likens it to a burial of the old life now to be reckoned dead (Rom. 6:4), we find ourselves admitting that the picture is well drawn, and the doctrine sound; but as the thought comes to us that the writer is one who has given proof after proof that he himself had died, and that his life since then had been hidden with Christ in God (Col. 3:3); that he himself had been crucified with Christ, and that what life he lived henceforth was as though Christ lived in his stead (Gal. 2:20) – when *this* thought comes home to us, we find ourselves occupied more with him than with his argument, masterly though it be.

His words, *backed by his life*, catch fire in our hearts, causing us to long to share his rich experiences of fellowship with the Master, and to determine that by God's grace we will so do, cost what it may. We find in his epistles the proof, not only that he was in the truth, but what was of far greater importance, *the truth was in him*, and it is *this*, which makes his letters pulsate with the throb of life.

"HIS" GOSPEL

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, a divinely commissioned Apostle, was, he tells us, separated unto the Gospel (Rom. 1:1). With him the Gospel was not incidental to other matters more important. It was not even one important thing among others that held place in his life. No! it was *the* business of his life, to which all else was incidental, to which all else was subservient – was *held* subservient. And in *this*, in the complete, whole-hearted abandonment to the Gospel, which, from his conversion and call he devoted his life, his strength lay.

To see the Gospel in all the fullness that Paul preached it one must read, and not only read but study, the Epistle to the Romans. Here we must content ourselves with very brief observations on the twofold work of Christ his Gospel unfolds, namely, first, Christ's work *for* us, or the ground of our justification; and, second, Christ's work *in* us, or our sanctification by His spirit.

CHRIST'S WORK FOR US

From first to last the Gospel of Paul has to do with a Person. The sum and substance of "his" Gospel is Jesus. The one purpose of his preaching, never at any time lost sight of, even in the midst of his most involved doctrinal discussions, is to put the individual hearer and believer of his message in personal and vital touch with his own risen and living Lord.

How shall he do this most effectively? *His own experience tells him*. He who had spent the years prior to his conversion seeking to establish his own righteousness, well knows that the first essential to salvation is a righteousness which may be possible for man to secure as a *gift*, for to merit it *he has found from his own experience*, is an impossibility. Ah! no wonder he is not ashamed of the Gospel, for therein is revealed a righteousness which may be procured by faith, a righteousness which has its origin and which is, therefore, entirely acceptable, with God.—Romans 1:17.

Any sincere seeker after righteousness—all who hunger and thirst after it – will undoubtedly be intensely interested in his message, and since the offer (of this righteousness as a free gift to all who will accept it) is made possible, by the redemptive work of Christ, small wonder that he says: "I delivered unto you first of all that which [in my own personal experience] I also received first of all, how that Christ died for our sins."—1 Cor. 15:3.

CHRIST'S WORK IN US

But if by His death on Calvary's cross our Lord performed a work *for* us, which constitutes the basis of our righteousness or justification, He is today, in His risen and glorified condition, carrying on by His spirit, a no less important work *in* us. "For", says the Apostle, "if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the *death* of His son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His *life*"—His resurrection life, of course. — Romans 5:10.

It is a blessed experience to have the peace with God which comes from being justified by faith in the precious blood of Christ (Rom. 5:1), but a true lover of righteousness could never be satisfied with an imputed righteousness only. His ardent desire is to be saved, not only from the guilt and punishment of sin, but from its power. The words of the Psalmist express the sentiment of the true believer's heart: "I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness" (Ps. 17:15). And he will not be *satisfied* until then.

By faith in Christ's work *for* us, righteousness is *imputed*, or reckoned to us; and when, by His spirit, Christ dwells in our hearts by faith, righteousness begins to be, praise be to God, *imparted* to us. Christ *in* us, therefore, that is to say, the Christ-spirit or the Christ-mind in us, is indeed, as the Apostle says, the hope of glory.—Eph. 3:17; Col 1:27.

Though, therefore, our outward man perish, the inward man is renewed. "When?" does one ask. "*Daily*", replies the Apostle. "Give us *day by day*," we pray, "not our temporal food only, but the Living Bread from heaven" (Luke 11:3). "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross *daily*, and follow me," said our Lord (Luke 9:23). In harmony therewith the Apostle writes: "Though, therefore, our outward man perish, the inward man is renewed, *day by day*" (2 Cor. 4:16). Under the gracious influence of the spirit of Christ, that blessed promise of the Father, we are to be no longer conformed to the spirit of this Age, but are to be, gradually, *day by day* transformed by the renewing of our minds.—Acts 1:4; 2:33, Romans 12:2.

Concerning Christ's work *for* us, the all-sufficient ground of our acceptance with God, our Lord cried from the cross, "It is finished" (John 19:30). In regard to Christ's work *in* us, the Apostle writes; "Being confident of this very thing, that He who hath begun a good work in you will continue to complete it until the day of Jesus Christ"—Phil. 1:6.

A FAITHFUL MINISTER

Such, briefly told, is the Gospel according to Paul. Let us now turn to some of the lessons his life has for us. Out of many we will mention only two.

First – his faithfulness. He who taught others, "It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful" (1 Cor. 4:2), had learned this lesson well himself. Oh! surely if his practice kept pace with his preaching anywhere it did so here. He was entrusted by God and by Jesus with the Gospel, and he guarded it, dear brethren, for you and for me. He kept watch over it as of a sacred treasure, as the keeper of a holy fire, which must never be allowed to die out.

His faithfulness is easily seen in his fearless defence of the truth before the Jews, before Festus and Agrippa and numerous others in high places (Acts 24:25; 25:9; 26:28), but to our mind it is still better demonstrated when he withstood *Peter* to the face (Gal. 2:11); when, lest the glorious Gospel which had been committed to his trust should be jeopardized, he separated from such a friend as *Barnabas* had proved himself to be (Acts 15:36-40; Gal. 2:13). Our Lord had said: "I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake" (Acts 9:16), and of all the things he suffered none could have cost him more. To defend the truth against its enemies! – that was easy – but what agony must it have been to his heart of gold when his loyalty to Christ compelled him to take issue with his friends!

A BELOVED BROTHER

Then too, he was a beloved brother, as well as a faithful minister. Such a combination of qualities is rare (Eph. 6:21). We wonder if all realize fully just how difficult it is to attain this combination of character quality and development. It is so easy to be beloved; – to be lovable, easygoing, gentle, agreeable, *at the expense of faithfulness*. On the other hand, to be faithful is little more than an attainment of the flesh, when faithful adherence to and defence of the truth of the Gospel is maintained in a rough, uncouth, unloving, contentious spirit of strife. It is possible for a brother to be a very faithful minister; he may be able to pick out our faults to a "T", but we would hardly call him a beloved brother, would we? But if the Apostle John was one who taught us to love in truth (1 John 3:18), it is not less certain that it was the Apostle Paul who taught us to speak the truth in love.—Eph. 4:15.

In concluding these brief remarks on our beloved Brother Paul (2 Pet. 3:15), perhaps we cannot do better than refer to a picture in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*:

You will remember that early in his journey to the Celestial City, Christian was taken into the Interpreter's house, and there shown a number of things which were designed to be of value to him along the way. One of the things Christian was shown was the picture of a man. "And this" says Bunyan, "was the fashion of it: It had eyes lifted up to heaven; the best of books was in its hand; the law of truth was written on its lips; the world was behind its back; it stood as if it pleaded with men; and a crown of gold did hang over its head."

Then said Christian: "What meaneth this?" The Interpreter replied: "The man whose picture this is, is one of a thousand. He can say in the words of the Apostle: 'Though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet

have ye not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the Gospel.’ – 1 Cor. 4:15.

In another place, the Apostle, in defending himself against false teachers, urges the brethren to remember, not merely what he had taught them, but how he had conducted himself in their midst, and says: “In our relations to you we showed ourselves as gentle as a mother is when she tenderly nurses her own children. Seeing that we were thus drawn affectionately towards you, it would have been a joy to us to have imparted to you not only God’s good news, but to have given our very lives also, because you had become very dear to us.” – 1 Thess. 2:7,8, *Weymouth*.

Thank God for Paul, and for all those noble men and women who, though commissioned to a lesser place in the ministry, have shared his fatherly and motherly spirit – for those who have resolutely refused to permit their names to be added to the already too long list of mere instructors, or would-be instructors, in Christ, but have earnestly coveted a place amongst the few– the “not many” fathers and mothers in spiritual Israel.

And may we be blessed with a sufficient measure of the Holy Spirit to be able to recognize any of those who, by the good favour of God, may chance to be labouring in our midst today, and, viewing attentively the result of their conduct, as the Apostle, in the *Diaglott* translation of Hebrews 13:7 suggests, imitate their faith and their lives. Thus may it be, for Jesus sake. Amen. (from the Herald)

The Early Christian Fathers

(A historical note of interest)

Knowledge of history enables one to understand the present in the light of the past while at the same time obtaining some measure of guidance in relation to the future. Knowledge of sacred history is no exception to this general rule; it provides valuable lessons for the present and the future and enables us better to appreciate the circumstances of those who trod the same “narrow way” when conditions in the world were vastly different from those which now obtain.

We can gain much information to our profit by study of the so-called “early Christian Fathers” who lived in the opening centuries of the Gospel Age, in times of severe persecution at the hands of Pagan Rome, culminating in the ten years 303-313 A.D. under Diocletian. Coins were struck to record the fact that the “Christian superstition” was utterly exterminated. In the light of these facts, we can easily recognise their witness as characterised by severe sufferings for Christ in times when **religion**, as the term is to-day understood in Western Europe, was not tolerated; that is to say, the nations were not even nominally Christian.

It might perhaps be asked how those early Christians, among whom the Christian Fathers stood out prominently, could endure such sufferings. The answer is, of course, that according to our needs so is strength given, and quite apart from this there is no doubt that the race was physically stronger than it is to-day, after a further two thousand years of accumulated sin and death. This, however, does not in any way minimise their faithful witness for Christ, but it is well to remember that if the “feet members” are called upon to suffer physically ere they are changed, the promise that “as thy days thy strength shall be” will surely be fulfilled.

Their **intense zeal** for Christ calls forth our admiration. Many who lived in the first century had actually seen the Lord when on earth, while some of those who lived later would be the children of those who walked with Jesus Christ when on earth. The mystery of iniquity already worked in those days, but it had not come into power. Indeed, it did not rise properly until 539 A.D. The truth, in consequence, was comparatively pure, for this was prior to the “Pergamos” period, when the world entered the church and self-seeking men began to pervert the Gospel to their own ends, withal introducing vestments, incense, and other features to attract the natural mind in to the church services.

The errors with which we are familiar to-day were not established. Eternal torment, for instance, gained its hold at a later date, coupled with the immortality of the soul, so essential to the former error. Christians knew the truth of the Apostle’s words when he said that not many mighty men were called, but the poor of this world to confound the wise. (1 Cor. 1.26-27).

In those early times there was intense love for the Bible, which was accepted as the inspired Word of God. Higher Criticism and evolution were unknown. So real was their love for the Word that it permeated their writings. The story is told that many years ago, a party of scholarly men attended a meeting in the course of which the question was asked–“if the New Testament had been entirely destroyed and every copy of it lost by the end of the third century, could it have been collected again from the writings of the early Fathers of the second and third centuries?” Two months later, one of the company called on Sir David Dalrymple who had been present and who, pointing to a table covered with books, said. “Look at these books. You remember the question about the New Testament and the Fathers? That question aroused my curiosity, and as I possessed all the existing works of the Fathers of the second and third centuries, I commenced to search, and up to this

time I have found the entire New Testament, except eleven verses.” Naturally, only a few of their writings, comparatively speaking, have reached us, and this demonstrates even still more forcibly how often they drank at the fountain of all Truth. In the books of Origen alone (born 185 A.D.) it is said that two-thirds of the New Testament are contained.

Remember, of course, that books were not easily obtained as has been the case since the art of printing was discovered. Books were then written by hand (as were the Scriptures themselves) on papyrus or on parchment. This fact alone should help us to appreciate more dearly the sacred Word of God in this day when we are so favoured with the Scriptures in our own tongue and when we have countless translations to which we may easily refer with concordances to help us locate any particular verse that we may require.

By way of illustration and in order that we may learn valuable lessons, we briefly refer to six of the early Fathers—Clement of Rome, Polycarp, Papias—who were Apostolic Fathers— and Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Clement of Alexandria who lived a century or so later.

Clement of Rome. It is usually thought that Clement of Rome is the one referred to by the Apostle Paul in Phil. 4:3. He wrote an Epistle to the Corinthians which is bound up with the New Testament volume of the Alexandrian Manuscript (Codex A). In it are copious references to passages in the New Testament and the general tenor bears a striking resemblance to Holy Writ. This, incidentally, is a very valuable chain of evidence in relation to the authenticity of the Scriptures for it proves that the New Testament as we know it was in existence at that time.

Polycarp. His name is probably one of the best known of the Christian Fathers and he was Bishop of Smyrna which was not very far from Ephesus. He was born in A.D. 70 and martyred at the age of 86 in the year A.D. 156. His witness before the Roman Pro-Consul who tried to persuade him to recant is well known “Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He never did me any wrong: how can I blaspheme my King and my Saviour?” Only one of his letters remains, but it throws much light upon his character and pious outlook. He was a disciple of John and had had the advantage of early Christian training like Timothy who had from a child known the Holy Scriptures which are able to make wise unto salvation.

Here is an extract from his letter (to the Philippians) “Polycarp and the presbyters that are with him, to the church of God at Philippi : Mercy unto you, and peace, from God Almighty, and the Lord Jesus Christ, our Saviour, be multiplied . . . Wherefore girding up the loins of your mind, serve the Lord with fear, and in truth; laying aside all empty and vain speech, and the error of many, believing in Him that raised up our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, and hath given Him glory . . . But He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also raise up us in like manner, if we do His will, and walk according to his commandments, and love those things which He loved; abstaining from all unrighteousness, inordinate affection, from evil speaking, false witness, not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing, or striking for striking, or cursing for cursing; but remembering what the Lord has taught us, saying, “Judge not, and ye shall not be judged; forgive, and ye shall be forgiven.”

Papias. He was another saint of the early period of the Gospel church, who knew at least two of the Lord’s disciples and also the daughters of the Apostle Philip. We do not know so much about him as of the others because his works are only found by extracts from those of others—the actual writings being either hidden or destroyed. It is evident, however, that he was well versed in the Scriptures and boldly took his stand on the Lord’s side.

Tertullian. This Christian came of heathen parents in the days of Pagan Rome; his father was a centurion, that is, the commander of a hundred men. He was brought up and educated along orthodox lines and was skilled in law and history.

Like the Apostle Paul, he was not converted until of mature years; he was probably forty years old when this vital step was taken and he was not “disobedient unto the heavenly vision.” It cannot be over-emphasised that he and those like him were intensely earnest or they would never have espoused the cause of Christianity, for it entailed so much suffering and loss of reputation. He wrote much, often in Latin, and those writings reveal his deeply spiritual outlook, for he brought his great scholarship to bear upon the mine of Christian truth which is available to those who are guided by the Holy Spirit. Incidentally, it appears that Tertullian was the first to introduce the phrase “New Testament.”

Irenaeus. This Father was a disciple of both Papias and Polycarp and was born about A.D. 130 in Asia Minor. We associate him particularly with his Christian work at Lyons where he held office in the church during the fierce Pagan persecutions of Christians, especially under Marcus Aurelius towards the end of the second century. Pothinus was imprisoned and died in A.D. 177 and Irenaeus succeeded him as Bishop of the church at Lyons. Once again, our insight into his character is obtained mainly from his own writings which are fully in harmony with the calling of this Age.

Clement of Alexandria. Alexandria was a very famous city in the world of that time being next in impor-

tance after Rome as regards wealth and after Athens as regards literature and science. Tradition has it that Mark preached the Gospel in Egypt and founded the church in Alexandria. It possessed a University and a famous library. Clement lived in these surroundings and was a scholarly man who contributed his due share to the cultural life of the city, being president of a noted school of thought. He embraced Christianity in adulthood and his conversion, without doubt had a marked influence on many, just as Paul's testimony a century or so before when in front of King Agrippa was so convincing that "almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." His writings are full of references to the Scriptures and his life was brought fully in conformity thereto. (from B.S.M.)

The True Riches

"The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow with it." (Proverbs 10:22)

"Hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom." (James 2:5)

The Bible declares that there are not many rich, not many wise, not many learned, who enjoy God's special favour, but chiefly the poor of this world, who are rich in faith. But whoever concludes from this that God is prejudiced against the rich, or that all the rich are iniquitous and have gained their wealth through fraud, errs grievously. What it does teach is that God is no respecter of persons. Whether one be rich or poor, learned or ignorant, God's estimation is from the standpoint of the heart. There are both good and bad rich, just as there are both good and bad poor.

ABRAHAM'S RICHES

Abraham, though the youngest son of the family, at the death of his father, Terah, doubtless inherited all that remained of his possessions, including the share of Sarah, his wife, who was his half-sister. The chronology of the narrative agrees with this; but some have erred in the study of it. Abraham is mentioned first amongst his brethren because of his greater prominence, and not because he was the elder.

Added to Abraham's rich inheritance was the blessing of the Lord upon him. After he had accepted the Divine call and left his homeland to become a wandering shepherd and herdsman in Canaan, his flocks and herds increased greatly. He was, under God's blessing, very rich. Others also of God's servants in the past were greatly blessed with riches—for instance, Job. We are not, however, to apply the lesson in this way at the present time. The blessing of the Lord very rarely makes wealthy His saintly people during this Gospel Age. Jesus and the Apostles and the specially saintly all down through the Age and to-day are generally poor in this world's goods.

SPIRITUAL RICHES

It may be asked, Why this change in God's dealings? The reply of the Scriptures is that in the past, up to the time of Christ, God's blessings were to men as men; but since the time of Christ, God's saints are "New Creatures in Christ." The terms of discipleship are that they exchange all earthly favours, riches and blessings, and sacrifice their claims to these in order that they may become heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ, their Lord, to the Heavenly inheritance – and share in the Messianic Kingdom and its glory, honour and immortality.

God dealt with Abraham as a friend and gave him earthly blessings and promised him earthly blessing in the future life. Jesus' followers God accepts not as friends, but as His children. His promises to these are not earthly, but Heavenly, spiritual privileges and hopes in the present life, and spiritual glory and immortality – far above angels – in the life to come. God's favour to this "House of Sons," of whom Jesus is the Head (Hebrews 3:6), is manifested often in the trials, difficulties, chastisements and earthly losses and afflictions which they experience, all of which are designed to work out for them "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." The beauty and harmony of the Bible can be understood only by those who thus "rightly divide the Word of Truth" and differentiate between the blessings and promises to the Ancient Worthies as distinct from those which appertain to the followers of Jesus.

HEIRS OF RICHES

Lot was a man of nearly Abraham's age, his nephew, the son of his brother, Haran. They were friends and companions. God did not call Lot, nor any other of Abraham's relatives, but merely himself, to be the recipient of the promises—the channel through whom they would be fulfilled. This did not hinder Lot from being with his uncle, but indeed permitted him to share the blessings of Divine Providence, which guided Abraham's affairs. God's Covenant and promises were not made with Lot, but with Abraham only. Similarly, the spiritual children of Abraham alone are the heirs of the Abrahamic promise, and not their friends or relatives, although the latter may share a reflex blessing of spiritual influence through association with them.

These spiritual children of Abraham, Christ and His consecrated followers, are particularly specified as the

heirs of the Abrahamic promise by Paul (Galatians 3:29). They all have a faith similar to that of Abraham, and a spirit of obedience similar to his. Jesus is their Head, Captain and Leader, as well as their Redeemer, and they become His disciples by a covenant of sacrifice similar to His own. His promise to them is, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My Throne"—the Kingdom which is to fulfil all the gracious promises which God made to Abraham – to Jews and Gentiles.

DECEITFUL RICHES

God's blessing upon Abraham, shared by Lot, led on to more or less of ambition and strife, not between the two men themselves, but between their servants. Abraham loved peace, and perceived that it would be wise that the two families should part company. Lot assented. Abraham gave him his choice as to the section of country; and Lot chose the most fertile—the plain of Sodom, in the Valley of Jordan. The Plain of Sodom, afterward devastated as a judgement from the Lord, is now the Valley of the Dead Sea.

Lot made his home in Sodom, while his herds and flocks were pastured in the fertile regions surrounding.

The family lived there three years, although the riches of the country had a debasing effect upon the people. Lot's righteous soul was vexed, more than offsetting the charm of the country, which his wife evidently loved. Looking back with longing heart at the time of its destruction, she was overtaken in the catastrophe which her husband and daughters escaped.

Abraham, on the contrary, fixed his heart and hopes upon the gracious promises of God, which appertained less to the present and more to the future life. Sarah, his wife, was a real helpmate, who shared her husband's hopes and desired to co-labour with him faithfully for their accomplishment. In these two families, both well-intentioned, we see illustrated the difference between seeking chiefly the Divine approval and seeking chiefly earthly welfare and ease.

Many Christian people to-day make similar mistakes to that which Lot made. They allow conflicting earthly interests to separate them from the blessings of God's greater favour. They thus involve themselves and their families in the snare of the wicked, while at heart preferring righteousness.

The Master's advice should be remembered, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His Righteousness." Do that which is in harmony with that aspiration and leave to God the oversight and care of earthly interests, that He may give you the lessons and experiences most helpful for you. Those who follow His advice find peace and joy which the world can neither give nor take away—"the peace of God, which passeth all understanding."

GOD'S BLESSING MAKES RICH

Whoever has the Lord's blessing is rich indeed, regardless of the amount of this world's goods which he possesses. Of what value is all the wealth of a Croesus if it brings not peace, joy and happiness? Wherever we go we find all—rich and poor—seeking pleasure, seeking the springs of joy; but how few of these seekers ever find it! Alas! it seems impossible for the world to understand the great fact that the blessing of the Lord constitutes the true fund of riches and pleasures for evermore—more than the life that now is, and the coming one!

Those whom the Lord makes rich with His promises and His favour, His guidance and His blessing, have the joy which others are vainly seeking. These true riches during this Gospel Age are obtainable by all who have the "hearing ear" and who learn of God's favour in Christ. In Christ are hidden all the treasures of Divine Wisdom, Love and Power.

The only ones who obtain a share of these blessings at the present time are such as become followers of Jesus through faith and consecration of their lives to His service. Nevertheless, in Him are also restitution blessings for the world of mankind, which will be dispensed during the thousand years of His reign. Peter tells us of this, and points us to the fact that it has been "foretold by all the Holy Prophets since the world began."—Acts 3:20, 21.

May each of the Lord's people seek only the true riches from God's bountiful hand, striving always to be rich in faith and good works, laying up treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.

"For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

(Matt. 6:20, 21)

(P.P. 11/35)



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THE CHRISTIAN'S JOY

"Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." 1 Peter 1:8

The Word of God has much to say in both the 1 Old and New Testaments on the subject of Joy and Rejoicing, such as -

Psalms 100:2 *"Serve the Lord with gladness."* 1 Thess. 5:16 *"Rejoice evermore."*

It is, indeed, only those like our Saviour whose delight and joy is to do the Father's will who can be pleasing in His sight.

Moses was directed by the Lord to instruct the children of Israel to render their services to Him with joy and rejoicing of heart. (Deut. 12:7, 16:14, 15, etc.) In fact, punishments came upon them if they failed to serve the Lord with joy (Deut. 28:45-47), showing how important this matter was, and is, in the Lord's sight. The psalms also give great prominence to the matter of joy and rejoicing -

Psalms 5:11 *"Let all those who put their trust in Thee rejoice; let them shout for joy."*

Psalms 16:11 *"In Thy presence is fulness of Joy, at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."*

Psalms 35:9 *"My soul shall be joyful in the Lord, it shall rejoice in His salvation."*

Many other references to the value of cultivating the joyful spirit are to be found in the Old Testament; two examples may suffice -

Isaiah 29:19 *"The meek also shall increase their joy in the Lord, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel."*

Neh. 8:10 *"This day is holy unto our Lord, neither be ye sorry, for the joy of the Lord is your strength."*

In the New Testament, we find that the Lord and His apostles have much to say on the subject of Christian rejoicing. Paul's words in Phil. 4:4 surely represent the very essence of Christian living- *"Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice!"* Under present conditions, it is not to be expected that outward circumstances will always be favourable to rejoicing, from a natural viewpoint. Those, therefore, who would always rejoice in the Lord must have faith in Him - trust, hope, love.

Without these, we could not so appropriate to ourselves the gracious promises of the Word as to be able to rejoice in tribulation and suffering, in trials and difficulties, when falsely accused or misrepresented, when slandered or evilly spoken of, for the truth's sake. Those only can rejoice always who are living near to the Lord, who can feel at all times their oneness with Him, who know that His protection and care are over them and His promise is sure that all things shall work together for their highest welfare as new creatures.

Others may rejoice today and be cast down tomorrow; only the faithful in Christ Jesus are privileged to rejoice always. The realisation of the Lord's favours, past, present and still to come, make all the trials and difficulties appear very light afflictions, lasting but for a moment, and not worthy to be compared with the glory, honour and immortality promised, and the blessed privileges of divine service, both here and hereafter. The apostle emphasises his exhortation by saying - *"Again I say Rejoice!"* It has been said that we cannot have too many rejoicing Christians, nor can they rejoice too much, if they rejoice in the Lord. This rejoicing is not necessarily boisterous or the reverse, but it implies serenity, happiness, peace and pleasure of soul.

The apostle follows these words with the exhortation - *"Let your moderation be known unto all. The Lord is*

at hand.” Phil. 4:5. The faithful are to let their moderation, their forbearance, be manifested not only toward the brethren, but toward all with whom they have to do. The word here rendered “moderation” seems to carry the thought of reasonableness and of not exacting our own rights too rigorously. Mercy and leniency are certainly qualities required of all who would be members of the Body of the Anointed. We should strive to be faithful in the performance, as far as possible, of all that justice would require of us, and merciful in respect of all our requirements of justice from others. In this way, we shall be the children of our Father in heaven, who is kind to the merciful and to the unthankful.

The thought in his words - “The Lord is at hand” - seems to be that we who are the Lord’s are not living for the present time. We are expecting great changes to be ushered in when our King takes to Himself His great power and begins His reign. We are not to struggle for the last centimetre, or the last cent, nor for the extreme of our rights; but rather, to be so full of rejoicing in the good things coming and already ours by faith, that it will make us generous as regards the things of the present time in our dealings with the brethren and others.

Nothing that we have done or could do would justly call for such exceeding great and precious things as He has promised us. So as we are expecting grace or bounty from Him in so large measure, we can well afford to be generous and liberal in our sentiments toward others - especially the household of faith, because they are our brothers and sisters and fellow-representatives of the Lord Himself, from whom our bounty is to come. We can also be the same toward the world without, because they have not the future prospects which we possess, and we are so rich through our Heavenly Father and our Heavenly Bridegroom.

“Be careful for nothing” is the apostle’s next exhortation (Verse 6), but since our English word “careful” has lost its original meaning, there is a danger of taking a wrong thought here. The word formerly had the idea of being full of care, anxious, troubled. The apostle’s words correspond exactly with those of our Lord’s injunction - “Take no thought” - that is to signify - Do not be anxious, burdened, full of care. It is proper that the Lord’s people be careful, in the present meaning of the word - not careless, indifferent, loose in conduct or words, but circumspect.

Anxiety and burdens are unavoidable for those who are depending on themselves, their own wisdom, their own strength, their own skill; but the members of the Body of Christ, accepted in the Beloved, members in the divine family - children of God, are assured over and over again in the Word of God that, if they abide faithful, all things shall work together for their highest welfare. Why should they be burdened? Why should they feel anxious? He who guards their interests slumbers not.

When Christians find themselves anxious, fearful, burdened, the evidence is that they are lacking in faith, and the probability is that they have either never grown to the point of having proper faith in the Lord, or that they have allowed “earth-born clouds” and cares of this life to come between them and the Lord, so that they no longer have confidence that they are abiding in His love and care. All such should go at once to the throne of heavenly grace and to the divine promises, and, having obtained mercy and help, should grow in the Lord and in confidence in Him; their corroding cares will give place to faith, confidence, peace of heart, whatever the outward conditions.

Such is the counsel of the Apostle - that, instead of continuing in the anxious condition, we should lay all our affairs before the Lord, supplicating His promised providential care. Acknowledging our own lack of wisdom and gladly accepting His wisdom and the provisions of His love, we should make every request in a spirit of thanksgiving. This spirit recognises that the circumstances and conditions in which we are placed have been supervised of the Lord, that we are truly appreciative of His care, and trust it for the future. Thanksgiving for what we have, and a full appreciation of the Lord’s leadings hitherto and now, will preclude any anxiety for the future, for the thankful heart will conclude that He who favoured us and redeemed us while we were yet sinners, will much more favour and do for us now that we are His.

But we might ask - Why will God not give us the things which He sees we need without our making petition to Him and claiming the promises of His Word? Undoubtedly because we need first to come into the proper attitude of heart to receive His favours and be benefited by them. Even as it is, we may be sure that we do not sufficiently appreciate the divine care bestowed upon us hitherto and now. Even in the attitude of prayer and thanksgiving, we probably do not discern half of our causes for gratitude, as we shall later see them by and by, when we shall know even as we are known.

If we have the spirit of rejoicing and trust in the Lord, making all our requests, so far as we can discern in harmony with His promises, then accepting with gratitude whatever His providence may send, then - *“the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.”* It is not our own peace here referred to; we may by nature be not inclined to peace but restless, dissatisfied, discontented, fearful, but, following the Apostle’s counsel, we may learn to trust God in all our affairs. Then it is the peace of God, the peace which comes to us from a realisation of His power and goodness, and His willingness to hold us by His right hand as His children, that will be our portion to keep us from worry and anxiety.

The thought here is that this peace stands guard continually as a sentinel to challenge every hostile or worrying thought or fear. It keeps the Christian's heart, so that we have inward peace with the Lord, fellowship, communion. It guards the mind also, the reasoning faculties, instructing us concerning the divine power and wisdom and love. It does not assure us of anything respecting our own personal worthiness for acceptance before God, but His peace does assure us of our standing in divine favour through Christ Jesus and of His worthiness, His perfect sacrifice, His aid and strength.

In 1 Thess. 5:16-18, we read - *"Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."* A striking feature of the apostolic epistles is that a large portion of them is devoted to the unfolding of the future exalted station that God sets before the consecrated ones of this Gospel Age, but the remainder of the epistles is given over to a description of the effects that acceptance of the call to run in the race for that great prize should produce in the lives of such.

This is so in Paul's first letter to the Thessalonian Christians. It is well known that great truths may be taken into the head, may be intellectually discerned, and yet produce little or no effect in the life. In such cases, it is not the truths that are at fault, but those who imperfectly receive them. It is reasonable to conclude that, if these wonderful truths do not make a change in the everyday life of those claiming to receive them, then they have not yielded, or are not yielding up, their wills, all their ransomed power, to the One who purchased them with the pouring out of His life. *"Ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body"* are the solemn words of the Apostle.

To know whether we are truly consecrated or not, it is absolutely necessary to be instructed not only about the high and heavenly calling itself, but also about the effects that, according to Scripture, reception of those blessed truths should have when taken into the heart and life. This first Thessalonian epistle has much to say about the "high calling of God in Christ Jesus" and the heavenly hope of the Christian. The words "rejoice evermore" are the first of seven exhortations which close the epistle and how helpful it is to the Christian to be in this condition of constant rejoicing.

In days of sunshine or of gloom, in life's bright scenes or life's dark scenes, in times of peace and quiet or of tribulation and distress, when the heart is uplifted or in mourning, in seasons of prosperity or adversity, it is always possible for the mature Christian to rejoice, to increase in prayer, to give thanks in everything. These characteristics describe those whose affections are centred on things above, who are closely united to God and who are thoroughly in earnest to please Him. They describe those who have a deep sense of their own unworthiness and deficiencies, and, more than this, a whole-hearted appreciation of the divine arrangements in Christ to make them acceptable, and to have fellowship and communion with the infinite God as a loving and kind Father.

In the words "rejoice evermore", we are reminded that true Christianity is not a gloomy thing nor a depressed state of existence. It is true that pure Christianity does have the effect of separating the believer from the evils of the world, and to a certain extent also from what may be termed legitimate worldly pleasures, pursuits and amusements. The thought is not, however, of the giving up of these things being depressing to Christians but rather that they have come into possession of higher enjoyments, pleasures that are eternal, enjoyments that have only their beginning in the present life and continue on in a fuller and richer measure.

Whatever Christians give up now, they suffer no loss of real pleasure that is not more than compensated for even in this life, in the enjoyment and blessings of a spiritual kind. Christians are not exempt from the trials and tribulations, adversities and perplexities, which flesh is heir to, but they have One who is with them in all these circumstances and conditions. The great ambition and purpose of their hearts is to give evidence by their lives that this One who is with them lifts them above these trials and adversities and enables them to bear all with patience and fortitude. They know that these earthly experiences that seem, from the natural standpoint, to work against them are being over-ruled for their development into the likeness of their Master.

They can see that these light afflictions, which are only for a moment, are working out for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Meanwhile, they look not at the things which are seen, but at those which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal but the unseen are eternal. They can see that the seemingly adverse things are providential occasions for them to show what faith in the Lord can do for them, and so give a witness, a testimony, to God's favour and power in Christ. It has been truly said that even "the saddest aspects of a Christian's daily life are but the showers of spring that usher in the bright and beautiful summer - the everlasting and the heavenly sunshine."

To many, the Christian life may seem more like a penance than a life of fellowship with God. The word of God does not so describe it - rather it describes it as a blessed privilege. It is true that if it were not for the "blessed hope" beyond this vale of tears, the Christian would not be able to fulfil the exhortation to "rejoice evermore". The Christian life, therefore, cannot be separated from the hope of the life beyond. The more firmly this hope is laid hold of, the more it becomes a living reality, and the more the Christian can rejoice in

all conditions.

How beautifully the Apostle John describes this hope and the effect which a proper appreciation of it has on the Christian. *"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God; therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not. 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 like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as He is pure."* The hope that expresses not only desire, but confident expectation of its being realised in due time, enables the Christian to rejoice in tribulation, and even in bitter sorrow, to "joy in God", knowing that all things are working together for his or her eternal good.

Hope is an element that to a greater or less extent exists in all, although to the children of the world, not understanding God's love as revealed in His purposes for them, it does not reach beyond this present life. It does serve, however, to tide them over many of earth's sorrows and trials. The poet has expressed it-

*Soft as the voice of an angel,
Breathing a message unheard;
Hope with a gentle persuasion,
Whispers the comforting word-
Wait till the darkness is over,
Wait till the tempest is done;
Hope for the sunshine tomorrow,
After the showers have gone.
Whispering hope,
O, how welcome thy voice,
Making my heart in its sorrow rejoice.*

The Christian life is not a reluctant sacrifice wrung from us, but a joyous, freewill offering, gladly and gratefully presented. Christians' joy is not in the trials, difficulties and sorrows that they encounter, but in spite of them all, and in the midst of them all, they have a deep and abiding joy. This joy is in God, in the knowledge that they are in union with God through Christ, and they have been accepted by God in the Beloved. Their joy is enhanced as they recall that each is a branch in that heavenly vine that the Father is pruning that it may be more fruitful. *"These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full."* - our Saviour's words in John 15:11, following the account of the vine and branches.

The Christian's secret of a happy life is in knowing and always keeping in mind that they are children of God, that Christ is their Elder Brother, that their standing and acceptance are in Him, that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is their Father, that it is not by works of righteousness which they have done, but by His own mercy, He saves them "by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit."

Why is it the privilege of Christians to "rejoice evermore"? So far as we personally are concerned, Christians have much indeed in which to rejoice; we have nothing that need make us sad or rejected. God has forgiven all our past sins, in Christ we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace. We have a throne of grace which we may approach that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. We are by nature frail and weak, but we have a great High Priest who is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities". We have received of God's own spirit, bearing witness that we are His children.

We have the blessed privilege of knowing that the great God and Creator is dealing with us as His sons and daughters. While He sees best at times to chasten us, we know that these chastenings are necessary and for our good, that we might become partakers of His holiness. We are made aware that there is a special providence over us, that all things work together for our good because we love God and are called according to His purpose. Jesus tells us that the Father loves us and that He Himself will love us to the end. Paul tells us that He who has begun a good work in us will complete it unto the day of Jesus Christ. Peter tells us that "all things that pertain unto life and godliness" are freely given to us by God.

If persecution comes to us because of our identification with Christ, or for His sake, He tells us to rejoice and be exceedingly glad for great is our reward in heaven. We not only have the Spirit witnessing with ours that we are God's children, but also that we are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with Him. We are no longer under condemnation, no longer subject to bondage, for *"we have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but we have received the spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father"* We have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren. As our faith lays hold of these exceeding great and precious promises, we can rejoice in tribulation, knowing that tribulation works patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope makes not ashamed because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by His Holy Spirit.

As for spiritual blessings, the greatest of all blessings, we are told that even now by faith we are raised up and privileged to sit with Christ in heavenly places. We have had made known to us by God the mystery of His will, according to the good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself; that it His purpose in the dispensation of the fulness of times to gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth.

We have further the promise of Christ that He will come again and receive us unto Himself that where He is we may be also; that when He who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory. We have had made known to us God's wonderful plan of all ages - that all mankind are objects of His love, that He gave His Son to be a ransom for all, to be testified in due time, that our loved ones, who now do not see His love, in due time will be privileged to learn of it, and be offered an opportunity to obtain everlasting life; that there is a hope to be set before the world to attain to earthly glory in times of restitution of all things.

We are also assured that nothing shall separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. "What more can He do for me?" - one might **ask** - "He has given me His word to guide me, His spirit to teach and comfort me, and the bright hope of an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away." And as if to make me sure of all, He has said through the Apostle - "*All things are yours, whether the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.*"

The Bible may not teach that the full assurance of faith is an absolute duty, but it does teach that it is a blessed possibility. There are indeed Christians who can truly say with the Apostle - "*I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.*" Others can say with the Psalmist - "*Whom I have in heaven but Thee? And there is none on earth that I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.*" It has been said - "Faith believes in Christ for salvation; assurance, which is a step higher, believes that in Christ we already have salvation. Both are saving. The first is saving only, the second is saving and comforting too." The Apostle John says - "*These things I write unto you, that your joy may be full*", that you may have a full assurance of joy.

The Christian's joy may be increased even beyond that fullness for we have something to give to others. If we wish to retain this assurance, we must give out liberally of that which we have received from God. We need to remember and practise the words of our Lord - "*It is more blessed to give than to receive.*" We do well to ponder also the lesson to be drawn from the incident of the four starving lepers recorded in 2 Kings 7:3-11. At the time there was a great famine; as lepers they had to live outside the city, but feeling no doubt they had nothing to lose they went in, only to find that the enemy host had all left, as a result of divine intervention, and so they proceeded to eat and drink their fill.

But later they began to talk amongst themselves - "*We do not well; this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace. If we tarry till morning light, some mischief will come upon us; now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king's household.*" Is there a lesson here for Christians? Are we not in a condition similar to that of the lepers? We have all been tainted with the leprosy of sin and in our needy and undone state we have been guided by the Lord's providence to a wonderful supply of food, Are we, as it were, hoarding the precious truth, keeping it to ourselves, or, as opportunity permits, passing the "good tidings" on?

If we wish to retain our full assurance of joy, we must give out freely of the good we have received. The Apostle Peter has said - "*Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should show forth the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvellous light.*" A writer comments on these words thus - "The very object of our being called into this light is that we may let it shine. If we do not let it shine, we are unworthy of it, and the treasure will be taken away and we will be left in the darkness. If indeed we have received the light and have consecrated ourselves fully to God, let us ask ourselves - "What am I doing to show forth the praises of Him who has called me out of darkness? Can I truly affirm that I am - "All for Jesus, all for Jesus; All my being's ransomed powers; All my thoughts, and words, and doings; All my days and all my hours?"

It is a grand and blessed law in God's providence, that if we try to increase our own joy by gratifying our desires and appetites, we find that the more we give them, the more they necessarily crave. But on the other hand, if we wish to increase our joy by denying our own desires and appetites and giving to the wants and necessities of others, we will find that our real gratification will increase and that the more we can give, the more the current of our true happiness will swell, multiplying the inner joys of the heart. To rejoice always, therefore, give always - "*There is that scattereth and yet increaseth!*"

One of God's prophets of old, when brought into circumstances in which everything of earthly comfort was slipping from his grasp, gave utterance to the beautiful words - "*Although the fig tree may not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice the Lord, I will joy in*

the God of my salvation!" Hab. 3:17,18. What an example of total trust and unquenchable joy is here set forth before us!

Let all the followers of Jesus therefore heed the Apostle's exhortation and *"Rejoice in the Lord always."* It gives honour to the One who bought us, • to rejoice. Indeed, we owe it to God, to show to the world that our Saviour enables us to rejoice. In this way, perchance, we may draw others to come and drink of that spring from which we have received the water of life which makes even this present life for us an occasion of constant joy and rejoicing.

"Jehovah is my strength and my song; He also is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." Isaiah 12:2,3.

The Birth of Christ

"Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." Luke 2:10

The story of our Lord's birth is one so familiar as to require no special comment, and yet in its simple detail lies the hope of the whole world. Four thousand years previously, the birth of this child was promised, and all down those forty centuries some faithful souls continued to trust in God's promises to His faithful ones of old and to look for the salvation to be bought about through this promised child. We may be confident that the humble shepherds to whom the message of the Lord's advent first came were of those who thus hoped in the promises of God, for to such, and such only, God discloses His purposes.

The account of this angelic message to the shepherds is lovingly recorded for us by Luke in Chapter 2:8-20 of his gospel and, as another Christmas season nears, we may do well to reflect once more upon his account. We note that the shepherds were quietly tending their flocks by night, no doubt in the normal course of their occupation, when suddenly the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were sore afraid. (Verse 9) But their fear was soon overcome by the message of the angel, contained in our text, but which some strangely only partially quote, leaving out one of the greatest features of the message - namely, that it is to be to *all people*.

The message reads - *"Fear not; for, behold, I bring you GOOD TIDINGS of GREAT JOY which shall be to ALL PEOPLE."* (Verse 10) It will be observed that the blessedness of the message is cumulative; first, it is "good tidings", then it is of "great joy", and then the crowning feature is that it is for "all people" - not only for those who on that night were looking for the hope of Israel, but for all their friends and relations, indeed for all mankind far and near, those now living and who shall live, and those now in death.

Blessed tidings! Harken to the gladsome sound - *"For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord."* (Verse 11) He was to be a Saviour to ALL people; so the Scriptures clearly affirm, saying that, by the grace of God, He tasted death for every man, and that He gave Himself a Ransom for all, to be testified in due time, (Heb. 2:9,1 Tim. 2:6) The testifying to all in due time however, is also as necessary to the salvation of the sinner as the fact that Christ gave Himself a Ransom for all.

The favour of salvation will not be forced upon any; but the testimony that it has been provided for all people on condition of their acceptance of that favour on God's terms, is to be given to all for their acceptance or rejection. Though millions of the race for whom Christ died have gone down to the grave without such testimony, the fact still remains that it shall be given in *due time*, which in their case must be after their awakening from death.

To this the words of our Lord agree - *"The hour is coming in which all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of Man and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of judgement."* (John 5:28, 29) The former class are those who during the present life have accepted Christ as Saviour, come into judgement and passed their trial successfully - these gain life and the full reward of the faithful.

The latter class will come forth from the grave to have the truth of God's salvation testified to them *then* for their acceptance or rejection. Their final judgement for worthiness or unworthiness for life will be based upon their course under trial after the truth has been testified to them - during the Millennial Age. Thus the message of the angel, to the shepherds on the plain of Bethlehem, on that night so long ago, embraces the preaching of the good tidings of the restitution of all things. Good tidings of great joy to ALL people who have ever lived!

The beautiful story continues in the following Verses 12-20 of Luke's account. Following the message, the shepherds were told where and how they should find this bud of promise, so that when they should see Him they might be doubly assured. So we read - *"Then suddenly there was with the angels a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men."* (Verses 13,14) Here we see how the angels of God are concerned in the affairs of mankind and we are remind-

ed of other scriptures to the effect that there is joy in heaven among the angels over one sinner who repents (Luke 15:7), that they are eager students of God's plans for human salvation (1 Pet. 1:12) and that they are all ministering spirits sent forth to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation. (Heb. 1:14)

O! what universal joy will prevail when the whole family of God in heaven and in earth is bought into fullest harmony under Jehovah's Anointed! As the poet declares:

In Christ, when all things are complete-
The things in earth and things in heaven-
The heavens *and* earth shall be replete-
With Thy praises ever given.

In Verses 15-18, we see the responsive attitude of the shepherds; they recognised the angels and their message as from the Lord, and their fears being allayed, their hopes revived and their faith increased, they felt that they must go at once and see that which had come to pass. When they found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger, they could not remain silent, but "*made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning the child. And all that they heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.*"

The account concludes - "*But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart*" (Verse 19), doubtless calling to mind also the message of the angel to herself - Luke 1:28- 35. Again and again we seem to hear her say - "*my soul doth magnify the Lord* for He hath regarded the low estate of His handmaiden He that is mighty hath done to me great things and holy is His name." -Luke 1:46-49. As for the shepherds, we read that they returned to their flocks, "glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them." (Verse 20)

NATHANIEL

From Jesus' own mouth came a definition of a true Israelite and by extension we can say, of a true Israel, or a true Church. He saw Nathaniel coming towards Him and He said, "...an **Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!**" (**John 1:47 NAS**). That definition still stands. The Spirit of Christ in us still leaps in recognition when a Nathaniel comes into our presence. Nathaniel had not yet said a word. He had not uttered a single doctrinal truth or factually correct statement at the time that Jesus identified him. He was an Israelite indeed, a true Israelite, recognizable as such, not by his words but by his utter guilelessness. Nathaniel walked in truth, free from all pretence, all hidden meanings, all false appearances. He walked in and lived in the light; and it showed.

Arthur Katz

A Crown of Righteousness

"For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the Righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing." (2 Timothy 4:6-8)

How noble and yet how solemn is Paul's statement! It is not in any spirit of egotism that the great Apostle penned the above lines as a part of his dying message. Rather, we believe it was in the spirit of meekness and lowliness that he here presents what is his best and innermost state of mind. Indeed he makes no boasts that he is looking forward to a reward as the *result of his own works of worthiness*, but on the ground of God's faithfulness. What a grand testimony! And at the conclusion of a grand life, nobly lived or rather, nobly sacrificed after the Lord's example-laid down for the brethren! How sublime the incentive for us who are seeking to walk in the narrow way! The secret of Paul's success and struggle in this way is to be seen in his holy and righteous motives and objectives-the *Divine approval* to be manifested in granting him a share in the "First Resurrection." (Phil. 3:10) This meant "a crown of righteousness"- glory, honour and immortality, association with Christ in His Millennial Kingdom. He knew of his own whole-heartedness in the Lord's service, and knew that the Lord was not unjust to forget his work and labour of love. Nevertheless, he did not expect the reward until "that day"- until the morning of the Resurrection-which *morning, in some important respects is already here*. Then the Redeemer, as the Head of the Church, would give to each faithful member an abundant reward-not to Paul only but to all those who similarly love His appearing-His revealing and manifestation in Millennial Kingdom glory.

As we glance through the Apostle's history we concur with his judgment, and *see that he was not boasting*; but was a faithful follower in the footsteps of Jesus; that he did make a good fight for right, for principle, for truth, for the Lord against sin and selfishness; that notwithstanding its narrowness and ruggedness, he did run faithfully over the course from the time that he started in it; that he *did keep the faith* to the close, at the cost of

self-denial, of self-sacrifice, hardships and persecutions. And here we must remember that “keeping the faith” is not merely holding to it theoretically, but believing with all the heart and the soul, and having it permeate all our affections and purposes-unto holiness and sanctification. Those who thus keep the faith will let it shine out to all those around them. This is *keeping* the faith.

Paul looks forward in his closing hours to a crown of righteousness. The Apostle James and John speak of the same crown and call it the “crown of life” (Jas. 1:12; Rev. 2:10), and the Apostle Peter, speaking of the same, calls it the crown of glory. (1 Pet. 5:4) The underlying thought of each of these expressions is evidently the same; namely, the custom in olden times of running races and *the giving of a crown to the successful runner* at the end of the course. As it was not sufficient to *enter* a race, or to start to run, but it was required that the race be run *faithfully and perseveringly to a conclusion*, so with this race which we are running as followers of Jesus, it is essential not only that we shall make consecration to the Lord, but that we *persevere* to the end, and our reward will be the crown of life in the sense that if faithful we will get life on the highest plane, inherent life, immortality. It will be a crown of righteousness in the sense that *only those who are approved of God as righteous* will thus be rewarded and glorified; and our hope is, therefore, that we may be accepted in the Beloved; that the righteousness of the Law may be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit; and that the rewards which God has promised to those who love Him and serve Him will be granted to us. The crown of glory is another name for the same grand reward- the glory of the Kingdom, the glory of immortality, the glory of the Father’s favor, the glory of being joint-heirs with Christ in His Kingdom.

The Apostle declares that this crown is *laid up* for him; he did not claim to possess it at the time, except by faith, and he had never seen it *except by the eye of faith*. This laying up of crowns is an expressive figure. The Scriptural thought seems to be that when justified believers enter the life of *uncompromising surrender to God* and are *accepted* as members of the Body of Christ, their names are written in the Lamb’s book of life, and crowns are *set apart for them*. If they are faithful, their names will never be blotted out, and crowns will be given to those whose names are upon the roll of honor, and they shall attain to their inheritance of the crown-their share in the Kingdom. (Rev. 3:5, 11.) The Lord, the righteous Judge, *will determine the matter of worthiness or unworthiness* for the crowns. He will approve *all who run the race faithfully*; but being a righteous Judge, none may venture to hope that He will approve that which is evil, unrighteous, unfaithful; hence if our hearts condemn us not we may have peace and assurance with God.

What an encouragement is here for the very humblest of God’s people!- not by intellectual or physical strength, not by wonderful works, *not by anything we can do* or have done for the Lord, His cause, and His people, are we to hope for eternal glory; but simply with the Apostle we are to seek to use what talents we do possess and what opportunities the Lord provides for us, faithfully. We are to *keep* the faith, not *denying* the faith under any consideration- neither to secure favour of any, *nor to avoid the frowns of any*, may we be unfaithful to the Word of God’s testimony. We too, are to fight the good fight against selfishness in its every phase, especially in ourselves, and to develop in ourselves more and more under the Lord’s instruction, of His Spirit, the Spirit of love.-John 13:34,35; 1 Cor. 13:13.

What a sublime and inspiring character was that of Paul, and how exalted and worthy is his ministry unto this day! How glad we are that the Holy Spirit so directed the Apostle that *we also might know him better*, and might fully appreciate his loving loyalty to the King of kings; and understand the fact *clearly* that he was a chosen vessel of the Lord for the communication of the Truth to the entire Church, even including the Saints of these the closing hours of the Age!

Jesus is There

Haste my dull soul, arise,
cast off thy care;
Press for the promised prize,
mighty in prayer.
Jesus has gone before,
count all thy sufferings o’er;
He all thy burdens bore;
Jesus is there.

Souls, for the marriage feast,

robe and prepare-
Holy must be such guests;
Jesus is there!
Saints, bear your victory palms,
chant your celestial psalms,
Bride of the Lamb, thy charms
O seek to wear.

Kings for the promised throne,
crowns we shall wear;
Christ reigns, but not alone -
we soon shall share.
O ye despised ones, come;
pilgrims no more we'll roam;
Sweetly we'll rest at home;
Jesus is there.



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GOD'S RESTITUTION PLAN

Peter's use of the term restitution, in his prophecy of events which were to follow the second coming of Christ, indicates that there is to be a period of reconstruction. This program calls, not for the creation of a new paradise, but for the restoration of the paradise which was lost. Jesus tells us in Luke 19:10, that the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost. The completion of this divine project requires both the first and second advents of Jesus. At His first advent He gave Himself a ransom, or corresponding price, in order that the sentence of death imposed upon mankind in Eden could be set aside. He comes the second time for the purpose of restoring to life those who lost life through Adam's transgression.

If we can visualize the perfection and happiness enjoyed by our first parents before they transgressed the divine law, then we can understand, at least partially, the revolutionary changes that are to be effected in the world, when the lost paradise, with all of its blessings, is restored by the returned Christ. The Garden of Eden was but a sample of what the whole earth will be like when God's program of rehabilitation is complete.

GOD'S FAVOUR MANIFESTED

The apostle says that times of refreshing shall come from the "presence of the Lord". This expression is translated from Greek words meaning, "out from the face of the Lord." This typically Eastern expression suggests the thought of God's favour being manifested toward the human race. The complete thought outlined by the apostle therefore is that the second coming of Christ is a manifestation of God's returning favour to mankind, ushering in a period during which He would beam upon the human race, and bless them by restoring them to their long-lost Edenic home.

The apostle declares that all of God's holy prophets have foretold the coming times of restitution. David was one of these prophets who had much to say on the subject. In his 30th Psalm, verse 5, he mentions it in connection with the thought of God's returning favour. He says: "For His anger endureth but for a moment; in His favour is life; weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." God's anger against His human creation began when our first parents disobeyed His law. As a result, they were sentenced to death and driven out from their perfect Edenic home. Because their children were imperfect when born, the penalty of death passed on to them and to the whole human race. The entire world has been passing through a nighttime of sorrow and death.

While this manifestation of God's anger has continued for about 6000 years, yet from the standpoint of an eternity of God's favours and blessings, it has been "but for a moment," and for each individual it has been no longer than the few brief years from the cradle to the grave.

This nighttime of God's disfavour, is not to continue indefinitely. God will turn His face toward the human race. His favour was first of all shown in the sending of His Son to be man's Redeemer, and is further demonstrated in sending Him the second time to restore the race which He redeemed. David adds, "In His favour is life," which means that when God again smiles upon the human race, sickness and death will end. It means that the long nighttime of sin, sorrow, and death is to terminate in a morning of joy.

THE WORK OF REDEMPTION

As already noted, the coming times of restitution are made possible by the redemptive work of Christ, accomplished at His first advent. The Prophet Hosea refers to this, when, speaking as a mouthpiece of the Lord he says, "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death; O death I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction; repentance shall be hid from mine eyes."—Hosea 13:14.

Notice how God's prophet, in the text just quoted, associates the ransom with the destruction of death. The New Testament explains the philosophy of this by showing that Jesus, the Son of God, was sent into the world by the Heavenly Father to be this ransom. He came to die, "the just for the unjust." (1 Pet. 3: 18.) Paul explains that this was all according to the will of God in connection with His purpose to save mankind from death. For, says the apostle, "there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time."-1 Tim. 2:5, 6.

The benefits of the redemptive work of Christ are available to the individual only upon the condition of knowledge and belief, so the apostle assures us that this knowledge will be "testified" to all "in due time." The due time for the world to have the knowledge of Christ's redemption testified to them will be the Messianic period which follows the second advent of the Master.

ALL GOD'S HOLY PROPHETS

Peter tells us that the facts concerning the coming times of restitution were testified by the mouth of all God's holy prophets since the world began. An examination of the Old Testament Scriptures reveals that this is true. Isaiah was one of these holy prophets and he supplies much information on the subject of restitution. In the 35th chapter of his prophecy, he tells us of the opening of the blind eyes, the unstopping of the deaf ears, the loosing of the dumb tongues, and that the lame man shall leap as a hart.

Isaiah also tells us of a "highway" that is to be cast up for the people, a way that will lead to holiness, or perfection. He tells us that, unlike the narrow way to life of this Gospel age, everything will be very plain on this highway—so plain that the ordinary wayfaring man, though unlearned, will not need to err. This agrees with other prophetic statements concerning that time, which inform us that then the knowledge of the Lord shall fill the earth as the waters cover the sea.—Isa. 11: 9; Hab. 2: 14.

Isaiah also assures us that there shall be no lion on this highway. Peter tells us of the present time that "the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." (1 Pet. 5:8.) According to the Apostle John, Satan is to be bound in the very beginning of the coming times of restitution. (Rev. 20: 1, 2.) Thus the prophet was quite right when he said that no lion shall go up on the highway that leads back to life and paradise.

Isaiah continues his description of the highway of holiness by saying that no "ravenous beast shall go up thereon." The Bible tells us of many different beasts that have afflicted and tormented the people down through the ages. Some of these beasts are referred to by Daniel and the Revelator. They are symbolic of beastly governments of one kind or another which have exploited and oppressed the people. But before the Messianic Kingdom is fully established all these "beasts" are to be destroyed; so it will be true that "no ravenous beast shall go up thereon."—Isa. 35: 9.

Finally, the prophet tells us that over this highway "the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." Indeed, that was God's purpose in ransoming the human race; namely that they might return from death, and once more enter into the joy of living; a joy which will far exceed that of their former experience because they will come to know God, and if they continue to live, will have His favour, His blessing that maketh rich.—Isa. 35: 10; Prov. 10: 22.

When viewed from the standpoint of the prophecies, restitution is seen firstly to mean resurrection. There are students of the Bible who are willing to admit that the second coming of Christ will signal a general conversion of the then living generation; but they try to limit the scope of restitution to this so-called world conversion, not realizing that if all the families of the earth are to be blessed, and if there are to be "times of restitution of all things," it means that those who have died, as well as the living, will be given an opportunity to be blessed. So, when viewed from the standpoint of the prophecies, restitution requires a resurrection.

Job was another of God's holy prophets, and he expressed the hope of a resurrection, saying, "If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come. Thou shalt call, and I will answer Thee: Thou wilt have a desire to the work of Thine hands." (Job 14:14, 15). Thus Job expressed the belief that he would hear the voice of the Lord calling him forth from the tomb. Jesus agrees with this, and makes it more comprehensive by saying, "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His (the Son of Man's) voice, and shall come forth."—John 5: 28, 29.

THE WICKED RESTORED

Ezekiel was another of God's holy prophets, and he lays emphasis on the fact that such wicked people as the Sodomites are to be brought back from the grave during the times of restitution. Chiding the Jews for their unfaithfulness, yet at the same time reminding them of their hope of a resurrection, Ezekiel says: "When thy sisters, Sodom and her daughters, shall return to their former estate and Samaria and her daughters shall return to their former estate, then thou and thy daughters shall return to your former estate."—Ezek. 16: 55.

This, of course, does not imply universal salvation for the wicked, irrespective of their obedience to the divine law; but it does mean a universal opportunity for salvation. Jesus said concerning the Sodomites, that it would be more tolerable for them in the day of judgement than it would be for the people of certain Jewish cities. (Matt. 10: 15; 11: 24.) The opportunity for everlasting life upon the condition of obedience, will be offered to all during the times of restitution; and we can see how it will be more favourable for the Sodomites than for many others.

The Jewish nation had been greatly blessed by the Lord, and their sin was against greater light than that of the Sodomites. Hence it will require a greater degree of humility on their part to come back into harmony with the Lord's law. Jesus said that if the mighty works had been done in Sodom that had been done in Capernaum, Sodom would have repented. (Matt. 11: 21-23.) But many great works will be done in Sodom. They will be awakened from the sleep of death and be given an opportunity, under the most favourable circumstances, to repent and live, and doubtless most of them will repent and gladly go up on the highway to everlasting life.

CHILDREN RESURRECTED

Jeremiah was also a holy prophet of the Lord, and he has much to say about restitution. In the 31st chapter of his prophecy we find a promise concerning the resurrection of children. This particular promise has to do with those children who were slaughtered by Herod at the time of Jesus' birth, but shows, nevertheless, that it is God's purpose to restore to life all those who have gone down into death as children. How grand it will be for mothers to have their children restored to them, and to have the privilege of raising them just as though they had not died. The prophet says:

"Thus saith the Lord; a voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children, refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not. Thus saith the Lord, Refrain thy voice from weeping and thine eyes from tears; for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy (death). And there is hope in thine end, saith the Lord, that they children shall come again to their own border."—Jer. 31: 15-17.

The prophet Daniel also foretold the coming times of restitution, indicating that it follows the great time of trouble with which the present age is now ending. He says that the "many ... that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake." (Dan. 12: 2.) When God pronounced the sentence of death upon our first parents, He said, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." (Gen. 3: 19.) This "awakening" means the setting aside of the Adamic death sentence, and the restoration of sleeping ones to life again. What a beautiful way of illustrating the blessed work of restitution.

Amos was another of God's holy prophets, and speaking for the Lord, he says: "In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old." (Amos. 9: 11.) David's tabernacle is one that he built to house the Ark of the Covenant at the time it was restored to Israel from the hands of their enemies. The Ark of the Covenant was a beautiful symbol of the presence and favour of God. It was wrested from the Israelites for a time, and when it was restored to them, it meant that God's favour was again upon that nation; and this signalled a time for great rejoicing.

The rebuilding of the tabernacle of David therefore is a symbol indicating that again God's favour is to be restored to Israel, after having been withdrawn from them for a long time; and this is exactly what will happen on behalf of Israel and the whole world during the "times of restitution." This prophecy is quoted in the 15th chapter of Acts, and its fulfilment shown to be at the second advent of Christ, when the Gentiles as well as the Jews will be blessed. To quote:

"James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me: Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name. And to this agree the words of the prophet; as it is written; after this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David which is fallen down and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up; that the residue of men might seek after the Lord and all the Gentiles upon whom My name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things."—Acts 15: 13-17.

Here we are shown that God's purpose between the first and second advents of Jesus has not been to convert the world, but merely to select from among the Gentiles a little company to be associated with the Master in the future Kingdom work—to take out a "people for His name." Again the glorious objective of God's purpose of love is here set forth in that we are told that, after this people for His name is taken out from the Gentiles, then God's favour will return to the Jews, and also, that then, all the Gentiles will have an opportunity to seek after the Lord.

"SAVIOURS ON MOUNT ZION"

Obadiah was also one of the Lord's holy prophets and in the very last verse of his prophecy, he says, "Saviours shall come up on Mount Zion to judge the Mount of Esau; and the Kingdom shall be the Lord's." Or-

dinarily we think of only one Saviour; and indeed, Jesus is THE Saviour. Apart from the shed blood of Jesus there could be no salvation for anyone. Nevertheless, His footstep followers are invited to share with Him in the work of *bringing* salvation to the world. They suffer and die with Him in order that they may live and reign with Him in His Kingdom; and His reign is for the purpose of saving the world from death.

In Revelation 14: 1-4, the identity of these saviours on Mount Zion is revealed. John says, "And I looked, and lo, a lamb stood on Mount Zion, and with Him an hundred and forty and four thousand, having His Father's name written in their foreheads." Now we can see what James meant by a people gathered from among the Gentiles—a people for His name. To start with, this glorious opportunity was limited to the Jews, but as a nation they rejected it, and the Lord turned to the Gentiles to make up the full ordained number that were to be on the symbolic Mount Zion with Jesus. They all must bear the Father's name, since they are all taken into the divine family and thus become the ruling house of God in the new Kingdom.

Jesus' followers who are pictured as saviours with Him on Mount Zion during the Kingdom period are such not because they have given themselves as ransoms—indeed, it is not necessary or possible that they do so—but because of their faithfulness in following Jesus into a sacrificial death they are given a share with Him in dispensing the blessings promised as a result of His ransom work. And when, the prophet shows, the saviours stand on Mount Zion, it will be the time when the "Kingdom shall be the Lord's." That will be the time of restitution.

BLESSINGS OF THE "LAST DAYS"

Micah was still another of the holy prophets, and he has much to say about restitution. In chapter 4, verses 1-4, we read, "But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountain, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And He shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it."

By referring to Daniel 2:35-44, it will be seen that the "mountain of the Lord" is, in reality, the Kingdom of the Lord. And notice how practical are the restitution blessings that will be dispensed to the world during that Kingdom period. The picture begins with the "last days," that period during which the old Satanic order of things will be set aside by a great time of trouble. The people, in their distress, will look to the Lord for help and instruction as to what to do—how to extricate themselves from the wreck that has been precipitated by their own selfishness and foolishness.

Giving recognition to the new Kingdom, they will be taught of the Lord's ways, which will be ways of peace instead of the ways of war. Economic security will also be one of the features of that new day of the Messianic Kingdom—every man will "dwell under his vine and under his fig tree." We are not to understand this too literally, of course, as it is merely a picture of security and happiness in which none shall make afraid. The thought is that all in the times of restitution will be amply provided for. The provision will be permanent, lasting just as long as the individual continues to obey the law of God.

A UNIVERSAL RELIGION

Habakkuk was a holy prophet of the Lord, and he tells of that day of restitution, saying that "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God, as the waters cover the sea." (Hab. 2: 14.) Zephaniah, another of the holy prophets, also tells of the God-given enlightenment which will come to the people at that time—"For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord to serve Him with one consent."—Zeph. 3:9.

No longer will the peoples of the earth be divided in their religious devotions. No longer will some be Catholics and some Protestants; some Mohammedans and some Buddhists, etc. The blinding influence of Satan will be dispelled by the light of the knowledge of the glory of God. The pure language—instruction— which will then be turned to the people, shall, as the prophet says, result in all mankind calling upon the name of the Lord to serve Him with ONE consent. Thus will the true knowledge of God be restored during those times of restitution.

The Prophet Zechariah, who also spoke for the Lord concerning that glad day of restitution, goes into detail in explaining how the enlightening influences of the Kingdom period will affect the people. He says: "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear or dark; but it shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord, not day or night: but it shall come to pass, that at eventime it shall be light."—Zech. 14: 6,7.

The thought here is that of gradual enlightenment, and it is easy to see how that will be brought about. The Messianic Kingdom will first of all be established with the living generations; and when we realise the size of the earth, and the myriads of people who live upon it, we can understand why some time will elapse before all will come to know of the new Kingdom. It will take time, also, for the people to get rid of their superstitious ideas concerning God, so that they will be able to know Him aright.

And then there will be all the billions who have died, who, when raised from the dead, will need to be instructed in the true knowledge of God. They have not learned anything while in the grave, hence as they are brought forth from the tomb they will need to learn about the true God, in order to have an opportunity to obey His laws. Thus the work of enlightening the people will go on throughout the entire thousand-year “day” of the Kingdom.

It will be partly light and partly dark during that period. That is, it will be a time when the people are having their blindness and superstition gradually removed. Until the work is complete, there will still be some symbolic darkness in the world, but in the evening, or close of that glorious day it will be fully light. By then, the enlightening and healing influences of the “Sun of Righteousness” as prophesied by the prophet Malachi, will have scattered all the mists of darkness, and the knowledge of God’s glory shall then fill the earth everywhere—Mal. 4: 2.

TANGIBLE BLESSINGS

Thus the result of Christ’s second coming is to be a glorious one. The blessings to be dispensed through the administration of His Kingdom are to be very practical. Upon the testimony of all of God’s holy prophets who foretold the times of restitution, these blessings are to be:

1. Enlightenment concerning the true God and His plan, putting an end to all the deceit and the countless superstitious beliefs that have plagued a bewildered world since the days of Eden.
2. Freedom from disease of all kinds, for those who obey the laws of the new Kingdom.
3. Freedom from death for the believers of that day.
4. No more wars.
5. Economic security for all.

But all of these very practical and satisfying good things of the Messianic Kingdom will not be dispensed unconditionally. The Apostle Peter is very careful to remind us, when telling us of the “times of restitution,” that it “shall come to pass, that every soul which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from amongst the people.” (Acts 3:23.) It is this same thought that is brought to our attention in the parable of the Sheep and Goats. To those represented by the sheep, the statement is made, ; ‘Come, ye blessed of My Father inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” But to the goats, “Depart from Me ye cursed into everlasting fire,” or, as the last verse shows, “everlasting punishment”, basically a “cutting off” from life.—Matt. 25: 31-46.

As the parable shows, the obedient ones of that day, the sheep, shall have the original dominion restored to them. That dominion was over the earth and the things of the earth. Thus, again, we have the thought of restitution, the restoration of paradise, world-wide in scope and effect. What a glorious hope this is for the poor, sin-sick and dying world. It is practically impossible for us to visualize at present the changes that will take place in the earth as a result of the inauguration of the divine plan of restitution.

Think of the changes that will be brought about as a result of the destruction of disease and death! Think of other changes due to the fact that there shall be no more war. Visualize the changes that will come as a result of the people learning to know and to love and to sincerely serve the true God. Think of what it will mean when love takes the place of selfishness as the motivating principle behind all human activity!

Think of the changed viewpoint when people will not need to think about and plan for death. When an eternity of joy stretches before them instead of a short, hectic existence made up, at best, of only a small portion of happiness, and the rest, disappointment and sorrow. Or, to put it in the words of one of God’s inspired and holy prophets, think of the time when “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor sighing, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away.”—Rev. 21: 4.

Impossible! No, nothing of this nature is impossible with God. It looks impossible to us perhaps, because we have never seen anything like it before. Life itself is unfathomable to us; that is to say, we do not understand what life is. Who is wise enough to tell us the philosophy of a heart-beat? Yet God, the Creator, created the heart and the heart-beat, and the same God is abundantly able to restore the heart-beat in the billions of human breasts that once haltingly pulsated with a measure of life, but finally succumbed to the ravages of death.

Praise God, this glorious restitution plan is to be accomplished by the Messianic Kingdom, which is soon to be established.

(EEM)

Walking with God

“Enoch walked with God: and was not; for God took him.”—Gen. 5: 24.

The words, “Enoch walked with God,” give us a most wonderful and unique picture of a man who lived in fellowship with God for three whole centuries. He is mentioned as one of the cloud of witnesses, and held up as an example to the Lord’s saints in this Gospel Age, an example of faith and obedience to God. “By faith Enoch walked with God,” the inspired Apostle in the Epistle to the Hebrews informs us. Enoch, therefore, is a most interesting figure, a grand illustration, a noble reminder of even greater possibilities and privileges in walking with God commensurate with our increased light and divinely given privileges.

CONSECRATED TO HOLY LIVING

Enoch’s name is very suggestive. Its meaning—“dedicated,” “consecrated,” “disciplined”—gives us the keynote of his success in walking with God. His name then, as well as the brief statement concerning him, shows us that he had consecrated himself to God. In other words, he had given into God’s keeping his life, his being. God was to have the right of way—to do with him as He chose. While it is true that the reward in the future life that awaits Enoch is not the same as that of the saints of the present time, nevertheless, his consecration meant to him living a holy life, a life pleasing to God. As has been said concerning the yielding up of the life to God: “This is consecration and this is the gateway of every holy and successful life. Only the lives that are given to Him in absolute possession, will He undertake to be responsible for, and there is nothing that He cannot, and will not do, for a life that is utterly His own. We are not told that Enoch was holy, sinless, useful, and wonderful, but simply that he ‘walked with God’.”

Is this not the true secret of Scriptural holy living? Indeed, it is; and in the measure we yield our wills unto God, in the measure our hearts, our lives are devoted to Him, in that measure do we please and give honor to Him. All that is worth anything in our Christian life comes to us as the result of a union with Christ by faith and no more belongs to us in the sense of being a part of ourselves or something for which we may take credit than the clothes we wear, or the air we breathe. The inspired Apostle in his Epistle to the Ephesians said that the work of grace in our salvation leaves no room for us to boast, either at its beginning, or along the way of our progress in the development of Christian character and works. “For we are saved By grace, through faith, and that not of ourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” (Eph. 2:8-10.) “Walking with God, therefore, is a Divine life in which we are constantly held in dependence upon Him, apart from whom, we cannot take a step alone.”

The figure of “walking” used in the text suggests something very practical. It presents to our minds the thought of “plodding along the pathways of daily commonplace duty. To live the Christian life it is necessary that we, like Enoch, walk with God, and thus have His help in the every-day duties—in the family, the workshop, the field, the farm, the schoolroom, the office, and in the hard and difficult places of trial, toil, and fierce temptation.” It is in these places that we are called to be His witness in the world.

Again, the figure of “walking with God,” suggests the thought of having been reconciled to Him, by the operation of His grace, without which, none could live in His presence. It suggests the thought of friendship, of close acquaintance. We are not informed just how God made known to Enoch His way of reconciling the sinful world unto Himself in Christ. We may be assured, however, that a sufficient knowledge was given him to enable him to lay hold by faith of the fact that God was pleased that he should have His fellowship. We may be sure that he must have desired the friendship and companionship of God, and therefore his tastes and affinities were towards Him. God Himself has said, “How can two walk together except they be agreed?” and the expression, “Enoch walked with God,” implies similarities in tastes, and a conformity of Enoch’s will to God his almighty Saviour, Friend, and Companion.

OUR PRESENT PRIVILEGE

If it was Enoch’s privilege to have such intimate fellowship and companionship with God by faith, in those far off days, it surely is no less our privilege in these days. This being true, is it not to the point to ask ourselves the question, Have we thus come to walk with God? Have we that fellowship and communion with Him which He was so pleased to grant Enoch? Has there come into our lives such a manifestation of God’s presence? Have we partaken of such a measure of the spirit, mind, disposition of our Master, Christ, that as it was of old with Peter and John, “all men take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus”? Do the lives we live before our fellowmen bear the Divine stamp and reveal to others the Divine Presence? How pertinent and

yet how searching is the question, Has God's presence become such a reality to us that our desires, our affections, our longings, instinctively turn to God, wherever we are? Are we always found in that kind of company, in those scenes and circumstances in which we may be sure that He is with us? or do we sometimes find ourselves in places in which we instinctively feel that we would prefer He did not know we were there?

Again, this figure of "walking with God" is most expressive, and suggests a characteristic that is very well expressed in the term devoutness. One has described this as "the flavour, the fragrance, the finer quality of piety—that something that makes the rose a rose, the diamond a diamond, and gives to some of music's tones a touch of sacredness and selectness that no language could explain. In this age of intense practical tendencies there is need of a revival of the spirit of devoutness. It is that fine quality of sacredness which comes from close association with the Divine Being, and which left upon the faces of Peter and John, in the council of old, such a depth of supernal glory, that even the magistrates that hated them 'took knowledge that they had been with Jesus.' It is the spirit of Mary sitting at the feet of Jesus, absorbing and reflecting His spirit. It can have no counterfeit or imitation. It bears its own credentials, and those who have it are quickly recognized as having been with Jesus, and still bearing on their faces the halo of His presence. God give us the spirit of heavenly mindedness, this touch of God, that we may better represent Him in the godless age and world."

THE LIFE OF PRAYER

Such a walk with God is not an impractical ideal. Indeed to a greater or less extent it describes every truly consecrated one. It is expressed and described the most forcefully in the words of the Divine Master: "How is it" said one of Jesus' disciples, "that Thou wilt manifest Thyself to us and not unto the world." Jesus answered and said unto him, "If a man love Me, he will keep My words; and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him." (John 14: 22-24.) This walk with God, with Christ, is a walk that is marked by many a silent prayer, many an utterance of praise, of thanksgiving, and many an hour of close and intimate communion with our Master that cannot be described by words. It may become a habit with us, and so real will become our sense of dependence upon Him and submission to His will in the daily, even the hourly circumstances and conditions of life, that we need no voice to tell us that He is near. It is, however, a walk of faith: "By faith Enoch walked with God." "The just shall live by faith." Were it not that we are made conscious of our continual acceptance in Him, "in whom we have redemption through His blood"; were it not that we have the full assurance that we are made acceptable in Him, the blessed realization of walking with God would not be possible. The Christian poet has expressed this walk of faith in the beautiful words:

"We walk by faith, He wills it so,
And *marks the path* that we should go,
And when at times, our sky is dim,
He gently draws us close to Him.
"We walk by faith, but not alone,
Our shepherd's tender voice we hear,
And feel His hand within our own,
And know that He is always near."

It is said of Abraham that when he was called to go into a land which he should afterward receive for an inheritance, he obeyed, *not knowing whither he went*. It was with him a walk of faith and not of sight. However, faith has the word of God to rest upon. Faith becomes faith only when it obeys that word. When we can see, it is not faith, but sight.

OUR CHART - GOD'S WORD

This figure of walking with God does not mean that God in person is really with us, but rather that His Word, His Spirit, His providence, become as useful to us by faith as though He were walking before, beside, and behind us. His Word becomes a lamp to guide our feet and a light to show us the path that we should walk in; and not the least important, His Word, that He has magnified above all His name, becomes to us His voice. "I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with Mine eye." (Psa. 32: 8.) We learn in this most wonderful promise that God sees the path, although it is invisible to us. He tells us that He looks out over the path, speaks words of instruction, and points out the way.

Another promise is, "The steps of a good man are ordered of the Lord, and He delighteth in his way." (Psa. 37: 23.) In this promise we are told that not only will He guide us in a general way, but in each successive step. The Psalmist, who had learned by long experience the lesson of walking with God, thus expresses himself: "Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart." However, he goes on to relate a previous experience which warns us of the necessity of keeping our eyes on our Heavenly Companion and off oth-

ers: "But as for me," he says, "my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For there are no bands in their death; but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men . . . Thus my heart was grieved and I was pricked in my reins. So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before Thee." When, however, he got his eyes back where they should be, he said: "Nevertheless I am continually with Thee: Thou hast holden me by Thy right hand. Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever . . . But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord God, that I may declare all His works."—Psa. 73: 1-5, 21-28.

God's promises to His trusting ones go even further than those already quoted. It is good to know that He sees our path; it is good to hear His voice speaking to us in His Word; it is good to have His counsel. The pathway at times may seem to be blocked up, and He has promised to go before us and remove the obstructions. We believe that the words addressed to one of old may be laid hold of by us to-day: "I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight"—Isa. 45: 2.

Again we are told by an Apostle who had experienced the blessedness of walking with God that "If any of you lack wisdom let him ask of God, who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not; but let him ask in faith, nothing wavering." (Jas. 1: 5.) This promise covers every need of God's people. It not only promises wisdom, but it enables us also to distinguish between the wisdom of God and the wisdom of men, thus causing us to know whether we are possessors of this heavenly wisdom and exhibiting it in all our dealings with our fellow-men. "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy."—Jas. 3: 17.

THE DIVINE CONDITIONS

These promises, however, as also all others contained in God's Word, are conditional. It will be well that we observe these conditions. There are seven to which we call attention:

First, a full committal, not only of the matter desired, but of ourselves, of all we have, into His hands. In other words, it is to the truly consecrated that these promises belong. We read: "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths."—Prov. 3: 5, 6.

Second, a full submission to His will and providences. This will mean that we believe His word, which tells us that "all things work together for good to them that love God, who are the called according to his purpose." "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine." "Not my will, but thine be done."

Third, distrust in self. "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in Me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; *for without [margin, severed from] Me ye can do nothing.*" - John 15:5.

Fourth, a firm confidence in God's desire and willingness to guide us.

Fifth, obedience to His Word. "And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us; and if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him". (1 John 5:14, 15). "Beloved if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. And this is His commandment, that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as He gave us commandment." - 1 John 3:21, 22.

Sixth, patience in order to realize His presence and guidance. "For ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the [fulfilment of] promise." - Heb. 10:36.

Seventh, and finally, in all matters a desire that the answers to our petitions shall be always for our best spiritual good.

(From 'The Herald')



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To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." (From the message to Laodicea -Rev. 3:21, 22)

We who have heard the call of God and felt the influence of His drawing power, who have responded to that call by making a consecration of our lives to Him by giving up our will to do His blessed will, are the recipients of many wonderful and amazing promises. These are so great that we never would have aspired to them in our wildest fantasies, if they had not been so clearly stated in the sacred word - heirs of God, joint-heirs with our Master, like Him immortal on the divine plane of existence, members of God's spiritual family, kings and priests to reign with Christ and assist in completing the divine plan to bring this planet and its people up to perfection.

The apostle Peter in 2 Peter 1:3-4 (part) tells us that we have been "*called to glory and virtue*" and "*given exceeding great and precious promises.*" This is our calling, not just an ordinary calling, but as the scriptures describe it - "*a high calling*" -Phil. 3:14. Let us reflect for a moment on these promises and reflect also that at present they are provisional on our overcoming. Our risen Lord's messages to the seven churches of Asia (Rev. 2 & 3) each close by listing one of our precious promises and each time we are told that the promise is for those who overcome.

Each of us needs a hope in life, a goal, something to aim for, something that gives the incentive to carry on in the face of adversity and trial, something worthwhile at the end of the road. Surely the promises contained in God's word give us that, and more than that - "*As it is written, eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things that God hath prepared for them that love Him.*" I Cor. 2:9. These things have not been revealed to the natural man, but the following verse assures us - "*but God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit.*" I Cor. 2:10.

Surely only the bare outline has yet been revealed, we still see through a glass darkly; we cannot comprehend what living in the spirit realm would be like, but undoubtedly it will be more wonderful than anything we could imagine from this side of the veil. Should we desire and want this great position of authority, honour and glory that has been promised to us, is it something that we should seek for? The apostle Paul thought so, noting his words in Romans 2:6, 7 - "*God will give to each person according to what he has done. To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honour and immortality, He will give eternal life.*"

Above all else, we should desire and seek for all these things. To be overcomers and receive the prize of the high calling should be the great aim and goal in our lives, but not because we desire honour and glory for ourselves, not because we desire to be somebody and exercise authority over others. If we were of this frame of mind, we would be quite unsuitable material for God's purposes. Why then do we desire these things, what is our motivation? Above all else, we desire these things because they are what our Heavenly Father desires for us, they are the purpose of our calling. It would be ungracious of us not to have a proper appreciation of those things which the Heavenly Father has offered us. If we prove faithful overcomers in this life, God will give us this honour and position in the next age, so that we will have the authority to accomplish the great work He has in store for us. We desire these things because we are so much in harmony with His great plan that we eagerly look forward to having a small part, under our Head, Jesus Christ, in bringing it to fruition.

Let us draw an illustration from an apprenticeship. An employer might take on an apprentice, to be a motor mechanic, cabinet maker, carpenter, plumber, etc. He spends his time, effort and money in training the apprentice; he desires a return on the time and labour he has spent on him; he wants him to succeed and become a skilled tradesman serving him in his business operations. And so it is with us - each of us is an apprentice

at the present time in the great schoolhouse of Christ. Our Heavenly Father and His Son Jesus are bestowing their efforts and labour upon us; it is God who worketh in us and who gives us of His Holy Spirit. If we are pliable and yielding clay, Our Father will mould us into a copy of His dear Son. He will supply the power and strength to enable us to be overcomers and gain the victory. We ourselves must have singleness of purpose, we must have the desire to be overcomers, we must work and labour in harmony with the Divine will.

Like the employer, our Heavenly Father expects some return for His outlay; He expects us to develop a meek and humble character and become such as can be used in His business operations. Like Jesus, we must be about our Father's business, now at this present time, and in a much greater and grander way in the next age. Let us then make every effort to be overcomers, let us not receive this great favour and grace bestowed upon us in vain, let us make sure that our Heavenly Father obtains the return that He is looking for.

The term "overcomer" implies that there is something to be overcome; it implies that the Christian's pathway will not be smooth and easy, with all the stones and stumbling-blocks taken out. On the contrary, we may expect to find hurdles and obstacles along the way which must be overcome.

The apostle Paul at times draws upon army life for his illustrations. The life of a soldier is not one of ease and relaxation - this would not make him fit and strong, capable of fighting battles. On the contrary, he is subjected to rigorous training, must negotiate difficult obstacle courses, go on long and strenuous route marches - these give him the physical strength required. As Christian soldiers in Christ's army, we obtain our spiritual strength, our strength of character, by overcoming the hurdles and obstacles we find strewn along life's pathway. If we had nothing to overcome, we could not become strong and develop the character our Heavenly Father wants for us.

Can we define in detail then what we must overcome? To answer this question, perhaps we should each search our own hearts. Each of us, as an individual, knows better than anyone else just what it is that we must overcome. Each of us is an individual, each of us is different. There is a great diversity among those whom our Heavenly Father has called, and we may be grateful for that. We all have individual personalities and characters; we all have individual weaknesses and failings, individual good points and strengths. A particular trait of character that is very difficult for one brother or sister to overcome may pose no problem to another. We hear the expression that someone has a besetting sin, referring to a particular weakness of that person.

"Wherefore, seeing that we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us." Heb. 12:1. We cannot be sure just what the sin was that the writer had in mind here; some think that it was a lack of faith, but could it not be a reference to an individual besetting sin, a sin that is different for each of us. The first step in overcoming our particular weaknesses is to recognise them, to come to a realisation that none of us is perfect, we all have overcoming work to perform on ourselves. If we feel that we are already perfect in every way, no progress can possibly be made.

When we ask the question as to what must be overcome, a standard stock answer often is - "the world, the flesh and the devil." While this is a well-worn expression, it is still a very true one and as regards overcoming the world, the well known and often quoted statement of Paul in Romans 12:2 comes readily to mind - *"Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."* In other words, he says - to overcome the world, do not allow yourself to be influenced by their conduct and behaviour. There is a tendency among some, especially the young, to desire to be like their peers, to be one of the crowd. They feel it is embarrassing to stand alone, to be different, but we have been called to swim against the current, which is always harder than going with it.

The instruction "be not conformed to this world" is specially appropriate in our day. During the lifetime of many of us, there has been a great deterioration in standards. To a greater extent than ever before, society has become faithless and amoral. During a recent radio panel discussion on the topic "Should children be told that there is a Santa Claus?", one panel member said - "Santa Claus is part of mythology, like believing in God." The other panellists seemed to be in agreement with this, reminding us of Jesus' words - *"When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?"* Luke 18:8, indicating that there would be little faith at that time. Jesus also said that at the end of the age, it would be like the days of Noah and the days of Lot in Sodom and Gomorrah. We have only to watch the T.V. news to see the truth of His statements.

"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." 2 Cor. 6:17, 18. None of us would have any desire to be conformed to these things, but to see them happening, and know that they are fulfilling God's word, should be strengthening to our faith. But there are other more subtle worldly activities and pursuits that must be overcome, activities which are not evil or wrong in themselves and in their right place. We must not however allow them to dominate us, crowd out the spiritual life or our service to God and the brethren.

How do we go about overcoming the world? Perhaps we can find answers in the following verses-

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth." Col. 3:1, 2.

"Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God." 1 John 5:4, 5

Jesus furthermore is our model or pattern. He also had to overcome and we remember His words of our text - *"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne."* Rev. 3:21 - and again in John 16:33, we have the words of our Master - *"These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."*

Our Forerunner and Elder Brother has overcome the world and we must follow His example. Let us look at Rev. 5:5, which is speaking of Jesus - *"And one of the elders said unto me, Weep not, behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof"* Here "prevailed" is the same word as "overcome" of our text. Verse 9 of the same chapter says in part - *"Thou art worthy to take the book and to open the seals thereof"* - It was because Jesus overcame and gained the victory, while here on earth, that He was accounted worthy to open the sealed book.

We must also overcome while here on earth, in order to be accounted worthy of that place in the divine plan that our Heavenly Father has in reserve for us. An interesting point to think about is that Jesus was always sinless and perfect, yet He still had to be tested and tried and to overcome, just as we do -

"Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered, and being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him. (Heb. 5:8, 9) "Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted." (Heb. 2:17, 18)

The Greek word translated "merciful" has the meaning of being kind and compassionate, and if our great High Priest was called upon to overcome trials, temptation and suffering, surely we must be overcomers also. We are part of that same priesthood, of which the apostle tells us in 1 Peter 2:9 - *"ye are a royal priesthood"* - "We are the under-priests, we must also develop sympathy, kindness and compassion, to perfect us for our part in the great work of the next age, when we are reigning with Christ and sharing in the work of judging our fellowmen. Our great High Priest deals with us in a kind and compassionate manner, and during this lifetime, which is our "apprenticeship", we must develop these same traits of character. Our Heavenly Father is not looking for stern faced, stony hearted, uncaring judges to preside over the millennial age kingdom - we must be able to display the same traits of character which our High Priest displays toward us.

Why is God selecting His special family from the world of fallen mankind? He could have made up the required number from perfect spirit beings, just as He made the angels. The answer seems clear - just to make perfect beings in the first place is no guarantee that they will remain that way, no guarantee that they will retain the perfect character that they were created with and will remain obedient and faithful to the One who created them. Even our dear Master, the perfect Jesus, had to be tested and tried and go through affliction and to overcome. It was these experiences that crystallised and fixed His character permanently, only then could the Heavenly Father give Him to have life in Himself - immortality. *"For as the Father hath life in Himself; so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself."* John 5:26. This was not a quality which He possessed prior to His resurrection, for an immortal could not have died on the cross of Calvary. 1

We have only to look back over times past to see the results from God's perfect creation. Everything that God makes is initially perfect. We read that when God created the earth, its animal population and the first human pair - *"God saw every thing that He had made, and, behold, it was very good."* Gen. 1:31. In other words, it was perfect, yet it was not very long before Adam and Eve disobeyed their Creator and fell from their initial perfection. When God made the angelic beings, these would have also been perfect, yet many fell into disobedience and sin, and became what we now refer to as the evil spirits.

We think also of Satan himself, who apparently at one stage held a special place in heaven. He seems to be referred to in Ezekiel 28, under the symbolism of the king of Tyrus - *"Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; . . . thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day thou wast created till iniquity was found in thee."* (Vv14, 15) Yet Satan became the great adversary of God and man.

With all this in mind, we can now see the vital importance of overcoming. A life that has been tested and tried in the fires of affliction, and has come through victorious, is very special and precious in God's sight, more precious than fine gold. It is only to the overcomers that God will give the deathproof condition of im-

mortality, as it says at the close of the message to the church at Smyrna - *"He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death."* (Rev. 2:11) Before God gives immortality to any, He must be completely sure that there is no possibility of their falling away at any future time.

We have seen that we must overcome the world, its opportunities, allurements and distractions, not be conformed to its way of life, must dare to be different and stand alone. These are all outside influences that must be overcome, outside of ourselves, and we now come to overcoming the flesh. This speaks of influences within ourselves, of overcoming desires of the flesh, our earthly weaknesses, faults and failings, those imperfect traits of character that we have been born with, through heredity. There are also those traits of character that we ourselves have developed through a wrong attitude of mind; as already noted, these are different for each one of us. With some, it could be a quick temper - we need to learn to be calm, quiet and placid, even when others are acting just the reverse towards us. *"A soft answer turneth away wrath, but grievous words stir anger"* Prov. 15:1.

We must also overcome any spirit of pride, of self-importance, of - *"thinking more highly of ourselves than we ought...let each esteem others better than themselves."* Rom. 12:3, Phil. 2:3. The attitude we should develop is well described in the words of the beautiful old hymn -

O! To be nothing, nothing,
Only to lie at His feet,
A broken and emptied vessel
For the Master's use made meet.
Emptied that He might fill me,
As forth to His service I go.

We must further overcome any spirit of criticism, of judging others harshly. We must not expect perfection, for we live in an imperfect world inhabited by imperfect people. If we are looking for perfection in others, we are always going to be disappointed. Perhaps we find it harder to overlook the faults of our brethren, because we expect so much more from them, and rightly so. But let us not be looking for absolute perfection, which none of us can possess in this earthly tabernacle.

Overcoming the flesh really means overcoming self and the desires of self. We remember the words of our Master - *"Then said Jesus unto His disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."* Matt. 16:24. This is a most important part of overcoming - the overcoming of self and the pleasing of self. When decisions of life have to be made by the average worldly person, the only criterion in arriving at the decision is usually self - what is going to be pleasing to self, what will give pleasure and happiness, what will be of personal benefit? We must overcome self in making decisions; the questions we should ask are - what would be pleasing to our Heavenly Father, what would be most beneficial to our brethren, what would Jesus do?

Of course, we must support ourselves and not be a burden on others; we must make proper provision for our families, but always keeping in mind the words of our Master - *"Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."* Matt. 6:33. Let us always take care of our legitimate secular interest in a proper way, but make sure that they never intrude upon, or crowd out, our service to God. The first place in our hearts and affections must be for His kingdom, His business interests, His people.

Finally, each Christian is called upon to overcome not only the *world* of external enticements, the *flesh* with its inner weaknesses and desires but the *devil*, the great opponent of God and His people. We need to heed the scripture warnings - *"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour."* 1 Peter 5:8. *"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."* Eph. 6:12. But we must also remember the assurance - *"Resist the devil and he will flee from you."* James 4:7.

We cannot doubt that many of our wrong thoughts and our temptations come from our great adversary, but we have even more powerful help. If we truly desire to be overcomers, we have our Heavenly Father and Jesus working on our side, so how can we fail while we trust? We all have a strong desire to be perfect as He is perfect, and this is the end result of overcoming; this is achieved when we pass beyond the veil. In this life, we must seek to achieve perfection of heart, of character, of desire. If we have this desire, and aim our lives to this end, we will succeed, not in our own strength, but as with the apostle Paul -

"I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me." Phil. 4:13

"In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us." Rom. 8:37

(Convention Address JGT:1/95)

Speak Gently

Speak gently. It is better far
 To rule by love than fear
Speak gently—let no harsh words mar
 The good we might do here.

Speak gently. Love doth whisper low
 The vows that true hearts bind;
And gently Friendship's accents flow
 Affection's voice is kind.

Speak gently to the little child.
 Its love is sure to gain;
Teach it accents soft and mild;
 It may not long remain.

Speak gently to the young, for they
 Will have enough to bear
Pass through this life as best they may;
 'Tis full of anxious care.

Speak gently to the aged one,
 Grieve not the care-worn heart;
The sands of life are nearly run
 Let such in peace depart.

Speak gently, kindly, to the poor;
 Let no harsh tone be heard;
They have enough they must endure,
 Without an unkind word.

Speak gently to the erring: know,
 They may have toil'd in vain;
Perchance unkindness made them so;
 Oh, win them back again.

Speak gently: He who gave His life
 To bend man's stubborn will,
When elements were in fierce strife,
 Said to them "Peace, be still."

Speak gently. 'Tis a little thing
 Dropped in the heart's deep well;
The good, the joy, which it may bring,
 Eternity shall tell.

(Bates)

The Glad Resurrection Day

"Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning" — Psa. 30:5

Jesus, on the night immediately prior to His sacrifice on behalf of us all, said —"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me." Within a few hours of uttering these words Jesus was to suffer and die on the cross. How could those disciples believe in Him then? However, on the third day they were

to learn that Christ had risen from the dead. He was a living Saviour then! This He had predicted also on the night prior to His death, when He said—"Ye now therefore have sorrow (you have sorrow when I say I must leave you), but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you."

Did Jesus see those disciples again? He surely did! And He has seen us again, so to speak, since we became Christians. Those disciples in Jesus' day were weak and timid while He was still with them, but after His resurrection appearances to them, and especially after Pentecost, they became strong, confident and full of faith in Him. The same has happened to us, as Christians, since we have learned to know and love the Lord, and to feel assured that He does all things well.

After Jesus' resurrection, those disciples at His first advent understood what His death and resurrection would mean for them, and for all mankind, in due time; and so do we, when we grasp the wonderful truth—that "Jesus Christ, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man"—for every human being who has ever lived. Those are the words of the Apostle Paul, and he knew the truth. He said again—"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

Then the Apostle Peter declared that "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." But Jesus doesn't bring all mankind to God in the present life, does He? Yet another Scripture declares—"God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." How many of the world have already been reconciled to God? Not everyone, we all admit. But Christ tasted death for everyone—in every city and country in the world!

And all mankind are yet to benefit from Christ's sacrifice for them. But How? The words of our risen Lord, through the Apostle John, help us in this matter when He said—"I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore; and have the keys of hell, and of death." What did Jesus mean by having the keys of hell? The Bible hell is the condition of death, and Jesus went to the Bible hell for all mankind. We call to mind the Scripture in Psa. 16:10, quoted by the Apostle in Acts 2: 31, after Jesus' resurrection—"Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell"—which was fulfilled in our Lord's resurrection—"This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses"—Acts 2: 32.

The words of the Psalmist help us further, in Psa. 102:19, 20—"For God hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary; from heaven did the Lord behold the earth; to hear the groaning of the prisoner; to loose those that are appointed to death." What a scene the Almighty beholds on earth today with man's inhumanity to man, and death taking away the human family one by one throughout the world. But God is going to loose the prisoners that are appointed to death—those in the prison-house of death. It's lovely to know that the Psalmist was given that information, by inspiration of God, so long ago, and it's absolutely true.

To illustrate or picture the wonderful resurrection day, when all mankind shall be awakened from the death condition, we have an account given in John's Gospel respecting the resurrection of a dear brother who had passed away while Jesus was absent from the locality where he lived. When Jesus returned He performed such a marvellous miracle which brought joy and rejoicing to the hearts of the two sorrowing sisters in particular, and which also brings hope and encouragement to our hearts, as we accept by faith the lesson God would wish us to take from this lovely incident. We refer to John 11 where the death and resurrection of Lazarus is recorded. When Lazarus became sick the sisters sent a message to Jesus—"He whom thou lovest is sick"—hoping and expecting, perhaps, that Jesus would return quickly and cure the sickness. They had become acquainted with the Lord curing people, bringing them back to health and strength. But Jesus did not return, and Lazarus died. Then Jesus said to His disciples with Him—"We'll go back and awake Lazarus out of sleep." The disciples replied that if he slept he would do well. Then Jesus said plainly—"Lazarus is dead."

When our Lord returned He was met by Martha who said—"Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." Jesus said unto her—"Thy brother shall rise again." To which Martha replied—"I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Martha had learned that truth from Jesus, no doubt. Then Jesus said to her—"I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead (though he die), yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth (then) and believeth in me shall never die." The miracle that followed was intended to illustrate just what Jesus had said in respect of all mankind.

When Mary met Jesus she expressed the same thought as Martha—"Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." We note the emphasis was on Jesus curing their brother while he still lived; they had not expected their brother to be restored to life, for he had been dead four days. When our Lord asked where they had laid their brother, and approached the grave, asking that the stone be taken from the entrance, Martha was apprehensive, saying—"Lord, by this time he corrupteth: for he hath been dead four days." After prayer to the Heavenly Father, acknowledging that it was the Father's power that would perform the miracle, and that He knew it was God's will that it be carried out, we read that Jesus—"Cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth; and he that was dead came forth." We read—"Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him." Can we wonder that they believed on Him after such a miracle?

Could there be anything more wonderful than to realise what the fulfilment of that miracle will mean in the Kingdom of Christ—that all mankind shall be awakened from the sleep of death. Lazarus, of course, died again, but we note clearly that he was asleep in death for four days; he had not gone to heaven. Four days, four years, four hundred years, or four thousand years, make no difference to the Lord when the time comes to bring mankind back from the prison-house of death, to enjoy lasting life on the restored earth, by obedience to the laws of Christ's Kingdom.

How thankful we are to know of this glorious salvation provided by God, through the sacrifice of His dear Son who “tasted death for every man.” From the Apostle Paul we read again in the words of 1 Thes. 4:13, 14—“I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.” When we have hope in Christ, we know of a surety that our departed loved ones are in His keeping; they are “asleep in Jesus.” Paul continues—“For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.” This is a sure promise that God will bring back from the death condition all mankind at our Lord's second advent, that all may learn to know the Lord from the least to the greatest, and accepting Him also as their Saviour gain lasting life on the restored earth.

What a comfort is this gracious plan of salvation God has promised for His human family, through the gift of Jesus to be our Saviour. We do well to remember also, that we were all under the sentence of death, but through faith in Christ, we have a certificate for life. And those who, in this life do not gain a certificate for life, will have a full opportunity of obtaining that in the resurrection day. In explanation, previous mention was made of the words of the Apostle Paul—“God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself”—but God has reconciled only a comparatively few of mankind unto Himself since Jesus' first advent. These, on proving faithful unto death in the steps of the Master, are promised a place in the heavenly kingdom, to reign with Christ, to assist in the restoring to life and blessing of the remainder of mankind who obey the laws of the earthly kingdom. This will be easy to do at that time, with Satan bound, and the glory of the Lord covering the earth as the waters cover the sea.

Then will be fulfilled the words of Rev. 22:17—“And the spirit and the bride say, Come.” There will be a Bride, then, for the Church will be with Christ for this great restoration work of a thousand years, on behalf of all the willing and obedient of resurrected humanity. “And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” Then shall also come to pass the fulfillment of Matt. 25: 34—“Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” (“The Voice”)

He Never Fails

He never fails the soul that trusts in Him;
Tho' disappointments come, and hope burns dim;
He never fails.
Tho' testing surge like angry seas around
Tho' trials sore like ambushed foes abound,
Yet this my soul with myriads more has found,
He never fails

(JS Baxter)

Knowing Him

The kernel or pivot of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God for the past two thousand years seems to be expressed in the statement of the Apostle in Phil. 3. 10, “*That I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.*” It reveals the only way to attain the great salvation of God and the steps by which we progress to the blessedness of association with God and Christ Jesus.

The first point is “*that I may know him.*” Primarily to know him means to have an intellectual appreciation of God and his purposes and the relation of Christ Jesus our Lord to God in bringing about those purposes. Secondly “*the power of his resurrection*”, the energising power of the Holy Spirit, must find access to our hearts and lives if that knowledge is to be fruitful in helping us to God. Thirdly “*the fellowship of his sufferings*”, the possession of the Holy Spirit and its possession of us is bound to lead us along in fellowship of his suffering through opposition to the world, the flesh and the adversary. Fourthly “*being made conformable to his death.*” The knowledge of Christ, the power of the Holy Spirit and the fellowship of his suffering are the only means by which conformity to God's dear Son can be effected in us, by which we can enter his death.

His was a sacrificial death, a poured out life, an offering on account of sin, and it is our privilege during this age to “follow in his steps.” “If we suffer with him we shall live with him” so the Apostle says, “being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.”

Paul’s longing desire was to know Christ Jesus in the truest sense and to the utmost degree. That knowledge meant more to him than any other possession and in his quest for it he was prepared to sacrifice every other valued treasure. He declares in verse 7 “what things were gain to me these I counted loss.” His material gains, humanly speaking, were weighty; he was “*of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews, a Pharisee, in zeal a zealot, in righteousness according to the law blameless.*” He had increasing ambition, innumerable friends, exceptional talent and great treasures, yet “I count all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as refuse that I may win Christ and be found in him.” The wholeheartedness of the apostle has been an outstanding example to every follower of the Lord and reveals the secret of success in the Christian life and walk. When we consider Paul’s talents and advantages of social position, his ambition as a scholar and citizen of repute with a commission from the High Priest we are not surprised that he should be misinformed respecting Jesus of Nazareth and his followers and the false accusations filed against them should incite him to persecution, nor are we surprised that when arrested and rightfully informed and with eyes opened to the truth the same energies were directed to reverse his order of life and procedure. In his defence before King Agrippa he said “I verily thought that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth, which I did and many of the saints I shut up in prison having received authority from the Chief Priest.” After relating his conversion he added, “I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.” What a happy and glorious confession to make; from that time Paul expressed obedience to the Divine Will in every detail of his life. His devotion to God and service to others became the prevailing characteristics of his life; he was poured out as an oblation on behalf of the Church. It seems very evident that it was the hungering and thirsting to know him and his prompt obedience which opened the windows of Heaven and brought abundant blessings all through his ministry, even though it was filled with trials and difficulties from beginning to end, and he was able to say “for our light affliction which is but for a moment worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” Such a life is like the High Priest’s two hands full of sweet incense crumbled upon the golden altar with the smoke of sweet perfume ascending and penetrating beyond the second vail into the Most Holy—the Divine Presence.

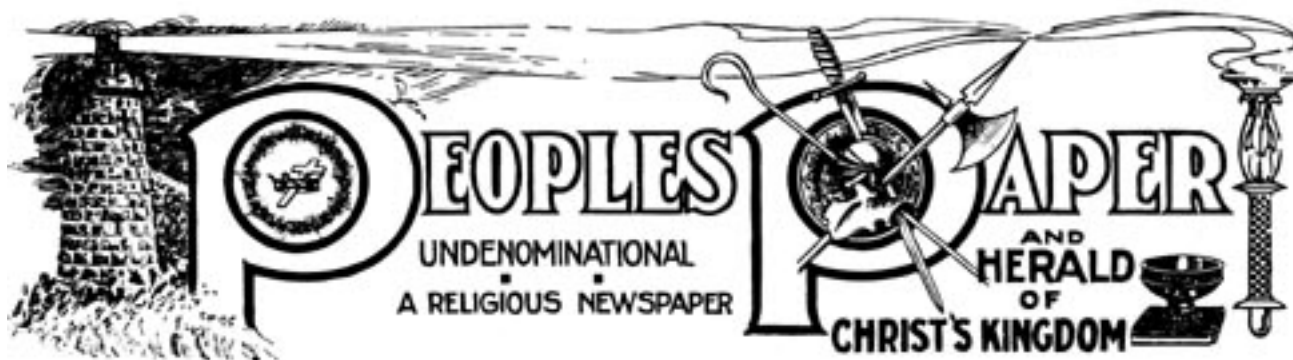
To know him is very different from knowing *of* him; so many can say they know of Jesus but not so many are able to bear testimony to knowing him with close personal contact and association. To really know a person we must understand him, instinctively discern his wish and will, know his trend of thought, be acquainted with his ways, be conversant with his purposes, be accustomed to his tastes and choice and be able to express his judgement generally. To do this we must enjoy close acquaintance, spend time in his presence and share in joys and trials, activities and experiences. It is by these same means that we can enjoy close relationship and sweet knowledge of Christ. We have long since come to an understanding of God in a very real and definite sense; we know his mind, thoughts and purposes respecting ourselves and the world from his sacred word and we have a unique and favoured position before God in the world today. Not only do we possess the Bible and freedom to use it but we live in a time when the sacred secrets of the mysteries of God and his Kingdom are clearly and beautifully unfolded. The great fundamental truths are made so luminous that if our heart is attuned to know him it is not such a colossal task as others had in past days; such light has been shed on the ransom, resurrection, restitution, the last days, and the conditions obtaining in them, that we have wonderful knowledge and an accumulation of evidence for our guidance and instruction in knowing Christ; yet we have found that much of this can be appreciated without vital life in Christ. These things take their place and give increased responsibility to every one of us and it seems right to say that we cannot know Christ to any great extent not be accepted of him without some measure of appreciation of these great and precious revealed truths concerning God’s plans. To know him we need to be influenced by his word, to walk in his light and to be taught of him. Life that endures is nourished and built up by the Word of God. “The words that I speak unto you, they are Spirit and they are life.” These will enable one to increase in the knowledge of God; not necessarily to understand all the intricate problems of human nature but anticipate their solution in the purposes of God. In this we can rejoice and give praise and honour and glory to him. “Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise lovingkindness, judgement, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight.” (Jer. 9. 23-24). “This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” (John 17. 3)

(From “B.S.M.”)

The Characteristics of Christian Discipleship

MATT 5:1-12)

The Beatitudes, as they are usually called, are descriptions given in an exclamatory form of the qualities, all of which must be found, and in fact are found in and in varying degrees, in the lives of those who have come under the influence of the kingly rule of God. They are also a declaration of the blessings which all who display those virtues: experience already in part, and will enjoy more fully hereafter. The future tense used in the description of those blessings in verses 5-9 emphasise their certainty and not merely their futurity. The mourners will indeed be comforted, etc. The beatitudes in Matthew would appear to be eight in number, for in verse 11 Jesus abandons the exclamatory form. 'How blest are' and addresses the disciple's directly in the words *Blessed are ye*. The eight qualities here set forth, when blended together (and no single one of them can in fact exist in isolation from the others) make up the character of those who alone are accepted by the divine: King as His subjects (3, 10), who alone can see Him who is invisible (8), and who alone are worthy to be His sons (9). In consequence, anyone who claims to be God's son, or to know Him, or to belong to His kingdom, or to be a Member of His body, the Church, in whom these qualities are conspicuous by their absence, 'is a liar and knows not the truth'. Many of these qualities had already been counted blessed by the psalmist. It is the assembly of them by Jesus, so that they form a kind of mosaic of the Christian character, that is His unique contribution. (R. V. G. Tasker, T.N.T.C.)



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ONE HOPE OF YOUR CALLING

The beautiful words of the apostle Paul in Ephesians 4:1-6 firstly urge upon all Christians the need for making every endeavour to maintain a spirit of unity among all who belong to Christ. Secondly, they list for us the firm foundations upon which such unity can and should be established. In these profound grounds of unity, there is surely ample basis for that spirit of oneness which our Master earnestly prayed for, and which His commandment to all His followers was given to reinforce -

"A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another, as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this shall all know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another" John 13:34,35.

But not only are the one body, one spirit, one hope of your calling, etc., the only basis of true unity, they are the one basis of our standing in the sight of God at this time, and this is particularly so when we consider the third item of that list - *"even as you are called in the one hope of your calling."* There is not a variety of callings and hopes from which we might choose, but those who are called by God are called in one hope and in one calling. Furthermore, the call is a unique one, a very privileged one and one not to be repeated.

Let us consider the characteristics of this calling as detailed in scripture. To do so cannot fail to impress us with the immensity and the priceless worth of that call. We might begin with Phil. 3:14, possibly the key text as far as identifying the call is concerned. Paul says - *"I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."* We note here, as elsewhere, that it is God who calls, that the call is into Christ and it is a high calling. A HIGH call, BY God, INTO Christ.

The basic thought of the word HIGH here seems to be of an upward call, as Paul says in Col. 3:1, 2, where the word is translated 'above' - *"seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth."* So the calling requires at the outset what we might term a transfer of affections, from earthly to heavenly aspirations, interests and aims. Mostly, the word is used of things of heavenly origin or heavenly direction, but even in the sense of noble or grand, how apt is this description of our calling, for its ultimate reward is truly a lofty one.

In 2 Tim. 1:9, Paul refers to it as a HOLY calling - *"God has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."* Again, the call is OF God, it is given IN Christ Jesus and was moreover planned BEFORE the world began, or, more literally, before the ages of time. This holy calling, Paul goes on to say (v.10) has only now been *"made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."*

The word "holy" as used in both old and new testament scriptures carries the thought of cleansing, separating and anointing for a sacred purpose. It is beautifully portrayed in many of the tabernacle and temple arrangements of Israel, in the selection and preparation both of the priesthood and the various vessels of service. So the Christian calling is first and always to separateness, to purity, to dedication to sacred service.

The separating or sanctifying influence in each believer's life is identified for us in our Lord's great prayer. *"Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy word is truth."* John 17:17. This sealing to our hearts, by the Holy Spirit, of the truth as revealed in our dear Saviour is the beginning and should be the daily experience of each true child of God. Only the word of truth, as manifest in Him who is the Way, the Truth and the Life can sanctify. How necessary that our hearts be ever open to hear His word - for His word is truth and the Holy Spirit with which God has sealed His children is the Spirit of truth.

The writer to Hebrews also refers to the calling as a HEAVENLY calling. *"Holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the apostle and high priest of our profession."* Heb. 3:1. He then goes on to speak of Christ's perfect faithfulness and exhorts each called one - *"exhort one another daily, while it is called"*

today, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end." Heb. 3:14. This calling is of heavenly origin, out of the immeasurable love and wisdom of our God, and it has a heavenly reward. It is a call to be identified with Jesus now - "partakers of Christ" - and, if faithful, to be glorified together with Him.

The calling of the gospel age is also a HIDDEN calling, indeed the "*mystery which hath been hid from ages and generations*" but "*now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith.*" Col. 1:26, Rom, 16:26 Peter further tells us of this privileged calling - "*of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you (the church) unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you which things the angels desire to look into.*" 1 Peter 1:10, 12.

Comparatively few in our Lord's and the apostles' day heard or comprehended that call, and still today this is so. God who knows the hearts still hides the precious truths of His present purposes from the worldly-wise and reveals them to those who are teachable and humble and who hunger and thirst after righteousness. James speaks of such as being generally "*the poor of this world, rich in faith.*" James 2:5. And this will remain so, until the wondrous calling of God to be joint-heirs with His dear Son is completed, and the marriage of the Lamb, the union of the called ones with Christ, as described in the Revelation takes place.

The calling of this age is also not indefinite but a LIMITED calling. In at least two of the parables, our Lord make it clear that the door of opportunity for this calling of God would in due time close, while In Hebrews 11, the writer after listing the great gallery of faith heroes of old time, tells us that they have not so far received their reward, the call and completion of the church first being necessary, before they should be perfected. Each part of God's plan, indeed, has its own time and season, all working out eventually His perfect will. So the apostle stresses to us in 2 Cor. 6:2, that for those with ears to hear "*behold, now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation.*"

Following the completion of the gospel age call, there will be the grand proclamation of the gospel of God's love in Christ to all nations. The rewards of obedience in that time will also be great, but the present calling, once completed, is not to be repeated. That coming age will bring an invitation to "whosoever will" to come and take the water of life freely, but now the calling is a SELECTIVE one. We read in Acts 15:14 - "*Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name.*" This is the first step, as it were, in the recovery of mankind process, to be followed by the rebuilding of the tabernacle of David, and the subsequent restoration and blessing of all people. But the calling of the church for a privileged share in that work of blessing must first be completed.

The calling of God in Christ Jesus is additionally a DEMANDING one that calls for self-sacrifice. Our Lord made this very clear from the outset - "*if any will follow me, let them deny self and take up the cross and follow me.*" Matt. 16:24. Jesus added the illustrations of the man planning to build a house and the king preparing to go to war, the lesson in each case being the need for counting the cost of being His disciple. In all cases, the call will require some sacrifice, though this may vary for each one. For some such as Paul, it may mean very great sacrifice and suffering, but he could say "*what things were gain for me, these I counted loss for Christ.*" Phil 3:7.

Peter at one time asked our Lord what he and the other disciples would receive in return for giving up all to follow Him and His answer is in Luke 18:29, 30 - "*There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the age to come life everlasting.*" The call of God to you and me means that all the affairs of our lives are to be carried out as unto Him, that we are stewards of all that He provides for us. If it entails suffering, we are assured that - "*if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together*" Rom. 8:17 Peter further tells that a purpose of our calling is that we might fellowship with Christ in His sufferings, in His experience in this world in which we sojourn. He has left us an example, that we should follow His steps. 1 Peter 2:20, 21.

The calling of God is furthermore a LIFELONG one. Here again our Lord desired that there be no misunderstanding. The call of God cannot be taken up lightly or on a temporary basis - once begun, there can be no turning back. The writer to Hebrews urges his readers to steadfastness as they press on in their calling of God. (Heb. 10:35-39) The reward is to those who persevere in faith - "*Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.*" Rev. 2:10. This promise was given to the church at Smyrna, a sorely tried and persecuted church, but the message of patient endurance, under whatever circumstances, is equally applicable to all who at whatever time respond to God's call.

The calling of God is a PURPOSE-FULL one. Firstly, God is now preparing His good work and will in those He calls, but they are being called and prepared for a purpose and an important purpose in God's plans.

This is outlined by Paul so clearly in Gal. 3, considering only verses 8, 16 and 29 just now. Verse 8 tells us of the promise to Abraham that all nations would be blessed through his seed, while Verse 16 identifies that seed as Christ and Verse 29 assures us that those who are Christ's, that is those called of God, are also Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise. What a glorious purpose awaits those who are called and faithful in those times of restitution spoken of by Peter in Acts 3:21!

These are to have part in the first resurrection and are to reign with Christ a thousand years for the purpose of judging and blessing. Their calling is to be a fruitful one, here and now, in the development of the fruit of the Holy Spirit in their individual lives, but even more so in that grand time when the blessings of God flow out to Israel and all nations in the glorious kingdom time. "O that I may be one found worthy to reign with Him a thousand years!"

Perhaps one of the greatest causes of rejoicing over the calling of God is that it is, according to God's word, an ATTAINABLE one. Most of us, at the outset of our Christian life, felt that we were not worthy of such a call. This is, of course, literally true, but usually some older, wiser Christian gently whispered that no-one is worthy, no-one is able, but GOD IS ABLE. A sure foundation for each of us is found in 1 Thess. 5:24 - *"faithful is He who calleth you, who also will do it"* and *"my grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness."* 2 Cor. 12:9. He who calls us, also strengthens us; He can enable us in all things to be *"more than conquerors through Him that loved us."* Rom. 8:37. *"This is the victory that overcometh the world, even your faith."* 1 John 5:4.

So while we look to our Heavenly Father to sustain and strengthen us, we can have that full assurance of faith, which the writer to Hebrews speaks of. *"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way... let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith... let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, for He is faithful that promised."* Heb. 10:19-23. What a beautiful picture here of our access to our Father and to His keeping and cleansing power! We have Jesus too, as our Advocate, when we fall short of the mark, and He has promised - *"Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age."*

None should then be deterred from entering upon the race for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus because of frailty of the flesh. Our Heavenly Father reads and knows the heart and we have the assurance of which the prophet wrote - *"He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might He increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall, but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint."* Isa. 40:29-31. In the New Testament, the apostle similarly assures us - *"If God be for us, who can be against us?"* Rom. 8:31. Those whom God calls, He is able to keep.

These then are some of the many facets of the high and holy calling of God, which for the past two thousand years has been held out to those of responsive heart, foreknown and drawn of God, who have been determined, by God's grace, to follow in the footsteps of Him who loved us and gave Himself for us, even our Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us turn briefly now to the one hope of that calling to which Paul refers. For among all its characteristics, it is a hope-full calling, with rewards here and now but even greater to follow. The favour of being named a joint-heir with our dear Lord must surely be included in that hope.

Meantime, now is the time of schooling and development in character likeness of our Lord for those who are called and a great amount of the New Testament deals with the way in which each called one should live. *"I beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called"* Eph. 4:1 is a typical exhortation of the apostle Paul. Along the way there will certainly be both trials and blessings, all permitted of God for growth in grace and understanding of the will and character of God. Overall, there is the assurance of Jude as he concludes his epistle - *"Now unto Him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."*

The apostle Paul, near the end of his life, declared - *"I have fought a good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day."* 2 Tim. 4:7, 8. This was Paul's confidence and hope, and surely his life was one of selfless, tireless service. But he does not stop there, he continues - *"and not to me only, but unto all also who love His appearing."* Here he includes you and me and all God's dear children who faithfully finish their course of life.

The apostle Peter, nearing the end of his life, encourages the faithful in Christ Jesus to *"give diligence to make your calling and election sure, for if you do these things, you shall never fall, for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."* 2 Peter 1:10, 11. He is not here telling us that our works will earn us the prize, but that to the foundation of faith we should be adding the qualities of character, which are the fruit of God's working in us by **His Spirit**.

A crown of righteousness, an abundant entrance into His kingdom, how wonderful are such prospects; but perhaps even grander is the prospect set out before us in our Lord's prayer - *"I will that they also, whom Thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory."* John 17:24. In his first epistle, the apostle John enlarges on this in the lovely words of 1 John 3:2 - *"Beloved, now are we children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is."* (NASB) To see Him as He is, whom yet unseen we love - what a prospect!

This is then the essence of the "one hope of His calling" which unites all the Lord's people. As we head into another year, let us each resolve, by God's grace, to *"run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith."* Heb. 12:1, 2. **In a normal** footrace, all runners seek so to run as to win the prize. The calling of God demands that same dedication from all who enter the race for the prize of the high calling, but in this race, we can all be winners if we continue faithful to the end, and furthermore we can and should be ready to help other runners. Through Christ we each entered the race, He has sustained us, He is the goal on which our eyes are set and His presence will be our ultimate reward. (Convention Address - DS 1/95)

The following hymn is based on the lovely sentiments of 1 John 3:2. The third line of each verse highlights the hymn-writer's greatest desire.

1. When all my labours and trials are o'er,
And I am safe on that beautiful shore,
Just to be near the dear Lord I adore,
Will through the ages be glory for me.
2. When by the gift of His infinite grace,
I am accorded in heaven a place,
Just to be there and to look on His face,
Will through the ages be glory for me.
3. Friends will be there I have loved long ago,
Joy like a river around me will flow;
Yet just a smile from my Saviour, I know,
Will through the ages be glory for me.

When by His grace I shall look on His face,
That will be glory, be glory, for me.

"As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness." Psalm 17:15.

A Personal Testimony

"The Convention is over - my very first Convention! What a blessing it has been! I had no thought that such happiness could be mine. Each day seemed to have more joy, more loveliness, to give greater benefit than the last. The first day I missed a good deal by not being able to attend in the afternoon; the next I missed a good deal also (through unforeseen circumstances), but the ineffable joy of the last two days!

Nothing will ever detract from the beauty of that baptism service, where Bro Sis. . . . and myself symbolised our consecration vows - to be dead with Christ, that we might be accounted worthy, if we make our calling and election sure, to reign with Him in glory in the age to come. God grant that we may prove ourselves to be overcomers, by the Lord's grace! What a thrill to clasp the right hand of fellowship, and know that love from the innermost recesses of the heart was behind that handclasp. Then the further joy of hearing those thrice-lovely words, "The Lord be with you", from each of the little band gathered together.

(Amc: 1938)

"Thou crownest the year with Thy goodness." (Psa. 65:11) As we review the leadings of divine providence during the year that is past, let God's goodness and mercy stimulate our faith and confidence in Him as respects the new incoming year. A proper retrospect on the part of a true child of God will enable us not only to render thanks for the past, but to look up and lift up our heads, realising that our deliverance is nearer than

when we first believed, and that He that began a good work in us is both able and willing to complete it, if we will but continue to submit our wills, our lives, our all, to His wisdom and loving care.” (Manna 30 Dec)

Be Sober, Vigilant, Steadfast

(1 PETER 5: 8, 9)

What more appropriate watchwords than these could express the proper attitude of the Christian soldier? – “Be *sober*; be *vigilant*; because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom *resist, steadfast in the faith*, knowing that the same afflictions are endured by your brotherhood in the world.”

The “brotherhood” includes all the soldiers of Christ throughout the world, and this symbol of their present character is not a mere empty sound; for there is a mighty conflict in progress, a war being waged, and the encounter is one of desperate earnestness. Those who know nothing of this great conflict, and who have no part in it, though they may bear the name of Christ – Christians – really have no right to that name; for they are not Christ’s soldiers. Jesus himself was a soldier, and fought the battle through to the bitter end, and gained the victory. And he is the Captain of all those who accept the redemption he purchased and that follow in his footsteps, and he will lead them on to certain victory, if they faint not. – Gal. 6:9.

The Apostle Paul gives the same idea of the Christian life. He represents it as a desperate warfare, and urges all the true soldiers of Christ to “put on the whole armor of God, that they may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil; for,” says he, “we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places....Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness,” etc.— Eph.6:10-18.

When we consider how strongly our adversary is entrenched in the world - in its ideas, its maxims, its institutions, its policy, its hopes, aims and ambitions - and the Christian life as in direct opposition to all these; and when we further consider how, because we were once partakers of the spirit of the world, the enemy of our souls has strongly entrenched himself in our weak fallen natures; and still further, how, with shrewd subtlety, this invisible, intelligent personal foe is plotting and scheming to allure, deceive and lead us into sin – when with sober judgement we consider all these things, then indeed we realize that we are in the midst of a great conflict.

The three points of attack by the enemy are, as the Apostle John (1 John 2:16) enumerates then, “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.”

The first of these includes all those appetites and passions common to the whole human family, which in their legitimate uses under the full control of reason find conscience, are right and proper, but which, unduly cultivated until they become the masters of reason and conscience, degrade and debase the person.

The second, – “the lust of the eyes,” – includes all those ambitions to acquire and possess whatsoever things the eye (the natural eye or the eye of the understanding) perceives to be good, i.e., to be gratifying to the carnal mind, the old unregenerate nature. This disposition impels to self-gratification regardless of the rights and liberties of others in any direction. It craves wealth, or fame, or power, or social distinction, and to these ends it inclines to harness every energy of mind and body.

The third, – “the pride of life,” – is the blossom of selfishness, so abhorrent to God and to all good men. It is that disposition in a man which glories in his shame. When the lusts of the flesh and the lusts of the eyes have brought their curse of narrowness, bigotry and conceit; and when they have gone further in depriving fellow-men of their rights and privileges, then pride, the exultation of meanness, has its short triumph, and loftily soars above the unfortunate subjects of its power and gloats over the desolation it has wrought.

These three points of attack by the great enemy are the points which the Lord would have us guard with unwearied vigilance. Be sober, be vigilant, and watch that the enemy gain no approach to the citadel of your heart by any one of these routes.

That he makes repeated attacks is certain; and that these attacks come suddenly and without warning, and often with terrible force, is a matter of experience with all; hence the necessity for sober and constant vigilance. Be assured the ever watchful enemy will take advantage of our unguarded moments and our unfortified conditions if such there be. Even with all the watchfulness and readiness which we can command, the ability to withstand the enemy and to resist his attacks causes more or less suffering, and often taxes the powers of endurance to the utmost. Indeed, we must expect that the tension on our powers of endurance will sometimes be so great as to threaten disruption, and as to surely cause it if we trust to our own strength. We are forewarned to think not strange of the *fiery* trial that shall surely try us if we are indeed the sons of God and

soldiers of Christ, as though some strange thing happened unto us. (1 Pet. 4:12-16) These things should be expected and carefully prepared for by the Christian soldier.

Peter intimates that the power by which we are to resist the adversary is the power of faith – “whom *resist, steadfast in the faith.*” And John expresses the same thought, saying, “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith” (1 John 5:4) If we are not strong in the faith, how can we endure hardness for it? Faith must grasp the exceeding great and precious promises of God and appreciate their value. Faith must lay hold also upon the power of God and find the grace to help in every time of need. And faith in a personal righteous God, whose eye is ever upon us, must steadily cultivate those elements of character which are always pleasing and acceptable to him, and which Peter tells us are most essential to our final overcoming in this warfare. – 2 Pet. 1:5-10.

He urges that, in addition to our faith in the exceeding great and precious promises which inspire zeal and give us renewed courage, we should give all diligence to add to our faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.” Then he adds, “For if ye do these things, ye shall *never fall.*”

The steady persistent cultivation of these graces of character will also clarify our spiritual vision, enabling us the more fully to comprehend the truth of God, and thus. “by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left”, we shall be able to “withstand all the fiery darts of the adversary” and to win the victory of faith and make our calling and election sure.

With this view of the great battle of life to the Christian, what a work we realize to be before us, and what necessity for sobriety, vigilance and steadfastness! It is a life work, a life battle against a mighty foe entrenched in our flesh. The powers without are strong indeed, but the civil war with the powers within is by far the most to be dreaded. If we become in any measure intoxicated with the spirit of the world; – if we give way to self-gratification, love of ease, pleasure, a little indulgence of any of the old dispositions of envy, malice, pride, vain-glory, vaunting of self, headiness, highmindedness, wrath, strife or any such thing – even a little, Oh, how great is the peril to which we are exposed!

Beloved, let us war a good warfare against the world, the flesh and the devil, seeking and finding, daily and hourly, fresh supplies of grace; for every day and every hour is a time of need if we are but awake to realize it. It is to the warfare with the powers entrenched within that we are again referred, when it is said, “He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.” (Prov. 16:32) Yes, the task is a greater one, and represents a greater, as well as a nobler, effort. Let us fight the good fight of faith along this line. Let our lives be a daily and hourly struggle to overcome the evil that is in ourselves, to purify and beautify our own characters. Thus shall we be the more fully prepared to strive faithfully and steadily against the foes without - to war a good warfare to the end.

The Apostle, out of the fulness of his love and sympathy for all his comrades in the army of the Lord, adds to his earnest exhortation this parting benediction - “The God of all grace who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.” It is only through endurance of hardness as good soldiers of Christ that this desirable condition can be attained -viz., perfect self-control and ability to resist evil, established faith, patience and virtue, settled, abiding rest in Christ, and hope through his word of promise. This undoubtedly was the Apostle’s own experience as he grew old in the Master’s service, and so may it be ours. Let each departing year find us nearer perfection!

HEARERS AND DOERS

It does not matter how much we
learn of the truth and of God’s will
- if there is not the obedience to
it after we have come to know the truth,
it will avail us nothing.

A New Joy

“*They departed from the face of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.*” Acts 5:41.

We find these once disappointed men suddenly invested with a joy that was unquenchable. Look at them, filled with radiant joy, eating their meal with gladness. There was a holy hilarity about their life; no dragging footsteps now; there was a buoyancy about them that was in strange contrast to what they had been during those days after their Lord was crucified. Their joy could not be quenched; imprison them and they sang hymns, and made the earth quake; beat them and they rejoiced at being counted worthy to suffer shame for

His name.

What was the explanation of that marvellous transformation? The answer is: "They were all filled with the Holy Spirit."

"And you will be a blessing"

**(Presented at the Melbourne New Year Convention, through an interpreter,
by Brother Danael Krawczyk, visiting from Poland)**

Dear brethren in Christ, I would like to remind you of the words of God which He spoke to Abraham - "I will bless thee, and make thy name great, and thou shalt be a blessing." (Gen. 12:2) (The N.I.V. rendering of these words is - "I will bless you, I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.") So the subject of this address is "And You Will Be A Blessing."

We all feel the blessing and care of our Heavenly Father upon us, but the Lord has promised that He will bless us, *if* we will be a blessing to others. In other words, if God blesses us, and we do not pass on that blessing to others, He is quite capable of taking that blessing away from us. So our duty is to be a blessing to others.

We have had a wonderful past year of divine blessing, but now the Lord is looking to us - are we a blessing to others? Wherever we are, in the family circle, or among others, we should be a blessing to them. God dispenses His blessings abundantly, but it is not for us to keep them to ourselves - we have to pass them on to others.

God, speaking through the Wise Man, Solomon, said - "The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow with it." (Prov. 10:22) Some imagine that it is the divine blessing upon them that they are getting richer day by day, but such blessings bring trouble - more trouble and difficulties than it is all worth. This is why all humanity is now complaining, because they do not feel the divine blessing upon them, and we have to watch that such discontentment can so easily come upon us as well. If we were to become like that, would the Heavenly Father take away His blessings from us?

The blessing which the Lord gives will never trouble us. In 2 Cor. 11:2, 3, the apostle Paul is explaining his own care for that ecclesia and says - "For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy, for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." So the greatest blessing, the biggest and best riches, for us is always Christ the Lord, as we read in Col. 1:27 - "To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is *Christ in you, the hope of glory.*"

The greatest treasure for us is Christ Himself, not the Christ we know about, but the Christ who dwells in us. The blessing which Christ received from His Heavenly Father He has given to us, and it is His expectation that we will share that blessing with others. For such a blessing, we have to pray, and there is a very interesting comment in the Daily Heavenly Manna for December 4 -

"If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" (Luke 11: 13).

"If the Lord's consecrated people could all be brought to the point where the chief aim in life, the burden of all their prayers, would be that they might have a larger measure of the Spirit of the Lord, the spirit of holiness, the spirit of truth, the Spirit of Christ, the spirit of a sound mind, what a blessing it would mean! If then they should wrestle with the Lord until the breaking of the day, their hold upon Him would be sure to bring the desired blessing. The Lord has revealed Himself to His people for the very purpose of giving them *this* blessing; nevertheless, He withholds it until they learn to appreciate and earnestly desire it."

We are entering a new year in which we desire much of the divine blessing upon us. But God will give so much of His blessing to us, as we will be able and willing to share with others. In younger years, a person may think that the blessing of God is of no necessity whatever, but we know of some sad experiences along these lines in Old Testament times. For example, Esau disregarded the blessing and the right of the first-born, and we read that, when he came to a realisation of what he had lost, - "Esau said unto his father, Hast thou but one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also, O my father. And Esau lifted up his voice, and wept." (Gen. 27:38)

Sometimes, the blessing which is not appreciated will have an adverse influence during all the rest of life. I have had much experience in working with young people during my working life, and have had many pleasant, but also quite a few unpleasant experiences in that work with the young people. They were pleasant where

others wanted to have the divine blessings, but some very unpleasant experiences with those who failed to appreciate and did not seek the blessing of the Lord upon themselves.

Fleshly Israel, while they were entering into the land of promise, had certain conditions to keep and requirements to observe. We too desire divine blessings but here again we have certain obligations put upon us. The land into which they were going was a very pleasant and good land, as we read in Deut. 11:10-12 - "For the land, whither thou goest in to possess it, is not as the land of Egypt, from whence ye came out, where thou sowed thy seed, and watered it with thy foot, as a garden of herbs, but the land, whither ye go to possess it, is a land of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven; a land which the Lord thy God careth for; the eyes of the Lord are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year."

Theirs was the land over which the Lord had care, the land His eyes were constantly looking upon and observing. Can we imagine that, on any day during the year, our Heavenly Father is not looking on us? If the Lord was very careful then about conditions of sowing, we can be sure that He is very careful over this time of harvest as well. His promise to Israel then was - "And it shall come to pass, if ye shall hearken diligently unto my commandments which I command you this day, to love the Lord thy God, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul, then I will give you the rain of your land in its due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil." (Deut. 11:13, 14)

Dear friends, if we love our Heavenly Father very much, but someone else even a little more, or more or less equally with Him, we will unfortunately not receive the blessing of God. The blessings of fleshly Israel were of a material nature; whether in the field or wherever they worked, the divine blessing was upon them. Our blessings are spiritual and so they are of a much higher nature and of course much greater as well.

I would like now to read from Deut. 11:26-28 - "Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; a blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you this day; and a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known." It is up to us to consider and to choose either blessing or curse.

The apostle James in his epistle brings lessons out of the daily round and common tasks of everyday life and one question he asks is - Can the same tongue utter blessing and cursing at the same time? Maybe on this new year's day, it would be good for us to make clear resolutions to keep our tongues in check. Our Lord Himself in His preaching also had much to say as to how we should behave as recipients of the divine blessings, but this is a topic in itself.

Our Lord has blessed us greatly in Jesus Christ - "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." (Eph. 1:3) And so we receive these blessings from the Lord so that we may share them with others. Could we feel happy, even if we were the richest people on this earth, and just kept it all for ourselves?

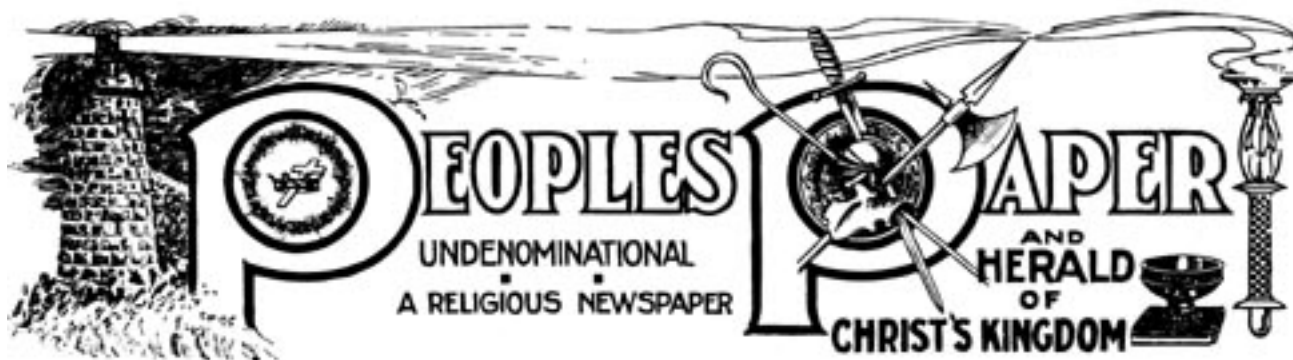
I remember an elderly sister who came to a knowledge of the truth late in her life - she went around to all her neighbours telling them that she had wasted practically all her lifetime. They took it up with their priest and he came to visit her and to see what she was doing. He wanted to make a joke out of the Bible and said - "Old lady, there are so many crosses and little stars in there - what do you know about it?" The elderly lady who was in her first year in the truth answered - "All these crosses and little stars I will leave to the knowledgeable ways and the learned men, but the wonderful consolation which I receive out of my reading, I cannot keep to myself without sharing it with others." Then she quoted 2 Cor. 1:3, 4 - "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them who are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."

God comforts us in every trouble and in every difficulty, so that we can give comfort to others who go through any difficulties or troubles - not by telling them some kind of story, but by telling them of the consolation that we have received ourselves from the Heavenly Father.

To conclude, I would like to read to you from Rev. 20:6 - "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years." With my whole heart I would wish that this blessing of the Lord may abundantly be imparted to every one of you, and that it may overflow for the benefit of others - as a blessing for them as well. May we all be sharers and distributors of the divine blessing, and so be able to be partakers in that first resurrection. I wish God's blessing on all the brothers and sisters here assembled.

NO OTHER WAY

There is no other message of eternal life open during the present age than the call to joint-heirship with



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“ABIDE WITH US” - THE UNKNOWN GUEST

Luke 24:28,29: And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and He made as though He would have gone further. But they constrained Him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And He went in to tarry with them.

Two interesting characters come before us as we consider one of the most inspiring lessons of the New Testament. The sacred narrative is of two men who journeyed from Jerusalem to a little suburban village on the day of the Saviour's resurrection, and were overtaken by Jesus on the way. These two men, who are they? The name of one of them is Cleopas. Of his history we know nothing further. The name of the other is not given, nor anything more by which we can certainly identify him. Apparently neither of them belonged to the college of the Apostles; for when they returned to Jerusalem "they found the eleven gathered together." They were therefore not of the eleven.

During the days which parallel the days following our Saviour's resurrection, it is eminently fitting that we dwell much on those lessons coming from the various revelations of our risen Lord. One of the most thrilling and soul stirring impressive manifestations is noted in the sacred narrative of Jesus joining the two disciples on the way to Emmaus. There is but a single record of it in the Scriptures, but it is a blessed and comforting record, filled with deep interest, pathos and spiritual instruction. Though it has been much expounded, it is ever fresh; and the variety of topics which it suggests is almost inexhaustible. Much of Christian life and Christian doctrine seem to cluster around it. Faith with all its trials, and hope with all its fears and triumphs; discipleship in its burdens of soul and heart-questionings and its illuminating converse and glad experiences; the feebleness of earthly nature, and the heavenly strength which accompanies it - all are beautifully introduced in connection with this evening walk from Jerusalem to Emmaus.

Unquestionably, devout men were these two Jews. It is of course a reasonable supposition that they had been in the Holy City observing the Passover as commanded by Moses. They had remained in quietness during the Sabbath, as devout keepers of the law; and they were disciples of Jesus. They had been taught to look for the coming of the Messiah, and they *did look and they saw*. How they first came in contact with the Saviour, we know not. It was perhaps, with them, as with many others. They had heard John the Baptist preach, and had had their attention directed to Jesus by *his* testimony. Hearing the Master's instructions and witnessing His miracles, they believed in Him as the promised Messiah. But now they were in great perplexity and trouble of heart. Their faith had received a blow under which it greatly staggered. He whom they had taken as their Lord had been crucified and slain. That Prophet, mighty in word and deed before God and all the people, and in whom they had fondly trusted as the Redeemer of Israel, had fallen a victim to the malice of His foes, and been ignominiously put to death. All their hopes had been thrown into confusion, and their souls were filled with gloomy doubts.

UNRESOLVED QUESTIONS

Most interesting must have been the conversation of these two men; but reason was too weak an instrument to give them relief. Merely *earthly* reason, when it comes to matters of faith and salvation, can do very little for us. It may serve to set us in controversy with each other, and bring on all sorts of disturbing debate, as in this instance; but it can give us no satisfactory light, and no peace of mind.

They were moving through one of the most interesting and beautiful districts. Their way from Jerusalem to Emmaus lay by the tombs of ancient Judges, by the old dwelling-place of Samuel, and through mountainous scenery as attractive as any in the Holy Land. But no charms of nature, however intermingled with sacred story, could soothe the trouble that was upon their souls. Those scenes of blood and murder that had been enacted at Jerusalem, and the sore disappointment which those scenes had entailed upon their most precious

hopes, followed them, and clung to them, in spite of all the things around them. *Nature in all its loveliness, cannot supply the place of Christ*, or give comfort to the soul that has lost Him. They had heard of the resurrection of Christ, but even those precious tidings only added to their astonishment, and bewildered their minds the more. They had been told of the angels the women saw at the tomb, and the words they uttered, that the crucified Jesus was alive again. But they had not yet come to faith in that fact, nor into a *right* comprehension of its meaning; and it only made their perplexities the worse.

How alike this are the experiences of the Christian, in connection with one upheaval or another in life's pathway, and *sometimes amongst professing brethren!* Strange, unheard of and unexpected developments take place; and many important matters close to our hearts are thrown into chaos; hopes seem shattered and expectations vanish. Then we struggle to assemble faith and courage to journey on in the shadowy way. Or the case may be one in which our own relationship to the Lord, and the hope of joint-heirship with Him may be rudely called in question; disturbing elements enter in rapid succession; doubts and grievous fears may seem to overwhelm us, And those very things in which the only relief and comfort can be found, are of such an extraordinary character, that faith is afraid to accept them. We *hesitate and are afraid* to believe; and *we go walking in sorrow*, with loads of unsolved questions burdening down our souls.

THE SAVIOUR SPEAKS

The Saviour was with these sorrowing pilgrims, *unknown to themselves*. As they were conversing together, and discussing these beclouded and beclouding events, "Jesus Himself drew near, and journeyed with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know Him." In the form of a common traveller, journeying the same way, and after the same manner with themselves, He overtook them, and made one in their little company. *There are many ways in which He comes to His people*. He comes to them sometimes in the form of a plain gardener, or a servant. He comes sometimes in the form of a fellow-traveller. He comes sometimes in the form of a poor beggar. Yea, it may be that He will overtake us in some distinct act of providence, entailing some deep humiliation or afflictive sorrow. But, in some shape or other, *He is never far from those who are in spiritual earnest*, and devoutly struggling for the light.

In our earthly way of looking at things, we do not always recognise the presence of our Saviour, and our eyes are holden that we do not know Him. *How often He comes to us in disguise!* When that friend, brother or sister spoke to us words which uncovered and dealt with some indiscretion, or spiritual defection, and made us see ourselves, our want, and our Saviour, as we never saw them before, we thought we were listening to a mere fellow-human. We did not once suspect that it was Jesus who was thus addressing us. That stranger who accidentally crossed our path, or whom we met in one of our journeys, who told us things of God, unfolding before us His Plan of the Ages, and imparting illuminating truths, we may have taken to be an erring fellow-mortal. Never once did we suspect that it was *Jesus Himself conducting the conversation*. That poor child of suffering at whose side in the sick-chamber we sat, and looked, and wondered, till our hearts softened, and our thoughts were warmly drawn out on topics which we never realised till then, we took to be only a frail human being, laboring with the disease and death. We did not even dream that it was Jesus addressing Himself to us for better instruction, and our improvement in saving wisdom. We never thought that it was the dear Saviour endeavouring to bring us blessed communion with Himself. *But, in all such varied forms, does the crucified but risen Lord appear now to His tried disciples*, to draw them out, and exercise their hearts, and build up their faith, and gain entry for His heavenly consolations into their troubled and anxious souls.

It is the fault of our feeble faith, that we only think of Christ as far away - as hidden in the grave - or in some remote world to which the grave is the mysterious doorway. Hence so much of our trouble and doubtfulness. But it is an erroneous way of thinking of Him. He is not in the grave. He is not far off in some realm which separates Him forever from all connection with this present world. He is risen! *He is not far from every one of us*. Wherever two or three are gathered together in His name, there He is! By His almightiness, and by His command of unnamed forces and agencies, He can cause His presence to be felt in the city, in the country; yea, in the remotest locality. He is in our assemblies for devotion, and He journeys with us in our travels. *Often is He with us, and speaking to us*, even when we do not at all suspect that it is He!

"Not in the grave, not in the grave, O man,
Believe thy Saviour now to be;
But in the lonely hour,
And in the evening walk,
Think that He companies thy solitude."

He "drew near; and went with them." It is the Will of our gracious Saviour to be near us, and to have us near Him. Two things particularly seem to have drawn Him into the company of these disciples. They were

filled with real soul-trouble. They were earnest, honest, and devout men, sincere in their faith, but now in distress and confusion of mind from which they could not extricate themselves. This attracted interest.

JESUS SHARES SORROWS

“We have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.” (Heb 4:15.) When grief and trouble are upon His disciples, He takes it to heart, and is drawn toward them in loving sympathy. Likewise when great gloom and sorrow come over us, we may be sure that He is not far off. In the ongoing of His great plan it cannot be but that clouds and pains *will often come upon the most earnest and devout* of God’s children. But when those clouds and trials come, He also draws near, and walks with us. *Affliction never enters our circles, but He enters with it, or follows close upon it.* And when we are most hopelessly overwhelmed, then He is the nearest. We may not *know* Him, in the *forms* in which He comes, but *we may be sure that He is at hand*, that our sorrows are considered, and that what our necessities require He will supply.

But in addition to their mental troubles, these pilgrims on the way to Emmaus, were earnestly engaged with each other, trying to solve and master them. They were talking together about things which had happened, and were communing and reasoning with each other over them. Earnestness of spirit is never unnoticed by our heavenly Guide. Mutual consultation and honest effort to solve the problems which hinder and obscure our comfort and our faith, are never without divine aid. *People who do not have concern enough to talk about their spiritual interests are not likely to have the Master come very near them.* But where there is solemn concern about Him, and earnest exchange of thoughts and views to come to a right conclusion respecting Him, and warm communing one with another as to *what is to be thought and done*, thither Jesus is attracted, and there we may be sure that He is near. If we come together with hearts anxious to know the truth, and solemnly purposed to learn of each other all we can, and moved in spirit to ascertain the true and saving faith, *we shall never fail to find Jesus in the company*, although we may not *know Him at the time*. In some form or other He will be near, and visible, and ready to help us to the solution of our doubts.

WHY ARE YE SAD?

He questioned them as to their troubles and sadness. “He said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another as ye walk? and why are ye sad?” His inquiries are put in the character of a stranger; but, in substance, they convey an expression of the Lord. It was a call to review the character of their trouble, as the basis for the formation of a better judgement. They had not looked at matters rightly. They had not estimated them in their proper light. They had not gone deep enough into the facts for the proper conclusions. The cure for their disturbance was in the very things that disturbed them, if they would only learn to see them in their true respects and relations. Poor human nature worries itself with many things which ought to be its highest comfort; and *is troubled with what should give it peace*; and is sad and perplexed with what is *freighted with the sublimest consolation*. Jesus dies, and their confidence dies with Him. Jesus rises from the dead, and their staggered hope transmutes the glorious tidings into an instrument of still greater stumbling. Let disturbed and desponding souls go back and consider what it is that distresses and disheartens them. Let them look again, and *see whether there is really reason* for all this perturbed feeling and this leaden sadness.

Did troubled brethren but view their anxieties aright, they would find in them cause for joy rather than discomfiture. In the worst that ever happens to them, they will yet have to pronounce against themselves as “fools and slow of heart”, to have allowed themselves to regard any of it as other than blessed, necessary, and good. Be their situation what it may, let them fairly answer the Saviour’s question, *why* they are so sad? and they will already be far on the way to have that sadness banished forever. Desponding soul, Jesus asks *thee*, Why art thou sad? *Canst thou give Him a reason* for thy disheartenment at what has happened? Review thy ground, and come to a better mind.

HE OPENED THE SCRIPTURES

Having drawn out their story, He directed them to the Divine Word, “Beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.” After all, there is nothing that can so settle, satisfy, and comfort our troubled hearts and anxious doubts, as the records of the holy Apostles and Prophets. *There the portrait of the Christ is fully drawn*, and all that concerneth Him is amply disclosed. There we will find the basis for understanding many mysteries of great import to us. From the Hebrew Prophets these disciples might have fortified themselves against all such sorrowful perplexities over their Master’s death. The very first promise that was made of Him, told of a suffering as well as a triumphing Saviour. He was to be bruised, as well as to bruise. All the appointments of the law pointed to death and bloodshedding, as the only possible way of remission of sins, or recovery from condemnation. All the types which prefigured Him, showed that He was to be a bearer of sin and shame. Isaiah had spoken of chastisements, stripes, smiting, and the making of His soul an offering for sin. The Psalmist had prophesied of reproach, of smiting, of spitting, of betrayal by His familiar friend, and of His being compassed about by all the power of

darkness. And from one end of the Scriptures to the other, suffering, shame, and death *were inseparably linked* with the Messianic work. To all these the stranger pointed, and put it to the consciences of these perplexed pilgrims whether it could be otherwise than that the Christ should suffer these things, and through them enter into His glory. Oh, it was a fruitful text, a sublime Preacher, and a mighty sermon! We know not what words were used, but we do know they made the hearts of the hearers burn within them, and threw a light and power into their souls which charmed away their gloom and doubt beyond all that they supposed to be possible.

READY TO FALTER?

Precious, indeed, are these blessed Scriptures! Herein is light which giveth understanding to the simple and which maketh wise unto salvation. Herein is balm for the troubled heart more than Gilead can furnish. Are we shaken in faith, and disturbed in our hopes because many walk with us no more? Jesus directs us to the Prophetic Word which has long ago *portrayed the days in which we live*, and has unmistakably outlined the apostasies and departures from the faith that are to be seen all about us. Are we oppressed with doubts which reason cannot solve, or ready to falter in our discipleship? Jesus bids us *look to what the Prophets of God have spoken*. Are we perplexed, befogged, and ready to let go our confidence because, in these days, the very atmosphere is charged with the smoke and dust of subterfuge, of deception, confusion and conflicting opinion? The risen Lord points out the remedy in the Holy Oracles of heaven. Earnestly searching these, we recognise that, true to our Master's promise, our hearts have been flooded with the light emanating from that dispensation of truth for the last days. Have we, in the depths of our hearts, absorbed the truth and the spirit of this great message? If so, then let it direct our conclusions and our course by what it reveals; and whatever is dark, will soon grow plain, and what is doubtful will become settled, luminous, and sure.

And having set these pilgrims to Emmaus right in their reading of the Scriptures, the Saviour yielded to their entreaties, entered with them into their home, and made Himself known to them in the breaking of bread. They supposed that they were conversing with a stranger; but they had been so profited and comforted by His words, that they desired more of His company, and insisted that He should accept of their hospitality. *Those who love truth will be kindly disposed toward those who teach it*; and those who admit Christ into their hearts, *will be anxious also to have Him abide in their homes*. And those who in grateful consideration of His kindness, receive Him into their places of abode, though they should not yet know with whom they are dealing, will soon have Him disclosed to them in all the certainties of an unmistakable faith; for HE IS STILL KNOWN BY THE BREAKING OF BREAD - the spiritual food He serves.

Ah, yes, *it is a great thing to have Christ fall in with us by the way! It is a great thing to tell Him our troubles, and to listen to His heart-warming words. But it is a greater thing to entreat Him to abide with us in our dwellings, and to sit down with us at our meals. Where He is earnestly invited, there He will go; and there He will give His blessing to our bread, and show Himself our true and ever-living Lord. Walking with Christ and listening to Christ, we are on the way to dwell with Christ and to have our eyes opened to see and know Him as our Almighty Saviour and our glorified Redeemer-King.*

EVENING SHADOWS

Friends and Brethren, how is it then with us? *We are all on our journey home*. Many also are the sorrows and anxieties that weigh upon our hearts. Often are we perplexed, and full of disappointment and sadness. Our faith is frequently sorely tried, and the questionings of our souls abound with anguish and unwilling misgivings. *There is but One who is able to help us!* Unknown to many others, He has long been following after us, and come to our side in loving sympathy with our sad estate. Often, and much, and in many forms, has He spoken to us, and inquired of our griefs, and proposed to us the remedy.

It is beyond all doubt that the pilgrimage of the Church is nearly at an end. The evening, yea, the night-time of the Age, "wherein no man can work," is enfolding us. But aside from that solemn viewpoint of the matter, *to many of us, our day of life is far spent*, and the evening thereof is drawing on. The shadows for some have already begun to fall, and the night is fast approaching. The question shall soon be settled whether our final abode is to be *with* Jesus, and of His glorious Bride, or *apart* from them. And what if that night should come upon us without His smile and blessed approval? And what if He should pass us by and we be at last excluded from all those untold riches and glories? But is such a sorrowful conclusion to our struggles possible to us? Indeed it is! - for, declares the Master, to many who shall be expecting entrance into the state of the glorified, He will say, "I recognise you not - [as members of My Bride]." And, as *such*, at *that* time, see themselves as from the standpoint of Him "Who hath eyes as a flame of fire," they will realise the bitterest disappointment. - Luke 13:24-28.

But, blessed and happy thought, His dear voice still is sounding in our ears! Praise be to His name, He is yet within our each! *He may now be entreated by our supplications, to come still closer to us, and to abide with us, as the night enfolds us*. Have we then given Him that place in our hearts and in our dwellings that He deserves? Have we asked Him to abide with us over the approaching night, which can never know a morning without Him? Has He not said and done enough for us already to deserve this at our hands? O thou weary and

distressed pilgrim to the tomb, thou hast professed to be fulfilling thy covenant of sacrifice with Him; thy way is lonely, thy cross bears thee down; thou art in heaviness through manifold trials; constrain thy Master then to abide with thee! Suffer not such a friend and comforter to pass thee by. Ask Him into thy sorrowing heart, and thy humble abode. He will leave thee if thou entreat Him not to stay. Let thy earnest prayer go up to Him unceasingly, *that He may abide as thy guest*. Constrain Him, and His presence *will* go with thee, and thou shalt *know* Him, and thy dwelling shall glow with His blessing, and thy soul shall see thy risen Lord.

Jesus, Master,
Abide with me. Fast falls the eventide;
The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide;
When other helpers fail, and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me!

“As They Were Eating”

Once more, this year, the Lord's consecrated people in many parts of the earth will commemorate the death of Jesus as their Redeemer and Saviour. The true followers of the Master should ever keep before them the noble example of Jesus' suffering and death on their behalf. But in addition to their precious heart memories of Jesus as their Redeemer, the Lord's people will use the emblems Jesus used when he instituted a formal calling to mind of the important fact of his death, and of what it means to those who have covenanted to lay down their lives with him as invited so to do by Jesus.

This formal commemoration of Jesus' death was outlined by him on the night before he was crucified. He was assembled with his disciples to partake of the typical passover supper, which followed the slaying of the passover lamb and the sprinkling of its blood upon the doorposts and lintels of the Hebrews' houses. This lamb pointed forward to the true “Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.” (John 1:29) Associated with the death of the passover lamb was the deliverance of Israel's firstborn from death and the deliverance of all Israel from their bondage in Egypt.

But still greater is the result of Jesus' death. In this case, as the Bible shows, comes the deliverance of “the church of the firstborn,” (Heb. 12:23) and later the deliverance of the whole world from its bondage to sin and death. It was while Jesus and his disciples were partaking of the typical passover supper that he took some of the bread and wine used at the passover supper and instituted the only ritual, besides baptism, enjoined upon his followers. The account reads, “As they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, Take eat: this is my body. And he took the cup and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it.” - Matt. 26:26, 27.

This method of commemorating the death of Jesus was not a new form of the passover supper. It was, rather, designed to commemorate the death of Jesus as the antitype of the passover lamb. It is a simple observance of the death of our dear Redeemer. He said “this do in remembrance of me”. The broken bread represents his flesh, his humanity, of which he previously had said, “My flesh...I will give for the life of the world.” (John 6:51) Jesus died as a substitute for the life of the perfect human, Adam, and this called for the death of his humanity.

The wine, or “cup”, represented Jesus' blood, his life, so the two together symbolize the fact that Jesus gave up his human life that Adam and his race might be redeemed from death. And this of course includes our redemption, so when we partake of these emblems, we are being reminded afresh, and with emphasis, that it was the death of Jesus which made possible our reconciliation with God, and, upon the basis of faith now, and in reality in the resurrection, our passing from death unto life.

Zealous consecrated followers of Jesus will remember his death on their behalf every day. The “memorial” should be a continuous experience. But it is more particularly emphasised in our hearts and minds once a year as we partake of the Memorial Supper - as we eat that morsel of unleavened bread and sip the “cup”. May our observance this year be a blessed occasion indeed!

In 1 Corinthians 10:16 the Apostle Paul gives us a further thought concerning the meaning of the Memorial Supper. We read, “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?” Here we are reminded that we have the privilege of suffering and dying with Jesus - that we take up our cross and follow him; that we are baptized in the likeness of his death. This, too, we should remember as we partake of the Passover Supper, and resolve that we will indeed continue to be faithful followers of the Master regardless of the cost.

Jesus' death was for the whole world of mankind, and we rejoice in this wonderful provision God's love has made for the world as we partake of the bread and the wine. We rejoice also in the blessed service so many of our dear brothers and sisters in Christ will be sharing in again this year throughout the world. May our dear Lord bless each one.

“THAT THEY ALL MAY BE ONE”

“Neither pray I for these alone; but for them also who shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me.” John 17:20,21.

When will the world believe that the Father sent the Son? From the language here employed in this prayer of our Master it is very evident that, in His view, before the world would believe on Him, a state of oneness must needs be attained by His followers. Belief by the world is thus seen to be made contingent on unity or oneness on the part of his followers.

How tenderly solicitous is the prayer of our Lord for those whom He is not ashamed to call His brethren; and of what stupendous import to the world are His words, for it is evident that the enlightenment and blessing of the world are dependent upon the oneness of His followers. Let us draw near with bated breath and listen, for it is the Master who is praying; “Father - that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me.”

Surely he who does not feel the pathos, the yearning, tender emotion, of the Master’s supplication, has not the spirit of Christ - “he is none of his.” “Father - that they all may be one....that the world may believe.” What a challenge, too, is this prayer of Jesus, to the love and affection of His followers. Would we hasten the day when the knowledge of the Lord will fill the earth as the waters cover the mighty deep; when the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His beams; when Jesus shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied? - that day *cannot* come until first there come the spirit of unity to his followers, until they find themselves possessed of the spirit of harmony, of brotherly kindness, of love.

A LOVE THAT BRINGS PEACE

Today, perhaps as never before, the world awaits, doubting, in the darkness of unbelief, *not having received the convincing proof for which Jesus prayed* – the oneness of Christ’s followers not yet being apparent. For the proof of our faith does not lie in learning but in living; not in a well-developed argument, but in a holy life. It will not be found in logic, however masterly, but in love; in a love that is strong enough to over-come indifference, to conquer antipathy - a love that knows how to be blind to unkindness, that can not only forgive but forget, that can melt prejudice and pride of opinion; that knows not only how to live and let live, but knows also how to think and let think; a love that brings with it an atmosphere of peace.

When the Gospel first began to be preached by our Lord and the Apostles, what a oneness was manifest in the Church, as the little band of followers sought to walk in the footsteps of the Master. They were only a humble folk, without wealth or scholarly attainment, or social standing, but they seemed to catch the spirit of the Master, and after Pentecost such a spirit of joy and love and faith and hope possessed them, and such a fervor of missionary zeal – such a oneness of heart and action, that it almost seemed that the prayer of Jesus would find speedy fulfilment, and that the whole world would soon believe on Him.

In the early centuries the Gospel message spread like wildfire. In the language of the Revelator – “It went forth conquering, and to conquer” (Rev. 6:2). Just to read the story of those early days is enough to make one’s heart beat faster. Well might the powers that were in those days be astonished, as they witnessed the power of the Gospel in the lives of those who received it, giving its believers such a vision of our glorious hope as enabled them to stand undaunted in the face of cruel deaths, to meet the furious hate of their persecutors undismayed; nay more, to meet that hate with a gentleness, a love, a compassion, which only close followers of Christ can display.

COMPROMISE BETWEEN CHURCH AND WORLD

Alas, the rider on the white horse, which seems to symbolize that period of the Church’s history, was followed by other horsemen, as those of us who are familiar with our Lord’s Revelation are aware, and ere long, as history shows, a great compromise was effected between the Church and the world. Since then, the story of the Church has often enough been a history of hatred, of narrowness and stupidity, of inconceivable bigotry and brutality. What crime against God and man has the Church not committed! How appalling is the record! As we read the pages of history, the outrages there revealed fill our minds with horror, especially as we bear in mind that they were perpetrated in the holy name of Jesus.

Yet through all the centuries, amid the wrangling bigots and proud tyrants, the true faith was kept alive. Though the Church as a whole was not Christian – indeed became Antichristian, some few were found at all times who had not defiled their garments. These have been the salt of the earth, the light of the world. As another has said:

“If one seeks an apostolic succession, here it is, unbroken and uninterrupted – a shining tradition of vision and service. It is in their gentle lives silhouetted against dark backgrounds, that we trace the history of the hid-

den Church – the little flock.”

Though not inspired as were the Apostles, they were entrusted by God and by Jesus with the Gospel, and they guarded it for us of today at the cost of their lives. They kept watch over it as of a sacred treasure, as keepers of a holy fire which must never be stamped out. They yielded their lives to the sweet, mellowing influence of the Holy Spirit of love and truth, though it meant for them certain privation, loss and hardship beyond our experience. They enjoyed withal a fellowship of spirit which not even the curse of sectarianism could destroy.

And if these with their feeble light were enabled to preserve a fellowship of spirit even in the midst of sectarian bondage and in the darkness of the Dark Ages, will not the Lord expect at least as much from us as we face the issues which confront us today? With the advancing light the old sectarianism is seen to be not only sinful but absurd; and yet all of us must be aware that *this spirit of sectarianism is as active in our midst today as it was in the centuries that are past*. It is the height of folly – it does not even indicate the wisdom of this world, much less that which is from above, which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entrusted, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, or wrangling, and without hypocrisy.

CHRIST OUR ALL IN ALL

Let us thank God that our faith is not in a creed, but in a person, our blessed Lord Jesus Himself, whose personality embraces every grace, in loyalty to whom we can all find fellowship and unity. How true is the saying, “What we believe divides us – Whom we believe unites us.” That which enabled our brethren who have gone before to maintain the unity of spirit even in the midst of sectarian bondage was the realization that notwithstanding their differences Christ was their all in all, and this realization must be our salvation today.

May Jesus Christ be Praised

When morning gilds the skies,
My heart awaking cries
May Jesus Christ be praised!
Alike at work and prayer
To Jesus I repair;
May Jesus Christ be praised!
Be this while life is mine,
My canticle divine,
May Jesus Christ be praised!
Be this the eternal song
Through all the ages long;
May Jesus Christ be praised!
(Anon. tr from German)

God doesn't bless us just to make us happy. He blesses us to make us a blessing.

(Warren Wiersbe)

“I,” said Jesus, “if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me.” This saying of Jesus, we know, is to have its grand fulfilment in the coming Age, when all shall have their eyes open to behold our Lord – when he shall indeed be the desire of all nations. But while we await that time with calm confidence, we must not do so passively, but with breathless eagerness. We yearn to see him take his rightful place in the hearts of all now. And if this cannot yet be in the world, it must be in the Church.

Somewhere we have read of the sin of making a Christ of one's opinions, a rather remarkable expression meaning that there are some – let us be extremely careful that we are not among them – who think that they are worshipping Christ, when all the time they are worshipping their own opinions. They follow their own prejudices – believing that what is habitual with them must be essential for everybody – and imagine that they are obeying the precepts of our Lord.

Surely there is no one amongst us so self-confident as to believe that he has the exact viewpoint of the Master on each and every problem that is before the Church in these difficult days. Even the great Apostle Paul was not ashamed to confess that he was in perplexities at times. It will not be such a very great humiliation for us then, to admit that we, too, are sometimes at a loss to know just what to do – just which way to turn. Even

when we have been very sure of our ground, and the positions that we have taken, things have not always worked out just precisely as we had expected. It would be foolish indeed for us to deify our opinions and interpretations, and demand that others accept our thought on this, that, or the other question, before we can work with them in the fellowship and service of the Master.

If Jesus were to stand in our midst today, we venture the assertion that He would identify Himself with none of us; but with what gladness, nay, in what a delirium of delight, would we identify ourselves with Him.

Jesus *does* stand in our midst today, and how manifest it is that none can claim Him exclusively as their own. No – as in the glorious vision – Jesus is walking in the midst of the golden candlesticks, and thrice happy are they who follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF DIVINE FELLOWSHIP

Our differences need not - nay they must not, disturb our fellowship. Differences are unhappy only when they sharpen tempers, and occasion ill-will. Otherwise they may be profitable and result in a larger education for us in the school of Christ. Some one has said that "Identity of sentiment with difference of opinion" is requisite to happy company. These are no less requisite to Christian fellowship and to the health of the Church.

Some of us have made grave blunders in the past in this matter of fellowship, but how great will be our mistake if we fail to learn by these experiences. The footstep followers of Jesus have been given God's own Holy Spirit, and those who yield themselves to its sweet influence, find themselves possessed of a strange wisdom – a wisdom which knows how to climb over the walls of separation which others construct, and clasp in warm and loving greeting the hand of a brother spirit. "Many waters cannot quench love."

How blessed is this fellowship, this oneness in Christ which may be enjoyed by the people of God - this oneness for which the Master prayed! It is a fellowship of joy and a fellowship of suffering - of joy in a common anticipation of the future glory, as also of our present privileges in communion with our Lord; and of suffering in mutual participation of the preliminary trials to secure that end. Thus the members of the one Body are bound together in one bond of love and fellowship and confidence and sympathy and common interest. May our love abound yet more and more one toward another even as our Master prayed, that thus "the world may believe."

(From the Herald)

Keep Me, Dear Lord

Keep me in Thy secret place,
Dear Lord, I pray,
Neath the shadow of Thy wing,
From day to day.

Arm me with peace and charity,
For this I pray,
Guide me, guard me, keep me,
In Thy way.

(Elizabeth Gibson)

When you have nothing left but God, you will become aware for the first time that God is enough.

(Dag Hammarskjöld)



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Behold the Lamb of God

It is good for us to pause a while, from time to time, consider how great a price has been paid for the blessings of our salvation and the calling of God in which we rejoice; to recall how our loving Father has so graciously led us thus far, to review what privileges and responsibilities are ours as we press on in the narrow way. All these are centred in Him who is *the Lamb of God and our Saviour*.

The scriptures tell of more than one “acceptable time” or day of salvation. But for all those who have accepted Jesus Christ as personal Saviour and are seeking to live out lives consecrated to His service, now is the “acceptable time” for making our calling and election sure, as the apostle Peter urges us in 2 Peter 1:10,11. “Give diligence to make your calling and election sure, for if you do these things, you shall never fall; but so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” What prospect, indeed!

The writer to the Hebrews issues us a warning as we may read in Heb. 2:1-3. Here the call of the gospel age is spoken of as an invitation to participate in a “so great salvation”, and in the previous chapter, he refers to the Lord’s people of this age as “heirs of salvation”. The apostle Paul writes, in Eph. 1:6,7 that God has made these privileged ones “accepted in the Beloved”, that is in Christ.

The price at which this salvation has been purchased for us is expressed in 1 Peter 1:18,19 - “You were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold ... but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, who verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who by Him do believe in God”. Right here, we touch on the only sure foundation, not only for God’s “so great salvation” but for the ultimate salvation of all our race from the curse of sin and death.

In John 1:29, we read the momentous announcement of John the Baptist as Jesus came before him - “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world”. John had already openly declared that he himself was not the Christ but was merely a voice, one sent to announce the long-awaited Messiah. So we read again in verses 35-37 - “the next day, John stood, and two of his disciples, and looking upon Jesus as He walked, he said “Behold the Lamb of God”. And the two disciples heard him speak and they followed Jesus.”

This surely is the essence of all good preaching and witness - to point others to the Lamb of God, to the Saviour. This we should, of course, be doing in our daily lives also so that others may see something of the beauty and character of Jesus in us. The deeper truths of God’s word, the details of His plan, are most important for us to learn, but if we are to be victorious and fruitful in His service, we must first and always be looking unto Jesus and seeking to exalt Him. “Let my eyes see Jesus only, let my lips speak forth His praise.”

What a strange impact the pronouncement of John the Baptist must have had on his Jewish hearers! “Behold, the Lamb of God!” What they saw was a man - Jesus - walking among them, but John refers to Him as a lamb, in fact, THE lamb. We might expect this to take the mind of any devout Jews back to their regular sacrifices and especially to the passover lamb. The suffering servant of Isaiah 53 was also likened to a lamb. And here, this one who stood among them was declared to be THE lamb, a particularly chosen lamb. This was God’s lamb, specially provided by Him.

That the passover lamb prefigures our Saviour is clearly shown by the apostle Paul, when he writes to the church at Corinth - “For even Christ, our Passover, is sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast, not with the old leaven but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” (1 Cor. 5:7,8) How aptly in every respect the passover prefigures Jesus we shall see later.

Even before the institution of the passover, however, we see the Lamb of God foreshadowed, albeit dimly, in Abel's offering. No doubt, the heart of Abel was right with God and so God was pleased to receive the offering of the "firstlings of his flock"; but the offering of a life, a living sacrifice, was also significant. The apostle, many centuries later, assures us that Abel's offering to God was a "more excellent sacrifice". He also explains that, under the later Mosaic arrangements, "almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without the shedding of blood is no remission." (Heb 11:4, 9:22) So the nature of the sacrifice was important.

Then again in the offering up of Isaac by his father Abraham we can see a foreshadowing of the giving by our Heavenly Father of His beloved Son for us, and for all mankind in due time. In the first place, the account in Genesis 22 deals with God's testing of Abraham's faith and it concludes with the re-affirmation of God's promise to Abraham to bless him and through him and his seed all the families of the earth. But before this re-affirmation, Abraham was called upon to offer up his son of promise, the son miraculously born to him and Sarah in their old age.

What wonderful lessons of faithfulness and submissive obedience there are in the words and actions of both Abraham and Isaac! Surely, these two give us a preview, as it were, of the faithfulness of God Himself and the perfect submission of our Lord, of whom it is written - "though He were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which He suffered." (Heb. 5:8) Jesus was always obedient but we learn from the epistle to the Hebrews that His experiences at His first advent, when He was "made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death", have equipped Him to be a merciful and faithful High Priest - "for in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted." (Heb 2:9,18) Have we not each indeed found it so?

Returning to Genesis 22, we read - "and Isaac spoke unto Abraham his father and said - My father -and he said - Here I am, my son. And he said -Behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham said - My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering." (Gen. 22:7,8) So in faith Abraham continued with his preparations to offer up his son, the centre of all his hopes and joy, until at the last moment the angel of the Lord stayed his hand. What marvellous faith is displayed here! Abraham trusted God even though he could not have seen how God would over-rule. We learn from Heb. 11:19 that he believed that God, if necessary, "was able to raise him (Isaac) up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure." What a lesson of trust there is for us here! Can we sing from our hearts - "God holds the key of all unknown, and I am glad."?

"And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns; and Abraham took the ram and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son." (Gen. 22:13.) Here we are reminded of the substitutionary character of our Lord's great sacrifice. "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." (1 Peter 3:18) "God hath made Him to be sin, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Cor. 5:21)

But it is when we come to consider the selection and qualifications of the passover lamb that we see our Saviour pictured even more clearly. The lamb was to be without blemish, a male of the first year, taken out from the sheep or the goats and then kept from the tenth to the fourteenth day. It was then to be slain in the evening, or between the evenings. Only a perfect animal was acceptable for the sacrifice, nor was it to be immediately slain but, after selection, set apart for a few days. How unmistakably this speaks to us of Jesus, the spotless Lamb of God - and our passover lamb.

John, the beloved apostle, who had journeyed with the Master for over three years, had much time to observe Him and has left us his inspired testimonial - "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14) All the disciples, indeed, had listened to His gracious words, spoken as never man spoke, had marvelled at His wondrous acts of mercy and compassion, had felt His love and strength, had seen his perfect witness before the high priests and Pilate, and observed His complete obedience to His Father's will. The writer to the Hebrews also testifies to Jesus as the one who was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" and who "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 7:26 & 4:15)

In the account of Abraham's offering up of Isaac, the submissiveness of the son and his willing acceptance of the father's will are very clear. This aspect of our Saviour's submission to the Heavenly Father's will is again foreshadowed in the remarkably prophetic Chapter 53 of Isaiah. "The Lord (Jehovah) hath laid on him (the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief of verse 3) the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth, he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth."

The apostle Peter referring to these experiences of our Lord points the lesson for us of patient endurance and, if need be, of suffering for righteousness sake. "Even hereunto were you called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow His steps; who did no sin, neither was guile

found in His mouth, who when He was reviled, reviled not again, when He suffered He threatened not, but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously; who His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree...by whose stripes we were healed.” (1 Peter 2: 21-24).

How beautifully the lamb-like character is exemplified in our dear Saviour. He who left the glory He had with the Father took on Himself the form of a servant, humbling Himself even unto death, the death of the cross. And His invitation to all those of broken heart at His first advent and ever since comes down to us - “Come unto me ... and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart and you shall find rest unto your souls.” (Matt. 11: 28-30) Is this our character-likeness also? Meekness is one of the Spirit’s fruits and one way in which we should be growing more like our Master.

Such a spirit is essential for harmony among the Lord’s people. Ours is the privilege to present our bodies daily as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God, our reasonable service. The apostle John tells us further that as our Saviour laid down His life for us, so we should be ready to lay down our lives for the brethren. The spirit of deference and service to others cannot co-exist with pride or self-interest but requires that we learn what Paul refers to as the “meekness and gentleness of Christ.” (2 Cor. 10:1) “Christ gave His life for me, what have I given for Thee?”

Truly, our salvation has been bought for us at the highest price, even the precious blood of Christ. It was our sins, and the sins of all mankind, that He bore in His body on the cross, as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. The “so great” salvation offered to the Lord’s people in this gospel age is so wonderful, we are assured, that the prophets enquired and searched into it when they prophesied of the grace that should come unto us. It was such that even the holy angels desire to look into it. Dare we neglect so great salvation? Surely not, rather we need to give more earnest heed to the things which we have heard and learned of our Lord - to be working out our salvation with fear and trembling, as God Himself works in us. On the foundation of faith, let us build not ephemeral things but the enduring traits of character, typified in gold, silver and precious stones.

The theme of the Lamb of God is one of the golden threads of scripture - it is foreshadowed in the first living sacrifice offered by Abel, carried forward in the sacrifices of Israel and reaches its pinnacle in our dear Saviour Himself, the Lamb of God, without spot or blemish, the gift of God for our salvation, and not ours only, for His life was given as a Ransom for all mankind, to be manifest in due time. Nothing less than the perfect, sinless Lamb of God could meet the strict requirements of divine justice. The theme continues right through to the last book of our Bible where in Rev. 13:8 we read of “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”

God in his infinite wisdom and mercy had already provided for a lamb, even before our first parents’ transgression. In Revelation chapter 5 and 14, we see the risen, glorified Jesus as a Lamb, to whom the four living creatures, the twenty four elders and the heavenly angels sing praises, saying - “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.” No longer is He the suffering, sacrificial Lamb, but now the enthroned Lamb in glory.

Down through past ages, many and varied sacrifices and offerings would have been made to God under the old law arrangements, but none of these could finally take away sin. All had to be repeated and renewed until in due time, God Himself would provide a lamb for a once-for-all offering. “For such a High Priest became us...who needeth not daily, as those high priests (of Israel), to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people’s, for this He did once, when He offered up Himself.” (Heb. 7:26,27)

How beautifully God’s justice and love meet in Jesus, the Lamb of God. Divine justice could accept no less than a perfect sacrifice to redeem what was lost in Adam, but God, who so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, in His infinite love and mercy provided the means by which He might be just and at the same time the justifier of those who believe in Jesus. Truly God has indeed provided Himself a lamb for a burnt offering.

The so great salvation offered to the Lord’s people in this age, the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, are riches beyond comparison. They constitute a prize never before offered, and not to be repeated. They demand our full attention; they require that we so run the race set before us as to obtain that prize; that we ever look unto Jesus, the spotless Lamb of God, who purchased for us that so precious gift, the author and finisher of our faith.

Searching the Heart

“The Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom

we have to do.” - Hebrews 4:12,13

Every true servant of the Lord desires to keep his or her heart pure and in harmony with the principles of righteousness set forth in the Word of God. It is not enough that we search our own hearts. We must also search the Word of God, with the view of being instructed by the Lord. David, a man after God’s own heart, realized that he needed the Lord’s help in searching his heart, so prayed, “Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me; then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my Redeemer.”-Ps. 19: 12-14

The Scriptures make it abundantly clear that God is able to read our hearts and to know all the secret intents of our thoughts. As for us, we can judge another only by his or her outward appearance, but God is not thus limited. To the Prophet Samuel the Lord said, “Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.” (1 Sam 16:7) That our thoughts are naked before the Lord should make us very alert in controlling them. On the other hand, to know that God is able to read our hearts should also be an encouragement, for He knows our weakness, and remembers that we are dust, and deals with us, not according to what we are able to accomplish, but according to what we would like to do and be.

Our High Priest, Christ Jesus, is also sympathetic; and we are invited to go to Him at the throne of grace, there to obtain mercy, and to find grace to help in our every time of need. We are admonished to approach the throne of grace “boldly,” that is, with confidence. (Heb. 4:16 RSV) We know we can do this, for we are assured that the blood of our High Priest cleanses us from all sin, and if we are sincere in searching and controlling the intents of our hearts, we can boldly claim the blood of Christ to make us acceptable to the Lord.

SINCERITY

Sincerity before the Lord is of supreme importance in searching our hearts. The Psalmist wrote, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me and know my thoughts.” (Ps. 139:23) None but the sincere would presume to ask God to search his or her heart. Are we willing, at the close of each day, to ask God to search our hearts because of our knowledge that we have not wilfully transgressed his laws?

Jesus is our great Exemplar. He rejoiced to realize that His Heavenly Father knew every intent of His heart, and whether or not He had been faithful under all circumstances. The Psalmist speaks prophetically for our Lord to His Heavenly Father, “I have preached righteousness in the great congregation, lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest.” (Psalm 40:9) “Thou knowest” -how heart-searching this information should be to all of us who are endeavouring to follow in the footsteps of our Master! Our own brethren in Christ may not know just how faithful we are from day to day, but the Lord does.

JESUS ALSO

Jesus also was, and is, able to read our thoughts and to search out the true intents of our hearts. An interesting incident in this regard is recorded in connection with Jesus’ association with the Apostle Peter. We recall Jesus’ prophecy that Peter would deny him; and at the time this was apparently far from Peter’s thoughts and intentions, but the prophecy came true, and Peter learned a most valuable lesson from it.

Following Jesus’ resurrection, when He appeared to His apostles on the shore of Galilee He entered into conversation with Peter asking him a very pertinent question: “Lovest thou me?” Was there any resentment in Peter’s heart over what had happened in connection with the trial and crucifixion of Jesus? Jesus knew the answer, but He wanted to hear it from Peter’s own lips. And perhaps Jesus may also have reasoned that such a confession from Peter would be of value to the other disciples.

Peter assured Jesus that he did love him. And then the Master repeated the question, and Peter again confirmed his love. Then the master asked essentially the same question for the third time, and Peter, perhaps wondering why he was being asked the same question so many times, replied, “Lord, thou knowest all things. Thou knowest that I love thee.” - John 21:15-17

It seems not unreasonable that here Peter had in mind-the fact that Jesus, knowing the inner workings of his mind and heart so well that he could foretell his denial, certainly did know all things, and therefore now knew that his love for the Master was sincere and genuine; that there really was no need for the Master even to raise the question. But in the divine arrangement it seemed well for Peter, even as it does for us, to tell the Lord that we love him.

THE SEVEN CHURCHES

Jesus’ knowledge of the thoughts and works of His people is revealed in His messages to the seven churches, the account of which is recorded in the second and third chapters of Revelation. In His message to each

of these churches Jesus said, "I know thy works." He knew their outward works and their secret works, and he also possesses this same knowledge concerning us. We cannot relax our faithfulness even for a day with the thought that it will not be noticed by our Lord. If this is done through the weakness of the flesh, the Lord understands, and will forgive, and give strength for the future. To whatever extent unfaithfulness is wilful, we will suffer chastisement, but even this will be an evidence of divine love, for "whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth."

Every follower of the Master strives constantly to be worthy of his love and care now, and cherishes the wonderful hope of being worthy to enter into that glorious inheritance which He has prepared for all who are faithful even unto death. In our earnest, heart-searching desire to please our Lord let us remember that He knows all things. If we find traces of sin or of disobedience in our own hearts, let us remember that the Lord knows about these even better than we do.

May we therefore seek the Lord's forgiveness, and also His help to overcome any selfish spirit we may have; to help us detect the smallest beginnings of defiling sin in our hearts. Surely we want to walk with the Lord in the white robe of righteousness provided through the blood of Christ. What a comfort it is to realize that the Lord does know the true condition of our hearts, and has provided the necessary help for our every time of need.

This help comes largely through the instructions and warnings contained in his Word. May we make greater use of these as day by day we endeavour more earnestly to know and do the Lord's will. The works of nature reveal some of the glorious characteristics of God, and inspire us to worship and serve Him, but it is only through His Word that we are instructed in the true knowledge of God and guided in the manner in which we should serve Him.

"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward." - Ps. 19:7-11

As we continue to search our hearts, let us continue in prayer, asking the Lord to help us know and obey His will. May we be able at all times to go to the Lord, and like Peter, say to Him, "Thou knowest that I love Thee."
(from the Dawn)

ALL, ALL FOR THEE!

(A New Year Prayer)

All, all for Thee! Dear Saviour, may this watchword
Be Thine own Keynote for my life this year;
So sweetly harmonising thought and action,
That none who listen may a discord hear.

All, all for Thee! O take me now entirely!
Return each note with Thine own gentle hand;
I give myself afresh into Thy keeping,
To do or suffer, as Thou shalt command.

I give my heart - I long to love Thee better
Than ever I have done in years before:
That all I do may be a joy, not duty,
Lord Jesus, grant it, may I love Thee more.

I give my will, O Master do receive it;
It must rebel in any care but Thine;
I cannot keep it, it is so self-pleasing:
What rest to think it is no longer mine.

O Master, by Thine own most Holy Spirit,
Send heavenly music o'er the earth through me!
So true, so beautiful, so soul refreshing.
That those who hear it may learn more of Thee.

(Charlotte Murray)

SEARCH ME, O LORD

-Psa 139:23

Search me, O Lord and try this heart of mine,
Search me, and prove if I indeed am Thine,
Test by Thy Word, that never changed can be,
My strength of hope and living faith in Thee.

Search me. O Lord, subdue each vain desire,
And in my soul a deeper love inspire;
Hide Thou my life, that I supremely blest,
Beneath Thy wings in perfect peace may rest.

Search me, O Lord, let faith through grace divine
Thyself reflect in every act of mine;
Search Thou my thoughts, whose springs Thine eyes can see
From secret faults, O Saviour, cleanse Thou me!
(Grace J Francis)

"The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?"

The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" (Psalm 27:1)

Created for God's Glory

In the Scriptures there are many texts which tell us that all created things are for God's glory. All things, indeed were intended to reflect the glory of God in some way pleasing to Him.

In the Old Testament, there are passages which speak of this prophetically and one such is Isaiah 43:7, which reads - "Every one that is called by my name;...I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him." In the New Testament, similarly, Rev. 4:11 reads - "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power, for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." The passage in Isaiah 43:7 has reference to natural Israel as the people of God and will ultimately apply to all who become His people. But first let us see how it can be applied to Spiritual Israel.

It does us good to think over what that glory must be that requires all creation to reflect it, for as stated all things were intended to show forth God's glory in some way to please Him. We can think of the wisdom and power of God as revealed in creation - no two things are exactly alike - no two human beings are exactly the same. We see the beauty in the inanimate creation, we look into the delicate forming and colouring of the smallest flower. In the forest, we see a multitude of trees and shrubs and ferns delicately perfumed, a multitude of flowers each with its own beauty, but each in some degree displaying the glory of God.

The hymn so beautifully expresses this:-
*All things bright and beautiful,
All creatures great and small,
All things wise and wonderful,
The Lord God made them all.
Each little flower that opens,
Each little bird that sings,
He made their glowing colours,
He made their tiny wings.
He gave us eyes to see them
And lips that we might tell,
How great is God Almighty,
Who hath made all things well.*

The Psalmist said-"The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words;

their voice is not heard; yet their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.” (Psalm 19: 1-4 AV & RSV) We could say more of all these wonders but let us turn to God’s animate creation.

The first such creation to truly manifest God’s glory was Jesus, who is referred to in the scriptures as the firstborn of every creature. “The image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature.” (Col. 1:15) In Rev 3:14, His title is the “Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God.” John, in Chapter 1:1-3 of his gospel, refers to Jesus as the “Word” or “Logos” and states - “all things were made by Him and without Him was not anything made that was made.”

Jesus the Son of God, in His pre-human life manifested God more fully than any other creation; He was the only direct creation of the Father, all others were of the Father but by the Son. In Proverbs 8, Jesus is portrayed as the personification of “Wisdom” (verses 22-31). Verses 22 and 30 read - “The Lord (Jehovah) formed me in the beginning of His ways, before His works or the first of His works of old Then I was by Him as one brought up with Him, and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him.” This portion is a vivid description of Jesus before He became the man Christ Jesus, even as John describes Him as the “Word” in His pre-existence.

While Jesus was on earth as the perfect man, He reflected the character of the Father. In John 14:7-14 Jesus indicated that those who would know Him as Messiah would know the Father also. “Phillip saith unto Him, Lord show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Phillip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself; but the Father that dwelleth in me, He doeth the works.” What Jesus meant was that during His ministry He fully reflected His Father’s character.

He had previously been always at God’s right hand and His honoured agent and after His death, resurrection and exaltation, He is spoken of as the “express image” of the Father’s person, the most complete mirror of God’s glory. So we can see then that our Lord Jesus has always been a delight to His Father and was indeed created for God’s glory.

Returning to Rev. 4:11, we note that *all things* were created for God’s pleasure. Adam, created in the image and likeness of God, was capable of reflecting God’s glory more fully than any other of the earthly creation, but when he disobeyed the command of God, sin prevented him from reflecting the true likeness of His creator as intended by God. God foreknew what would occur before He created Adam, but He went ahead with His plan, knowing that, if mankind had experience with evil, it would eventually work out for good and the welfare of all His intelligent creation.

There have been few of the posterity of Adam and Eve who have shown any likeness to their creator as God intended. The “ancient worthies” as we have come to name them, some of whom are referred to in Hebrews 11, however received a good report through their faith and their endeavour to please God. But during this present Gospel Age God is selecting from among all nations men and women who are willing to co-operate with Him in the transforming of their characters to be copies of His dear Son. In 2 Cor. 3:18, Paul says - “We all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the spirit of the Lord.”

The Amplified Version of that verse is helpful - “All of us with unveiled face, (because we) continue to behold *and* to reflect like mirrors the glory of the Lord, are constantly being transformed into (His very own) image in ever increasing splendour *and* from one degree of glory to another; (for this comes) from the Lord (who is the) Spirit.” What the apostle is saying is explained in 2 Cor. 4: 4&6 - “In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them who believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them....For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” The veil of darkness which clouded our minds has been removed and so we can reflect more and more the glory of God as we see revealed in His word.

The Amplified Version again helps to explain this - “For the god of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers (that they should not discern the truth) preventing them from seeing the illuminating light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image and likeness of God....For God who said, Let light shine out of darkness, has shone in our hearts so as (to beam forth) the light for the illuminating light of the knowledge of the majesty and glory of God (as it is manifest in the person and is revealed) in the face of Jesus Christ, the Messiah.” Jesus was a perfect manifestation of God in the flesh. If the light of the gospel bears fruit in us, the fruit of the Spirit, as is intended, then we shall reflect God also, though at the present time we can only imperfectly reflect the perfect pattern of our Master.

It will not be until the resurrection that we shall reflect the glory of the Lord perfectly. The apostle Paul explains this in 1 Cor. 13:12 - “For now we see through a glass darkly (dimly) but then face to face; now I know

in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known.” It seems reasonable to suppose that Paul had in mind that the glass in use in his day was an imperfect and obscure medium for reflecting a true image of a person. The earthly body through which we endeavour to reflect God’s glory is likewise very tarnished, so to speak, and so reflects imperfectly. But when we are resurrected with perfect spirit bodies, we shall see and know face to face, that is, with full clear light.

The scriptures indicate that God has had the new creation in His mind from the beginning of His creative work. He did not however see fit to create them like He did the angels and other spirit beings but chose to take out a people for His name from among the imperfect human race, the lowest order of beings formed originally in His image, and to make or conform them into the image of His dear Son.

Paul in Romans 12:1,2 urges his hearers - “present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world; but be ye *transformed* by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.” Jude tells us how this can be done (verses 20,21, 24, 25) - “Ye beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life...Now unto Him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.”

To be made faultless, we must pass through trials and testings. This is why we are encouraged to look forward by faith to the finished work - “the presence of His glory”; if we do not do so, we may well become discouraged. It will indeed be a joyful time when we actually experience that which we look eagerly forward to. The Psalmist puts it - “Thou wilt show me the path of life; in Thy presence is fullness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.” (Psalm 16:11) The apostle James confirms what Jude has said (James 1:2-4 RSV) - “Count it all joy, my brethren, when you meet various trials, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness; and let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.”

We have the opportunity, now, for demonstrating our loyalty to God and to the principles of righteousness. It rests with us as to whether we allow Him to work in us to will and to do His good pleasure. When the union of our Lord Jesus Christ and the church takes place, the new creation will be complete. We read in Rev. 19:7,8 - “Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him; for the marriage of the lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready” - ready to begin the work of the millennial age. This will be God’s new creation, created for His glory.

We noted that Adam was created in the image and likeness of his Creator but did not continue to reflect the character of which a perfect man was capable because of disobedience. But an opportunity for Adam and all his posterity to do so will be made available when the kingdom of God is set up. During the times of restoration of all things, spoken of by the apostle Peter in Acts 3:20,21 and also by all God’s holy prophets since the world began, Adam’s posterity will have the opportunity of becoming God’s earthly family; and at the end of the millennial age all who are willing to drink of the water of life will be rewarded with everlasting life. As we read in Rev. 22:17 - “And the spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

Then will be the time when all mankind will glorify their Creator. It will also be known for all time that mankind’s true peace can only be found in harmony with their creator, and they can truly say - “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power, for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created.” (Rev. 4:11)

(Convention Address – JBH: 94)

“Each of us should consider not merely how much time we have spent in talking about the Lord, but also how much we have spent in listening to the Lord’s voice, in searching the Scriptures, in seeking to know the Divine mind.”

The heavens declare Thy glory, Lord,
Through all the realms of boundless space
The soaring mind may roam abroad,
And there Thy power and wisdom trace.

But not alone do worlds of light,
And earth, display Thy grand designs;
‘Tis when our eyes behold Thy Word

We read Thy name in fairer lines.
In Christ, when all things are complete,
The things in earth and things in heaven,
The heavens and earth will be replete
With Thy high praises ever given.
Called, Lord, by Thee, to highest place,
To presence of Thy glory bright,
O for such condescending grace
How can we speak Thy praise aright?

Choose Ye This Day

“As for me and my house we will serve the Lord.” -Joshua 24:15.

The Children of Israel had crossed Jordan. Moses was dead and Joshua was their Leader. They were having no difficulty at that time; but Joshua thought that it was proper for them to make their decision - proper for them to decide whether or not they would be faithful to the Lord, or would allow themselves to be led away by the idolatry of the people who lived in Canaan. Joshua had called them together and had recounted to them the Lord's blessings and favour which they had thus far enjoyed, and then expressed himself in the grand and noble sentiments of our text.

So, we who realise that the Lord has been blessing, guiding and sustaining us in the past, should come to a full, positive decision as respects our course of life. The very fact of coming to a positive decision is a great help in the formation of character, and makes us much more ready for another test - along some other line perhaps.

We well recognise the fact that the entire consecration which the Christian makes, leaves nothing out; but we need to have some touchstone, something which will enable the mind to reach a decision quickly, and this touchstone should be God's will, so that to perceive the Lord's will on any subject would be to settle it without any temporizing. Again, it is highly proper that we should reiterate our consecration, and thus make it prominent before others.

Every day we should renew our covenant with the Lord - renew it and make it fresh in our minds, thus showing that there has been no change on our part; that we are still in the same attitude. We are exhorted to make this review of our lives and renewal of our minds and hearts; to render our sacrifice to the Lord.

If the Lord's consecrated people could be brought to the point where the chief aim in life, the burden of all their prayers, would be that they might have a larger measure of the spirit of the Lord, the spirit of Holiness, the spirit of the Truth, the spirit of Christ, the spirit of a sound mind, what a blessing it would mean! If then they should wrestle with Him until the breaking of day, their hold upon Him would be sure to bring the desired blessing. The Lord reveals Himself for the purpose of giving this blessing; but He withholds it until we learn to appreciate and desire it.

We Rest on Thee

We rest on Thee, our Shield and our Defender!
We go not forth alone against the foe:
Strong in Thy strength, safe in Thy keeping tender.
We rest on Thee, and in Thy name we go.

Yes, in Thy name, O Captain of salvation!
In Thy dear name, all other names above;
Jesus our Righteousness, our sure foundation,
Our Prince of glory and our King of love.

We go in faith, our own great weakness feeling.
And needing more each day Thy grace to know;
Yet from our hearts a song of triumph pealing:
We rest on Thee, and in Thy name we go.

We rest on Thee, our Shield and our Defender!
Thine is the battle. Thine shall be the praise:



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Christ in You - Colossians 1:27

(CONVENTION ADDRESS)

The expression "Christ in you" speaks of that 1 special relationship that we are privileged to have with our dear Master and through Him with our Heavenly Father. In John 6:44 Jesus said - "no man can come unto me except the Father who hath sent me draw him and I will raise him up at the last day." It is only those who are called and drawn of the Father who have Christ in them.

In the passage surrounding the theme text, Paul shows the special care that he had for the church, those who had Christ in them. In verse 24, he speaks of the great sufferings and afflictions he was going through for them. Paul suffered perhaps more than any of the other apostles - severe beatings, scourgings, persecution, etc. All these experiences he gladly underwent, in fact he said that he rejoiced in his suffering! Why? Because he was doing it for the sake of Christ's Body members to assist them to develop the Christ-likeness and character.

As he says in verse 28, it was so that "we may present every man perfect IN Christ Jesus". This is the reverse of Christ in you, these two expressions are very much linked together. It is only those who are in Christ as His body members who have Christ in them. Paul's concern for the church is a great example to us, as he said in 1 Cor. 11:1 - "Be ye followers of me even as I also am of Christ." He was always prepared to do anything, to go to any lengths, to help his brethren in Christ and these should be our special concern also.

Paul likens our Christian development to running in a race. Ours is a very unusual race in that we can only run the race and make our calling and election sure, if we spend our time helping the other runners also to become winners and over-comers. If we truly have Christ in us, our chief concern should be to help and assist those others who are in Christ and have Christ in them. These are our brothers and our sisters, members of our own family, the New Creation that God is bringing into being. This is really an amazing truth - God is creating a special family to share His nature and to live on His plane of existence. This is the ultimate result if we allow Christ to be fully formed in us.

In Gal. 4:19 Paul said - "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you." There is more than one sense in which Christ is in us, and Paul here speaks of His being formed in us. When Christ is fully formed in us, it means that we have developed the likeness and character of our dear Master, just as He bears the likeness and character of our Heavenly Father. As He said in John 14:9 - "he that hath seen me hath seen the Father" then in verses, 10,11 - "Believest thou not that I am in the Father and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself, but the Father that dwelleth in me, He doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me, or else believe me for the very works' sake."

Any suggestions that this passage of John 14 supports the trinity teaching is answered in verse 20, again the words of our Lord - "At that day you shall know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you." This verse makes it very clear that the Father is in Jesus, just as Jesus is in us. The passage really speaks of the oneness that exists between the Heavenly Father, Jesus and all the members of the Family - a oneness of spirit, of purpose, of desire, of character. We are all at one with the wonderful divine plan of the ages which our Heavenly Father has in hand, and we eagerly look forward to our part in it in the next age.

Our oneness with our Heavenly Father, with His Son and with each other, is an ongoing development, not something that is achieved in just a moment of time. The forming of Christ in us is a lifetime work. To have Christ in us really means to have His mind in us. We recall Paul's words in Phil. 2:3-5 - "let nothing be done through strife or vainglory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was

also in Christ Jesus.”

The mind surely is the most important part of the human body; it is with the mind that the important decisions of life are made. All our deeds and actions are governed by the mind. The Scriptures frequently speak of the heart condition. We speak of a good-hearted person. God says “Give me thy heart”. The term heart is used here in a poetic sense. It all relates back to the conscious decisions made by the mind - it is with the mind that we decide to give our heart to God, it is with the mind that we decide to become a footstep follower of the Master and run in the race for the prize of the high calling, it is with the mind that we decide to strive to achieve the Christ-likeness within us.

1 Cor. 2:16 says that we have the mind of Christ. This is the disposition, the character, that the indwelling of His Holy Spirit is developing in us, if we allow it to do so. The mind of Christ is not something that we naturally possess; our fallen nature has many impulses and desires that would be quite contrary to the mind of Christ. So there must be a transforming work as described in Romans 12:2,3 - “Be not conformed to this world but be you transformed by the renewing of your minds that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.”

Verse 3 seems to pinpoint one of the frailties of the natural mind before it has been renewed, that is, to think more highly of ourselves than we ought. It is a normal, worldly tendency to have a feeling of self-importance, to want to be somebody, but we are not to be conformed to the world. Phillips Modern Translation reads - “Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould, but let God remake you so that your whole attitude of mind is changed.”

There is a tendency on the part of many to have a desire to conform to the world, especially perhaps among young people. We sometimes hear the expression - “But everyone does it” referring to some particular activity that would not be appropriate. With us it is different, our desire above all else is to have the mind of Christ developed in us.

We note Phillips’ translation again - “let God remake you.” While this is not in the original text, it is a truth brought out elsewhere, for example in Phil. 2:13 - “for it is God that worketh in you to will and to do of His good pleasure.” Of our own selves we are very frail and weak, we cannot make progress simply in our own strength. But what a wonderful truth! We have the power and strength of the Almighty God working in us. “If God be for us, who can be against us?” All things are from God through Jesus Christ, so perhaps we could say that God is working through Jesus Christ who is in us. That seems to be the thought in the beautiful prayer of our Master on behalf of His followers, found in John 17.

In verses 9,10 of that chapter, Jesus is speaking of His footstep followers - “I pray not for the world but for them which Thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them.” Then from verse 20 - “neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one, as Thou Father art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me. And the glory which Thou gavest me I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one. I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one, that the world may know that Thou hast sent me and hast loved them as Thou hast loved me.”

“I in them and Thou in me.” God is in Christ Jesus, and Christ is in us - in this way God is in us and working in us through Jesus Christ. Speaking of the Heavenly Father and the sending of the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, Jesus said, in John 14:17 - “the world seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him; but you know Him, for He dwelleth with you and shall be in you.” Again in John 14:23, Jesus said - “if a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.”

Let us now link these verses with 2 Cor. 5:17 - “therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature (or new creation); old things are passed away, behold all things are become new. And all things are of God who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ and hath given us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.”

God has been in Christ throughout the Gospel Age reconciling to Himself those He has been calling out of the world to be His special family and Bride to His dear Son. Soon this work will be complete, all of the First-fruits class will have been gathered in but the reconciliation work will continue on for another thousand years, during which all the willing out of the remainder of mankind will be reconciled to God. In His prayer, Jesus prayed not for the world - not because they will not have a part in God’s plan but because it was not the due time. He will pray for them when that time comes, for He gave His life for them as well as for us.

To return to the passage in Phil. 2 previously touched upon, and this time reading part of verse 12 - “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of His

good pleasure.” One translation puts it - “work out your own salvation with reverence and self-distrust.” This again would be a paraphrase, but the thought is that we need never fear that God will let us down. He will always perform His part to the full, our only fear would be that we may come short.

These two verses (Phil. 2:12,13) teach an important lesson. While it is God that works in us, we must work out our own salvation. God does not do that work for us; He works in us, He provides the strength and power, but we must make the effort ourselves, we must utilise the help which our Heavenly Father and His Son are offering. That power and strength only becomes available to us as we draw upon it, in the working out of our own salvation. God does not take over our own minds, He does not control us, against our will.

We could take an illustration from the developing countries of the world. The more affluent countries often provide the skills and technical know-how and often the machinery and means to enable them to improve their position. It is entirely up to them as to whether they utilise the help provided or not. Just so it is in our relationship with Jesus and our Heavenly Father; they are dwelling in us ready to provide all the help required for our spiritual development, but they will not renew our mind, they will not make of us a new creation, they will not make us perfect, contrary to our own will and desire.

We also have Christ in us as our example and 1 Peter 2:20,21 brings out one way in which He is a pattern for us. The passage reads - “For what glory is it, if, when you are buffeted for your faults, you shall take it patiently? But if, when you do well, and suffer for it, you take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were you called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps.”

God has not shielded us from all the difficulties, trials and experiences of life, these are all necessary in order to develop the Christ-likeness in us. We learn to take them all without murmuring or complaining, without bitterness or antagonism in our hearts toward anyone, even if they have not treated us fairly. Peter points out in this passage one way in which Christ is our pattern or example but we are to copy Him in all the affairs of life. When we come to the crossroads, when there are decisions to be made, we do not just please ourselves but ask the question - what would Christ do?

The word “example” in this passage is very interesting; it is from the Greek “*hupogrammos*”. This is the only place where it occurs and a Greek scholar says that it means a written copy such as is set up for children, or an outline or sketch for a painter to fill up, then in general an example, a pattern, for imitation.

At the last supper, Jesus gave us a most important lesson in the washing of His disciples’ feet. We find the account in John 13, reading verses 13-15 - “you call me Master and Lord and you say well for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.”

The lesson being presented was not that we need literally “wash one another’s feet” but simply that we should be prepared to perform the most menial tasks for each other, the most commonplace humdrum things, tiresome uninteresting duties. Jesus knew well that many would want to serve Him in the bigger, and what they thought to be more important and honourable things.

In the Lord’s sight, nothing can be more important than the small, mundane, everyday tasks which we can do for each other, pictured by washing each others’ feet or the giving of a cup of cold water.

In all this, Our Heavenly Father has set Jesus before us as the pattern to follow. Those who have Christ in them are gradually growing into His likeness for we must all bear the family resemblance to our Elder Brother and our Heavenly Father. In Matt. 5:48 Jesus said - “Be you therefore perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect” and in Col. 4:12 Paul, referring to Epaphras, states that he is “always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.”

We all have a strong desire for perfection, for completeness. We cannot be perfect in the absolute sense while in this body of flesh, but that is the goal and pattern that is set before us - perfection, the same perfection that our Heavenly Father has - nothing less. While we cannot attain to absolute perfection, through weakness of the fallen nature, as much as we would like to be able to do so, God desires us to develop perfection of character in heart condition, perfection of intent and desire. If we achieve that goal in this life, our gracious Heavenly Father will make us perfect in the full sense on the other side of the veil on the resurrection morning.

If we have this desire for perfection of character, we can achieve it through the power and strength of Christ who is in us. We can achieve nothing worthwhile by relying on our own strength and might. His strength is made perfect in our weakness. If we have Christ dwelling in us, we have that desire for Christ likeness and to be perfect as our Heavenly Father is perfect. The scriptures tell us that God is love, so if we would be God-like, we must develop and grow in love - love for our neighbour, love for all mankind, love for our enemies -and above all, we must obey the new commandment that our Master gave us, that “you love one another, as I

have loved you.” “He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love.” (John 13:34, 1 John 4:8)

It is so important that we KNOW God, not just about Him, but really know Him, know and appreciate His character, His love as manifest through His dear Son and in His glorious plan of salvation for all mankind, if we are to be perfect as He is perfect. We must have the correct pattern set before us, we must know just what His perfection is like, in other words, a correct understanding of His character. As we know, many have a very imperfect understanding of the character of God and the doctrines they believe and teach show Him as being far from a God of love.

This is where Bible study and doctrine fit in -we study to know God and His Son Jesus Christ; we can only truly know them when we come to a full understanding and appreciation of the divine plan. We can obtain an insight into the character of God by looking around us at the many good and lovely people who still are in the world. We know that there is much wickedness but there are still many who have not fallen completely away from the image in which God created mankind. “So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him, male and female created He them,” (Gen. 1:27)

The previous verse 26 also uses the word “likeness”, not the physical image and likeness but the character likeness. So by looking around us at the very best of men and women, we can see in some small measure at least a reflection of the character of God. This is especially true when we look at our brothers and sisters in Christ, those who have Christ in them. They should all indeed be a reflection of the Lord, this is exactly the thought in 2 Cor. 3:18 - “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord.”

By looking at our brothers and sisters in Christ, we do see in some measure a reflection of the character and love of our Heavenly Father, bearing in mind that only one person has ever been a perfect reflection of God, and that, of course, was Christ Jesus. Let us keep this in mind when looking at our brothers and sisters in Christ and not expect absolute perfection.

It is evident that we are not going to achieve complete oneness of doctrine on this side of the veil, but let us not allow this to become a stumblingblock, let us not allow this to prevent our oneness in Christ in a spirit of love. It has been said that, when we awake on the resurrection morn, each and every one of us will find out that we had many things wrong. But let us rejoice in that we do hold so many precious truths in common, let us rejoice in that we know our Heavenly Father, we know that He is a God of love, as manifest by His glorious divine plan. We know our Elder Brother Jesus and have the hope of being like Him and seeing Him as He is one day.

Let us be very tolerant with one another, forgiving one another whenever the occasion arises as Christ forgave us. Paul says in Phil. 4:5 - “Let your moderation be known unto all men, the Lord is at hand.” The Lord Jesus is indeed at hand, He is with us always, He sees our every deed and action. Another translation renders the verse - “Let your sweet reasonableness be known to all men” -the Greek word means to be yielding or pliable.

This sweet reasonableness is something which the Lord would have us display at all times, even to those we might feel are being quite unreasonable. What a beautiful world it will be when all have learnt to develop this attribute! We who have Christ in us are developing that trait of character now, let us all strive to develop more and more the sweet reasonableness desired by our Master at all times and especially towards each other.

“That He would grant you, according to His riches in glory, to be strengthened with might by His spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that you might be filled with all the fullness of God. Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.” (Eph. 3:16-21)

Good Tidings of Great Joy

(LUKE 2:10,11)

“Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.”

The story of our Lord’s birth is so familiar as to require no special comment, yet in its simple detail lies the hope of the whole world. Four thousand years previously, the birth of this child was promised, and all down those forty centuries some faithful souls continued to trust in the promises and look for the salvation to be brought about through Him. We may surely take for granted that the humble shepherds to whom the message of the Lord’s advent first came were men who thus hoped in the promise of God; for to such, and to such only,

the Lord discloses His purposes.

These men were quietly tending their flocks by night when suddenly the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone around about them, and they were sore afraid. (Verse 9) But their fear was soon overcome by the message of the angel, contained in the text, but which, strange to say, so many only partially quote, leaving out one of the grandest features of the message - namely, that it was to be to all people.

The message reads, "Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of GREAT JOY, which shall be to ALL PEOPLE.". The blessedness of these tidings is cumulative; first it is "good tidings", then it is "great joy", and then the crowning feature of it is that it is "to all people" - not only to those shepherds who were looking for the hope of Israel, but for all their friends and relations and indeed for all mankind far and near, those who now live and those who shall live, as well as those now in death.

Blessed tidings! Harken to the glad sound, "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord." (verse 11) That He was to be a Saviour to all people the Scriptures clearly affirm, saying that by the grace of God, He tasted death for every man, and that He gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time - to all. (Heb. 2:9, 1 Tim. 2:6)

This testifying, or making known, however, is quite as necessary to the salvation of the sinner as the fact that Christ gave His life a ransom for all. The favour of salvation will not be forced upon any, but the knowledge that it has been provided for every man and woman, on condition of their acceptance on God's terms, is to be given to all for their acceptance or rejection. Millions of the race have gone to the grave without hearing this testimony, but the fact remains that it will be given in due time. For such, this must be after their awakening from death.

To this agree the words of our Lord, "The hour is coming in which all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of Man and shall come forth; they that have done good (who during this life have come into judgment and passed their trial successfully) unto the resurrection of life, (the full reward of the faithful); and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of judgment." (John 5:28,29) This latter class will come forth from the grave to have the truth testified to them then, for their acceptance or otherwise. Their final judgment of worthiness or unworthiness for life will be based upon their course under trial after the truth has been testified to them - in the millennial age.

In the beautiful words of the text, the angel of the Lord thus preached the good tidings of the resurrection of all things to the shepherds on the plain of Bethlehem on that night of nights nearly two thousand years ago. *"Then suddenly there was with the angels a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." (Luke 2:13,14)*

The Story of Jesus

Tell me the story of Jesus,
Write on my heart every word;
Tell me the story most precious,
Sweetest that ever was heard.
Tell how the angels in chorus
Sang as they welcomed His birth,
"Glory to God in the highest,
Peace and good tidings to earth."

Fasting alone in the desert,
Tell of the days that He passed;
How for our sins He was tempted,
Yet was triumphant at last.
Tell of the years of His labour,
Tell of the sorrows He bore -
He was despised and rejected,
Homeless, afflicted and poor.

Tell of the cross where they nailed Him,
Tell of His anguish and pain;
Tell of the grave where they laid Him -
Tell how He liveth again!
Love in that story so tender,
Clearer than ever I see;

Glory for ever to Jesus!
He paid the ransom for me.
(Fanny J Crosby,

“We Would See Jesus”

Life has its battle grounds, where fierce conflicts are waged against opposing forces. Life has its fords and crossing places, where we go over from one great experience to another. Life has its mills, where are ground out the product of a greater love and a serene trust. And life has its gardens of peace, where one can sit beneath the blossoming boughs and rejoice in the warblings of the feathered songsters of the place.

And it was one of the gardens of peace that Jesus found in a certain home in Bethany. It was for Him a little oasis in the world's desert. We know not what took Him there on the occasion of his first visit, but we are told that he conceived a love for Lazarus and his sisters, Mary and Martha.

There were many homes that might have entertained the Master, but they failed to do so. They failed to see their opportunity. It has been said that opportunity knocks once at every door. We do not know. But we do know that it can be turned away. It does not insist on entrance. It just comes. In appearance it may not even seem prepossessing, but it is Opportunity none the less, and has precious jewels to give to those who can receive it.

Much has been said on the subject of Mary and Martha. No doubt they were both very good women. During one of our Lord's visits to their home it would seem that Martha was occupied with the housework more than was necessary. Consequently she was missing a thing of great value. Mary saw something of this and desired it. Yet at a later time Martha manifested great faith in Jesus, and we can believe that in her heart she was his true friend to the last.

There were times when Jesus needed comfort and refreshment, just as his followers do. The world is a hard, stern place in which to live. We do not refer to the natural world, but to the world of affairs that man has reared. There are times when the heart grows weary with the incessant struggle with the inclement elements, and when we yearn to step out of it all for ever so brief a span. Then perchance we think of the home of a friend, one who will understand and whose words will buoy us up and cheer us along life's way. For a true friend is a priceless possession in a dark world.

Mary and Martha appeal to us as being true friends of Jesus. And the Master did not have many friends on this earth. The people did not understand Him. He had been called with a calling that they knew nothing of. They failed to discern the temple wherein He dwelt. And little did they know that the dome of that temple reached up to the very skies. The thoughts of Jesus soared far above the selfish schemes and ambitions of men. He was in the world, and yet the world saw him not for what he was.

And the world sees Him not for what he is today. Yet the world needs to see Him more than it needs anything else. To see Jesus is the highest vision that God can grant to man. And if we belong to the favored few who see Him - his friends under all conditions of life - we have a source of joy that the sum total of the world's hardships cannot remove from us.

Suppose that by pressing a magic button we could transfer ourselves from this modern sphere of existence to the little town of Bethany over nineteen centuries ago. Here we are in the home of Lazarus. And here is Jesus, travel worn and weary, yet able to speak as never man spake. And what is the Master talking about? Is it politics? Is it about the recent arrest of some criminal? Is it about the affairs that make up the Roman world? Is it about any one of a thousand things that frequently engage our conversation when we meet together? Evidently not.

It is something higher than these things that so completely chains the attention of Mary. Jesus must have spoken some beautiful words in that quiet home. We are not given the discourse. But it must have contained something about His Father, something about salvation's mighty plan. How our Lord must have loved to speak of these matters to those who had the heart and mind to receive them! Ah, yes! here in this simple abode we see Jesus -not in the palaces of the great, but with the meek and lowly of heart, with those who possessed the capacity for faith and love.

But the spell is broken. We are back again in our modern world. Men are clamoring for dollars and cents. Pride and selfishness are turning human hearts to stone. Nations have brought upon the scenes the grim terrors of war. Darkness covers the earth and gross darkness the people. Wild beasts of destruction have been unleashed! Oh! that we might see Jesus with the human eye. Oh! that we might hear the tender accents of His voice. “The world is waiting for the sunrise” - a sunrise to be brought to men by Him. Poor world! Poor human hearts that by the million are breaking. O golden Day of God, with your unspeakable plenitude of joy!

Come soon! Come soon!

But while we cannot see Jesus with the natural eye we can see him in a higher sense, even with the eye of faith. We see his tenderness, his compassion, his love. And there are times when his presence seems so real that other things just fade away. But for the most part the vision of his face is reposeful and calm, and, as we reach out in the darkness and touch his hand, he speaks to us in a still small voice, yet with words of strength and assurance that drive all our fears away.

We would see Jesus with a still closer and truer vision. Ere long the thunders of the world shall crash, and the billows of human passion shall surge upon the land. But "there is a river the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the dwelling place of the tabernacles of the Most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved. God shall help her, and that right early." Let us then look up above the blackness and the gloom, and we shall see a star, and now while we gaze and gaze upon it, it assumes a form. It comes nearer and nearer. And now there can be no doubt about it - it is indeed the very Christ, the Son of God. Ah! yes, He is looking on, and he knows that the world's approaching change is even now at the doors.

And soon this Mighty One shall wield the rod of his power over a boundless domain. No more then shall the pale spectre of death stalk about the land. No more shall rivers of blood flow because of devastating wars. No more shall the gaunt hand of famine lay millions in the tomb. No more shall the sons of toil be exploited by the plutocrat and the profiteer. One country shall arise to catch the beams of glory poured forth by the Sun of Righteousness, and that country shall be the world. One people shall dwell therein in freedom, in happiness and in life, and that people shall be mankind. One law shall shine forth in a mundane paradise to eternally safeguard the interests of the human family, and that shall be the law of Love. And upon a new foundation shall be built a new world - the theme of all God's ancient prophets - to reflect the radiance of righteousness, joy, and peace forever more. That is what the vision of Christ will mean to the sons of men.

We would see Jesus "when morning gilds the skies," before we start in on the tasks and duties of the day. We would see Him in the evening when the night clothes the earth in sable robes, and we want to feel the assurance that his guardian angel will be with us during the hours of sleep. We would see Him when temptation assails us, and receive the overcoming power that he promised to his own. We would see Him when trouble like a gloomy cloud has settled down, and the flail of anguish beats upon the heart. We would see Him every day, and under all the vicissitudes of the years.

Then let us see Him. Let us take care that nothing robs us of our heavenly vision. Let us follow the example of Mary of Bethany, and sit at His feet. Let us enjoy the good portion that cannot be taken from us while our hearts are right. Over two thousand years of sorrows, and over the world's dark sea of death, let us see the Master's face smiling upon us in love, and let us hear his words, pure and tender and sweet as when he uttered them so long ago: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." And, "Fear not, little flock for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." (From the Herald)

*We would see Jesus, for the shadows lengthen
Across this little landscape of our life;
We would see Jesus, our weak faith to strengthen
For the last weariness, the final strife*

*We would see Jesus; other lights are paling,
Which for long years we have rejoiced to see;
The blessings of our pilgrimage are failing;
We would not mourn them, for we go to Thee.*

*We would see Jesus, the great rock foundation,
Whereon our feet were set by sovereign grace;
Not life, nor death, with all their agitation,
Can thence remove us, if we see His face.*

*We would see Jesus; this is all we're needing;
Strength, joy, and willingness come with the sight;
We would see Jesus, dying, risen, pleading;
Then welcome, day! and farewell, mortal night!*
— Anna B. Warner

The Glory of God

The personal glory of the Creator is quite beyond the ability of the human mind to comprehend. However, we can understand to some extent the glorious virtues of his character. We might say that God's infinite wisdom, his unyielding justice, his boundless love, and his almighty power, being in perfect balance as they are, together reveal his glory.

Enlightened Christians can now comprehend God's glory through an understanding of his plan for the redemption and recovery of the human race from death. But the world in general does not possess this knowledge and therefore does not now "see" the glory of God. The understanding which will enable the world of mankind to comprehend the glory of God's character will be given during the thousand-year reign of Christ. Then the knowledge of the Lord will fill the earth, and as a result "all flesh" will discern the glory of God. Isaiah wrote, "The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." - Isa. 40:5

The whole world will then know of God's justice as represented in the divine penalty for sin. They will know how divine wisdom found the way whereby God could be just, yet release the condemned world from death. Paul explained it this way: "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." - Rom. 3:23-26

During the millennial reign of Christ the world will learn that it was divine love that provided the Redeemer, who himself lovingly died for their sins. The world will also then discern - even better than we are able to comprehend at the present time - the miracle-working power of God; for they will see it demonstrated in the resurrection of the dead. Since all the dead from every part of the earth eventually are to be awakened from death, the glory of God will indeed then fill the earth. - Acts 24:15

The glory of God was reflected to a limited degree in our first parents, whom he created in his image, crowned with glory and honour. (Gen. 1:27; Ps. 8:4,5) As a result of the reign of sin and death man has lost much of his original perfection, although there are degrees of the divine qualities of justice, sympathy, and love to be found in many persons even now.

During the Gospel Age God has been inviting a small company of people to come out from the world, offering them the privilege of striving, through the exercise of faith, for a change of nature, from the human to the divine. (2 Pet. 1:4) Those who, in the resurrection, reach this high position will attain also unto the divine glory.

All who do not attain to spiritual glory in the resurrection will have the opportunity of being restored to human perfection. And think what a change that will be! It will be a progressive return to holiness, or perfection, which the Bible likens to travelling over a "highway." (Isa. 35:8)

It is the return road from death which Isaiah described when he wrote, "The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." - Isa 35:10

All mankind who have been ransomed by Jesus will return from the sleep of death. If they then accept the provisions of divine love through Christ, and obey the laws of his kingdom, they will obtain eternal joy and gladness; and sorrow, sickness, and death will be no more. - Rev. 21:4

The Bible assures us that then all will acclaim the glory of God, and the glory of his beloved Son, Christ Jesus, the "Lamb" which was slain to take away the sin of the world. (John 1:29) The people will then sing that inspiring song recorded in Revelation 15:3,4: "Great and wonderful are thy deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are thy ways, O King of the ages! Who shall not fear and glorify thy name, O Lord? For thou

alone art holy. All nations shall come and worship thee, for thy judgements have been revealed.” - Revised Standard Version

(From The Dawn)

Thy Word is True

(PSA. 119:160)

The history of the Bible, with all its striking facts, furnishes a broad tributary stream to swell the tide of evidence. The history of its composition, the history of its preservation; the history of its translation from tongue to tongue; the history of its circulation throughout earth's wide domain - in a word, its entire history “surpassing fable, and yet true” - forms a powerful argument in defence of its divine origin.

Rest in the Lord

(Psa. 37:7)

Stay still in the hand of the Potter,
Lie low ‘neath His wonderful touch.
He shapeth and mouldeth in mercy
The clay that He loveth so much.
Surrender thyself to His working
The curve and the hollow He wills,
Nor shrink from the pain and the pressure
For the vessel He fashions, He fills!

My Neighbour's Bible

I am my neighbour's Bible,
He reads me when we meet;
Today he reads me in my home,
Tomorrow in the street.

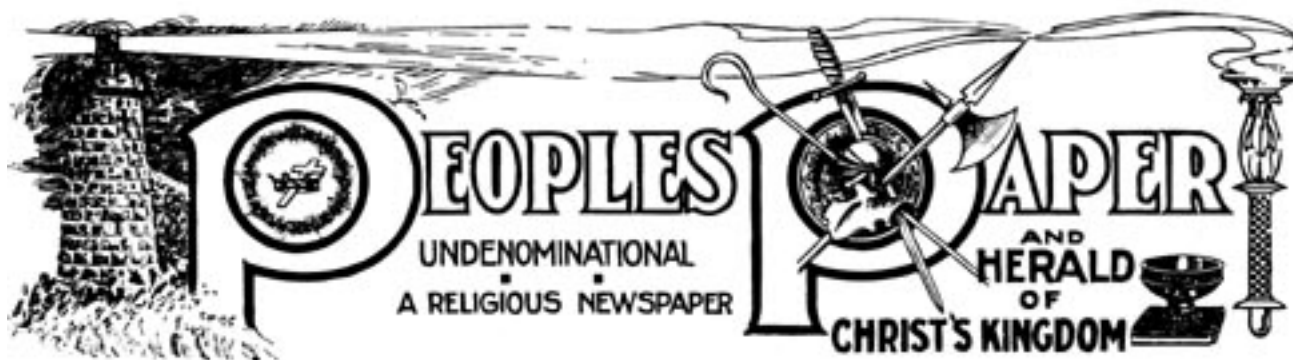
He may be relative or friend,
Or slight acquaintance be;
He may not even know my name,
But he is reading me.

The Contrite Heart

(Psa. 51:17)

There is a holy sacrifice,
Which God in heaven will not despise,
Yea, which is precious in His eyes -
The contrite heart.

Saviour, I cast my hopes on Thee;
Such as Thou art, I fain would be!
In mercy, Lord, bestow on me
The contrite heart,



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Seeking a Bride

God's promise to Abraham that through his seed all the families of the earth would be blessed is the first clear statement in scripture of His purposes for mankind and the channel through which they would be achieved. Yet at the time the promise was given, Abraham (or Abram as he was still known then) and Sarai, his wife, had no child and were both well advanced in age.

How then was the promise to be fulfilled? In Gen. 15, we read that Abram in fact enquired of God as to whether, in the absence of a natural heir, the trusted steward of his house, Eliezer, might be his heir. However, God assured Abram that he and Sarai (later re-named Sarah) would in due time have a son, and in their old age, Isaac the son of promise was born.

This then was the immediate fulfilment of the promise of a seed through which God's blessings would flow, but when we turn to the New Testament, we see the ultimate fulfilment in the words of Paul in Gal. 3:16 - "now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ."

Following from this, it does not surprise us to find in his birth and the subsequent circumstances of Isaac's life that there are wonderful illustrations of our Lord's birth and offering up, as well as the calling of the Church to be His bride. For the birth of our dear Lord was also miraculous and how beautifully the account of Abraham offering up Isaac on Mt. Moriah foreshadows the love of God who gave His only-begotten Son for us all.

Further, in the mission of the ruler of Abraham's household to find a bride for Isaac, we surely see a clear and detailed outline of the Gospel Age calling of the church. Though this ruler of the household is not named in Gen. 24, he would appear to be the same Eliezer about whom Abraham had enquired of God. He was not to be the heir but would gladly do service for the rightful heir. What a wonderful character he exhibits in faithful devotion to his master, Abraham!

The story of Eliezer's mission is told in Gen. 24 and abounds in noble characters. As we read, we cannot fail to be impressed with (1) the loving concern of the father that just the right bride be found for his son, (2) the utter faithfulness and obedience of his steward, (3) the beauty of character of the chosen young woman and (4) the humility and submissiveness of the son and heir at all times.

The procedure followed was evidently in keeping with the custom of the time, even though the record shows that Isaac's own son, Jacob, undertook the task of seeking a bride for himself. The seeking of a bride for Isaac, no doubt by divine over-ruling, more clearly prefigures the Gospel Age call of the Church, even to the point of the bride-to-be's consent being obtained - evidently not by any means the case in those days. Many features of the story, indeed, are significant for the Lord's people of today.

The account of Eliezer's journey may be briefly summarised as follows:

1. Abraham directed him to go to Nahor where his relatives still lived and there choose a bride for Isaac.
2. If the young woman chosen would not return with Eliezer, he was absolved from his task; in no case was Isaac to be taken to Nahor.
3. Eliezer loaded ten camels with supplies and gifts for the bride-to-be and her family and set off for Nahor.
4. On arrival, he asked God to direct him to the right young woman by a specific response to a request for water to drink from the well where he waited.

5. Rebekah soon came by and gave the right response, whereupon Eliezer gave her gifts of bracelets and earrings. At his request, she took him to her family home.

6. Food was set before him, but Eliezer first insisted on explaining his mission and how God had guided him thus far.

7. Rebekah's family recognised God's hand in events and agreed to her betrothal to Isaac, but asked that her departure be delayed "a few days". (Margin - a full year)

8. Eliezer however asked for an early start back and the family agreed, subject to Rebekah herself being willing. With her assent, the party set off home.

9. Meantime, Eliezer had presented further rich gifts to Rebekah and her family, all of whom appear noble characters.

10. Not far from the home of Abraham, Rebekah glimpsed Isaac "meditating in the field at eventide". Learning that it was her husband-to-be, she veiled herself as was the custom of the time, until Isaac came to receive her into his mother's tent and she became his wife.

Clearly in this lovely story we see a picture, or a type, of the Gospel Age calling of those who will be prepared to forsake their earthly surroundings, with their associations and ambitions, and journey daily onward to meet him of whom they have heard, who has already blessed them with rich gifts and whom yet unseen they have come to love. This is beautifully expressed poetically in Psalm 45 - "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house. So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty; for he is thy Lord, and worship thou him."

In Abraham, we see in this account, as in the account of his offering up of Isaac on Mt. Moriah, clearly a picture of the Heavenly Father Himself, who gave His only begotten Son to be the Saviour of the world and who is seeking those who are willing to be joined with Him in obedience now and in blessing later. In Isaac, the son of promise, we see unmistakably a picture of our Saviour, the ultimate seed of blessing as promised to Abraham. In Rebekah, the beautiful young woman chosen for Isaac, we see a portrait of the Church, all of whose members are to be joint-heirs with Him and form His Bride. Of these, Paul writes - "I am jealous over you with godly jealousy, for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." (2 Cor. 11:2)

What then of Eliezer, the faithful steward of Abraham? His mission without doubt reminds us of the work of the Holy Spirit down the Gospel Age, animating firstly the apostles and subsequently all who have followed them to the work of proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, with its call to personal separation, self-sacrifice and daily following in the footsteps of Jesus, out of every century and every nation. In many features of the story of Eliezer's mission, there are indeed lessons for us.

Abraham's explicit instructions to his steward at the outset were clear - "thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites among whom I dwell, but thou shalt go unto my country and my kindred and take a wife unto my son Isaac." (v.3,4) The Canaanites were idol-worshippers and he was rightly concerned that no-one of that heritage be bride to his son. So it was to his own country that he sent his steward, to those who already had an established and acceptable relationship with him and with his God.

So it is with the call of the church - God does not call people of the world, however good or noble or mighty. Only those who have been justified by faith in Jesus their Saviour and who have the ready spirit of service and sacrifice, as had Rebekah, may receive His call. It has been well said - "Like Rebekah, we (the Lord's people) were already virgins, pure ones, whose sins had been pardoned and therefore of the household of faith, before we were called of the Spirit to go to Him (Christ) to become His bride and joint-heirs." "Thine they were and Thou gavest them to me."

Eliezer's mission was a selective one; he was not just to seek a bride, but to select exactly the right one for Isaac. So with the Gospel Age call, it is declared in Acts 15:14 how that "God at first did visit the gentiles, to *take out of them* a people for His name." This is in harmony with Jesus' own words - "No man can come to me, except the Father who hath sent me draw him." (John 6:44) It is notable also in Abraham's instructions that if the chosen young woman was not willing to return with Eliezer, he was relieved of any further responsibility and he was further specifically directed that in no circumstances was Isaac to be taken back to Nahor, which Abraham had left long ago. So also it is the Bride of Christ which is to journey on to the Bridegroom's waiting heavenly home - only there can the marriage take place.

But how was Eliezer to recognise the right young woman? He had travelled some 500 miles to Nahor with ten camels bearing gifts for the chosen one and her family, as well no doubt as supplies for the journey. Now he had to meet and select the right one for Isaac's bride. We note his plan - first he went to a place where the young woman of good character and readiness to serve would be likely to come, then he asked the God of his master to guide him to the right one. Is there a lesson here for us? In life's problems, do we take such steps as

we reasonably and rightly can, then seek Divine wisdom and guidance as we wait on God?

So Eliezer waited by the local well to invite whoever might come by to give him water to drink from her pitcher. Almost immediately, it seems, Rebekah, a great niece of Abraham himself, came to the well and he made his request. "(He) ran to meet her, and said, 'Let me, I pray thee, drink a little water out of thy pitcher. And she said, Drink my lord, and she hastened and let down her pitcher upon her hand and gave him to drink. And when she had done giving him drink, she said, I will draw water for thy camels also, until they have done drinking. And she hastened, and emptied her pitcher into the trough and ran to the well to draw water and drew for all his camels. *And (Eliezer), wondering at her held his peace.*'"

How such a ready and bountiful response must have gladdened Eliezer's heart! Surely, here was God's answer to his prayer and in token of his appreciation for her kindness and as a sign of the bounty of the prospective bridegroom, he gave her precious gifts of golden earrings and bracelets. Does this remind us of a much later encounter at a well in Sychar where Jesus asked a Samaritan woman to give Him a drink of water and rewarded her with the precious message of the water of life which He alone can give?

One writer has said - "as in the type (Rebekah's call), certain gold ornaments were presented to Rebekah from the moment that she entertained the good tidings, so with us; from the moment that we first gave ear to the Father's invitation or "high calling" we have been blessed. The ornaments being of gold symbolise divine blessing . . . first earrings, representing the blessed effect of hearing the call, and second bracelets, representing the blessed effect of the divine call upon our doings thereafter." Later on in the story, of course, Rebekah received even more and greater gifts from him to whom she was then betrothed.

The account tells us very little directly about Rebekah, except that she was "very fair to look upon, a virgin, neither had any man known her" (V16), but external appearance is not the criterion by which God makes choices and we learn far more of Rebekah by her gracious words and actions. "Man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart." (1 Sam. 16:7); and, again, evidently picturing the Church, the future Bride of Christ, the psalmist declares in Psa. 45:13 - "The king's daughter is all glorious within." It was surely the inner qualities of heart that Abraham was looking for in a bride for Isaac, and the same graces of humility, readiness to serve and self-sacrifice are those which our Heavenly Father desires to see and develop in each one called in this Gospel Age to be a member of that company which is to make up the Bride of the greater Isaac.

After giving her gifts, Eliezer asked to lodge at Rebekah's family home and she, knowing the family generosity and hospitality, readily agreed. Here we see again something of the beauty of character of Eliezer, Abraham's faithful steward, for we read that he "bowed down his head and worshipped the Lord" (V26). Often we seek the Lord's leadings in our affairs; do we always recognise them when they come as being from Him? As the way opens up before us, do we always remember, like this noble character of old, to bless and thank our God? Is our standard always "hitherto hath the Lord helped us"?

At the family home, Laban, brother to Rebekah, extended the welcome to Eliezer - "come in, thou blessed of the Lord" and when he had entered, food was set before him. But he said "I will not eat, until I have told my errand" (V33). So he then recounted the details of his mission so far and asked if the family would consent to Rebekah's betrothal to his master's son. We read the father's and brother's reply in V50/1 "This thing proceedeth from the Lord, behold, Rebekah is before thee, take her and go, and let her be thy master's son's wife, as the Lord hath spoken." Here, Eliezer presented further rich gifts to Rebekah and her family.

The writer earlier quoted goes on to say "greater blessings (i.e. than those first received) followed when we accepted the call to leave our father's house (the human nature) and our own people (earthly friendships) and go to our Espoused One. So in type, when the decision was reached and Rebekah was betrothed to Isaac (whom having not seen she loved), the servant presented her with vessels of silver (symbolising truth) and with further jewels or ornaments of gold (divine blessings and graces) and with new raiment, symbolising the newness of life and relationship to the father and son whose call she had accepted."

In the giving of gifts to Rebekah's family, perhaps we see something of the blessings which come to those who may not themselves be drawn of God to His "so great" call, but who still appreciate in some measure the beauty of the Christian gospel and of the love of Jesus Christ. The family, nevertheless and understandably, desired Eliezer to allow Rebekah to stay on with them for a little time before setting off for the five hundred mile journey to her husband's home. The Authorised Version says that they sought a stay of "a few days" but in the margin "a full year or ten months". Some suggest that a betrothal period of twelve months was not unusual, during which time the bride-to-be, though fully committed to her future husband, lived at home. At Eliezer's request, however, for an immediate departure, Rebekah herself was called and she agreed.

The procedure for choosing a bride for Isaac is strange by our modern standards, but it is noted that ultimately Rebekah's own agreement to go with Abraham's servant was regarded as necessary. Only then did her family send her away with their blessing. Earlier, Eliezer had also been assured that if the girl herself or

her family were not receptive to his invitation, he had no further responsibility. And so it is, the call to each prospective member of Christ's bride is in every sense an invitation; there is no coercion, for our Heavenly Father seeks only those of willing, ready heart. The Psalmist echoes this spirit in Psa. 45:10,11 - "Hearken O daughter and consider and incline thine ear, forget also thine own people, and thy father's house; so shall the king greatly desire thy beauty, for he is thy lord, and worship thou him".

Then began the long journey back to Hebron in Canaan where Abraham dwelt with Isaac his son, who was at that time forty years of age. Today the journey of some five hundred miles would not take long, but in those far-off days it would have taken quite a considerable time and very likely much discomfort for Rebekah. And indeed, each one of God's dear children of this Gospel Age is a traveller, a pilgrim journeying on to that place where his or her real citizenship lies. "We nightly pitch our moving tent, a day's march nearer home". Each one of us is journeying onward to meet Him who has trod the way before us.

Like Rebekah, we have not yet seen our bridegroom but we have learnt of Him and of His love and of His beauty through the message of God's word implanted in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. How well this is pictured in the mission of the faithful servant of Abraham, who was sent to bring the precious invitation and rich gifts to the chosen bride, not in his own name but on behalf of his master and the prospective bridegroom. Such wondrous gifts and blessings speak to us of that "earnest of our inheritance" which is the seal and the assurance of each child of God.

So the long journey continued, until at last the party neared the home country and for a moment Rebekah caught a glimpse of her future husband Isaac as he meditated in the field at eventide. And so with us, all along the way we have been on the lookout, as it were, for Him whom we have not seen. Perhaps, like Rebekah, we have caught a fleeting glimpse of Him, in the mature beauty of some saintly soul, in the loving word or action of a Christian friend, or as we have again meditated on the words of the beloved apostle - "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us; and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth". (John 1:14)

In the experiences of life, also, how often have we felt His presence near, who promised - "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age" and "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee". Indeed, all the trials and difficulties of our life's journey fade when we think upon Him "whom yet unseen, we love; though now we see Him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" What fullness of joy awaits all who are faithful unto death and who, when He shall appear, shall be like Him and see Him as He is.

At this point of the story of Eliezer and Rebekah, she veiled herself until Isaac came to receive her and to take her into his mother's tent to be his wife. It is suggested that this may picture the need for each member of the church to pass through the veil of death before the union with the heavenly bridegroom. The original story, as far as it typifies the call of the church, the bride, ends here with the union of the bride and groom -Rebekah and Isaac. But as we look into the last book of the Bible, we read of the glorious event which that union foreshadows - "Let us be glad and rejoice and give honour to God, for the marriage of the Lamb is come and His wife hath made herself ready. To her was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints". (Rev. 19:7,8)

What a privilege it is for any to be invited to share, if faithful to the end, with our Lord, the greater Isaac, the heavenly bridegroom, in the work of blessing all mankind in the age to come! May we each one prove faithful to that gracious call!

The bride eyes not her garment
But her dear Bridegroom's face;
I will not gaze on glory
But on my King of grace."
Not at the crown He giveth
But on His outstretched hand
The Lamb is all the glory
Of Immanuel's land.

"In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength." (Isa. 30:15)

Thou Shalt Remember

(Deut. 8:2)

‘Tis good to remember the way He hath lead us,
To view once again both the track and the road;
To muse on the fact, that unfailing He fed us,
Our faithful and loving, compassionate God.
‘Tis good to review how He surely was leading,
Though we saw him not, nor knew
all He planned.

‘Tis good to recall that whate’er we were needing
Was wondrously met by His bountiful hand.
‘Tis good to remember; to pause; and to ponder;
It stirs us to worship, and tunes us to praise;
Such retrospect helps us of Him to grow fonder,
Whose goodness and mercy have
followed our days.

Christ Enthroned Within

The indwelling of Christ within each true believer is surely one of the rich treasures of the gospel message. Those who love the Saviour, who have received and keep His teachings, are assured of the Heavenly Father’s especial love and that both the Father and the Son will come unto them and make their abode with them. (John 14:23)

This indwelling first requires the emptying out, by the one who has come to know Jesus as Saviour, of self-will and earthly ambitions, so that the Holy Spirit of promise, the Spirit of Christ, may enter and occupy the heart, making the recipient a truly begotten child of God and fully associating him or her with Christ, both in development of His character likeness and in the life of obedience and self-sacrifice, like unto His.

The apostle Paul speaks of this as a mystery (Col. 1:26,27) and certainly no precedent was known to the Jews; God’s dwelling place with their nation was manifest in the tabernacle and the temple, though, even then, He promised to dwell in a sense with those of contrite and humble spirit, to revive and strengthen. (Isa. 57:15) But now both our Lord’s and the apostle’s words proclaim a personal indwelling of Jesus in each believer, whether Jew or Gentile.

The new life which flows from the indwelling of the Spirit of Christ is described at length by Paul in Romans 8, to quote verses 9-11:

“But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you.”

“Christ in you”, the apostle goes on to say (Col. 1:27) is our hope of glory, and it is certain that real progress in the Christian way and towards the goal, the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus, cannot be made without it. Elsewhere he speaks of Christ being “formed in you”, that is, in God’s people, as of new life being developed within each one’s heart and being (Gal. 4:19). Surely it is the earnest desire of every would-be follower of the Master to have His likeness developed and fellowship in His service enriched with each passing day.

Redeemer, Come! I open wide
My heart to Thee, here, Lord abide.
Let me Thy constant presence feel,
Thy work of grace in me reveal.

O! Come my Sovereign, enter in;
Yet more Thy nobler life begin.
Thy Word and Spirit guide me on,
Until the glorious crown be won!

Caleb - Lifetime Devotion

(NUMBERS 13:26-33, JOSHUA 14:6-15)

“And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it (the land); for we are well able to overcome it.” Num.13:30.

“And Joshua blessed him, and gave unto Caleb.. Hebron for an inheritance... because that he wholly followed the Lord God of Israel.” Josh. 14: 13,14.

Caleb was eighty-five years of age. He had a good record behind him. When it can be said of a man that he has wholly followed the Lord his God, he must have been a remarkable character. It has never been easy to do the divine will, and certainly it was not easy in Caleb's time. The people were frequently turned aside from a steady purpose to apply the principles of God's law to their lives. It took courage and backbone to stand for the Lord.

When Caleb and Joshua went with the spies to spy out the land of Canaan, the report brought back was that there were giants in the land, before whom the Israelites seemed as grasshoppers. This filled the people with fear, for they were in no condition to cope with giants. But Joshua and Caleb were of a different opinion; they remembered the mighty works that God had wrought on behalf of the people, and they knew that they who had God on their side are always in the majority. Just what the plan of their attack was we are not told. Perhaps they had not a set, definite plan, but were just trusting in God, having in mind how He had visited the plagues on Pharaoh and had led them through the Red Sea.

There are always giants in the land for those who see them. John Bunyan told the story of Christian and Hopeful who beheld two great lions right in their pathway. They were filled with fear at first, but then suddenly discovered that the lions were chained. As a rule, Satan tries to terrify us at the outset of our Christian careers. He is said to go about “as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour,” (1 Pet, 5:8) He tries tactics similar to the instincts of the lion of the jungle, which roars so as to paralyse its prey by fear.

There is nothing that disarms opposition like a strong stand. When the enemy sees that we are determined to pursue a right course and that nothing will turn us aside, he realises that he may as well leave us for the time, and determine upon some other method of attack. God's Word says, “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God and He will draw nigh to you.” (James 4:7,8) Courage is required from first to last of the Christian way. The faint-hearted will not get very far along the road. “Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might - take unto you the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand in the evil day. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life,” (Eph: 6: 10-13, 1 Tim. 6:12.)

Caleb was privileged to enjoy the reward of his faithfulness - or at least a measure of that reward - in this life; but the Christian receives his or her reward in that life which is to come. As long as they are here, struggling along in the flesh, the world will not pat them on the back and call them good fellows, for they do not conform to the world's ways. “Rejoice, and be exceeding glad,” said the Master, “for great is your reward in heaven.” (Matt. 5:12)

Caleb received the inheritance of Hebron, but the Christian receives “glory and honour and immortality,” even the divine nature. (Rom.2:7) When the kingdom of God is established on the earth, no doubt Caleb will be one of those whom God will set up as “princes in all the earth.” (Psa.45:16) He will not be classed as a member of the Church; for the Church is a body of people selected during this present Gospel dispensation and not during the time when Caleb lived, before the first advent of Christ.

Jesus Himself began the selection of the members of His Church, His Body, and there was no such church before that time. Caleb will be one of those who are often referred to as the “ancient worthies”, of whom we read that God has “provided some better thing for us (the Church), that they (the ancient worthies) without us should not be made perfect.” (Heb. 11:40) Meantime, he stands as an example of faith and steadfastness in that “he wholly followed the Lord God of Israel.”

Rich in Mercy

(CONVENTION ADDRESS)

“God, who is rich in mercy...” Eph. 2:4 “Blessed are the merciful...” Mat. 5:7

Mercy is one of the great threads which runs throughout God's word. We might say that the Bible itself from end to end is an account of the measureless mercy of God towards mankind. It is one of the most far-reaching of the elements of His character, for it is inescapable proof of His love and compassion for His creation. “Thou O Lord art a God full of compassion and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth”. (Psalm 86:15)

Many of the gods of man's devising on the other hand are presented as callous, arbitrary, unfeeling, even capricious, but we find from our own experience that our God, the only true God, the God of perfect justice

and wisdom and all power is also a God of lovingkindness and tender mercy, of compassion and of pity, all of which are summed up in His character of everlasting love and mercy.

Mercy is not only part of the character of our God however but His willing gift to all who seek. This we can see expressed in His dealings with individuals, with the nation of Israel and in this Gospel Age with the Church. In due course, His mercy will be extended to and bear fruit in all mankind as they come to realise and appreciate just how great is the love and mercy which He has shown towards them in the gift of His dear Son. "God so loved the world...." (John 3:16)

Furthermore, God desires mercy in the hearts of His people in every age and this was never more clearly expressed than in our Saviour's own words - "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." (Mat. 5:7) Happy indeed are all those responsive recipients of God's mercy who are always ready to show mercy to others, whose natural reaction has become one of showing forth a merciful spirit! "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful." (Luke 6:36)

In our courts of law, a person may be found guilty of some crime, but because of mitigating circumstances a plea for mercy may be made on his behalf. And in God's word we read that "mercy rejoiceth against judgment." (James 2:13) It is not that these two qualities are in opposition but rather that the one deals in the facts of the case alone, while the other takes account of all the personal and circumstantial factors. Because of sin, God could rightly condemn mankind to death with perfect justice, but we read - "He knoweth our frame, He remembereth that we are dust" (Psalm 103:14) and in His over-riding mercy He has provided a way of release.

Well can we say with the Psalmist - "O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good, for His mercy endureth forever." (Psalm 136:1) All mankind has had to experience the fruits of sin, but all in due time may share in His mercy. This is the great message which it is our privilege to pass on to others. But to know His mercy now in Christ Jesus is the greatest blessing of all and belongs to all those with the ears to hear and the hearts to seek after God.

It is right that we think of this Gospel Age as the dispensation of grace in which God's mercy is so wonderfully shown in the forgiveness and salvation made available in Christ Jesus, but we can see clear evidence of His everlasting mercy towards those able to receive it during Old Testament times also. Very many of the psalms commemorate the mercy of God in His dealings with the nation of Israel as well as with individuals.

David himself confessed his appreciation and personal need of God's mercy for indeed he sinned greatly at times. Yet he found God merciful when he turned again to Him in repentance. Psalm 51 records one such occasion - "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness; according to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions." (Verse 1) David's ultimate confidence was that (God's) "goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever." (Psalm 23:6) This is surely the Christian's confidence also.

Even in the giving of the law, which Israel because of the hardness of their hearts found a burden, we can see a portrait of God's character of mercy. "I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, and *showing mercy* unto thousands that love me and keep my commandments." (Exodus 20:5,6) God here made it clear to Israel that He must reign supreme and that He requires total allegiance. Those that choose to disobey must expect His judgement, but to all those who love Him and seek to do His will, He is ever ready to show His mercy.

The Psalmist's appreciation of the great merciful heart of God is beautifully expressed in Psalm 103:1-18. In the psalm, he sets out to praise God for *all His benefits* including His lovingness and tender mercies. "*The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy* the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness unto children's children." (Verses 2,8,17)

David's hymn of praise recognises not only God's mercy to the nation, beloved for the fathers' sakes, but to himself. We may be sure that he speaks also for all true Israelites indeed, including the heroes of faith of Old Testament times, who saw beyond the commandments of God the outlines of His character and the real requirements of heart He desired in His people. We see this recognition of God's character in the faithful Zacharias, father of John the Baptist, who prophesied - "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel for He hath visited and redeemed His people through the tender mercy of God, whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us to give light to them that sit in darkness....to guide our feet in the way of peace." (Luke 1:68,78,79)

Through the law, God sought to teach Israel the principles not only of justice but of mercy and love. Those whose hearts were in tune with God saw beyond its "shalls" and "shall nots" to the greater ideals behind them. Through the prophets God had declared - "I desired mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings" (Hosea 6:6) "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah 6:8)

These are the weightier matters of the law -judgement, mercy and faith - with which the Lord challenged the scribes and pharisees. (Mat. 23:23) They observed the law in fine detail and took infinite pains to ensure that others did so, but they had not grasped its real direction or purpose. Even in this day of grace, it may be possible to concentrate on lesser details and externals to the detriment of the real essentials of love and justice, mercy and faith, which are among the precious fruits of character which God most desires in us.

If God expected the fruit of mercy in His natural people, how much more from His people of this age who have so lavishly received of His mercy. *“What if God, willing to show His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction; and that he might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had before prepared unto glory, even us, whom He hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles”* (Romans 9:22-24)

Again, the apostle Paul reminds us just how great, how rich, His mercy has been towards us, who as Gentiles were outside that nation so long favoured only by God, but now made nigh by the blood of Christ, invited into His family. (Eph. 2:13,19) God truly is rich in mercy, as the apostle Peter also declares - *“according to His abundant mercy (He) hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you”* (1 Peter 1:3,4)

Not only have we been blessed with such a call, but we have access to His constant mercy, for we not only have a Heavenly Father who knows our frame and who loves His creation, but we have in Jesus a merciful and faithful high priest who because He Himself has suffered being tempted is able to succour them that are tempted (Heb. 2:17,18) So in every time of need, we can heed the apostle’s words - *“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need”* (Heb. 4:16)

When our Lord sent out His disciples two by two to preach the message of the kingdom, He instructed them - *“freely ye have received, freely give”*. (Mat. 10:8) Surely this principle is true in all God’s dealings with His people. We have freely received of His mercy in Christ Jesus, how can we justify failure to show the same merciful spirit to others? We remember the Lord’s story of the two debtors, one forgiven so much but not willing to forgive his own debtor a trifling sum. The apostle James also warns that *“he shall have judgement without mercy, that hath shown no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgement.”* (James 2:13)

One writer has well said - *“The Lord is very merciful, Love is His name, and in proportion as we have received His spirit, in that proportion we are full of love and mercy. He who lacks mercy lacks the spirit of the Lord. . . .O merciful Lord, help us, we pray thee, that we may more and more become copies of Thy dear Son and thus copies of our Father whose mercies endure forever.”*

“Put on therefore as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering, forbearing one another and forgiving one another...and above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfectness.” (Col. 3:12-14)

Our appreciation of the mercies of God in our own lives will be reflected not only in dedication to His service but in all our dealings with His people. Our judgments of others will be influenced by realisation of how greatly we need not only God’s mercy but also how much we need the merciful judgements of others. It seems easy at times to criticise the actions of others, very often in the areas where we ourselves are by no means free from fault. Here the three great qualities of Micah 6:8 are so important - to do justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly before God - and towards all with whom we have to do, especially the brethren.

The lessons of mercy towards others is surely an essential one for those whose call is to help in the great work of the coming age of blessing for all mankind. In this present age of experience and preparation, we need to be learning sympathy and understanding for others, generosity of judgment, and kindness and mercy in all our dealings with others. Our own High Priest is merciful and faithful, able to bless us, and we need to be developing the same character likeness if we are to be a blessing to others, even now and more so in the age to come. Mercy is one of the great characteristics of the true heavenly wisdom, which God waits to give to those who seek. (James 1:5 & 3:17)

As the people of God, we have received bountifully of His mercy to us in Christ Jesus, we have his throne of grace to which we can come boldly and in full confidence to find mercy and grace in time of need. And we have the opportunity and the responsibility to show that same spirit of mercy to others in our judgements, in our words and in our actions. Moreover, there is rich blessing for those who see and grasp this privilege. *“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.”* (Mat. 5:7) These are our Lord’s own words and they are true not only in the sense of final rewards but in daily experience.

It has been said that mercy is twice blessed - it blesses not only they that receive but they that give. There is a blessing to our own hearts, there is growth and development into the character likeness of our Father and our Lord, in the exercise of mercy, in demonstration of a merciful spirit in actions of kindness and gentleness, understanding and compassion. We do well to heed the counsel of the wise man - *“Let not mercy and truth*

forsake thee, bind them about thy neck, write them upon the table of thy heart.” (Prov. 3:3)

As seekers after righteousness and truth, blessed through the abundant and abiding mercy of God, may we in grateful response each seek in turn to be daily exponents of the gracious quality of mercy in all our dealings with others. **“Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.”** (Luke 6:36)

Under His Wings (Psa.91:4)

Under His wings I am safely abiding,
Though the night deepens and tempests are wild;
Still I can trust Him - I know He will keep me,
He has redeemed me, and I am His child.
Under His wings, under His wings
Who from His love can sever?
Under His wings my soul shall abide,
Safely abide for ever!



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The High Priest of Our Profession

In Hebrews 6:20 Paul tells us that our Forerunner, the One we are endeavouring to follow, even Jesus, has become “a High Priest forever after the order of Melchisedec.” The principal likeness here is in the fact that Melchisedec was a king as well as a priest. So, in harmony with the typical picture, during the Millennial Age, but not during the Gospel Age—the latter mentioned period being for the gathering out of the church—Jesus will reign as a King as well as a Priest, and will bless not only Abraham and his natural seed, but all the families of the earth.—Gen. 22:17, 18; 26:4; 28:14; Rev. 20:6.

In Hebrews, chapter 7, Paul shows that our Lord’s sacrificial work as our High Priest was pictured in the Levitical priesthood, and particularly by Aaron and the high priests who succeeded him in office. In the earlier part of this chapter Paul endeavours to show the greatness of Melchisedec as a typical figure. He refers us to Abraham, the father of the nation of Israel, to whom God made such wonderful promises, including the promise that Messiah would come of his seed, and how through this seed of Abraham God would bless all the families of the earth. Yet as Paul points out, in spite of his greatness and favour with God, Abraham paid tithes to Melchisedec, and Melchisedec, “blessed him that had the promises: and without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better.”—Heb. 7:6, 7.

A further argument showing the greatness and the superiority of Melchisedec as a high priest is seen in the fact that the sons of Abraham’s great-grandson Levi, who were appointed to the priest’s office and were commanded to take tithes from the people, paid tithes to Melchisedec. Paul says, “Through Abraham even Levi who receiveth tithes, hath paid tithes: for he was yet in the lions of his father when Melchisedec met him.”—Heb. 7:9, 10, RV.

According to the same argument the sons of Levi and the long line of typical high priests who received tithes of the children of Israel paid tithes, in Abraham, to Melchisedec. Hence Melchisedec must have been a greater high priest than any of the descendants of Aaron.

By the same reasoning, the Messiah, High Priest after the order or similitude of Melchisedec, would be a still greater High Priest than any of the priests of the line of Aaron who preceded him; and even a greater High Priest than Melchisedec, for the anti-type is always far greater than the type. “Having [then] a [great] High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near” to God through him.—Heb. 10:21, 22.

Scholars have pointed out that the Hebrew word for priest, “Kohen,” comes from an Arabic root meaning “to draw near.” Mediation and greater nearness to God is the cardinal idea in a priest. He therefore was looked up to that he might draw near to God on behalf of others, at the same time opening the way for others to draw near. And so Israel’s priests, by presenting the atonement for the congregation and the gifts of a reconciled people, brought them near to their God, Jehovah. As the antitype of this Paul says, “Having an High Priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith.”—Heb. 10:21, 22.

Our Lord, through his perfect obedience to the Law, had the right to draw near to God with full acceptance, not as a priest, but as a perfect man. His offering of a perfect sacrifice gave him a further right to draw near to God, this time as a Priest, entering into the antitypical Holy, and then into the Most Holy, heaven itself, “now to appear in the presence of God for us.” Heb.—9:24, 11, 12.

Jesus’ perfect offering and his faithfulness even unto death not only enabled our Redeemer to draw near to God and, in resurrection, come into his very presence, but his perfect offering enabled him to appear in the presence of God for us, that we, who were at one time sinners, might similarly offer ourselves to God and, through the merit of Christ, be accepted. As Israel, in keeping with the divine arrangement, had a typical priesthood that received tithes from the people and drew near unto God, offering typical sacrifices, thus en-

abling the people to come before him with acceptance, even so, in God's purpose, a great Priest after the order of Melchisedec has been provided, to whom we (the church)—and eventually all mankind—may draw near to God.

WORLD'S SALVATION FUTURE

However, instead of the Gospel Age being the time for the world to get the benefit of the great antitypical sacrifice for sins, God's purpose is that "a little flock" from the world should be brought in as a part of Christ's priesthood—underpriests—even as Aaron's sons in the type were priests under him. Hence the Gospel Age is not the time for the salvation of the world, but is the time for the salvation of only the few—the church, the body of Christ.

Just as Israel had underpriests as well as a high priest to bring them to God and, in a typical sense, to offer sacrifices as well as being the teachers and instructors of the people that they might know how to draw near to the Lord, so, to enable the world to draw near with acceptance, the divine plan has been to provide not only a Priest, but "a royal priesthood," "a holy priesthood," to assist in this work of reconciliation. Thus we have pictured in type the future work of Christ's priesthood, after being gathered out and perfected. So it was that Peter wrote, "Ye are . . . an holy priesthood, . . . a chosen generation, a royal priesthood." — I Pet. 2:5,9

Not seeing this feature of the divine plan in type and antitype, numbers have believed the Gospel Age to be the only day of salvation rather than the day for the salvation of the church, the royal priesthood, the divine agency for later enabling the world to draw near to God. The prophetic vision of the millennial kingdom shows a company of kings and priests reigning over the nations for their blessing. (Rev. 20:6; 2:26, 27) When God's true priesthood begins this great work, many will say in the words of the prophet, "Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths." — Isa. 2:3

COUNTERFEIT PRIESTS

Misunderstanding the time for the salvation of the world, the nominal church has sadly departed from the faith and work of the Early Church, and they have conceived that their present work is to convert or Christianize the world. In the furtherance of this work many branches of the professing church have appointed some of their number to the priests, members of a priesthood, presumably being specially qualified to draw near to God on behalf of those they represent. Particularly in the older churches, such as the Roman and Anglican communions, their ministers are called priests, who have been ordained, or consecrated to this office by means of a quite elaborate consecration ceremony, based to a large extent upon the typical consecration ceremony participated in by the Levitical priesthood. Later reform movements rejected the title "priest" as applicable to one called to be a pastor or shepherd of the flock because of its unscripturalness if applied to any special class of God's professed people.

WILL REIGN WITH CHRIST

The members of the royal priesthood who will be privileged to reign with Christ during the Millennial Age will not be priests made by a formal ordination ceremony, or, to use Paul's expression, "made . . . after the law of a carnal commandment." Like their Lord and Head, the great High Priest, they become priests by "the power of an endless life," "an indissoluble life" (RV), "an indestructible life" (Weymouth), "an imperishable life" (Conybeare and Howson). — Heb. 7:16

The Greek word "akatalutos" here rendered "endless" seems to be very close in meaning to our word "immortal." Young gives its literal meaning as "not loosed down," suggesting a kind of life that will at not time cease. In addition, Christ has proved worthy of a position or office which he will never relinquish. And Young suggests that the Greek word "dunamis" here translated "power" is a word used to indicate something accomplished through the exercise of an exceptional measure of power - appropriately picturing the manner of the making perfect of a divine new creature through suffering.

The typical priests of the line of Aaron were made by means of a mere formal ceremony not likely to affect them in a moral sense. The same must surely be said of the members of the various priesthoods of the nominal church. Although some of their number have doubtless been servants of God, the majority, it is to be feared, come into the category of those who "eat their own bread [enjoy their own brand of spiritual food], and wear their own apparel: only [they say] let us be called by thy name." They want to bear the honourable title of "priest" in the Christian church.—Isa. 4:1

But Jesus was prepared for his office in a very different way from this. For him it meant three and-a-half years of sacrificial ministry, laying down his human life in the service of his Heavenly Father, and at the same time suffering for so doing; suffering for righteousness' sake; passing through experiences which tested his faithfulness to such a degree that it prepared and perfected him as a new creature for the immortality of the divine nature. Surely all this, and more, is contained in Paul's words, "Made not after the law of a carnal com-

mandment, but after the power of an endless life.”— Heb. 2:17, 18, 4:15, 16; 7:16

Let us remember that if we would be of the number God is calling to be of his priesthood to assist the world to draw near to him, we must perform our share as sacrificing priests by presenting our bodies a living sacrifice, and then keeping the sacrifice on the altar until wholly consumed in the Master’s service, refusing to draw back from the fiery trials sent to help us to become touched with a feeling of the world’s infirmities to whom we seek to minister.

It is in this way that the priests who will reign with Christ are made: “Not after the law [regulation] of a carnal commandment [going through a purely formal ordination ceremony], but according to the power of an endless life.”

How many identified in this age with churchianity who have prided themselves in the title of priest will find that neither for this nor for anything else wrongfully appropriated will there be any place during the period of the kingdom! Neither will any in that enlightened time desire to hold on, either to this or to any other humanly bestowed titles, civil or ecclesiastical. “It shall come to pass in that day, that the prophets shall be ashamed every one of his vision, when he hath prophesied; neither shall they wear a hairy garment [a distinctive dress] to deceive.” — Zech. 13:4

Just as many of the typical priests in Israel were unworthy of their office, so the Scriptures intimate that many who have mistakenly assumed the title of priest among God’s professed people during the Gospel Age have been equally unworthy. — Ezek. 22:26; Micah 3:11; Zeph. 3:4

Thank God that the great High Priest of the Father’s appointment will, ere long, use his great power and reign for the purpose of undoing the evil work of the great Adversary and the corrupt counterfeit priesthoods he has used to deceive and mislead the professed people of God.

With Jesus in that day will be a little company of those who have truly followed him, and who have been similarly despised and rejected of men, but who, as a reward, will come forth fully anointed royal priests to reign with Christ for a thousand years. “For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy [of mankind] that shall be destroyed is death.” — I Cor. 15:25, 26

Concerning the work of this great Priest after the order of Melchisedec the prophet says, “He shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears. But with righteousness shall he judge the poor [world], and reprove with equity for [the benefit of] the meek of the earth:... for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.” — Isa. 11:3, 4, 9

I Can Trust

I cannot see, with my small human sight
Why God should lead this Way or that for me;
I only know He said. “Child. follow me”.
But I can trust.

I know not why my path should he at times
So straitly hedged, so strangely barred before;
I only know God could keep wide the door,
But I can trust.

I cannot know why suddenly the storm
Should rage so fiercely’ round me in its wrath;
But this I know. God watches still my path
And I can trust.

To be a Pilgrim

He who would valiant be,
 `Gainst all disaster,
Let him in constancy
 Follow the Master.
So shall discouragement
 Ne’er make him e’er repent
Of his avowed intent

To be a pilgrim.
(John Bunyan)

Divine Protection - Psalm 4

"Thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety." (Psalm 4:8).

It is good to review the past, to look at the present, and then to contemplate the future, because in this way we inevitably obtain exhortation and encouragement from the Divine Word as we see the "exceeding great and precious promises" in their true light. This spiritual exercise is specially opportune in the times in which we live, and the text chosen for our meditation is peculiarly appropriate to our present needs, "Thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety." Nothing is more obvious from the natural standpoint than the absence of true safety to-day, indeed crime, famine, natural disaster, and death are everywhere evident.

It was in circumstances also of real danger that the Psalm in question was composed. David was a type of Christ, and he was often in severe trouble, as may be judged from Psalm 3, when he fled from his rebellious son, Absalom. Generally, Psalms 3 and 4 are regarded as a pair, and they are often termed morning and evening Psalms respectively. As we are in, so to speak, the evening time of the Age, Psalm 4 has a valuable message for us.

THE PSALM SUMMARISED

Verse 1 is in the nature of a testimony to the goodness of God, "*Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress*" coupled with a prayer for mercy and succour—"have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer."

Verse 2 is doubtless a reference to Absalom and Saul, with the distress of heart and mind thereby brought to David. "*O ye sons of men, how long will ye turn my glory into shame?*"

Verses 3-5 strike a different note for they are suggestive of reassurance. If we likewise remember in our day that "*the Lord will hear when I call unto him*" we shall have no fear, come what may, and the shades of adversity will become bright with the fulfilment of His promises, for, "certainly I will be with thee" (Exod. 3; 12). It is essential, of course, that we should "offer the sacrifices of righteousness" while we at all times put our "trust in the Lord" who is ever-present with His people.

Verses 6-8 tell us of the blessed results. The Lord lifts up His countenance upon us (a symbol of favour) and, in consequence, we receive great gladness of heart "*more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.*" Our joy is greater than that associated with these temporal blessings, while there is also the realisation of Divine protection. "*I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety.*"

The thoughts associated with the concluding section may be examined from three standpoints:—

1. The joy of blessings received—"My heart thou hast already given more joy than theirs who harvest corn and store new wine" (Moffatt).
2. Divine protection—"Thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety."
3. Peace and calm in consequence in this Age. Indeed, it is only as we recognise the Psalm to be prophetic of this Age that we can examine it in its proper perspective.

1. THE JOY OF BLESSINGS RECEIVED

As the years come and go, so we cannot fail to realise the tremendous blessings that are ours. In this attitude of mind, moreover, our troubles surely appear to be light afflictions, "but for a moment," working out for each one a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Past blessings impart confidence in relation to the future, and we cannot dwell too much on this aspect of the Christian life.

The Psalmist contrasts spiritual blessings against material good things—"Thou hast put gladness in my heart, *more than* in the time their corn and their wine increased." In the days in which we live, there are special blessings of truth such as have never before been enjoyed by the Lord's people. "E'en now I see, and hear, and know, More than I hoped for here below." Another source of joy is to be found in our fellowship together, in our class studies, in our testimony meetings, and in our gatherings for worship, when the Word is publicly expounded. All these spiritual exercises are designed to build us up in the most holy faith. The truth means much in the individual life, too, for the Christian life is essentially personal.

Meditation upon the blessings received, then, is a *great power in the life*, and it is to be noted that the Psalmist speaks of gladness in the heart. Our joy and gratitude for blessings received must affect both heart and mind—the one is useless without the other. In this attitude of thanksgiving for blessings received, we can with the Psalmist now turn attention to the Divine protection given on our behalf.

1. DIVINE PROTECTION

The account of David's flight by reason of the rebellion of Absalom, is given in 2 Samuel 15: 12-14. Following through to chapter 18, we eventually see the Divine deliverance in verse 28: "Blessed be the Lord thy God, which hath delivered up the men that lifted up their hand against my lord the king."

Our life is hid with Christ in God, and this represents an even more wonderful illustration of Divine protection. The blessed consolations of Psalm 91 apply primarily to the New Creature. In this day of ours the Adversary is very busy, but God is for us, He is on our side, and we need have no fear of what man may do unto us. On the contrary, we can testify in the words of Paul, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." We shall be kept at all times in the Narrow Way if we rely on God, as David did.

We do well to contemplate His protection as a spiritual power, especially in the light of Ephesians 6:12 (Moffatt): "For we have to struggle, not with blood and flesh, but with the angelic rulers, the angelic authorities, the potentates of the dark present, the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly sphere." The Adversary is possessed of mighty power, but God's power is still greater; and we are exhorted to take unto us the whole armour of God whereby we shall be able to stand and withstand in the evil day.

3. PEACE AND CALM.

Our joy on account of blessings received, and our realisation of the Divine care over us to keep us in all our ways, lead to an indwelling of peace and calm amid the storms of life. Indeed, whatever may be our present or future conditions, these should not in any way interfere with our inward peace.

The peace and calm which we enjoy are likened in the Psalm to the literal rest at night, which is surely a beautiful picture of our standing in the sight of God. "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety." The peace which comes from God is begotten of the ability of Omnipotence as illustrated by the picture given to us in Revelation 4, with the sea of glass in the Throne vision.

We do well at all times to remember the Apostle's exhortation "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4: 6, 7). This summarises our attitude towards life if we would be pleasing to the Lord, and thus demonstrate to Him and to those around that His risen power is a mighty force in moulding us after the likeness of the perfect Pattern.

It is as we grow older and richer in experience that we are able to enjoy greater peace and calm by reason of increased faith in Him with whom we have to do. God has protected us marvellously and the truth shines brighter and means more to us, as we see the signs of the times fulfilled. It is in the days of "these Kings" that the God of heaven is to set up His Kingdom; as appointees of that new kingdom, we may rejoice and lift up our heads in the knowledge that our deliverance draws nearer and nearer, day by day.

The Gospel Hope for Young and Old

(CONVENTION ADDRESS)

Young and old alike are to share the blessings of God's kingdom - these are promised to all. Youth in good health and in vigour of life may still find some satisfaction in the present unsatisfactory world social and ruling conditions, though it still leaves a vacuum, acknowledges or not, in the hearts and minds of those who have no belief in the gospel of Jesus Christ. But when we grow older it is different.

Those who read God's word and exercise any faith in it at all know that God has promised a kingdom upon earth wherein all its subjects will find complete happiness, with good health and provision of all needs without stress or strain. The prophet Isaiah mentions this in many places; a verse or two will give us a glimpse of this wonderful time to come.

Isaiah 25:8 - "He will swallow up death in victory (i.e. death will not be allowed to deny the privilege and opportunity to enjoy this time) and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces."

Isaiah 35:1, 2 - "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, it shall blossom abundantly..." then in *Verse 5* - "the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped, then shall the lame man leap as a hart and the tongue of the dumb shall sing. In the wilderness shall waters break out and streams in the desert." These verses are telling us that there will be no more droughts or famines, and all the afflictive diseases and infirmities of mankind will be healed. *Isaiah 33* has much to say about conditions leading up to this wonderful time and declares in the last verse - "and the inhabitants shall not say, I am sick..." Can we imagine a world inhabited by people who will never be sick? According to the last book of the Bible, this is going to come about.

We read in *Revelation 21* from verse 3 onwards that, when this time comes, it can be said that the tabernacle of God will be with men (i.e. all His favours be poured out upon them), that He will wipe away all tears from their eyes, there will be no more sorrow or crying or pain and NO MORE DEATH.

The majority of people nevertheless still would turn away in total disbelief that such a time could ever come upon this earth. But some, although the prospect seems to them to be too good to be true, still have hope that it MIGHT be true. Many say - "it will be wonderful if such a time does come and they will be blessed indeed who live to see it; but what of us older ones, on the brink of the grave as it were - it means little to us."

This is just where countless numbers make a great mistake. The scriptures we have been referring to are not picturing events and conditions which will take place during the present world order; they refer to a new day that is to come. The present life will surely end in death and we will be laid in the grave. God's word looks beyond this.

Though many still recite, parrot-like mostly, creeds which include "I believe in the resurrection of the dead", how many really BELIEVE what they affirm? The joys of the Kingdom of God which has been promised and which will be made available to all, do not occur now, for it is Satan's deceptive and evil reign that we presently live under. Not that there are not present joys for believers in Christ, but they are experienced amid the tribulations of the present time, and they are related to the hope set before us in DAYS TO COME.

Paul's words in *1 Cor. 15:19* declare - "if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." The blessings which God has promised to mankind, because of the sacrifice of His Son, come through a resurrection from the dead.

Every person who has ever lived has a right to resurrection, by virtue of Christ's ransom for all, but it is still the same today as it was in the apostle's day. People will listen to a hope or remedy for human ills which can become operational now through human efforts, but when the resurrection of the dead is mentioned, they turn away and lose interest, as did some in the past who were grieved at the preaching of the resurrection. (*Acts 4:2*) Some mocked at the teaching, a few did not reject it outrightly but it did not influence their current thinking - "we will hear thee again of this matter." (*Acts 17:32*)

In view of the fact that the Bible so fully substantiates a resurrection from the dead, we might well echo Paul's words in *Acts 26:8* - "why do you think it incredible that God should raise the dead?" Did not Jesus Himself say - "Marvel not at this for the time is coming in which all that are in their graves will hear my voice and will come forth." (*John 5:28*) Everyone will share in the benefits accruing from the resurrection. It does not matter whether one died thousands of years ago or will go into the grave tomorrow, all will live again and in vastly different circumstances from those they were acquainted with in the former life.

So now we come to the hypothetical question posed by Paul in *1 Cor. 15:35* - "how then are the dead raised up and with what body do they come?" Exact detail as to how the dead will be brought back to new life on earth is not given us, but there are enough assurances in God's word to give us faith that it will occur. Most certainly the literal graves will not be opened to return men and women to earth with bodies of disability. The old worn-out bodies return to the dust - for from the dust they were first formed. (*Gen. 2:7*) God will give to each a new body as it pleases Him. (*1 Cor. 15:37, 38*)

However, there will be one sense in which the dead will return as they were before; they will be brought back to life with the same CHARACTER they had before. If in this life they endeavoured to live justly and righteously, they will come back and will retain that character in resurrection. If they lived selfishly, were hard-hearted and unmindful of good, they will come back with similar character disposition.

If the teaching of Jesus prompted the development of character to any degree, this will provide a great start to the new life; if His teachings were ridiculed and His name perhaps used only in blasphemy, they will come back to the sterner "judgment" of *John 5:29*. (The word "damnation" -AV- is incorrect.)

In such scriptures as *Matt. 11:20-24*, we see a clear intimation that rejection of any light given in this life for the formation of good character will bring greater judgement than will come to those not so enlightened. It will be more tolerable for some than others and easier for them to come into line in the new world where only God's standard of righteousness will be acceptable. God is no respecter of persons and He will not be mocked; as a person sows, so shall they reap.

In the new world of the resurrection, in the day of TRUE judgment, the wicked will no longer "prosper as the green bay tree" (*Psa. 37:35*), as they can now under the rule of Satan. Instead people everywhere will be obliged to AMEND WRONG CHARACTER and come into line with the precepts taught by Jesus, so that all can prosper and be at peace. (*Micah 4:3, 4*) - no wars, each having their own vine and fig tree (ample food provision pictured), nothing to make them afraid.

God is all-powerful and absolutely just. He is merciful, kind and good; none will be denied because of

ignorance, for His requirements for enjoyment of His beneficence will be made clear to all. Every person who has ever lived will receive an opportunity to enjoy the “times of restitution” which all the holy prophets have foretold from the beginning. (*Acts 3:21*). Here is the wisest counsel that can be given to young and old - “Fear God” (i.e. reverence Him), seek to understand His requirements, and rest assured that He will withhold no good thing from them that walk uprightly. (*Eccl. 12:13, Psa. 84:11*)

At present, there is another very important feature of God’s purpose in the call and preparation of His true church, to become associates of Christ in the establishing of the “times of restitution” already referred to. This work seems nearly complete and it involves only a comparatively small portion of mankind. The message of Good News for Young and Old is therefore sent out to arrest the attention of any who will heed out of the countless millions of those who will soon, we believe, receive an opportunity to enjoy resurrection conditions and the fulfilment of the prayer - “THY KINGDOM COME, THY WILL BE DONE ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN!”
(WAS:1993)

Rejoicing in the Lord

(CONVENTION ADDRESS)

The children of God are called to be representatives of Christ, showing forth the goodness and mercy of the Lord. As Jesus has revealed to us the true character of the Father, so we are to reveal Christ to a world that does not know His tender love. “As thou hast sent me into the world, even so I have sent them into the world.” “I in them, and thou in me - that the world may know that thou hast sent me.” (*John 17:18, 23*)

The apostle Paul says to the disciples of Jesus, “Ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ, known and read of all men.” (*2 Cor. 3:2*) In every one of His followers Jesus sends a letter to the world. If we are Christ’s He sends in us a message to the family, to the town, to the street where we live. Jesus, dwelling in us, desires to speak to the hearts of those who are not acquainted with Him. Perhaps they do not read the Bible or do not hear the voice that speaks to them in its pages; they do not see the love of God through His works. But if we are true representatives of Jesus, it may be that through us they will be led to understand something of His goodness, and be won to love and serve Him.

Christians are set as light-bearers in this world of darkness, they are to reflect to the world the light shining upon them from Christ. Their lives and characters should be such that through them others will get a right concept of Christ and of His service. If we do represent Christ, we shall make His service appear attractive, as it truly is. Christians who gather up gloom and sadness and who murmur and complain give others a false picture of God and the Christian life. They give the impression that God is not pleased to have His children happy, and in this way they bear false testimony to their Heavenly Father.

Satan is surely pleased when he can lead the children of God into unbelief and despondency; he delights to see us mistrusting God, doubting His willingness and power to save us. It is his work to represent the Lord as lacking in compassion and pity. Satan ever seeks to make the godly life out as one of gloom, to appear tiresome and difficult; and when Christians present in their own lives this view of Christianity they confirm the falsehood of Satan. Sadly, many walking along the path of life dwell upon their mistakes and failures and disappointments, and so their hearts are filled with grief and discouragement.

Amid the beautiful flowers and fragrances of the garden, do we sometimes see only the unsightly briars? Are not God’s promises like fragrant flowers growing beside our path on every side? Will we not let their beauty and sweetness fill our hearts with joy? The briars and thorns will only wound and grieve us, and if we gather all the unpleasant recollections of a past life, its inequities and disappointments, to talk and mourn over them until we are overwhelmed with discouragement.

A discouraged Christian is so filled with darkness as to shut out the light of God and to cast a shadow upon the pathway of others. We should and can thank God for the bright prospects which He has presented to us. Let us hold together the blessed assurances of His love, that we may look upon them continually - the Son of God leaving the presence of His Father, that He might rescue mankind from the power of Satan; and ultimately ourselves, if faithful unto death, clothed in the righteousness of Christ and seated with Him in His throne. These are the pictures on which God would have us meditate. When we seem to doubt His love and distrust His promises, we dishonour Him and grieve His Holy Spirit.

How, indeed, can our Heavenly Father regard us when we distrust His love, that love which led Him to give His only-begotten Son that we might have life? The apostle Paul writes in *Rom. 8:32* - “He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him freely give us all things?” God is listening to hear what kind of report we are bearing to the world about our heavenly Master, so let our conversation be of Him who makes intercession for us before God. We all have trials hard to bear, and temptations difficult to resist; let us not tell our troubles to those whom we contact in the world, but carry everything to God in prayer.

If we make it a rule never to utter a word of doubt or discouragement, we can do much to brighten the lives of others and strengthen their efforts, by words of hope and godly cheer. There are many who have a false idea of the life and character of our Master. He was indeed a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, for He opened His heart to all the troubles of mankind, but though His life was self-denying and shadowed with pain and care, His spirit was not crushed. Wherever He went, He carried rest and peace, joy and gladness. Our Saviour was deeply serious and intensely earnest, but never gloomy.

The lives of those who seek to imitate Him will be full of earnest purpose; they will have a deep sense of personal responsibility. There will not be boisterous merriment or the like, for the religion of Jesus gives peace like a river - it does not quench the light of joy, it does not restrain cheerfulness, nor cloud the sunny, smiling face. For Christ came not to be ministered unto, but to minister; and when His love reigns in the heart, we shall follow His example.

If we keep uppermost in our minds the unkind and unjust acts of others, we shall find it impossible to love them as Christ loved us. But if our thoughts dwell upon the wondrous love and pity of Christ for us, the same spirit as His will flow out to others. We should love and respect one another, notwithstanding the faults and imperfections that we cannot help seeing. Humility and a patient tenderness with the faults of others should be cultivated, and this will do away with selfishness and make us large-hearted and generous towards them.

It is not the will of God that His people be weighed down with care. He knows that there are trials and dangers, and He does not promise to take His people out of a world of sin and evil, but He points them to a never-failing refuge. Jesus' prayer for His disciples was, "I pray not that thou should take them out of the world, but that thou should keep them from evil." In the world, He said, "ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." (John 16:33) In His Sermon on the Mount, Christ taught His disciples precious lessons on the necessity of trusting in God. These were designed to encourage the children of God through the years, and they have come down to our time full of instruction and comfort.

The Saviour pointed His followers to the birds of the air, and said that they sow not, neither do they reap, yet the Heavenly Father provides for their needs. So the Saviour asks, "Are ye not much better than they?" Will not God indeed provide for our necessities if we but trust in Him? This lesson of Christ's is a rebuke to the anxious thought, the perplexity and doubt of the faithless heart. The Lord would have all His children at peace and obedient. Jesus says, "My peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." Happiness that is sought from selfish motives soon passes away, leaving loneliness and sorrow, but there is abiding joy and satisfaction in the services of God.

Even here and now, Christians may have the joy of communion with Christ, they may have the light of His love and the comfort of His presence. Every step in life may bring us closer to Jesus, give us a deeper appreciation of His love, and bring us nearer to our blessed home of peace. As we look towards new perplexities in the world around us, we can confidently say, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." The trials will not exceed the strength that will be given to us to bear them. Let us then go forward, believing that whatever may come we will not be left alone to carry our burden, remembering our Lord's words, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

"Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice!" (Phil. 4:4)

Be Patient Until (James. 5:7, 8)

(CONVENTION ADDRESS SUMMARY)

The text verses show a simple truth - much as we may desire to hasten the products of our labour in material things, we have to abide the seasons. So also it is in spiritual things. Wanting - Waiting; two words spelt the same except for one letter, and closely related. All wants generally have to be waited for - the natural man often waits fretfully for the desires of his heart, only to find them vanity when they are attained. But the Christian waits in patience for the sure promises of God to be fulfilled.

God's way is best; that is the thing we must learn and remember. The kingdom of Christ is going to bring lasting peace and happiness to this earth, and while we all long for it, we know that it will not come until He assumes full power at His second advent. God will subdue all opposers when the proper time comes. Our eyes are open to the errors of Babylon and we are glad to be put out of her in response to the voice from heaven. (Rev. 18:4) We delight in the scriptural exhortation to assist others who are mourning also in Zion at this time, but it is not our prerogative to COMPEL others to come out, or to try and bring down Babylon ourselves.

All the nations of earth, based on greed and selfishness under Satan's domination, will ultimately be broken to pieces as a potter's vessel when it is the DUE TIME for this to happen, but this is not our task. Until God's



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Sowing and Reaping

"He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." (Gal. 6:8)

The thought of sowing is that of planting with a view to development or result. Some time the harvest will come. All of our thoughts, all of our actions, have an effect on future character. Little by little the character is made up. The sowing of today will bring the reaping of tomorrow. If our thoughts and our attention are given to earthly things, the result will be an increase of development along earthly lines; but if our thoughts and attention are given to heavenly things, the development will be along spiritual lines.

Sowing to the flesh, minding the things of the flesh, means gratification of the desires of the flesh, minding the things that are craved by our fallen nature. If yielded to, these cravings will grow stronger and stronger. It is a mistake to suppose, as some do, that a reasonable gratification of the flesh is proper. Every gratification of the fallen flesh satiates only the animal propensities. Those who continue to yield to these propensities will ultimately reach corruption, death—the second death. Those who mind spiritual things ^{set} their affections on things above, not on things of earth; those who seek to develop themselves along spiritual lines, will progress in spiritual attainment. In due time such will reap a character likeness to the Lord, and become copies of God's dear Son, sanctified more and more through the Truth. To such is promised the gift of life eternal.

The words of our text are addressed to the church, and relate, therefore, to "those who have made a covenant with the Lord by sacrifice." If these live after the flesh, they shall die, as the Apostle says; for they have already surrendered their human life-rights. If by earnest endeavour they seek to lay down their lives and to develop the new life by mortifying the flesh, by putting it to death, by striving to overcome the weaknesses which they inherit, they shall shortly be rid of all the impediments and be clothed upon with the new body. Then they shall be like the Lord.

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Comparatively few realize to what extent we form our own characters, to what extent our minds, our affections, are gardens in which we may plant either the thorns and thistles of sin, or the merely moral and practical qualities corresponding to the useful vegetables, or those seeds which produce the fragrant and beautiful flowers and fruits which more particularly represent the heavenly and spiritual graces. Whatsoever a man soweth he shall also reap, whether he sow to the flesh or to the spirit. Whoever, therefore, seeks for the heavenly things, joint-heirship in the kingdom, etc., must plant, or set out in his mind, in his affections, those qualities and graces which the Lord marks out as essential to the development of characters such as will be "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light."—Col. 1:12.

Thus the Father throws upon all those whom he calls to this "high-calling," this "heavenly-calling," and who accept the call and make a covenant thereunder, the responsibility for their success or their failure in attaining the prize. Through his Word he tells them of their own natural weaknesses and imperfections, and shows them how he has provided a full off-set or counterbalance for these imperfections in the merit and sacrifice of the Redeemer; he shows them also what are the fruits and graces of the Spirit which they must possess, in heart, at least, if they would be joint-heirs with Christ; he shows them also, in the Redeemer's life as well as in his teachings, the copy which all must follow who would reach the same glorious station and be his joint-heirs.

We might look at this matter merely from the standpoint of the responsibility which it throws upon us, and might well feel overawed thereby.

Rather, however, we should view it from the standpoint of divine grace, and consider what a blessed privilege has been granted us, of being transformed by the renewing of our minds, that we may come more and

more to know and to strive for the good and acceptable and perfect will of God. In addition to all this, God has set before us the grandest reward imaginable for the doing of that which is merely our duty and our reasonable service—the doing of that which would bring us the largest measure of joy and peace, aside from a future reward.

PLANTING GOOD SEED

There is for all mankind a natural attraction toward earthly things; even though, during this reign of evil, the earthly things are blemished and in many respects distasteful to those who have learned to love righteousness and hate iniquity, there is still, nevertheless, a strong attraction toward the marred and blemished earthly things. Like weeds, earthly affections and desires spring spontaneously from seeds which come we know not whence. The Christian, therefore, who would keep his heart in the love of God, must not only keep planting good seeds, keep setting his affections on heavenly things, but he must keep rooting out the weeds of earthly desire and attraction.

Our new life is not manifest to all, nor upon all occasions to any. This the Apostle intimates when he says, “Your life is hid with Christ in God”; it is a life of new desires, new aims, new aspirations, which the world can neither see nor fully appreciate, though it sees some outward manifestations of the new life in our daily conduct. Even the “brethren” may not be able to appreciate the progress of the new life in us; and we ourselves may at times be perplexed respecting the rapidity and strength of its growth; and we may need to look back over the weeks or months, or perhaps years, in order to determine unquestionably that it is growing. Our new life, represented by our endeavours to follow the will of Christ, is hidden thus in Christ and in the Father.

In harmony with this thought the Apostle in one place declares that neither the world nor the brethren were capable of judging him—that only the Lord, who could read the heart and know all the conditions, testings and weaknesses to be striven against, could properly judge him. He even declares, “Yea, I judge not mine own self.” (1 Cor. 4:3.) It is an excellent plan neither to condemn others who claim to be walking conscientiously as children of the Lord, nor even to condemn ourselves if we are sincerely striving to do the Lord’s will. We should simply press along, day by day doing the best we can to cultivate the heavenly graces and to serve our Master, leaving all the results with the Lord. He careth for us, and so long as our hopes and aims and objects of life are centred in the heavenly things and our lives thus hid with Christ in God, we need fear no evil, present or future; for the Lord will be with us and bless us and keep us from falling and, ultimately, present us to the Heavenly Father both blameless and faultless.

PUTTING OFF AND PUTTING ON

Coming down to a particularization of the changes which take place in those who have consecrated themselves wholly to the Lord, the Apostle enumerates certain alterations of disposition which should be attempted and, so far as possible, accomplished, namely, the putting away of all the following: anger, wrath, malice, evil-speaking, impurity of language and falsehood in its every form. (Col. 3:8, 9.) The necessity for such correction of life might, at first thought, seem to be unnecessary to mention, such evil traits being too coarse and entirely opposed to every true Christian principle; but, as we scrutinize the matter we find that the Apostle has really taken into his list nearly all the weaknesses of the flesh which beset those who have become “new creatures in Christ.”

What is more common with Christian people than to become angry? How many there are who have named the name of Christ, but who have malicious or, at least, unkind thoughts respecting others, and who harbour these, permitting them at times to influence their conduct! How many are there who indulge in evil-speaking—that is, slander (here translated blasphemy)! This is often done in such a manner as to deceive, not only the hearer, but also the speaker as respects his real intention in speaking of others discredibly, unkindly.

If all evil and impure language were avoided, what a wonderful world this would be! Every Christian should see to it that, henceforth, every word which proceeds from his mouth shall be such as will minister grace to the hearers, such words as will do only good and be edifying.

Finally, how much need there is, not only of having good intentions in the heart, but also of expressing those good intentions truthfully one to another, without deception, without hypocrisy. But it requires that a heart be very pure and very full of love if it would be very truthful; otherwise it would lead to trouble continually. If the unloving, ungenerous, unkind hearts, full of evil surmising, malice, hatred and strife, were to express themselves frankly it would add immensely to the trouble of the world. The Apostle therefore urges, first the purifying of the heart, and then general candor.

With the thought before our minds of the oneness and equality of those who have been accepted into the body of Christ, the Apostle urges upon our attention the necessity not only of putting off the evil dispositions of our fallen flesh, but also of putting on, cultivating, the various graces of the Spirit exemplified in our Head, Christ Jesus.—Col. 3:12-14.

He specifies these: (1) Compassionate sentiments; a disposition of largeness and generosity of heart toward everybody and everything—toward the saints, toward our neighbours, friends and relatives, toward our enemies, and toward the brute creation. Amplifying, he continues, showing that it would imply (2) kindness toward all; (3) humbleness of mind, the reverse of boastfulness, headiness, arrogance; (4) meekness, or gentleness of disposition; (5) long-suffering, or patient endurance with the faults and weaknesses of others. It implies that we should bear with one another's peculiarities of temperament and disposition, freely forgiving one another, if there be found cause of offence in each other—learning the meanwhile to correct ourselves, as we see our own blemishes mirrored in others. And the standard for all this course of conduct is found in the Lord's course toward us; for he surely has been generous, kind, forbearing and forgiving.

INSTRUCTIONS TO THE CHURCH

The Apostle brings to the attention of the “holy and beloved,” the elect, the fact that he is not attempting a reformation of the world along these lines, but merely a transformation of those who have entered into a special covenant with the Lord. All who have thus covenanted with the Lord and who hope to make their “calling and election sure” to membership in the glorified church, will not only seek to cultivate these fruits of the Spirit in their own lives, but also to assist in the cultivation of the same fruits, as they may have opportunity, in their Christian friends and neighbours; and above all, will seek to exercise so good an influence upon their own families that, as their children receive from them, as parents, the natural life and the necessary instructions and start therein, these may also, if possible, receive from them a start in the new life, and the necessary instructions and equipment for it.

But the Apostle, as the mouthpiece of the holy Spirit, is a thorough instructor. Not only does he tell us what dis-graces to put off and what graces to put on, but viewing the Lord's body arrayed in these qualities of heart—compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patient, endurance, forbearance and forgiveness, he adds. “And above all these put on love, which is the bond of perfectness.” Love is thus pictured as the “girdle” which binds and holds in place the folds of the robes of Christ's righteousness with its various graces. In other words, the Apostle would have us see that forbearance, meekness, patience, etc., must not be matters merely of courtesy or merely of policy. However much they might partake of these qualities in the beginning, the wearers will not be perfected in heart, nor be fit for the kingdom, until they have reached the place where these various graces of their wills, or intentions, are bound to them by the cords of love—love for the Lord, love for righteousness, love for the “brethren,” and sympathetic love for the whole groaning creation. Love is, indeed, “the bond of perfectness,” the very Spirit of the Lord.

Each exercise of the new mind, of the new will, toward the things that are pure, the things that are noble, the things that are good, the things that are true, the things that are spiritual, is a sowing to the Spirit, which if persevered in, will ultimately bring the attainment of the Lord's gracious promises and arrangements - everlasting life and the kingdom.

But God

I know not, but God knows:

Oh, blessed rest from fear!

All my unfolding days

To Him are plain and clear.

I cannot, but God can:

Oh, balm for all my care!

The burden that I drop

His hand will lift and bear.

I see not, but God sees:

Oh, all-sufficient light!

My dark and hidden way

To Him is always bright.

(A J Flint)

Hymns and Spiritual Songs

(CONVENTION ADDRESS)

“Let the word of God dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” Col. 3:16.

These words of the apostle Paul, and the companion verses in Eph. 5:18-20, are worth noting. From them, we learn something of the worship of the Lord’s people in the days of the apostles. The texts make it clear that congregational singing was a part of the worship of believers and briefly describes this as made up of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. If we trace this back through the Bible, we will find that we have a rich legacy of hymns from the past for us.

There are not many other references in the New Testament to the singing of hymns but in Matt. 26:30, it is recorded that, after the Memorial Supper instituted by the Lord, He and the disciples sang a hymn and then departed out into the Mount of Olives. The A.V. margin reference here is that it was a psalm. Bible Students today follow this example of our Lord in closing each memorial service with an appropriate hymn before departing.

In Acts 16, there is the record of Paul and Silas who, after being flogged, cast into prison and fastened into stocks in Philippi, sang praises to God. This is a most amazing account of praise being given to God under such cruel and painful circumstances. Verse 25 says that this was at midnight and that the other prisoners heard them. From the succeeding verses, we learn that as a result of their witness in song the keeper of the prison was so affected that he and his household became followers of the Lord. Furthermore, it is quite clear that God heard them, an indication that hymns sung from the hearts of the Lord’s people ascend to the heavenly realm.

Singing is also spoken of in James 5:13, “Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray. Is any cheerful? Let him sing psalms.” Psalms are included by the apostle in the text verse along with hymns and spiritual songs. The psalms have been described as “the cherished heritage of the Jewish church, the book of Psalms the inspired work of David” and in 2 Sam 23:1, David is referred to as “the sweet psalmist of Israel.”

The word “psalm” means a song of praise accompanied by music, and it is interesting to note in 1 Sam. 16:16-23 that Saul called upon David to play the harp for him when he was troubled and when an evil spirit was upon him; this refreshed Saul and the evil spirit departed from him at that time.

Songs are also referred to in the Old Testament, being written or composed for special occasions. One such was composed by Moses after the deliverance of Israel through the Red Sea. This is recorded in Exodus 15:1-19, the opening words being, “I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously the Lord is my strength and my song, and He is become my salvation. He is my God, and I will prepare Him a habitation, my fathers’ God and I will exalt Him.”

The Song of Solomon and Psalm 45 are songs to celebrate weddings. When clearly understood, Psalm 45 brings before us that momentous occasion when “the marriage of the Lamb has come and His wife has made herself ready; to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.” Rev. 19:7,8.

In Isaiah 30:29, the prophet speaks of “a song, as in the night when a holy festival is kept; and gladness of heart, as when one goeth with a pipe to come into the mountain of the Lord, to the Mighty One of Israel.” And there are other instances of songs being composed in Old Testament times on occasions of national calamity or sorrow, victory or thanksgiving, and of breaking forth into songs of rejoicing in the Lord.

The first song in the New Testament would be that of Mary, the mother of Jesus, in what is called the “Magnificat”, or hymn of Mary. “My soul doth magnify the Lord and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour; for He hath regarded the low estate of His handmaiden, for from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For He that is mighty hath done great things and holy is His name.” Luke 1:46-49. The songs of Zacharias at the birth of John, and of the aged Simeon, when he took the infant Jesus in his arms, are also recorded by Luke.

The spiritual songs of the text may specially refer to those of the new age then beginning - the Gospel Age, and it seems reasonable to assume that it was common practice in the early church to sing all such forms of praise to God. In Rev. 15:3, the Lord’s people are spoken of as singing “the song of Moses and the Lamb” - the testimony of Moses pointing forward to the work of Jesus. God’s plan is indeed a harmonious song, as it were, in which all His people may rejoice.

It is interesting to note that when the papal system began to influence the church, this great privilege was taken away. A reliable source says - “the synod of Laodicea in the year AD 363 decreed that (1) psalms composed by private men must not be used in the church and (2) none but appointed singers shall sing in the

church. Eventually these two rules became virtually the law in both branches of the Catholic church.” This furthermore totally prevented the women from singing or taking any part in the great privilege of praise to God.

When the Reformation of the 16th century began, Martin Luther was one who first protested against the false doctrines and practices of the Catholic church. The book “Hymn Writers of the Christian Church” in reference to the life of Luther states that “during his lifetime, he started a movement that was to make his name practically synonymous with the Protestant Reformation. Though Luther is remembered primarily for this, he was a man of great culture and a devoted musician. He believed strongly in congregational singing, (including) women, and wrote more than 30 hymns.”

It is said that he gave as his authority for this the words of the apostle Paul as recorded in the text verse, where he admonished the Lord’s people to include in their services the singing of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Other reformers joined him in this and included congregational hymn singing in their services. Here again, what great blessings have come to us with the removal of the dark ages teachings of men.

It is further notable that the majority of our best loved hymns of today were written during the 18th and 19th centuries. This was the time in church history often referred to as the Philadelphia period. The word “philadelphia” means brotherly love and it was a time when the light of the truth of God’s plan of salvation brought to His people a bond of brotherly love, as was evident in the early church. Among the many blessings of that time was the writing of those hymns and spiritual songs which so much add to the joy of fellowship.

Our hymnals have helped to keep alive this bond of brotherly love in our gatherings and in this context, it is good to note 1 Cor 14:26. Here Paul is counselling the church that when it meets together, all things should be done for the benefit of all the congregation. The verse reads - “When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.” It is notable that the hymn (A.V. psalm) is mentioned first and evidently has an important part in the service, preparing the mind to take in the lesson, presented to those gathered.

In Eph. 5:18, Paul exhorts his hearers - “Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled with the spirit.... making melody in your hearts to the Lord” The apostle here makes it clear that there should be a very close relationship between heart and voice when offering praise to God. True praise and thanksgiving to God must spring from the inner desires of the heart. “With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” Rom. 10:10.

Wine may have the effect of stirring the emotions but it brings only a temporary feeling of enjoyment which does not last. To be filled with the spirit of Jesus Christ is to have something that will not fade away. To be filled with the spirit has indeed quite a deep significance; it is said of Jesus that the spirit was given to Him without measure. (John 3:34), but because of our imperfection, we can only receive the spirit by (or in a) measure. Only as we are emptied of self and the old nature can we be filled with the spirit of Christ.

Emptied that He might fill me

As forth to His service I go;

Broken that so unhindered -

His life through me might flow.

In the opening words of the text (Col. 3:16), Paul says - “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another.” Some of our hymns have been modified so as to be free of doctrinal error and so that they can be used for teaching and admonishing and edifying one another, as we sing with thankfulness in our hearts to the Lord, uniting in prayer and praise and lifting up our voices in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.

Today we have a rich legacy in our hymn books, bequeathed to us by devoted men and women with the talent to write such lovely and scriptural hymns. In addition to our gratitude to these, we can also be thankful to those whose music so beautifully complements their words. There are hymns suitable for all occasions of Christian experience, designed for the furtherance of the ministry of the word of God and the development of Christian character.

By means of these, we too can, with the apostle, continually be “giving thanks always for all things unto God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus.” (Eph. 5:20) (JBH:1994)

Baptised into Christ

(BAPTISM SERVICE ADDRESS)

It is always a privilege for others of the Lord's people to attend a service of water baptism, to rejoice with the brothers/sisters to be immersed in witness of their consecration to the Lord's service, to commend their decision and to encourage them in the carrying out of their consecration vows.

We remember always that water baptism is a symbol or sign of a deeper, inner truth. It is the divinely appointed means by which those to be baptised declare publicly their personal faith in Jesus Christ as their Saviour and their desire and determination, by God's grace, to follow Him as Lord of their lives henceforth.

But why should those who become Christians, that is, who recognise their need of a Saviour, who find that need met in Jesus and go on to pledge loyalty to Him, be baptised in water? If it is only a symbol, is it all that important, is it obligatory? From God's word, we see that it is first and foremost an act of obedience, but it is also a rich and blessed privilege for believers to confess their faith and commitment to their Lord in this way before others.

The related words in Greek for baptise, baptism, etc. occur many times in the New Testament. In three instances, they refer to ceremonial washing of hands or utensils (by dipping in water), practices which the Pharisees and other leaders were always very concerned about - to the detriment of many far more important issues. In other instances, however, the words refer (1) to the activities of John the Baptist and his mission to call Israel back to God in preparation for Messiah, (2) to the later rite of water baptism as practiced in the early church or (3) to the inner heart baptism which that pictures.

The circumstances of John's baptising in the waters of Jordan, the later baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch beside the road down into his own country, the basic meaning of the Greek words used, and perhaps above all, the significance of the act all point conclusively to immersion as the only appropriate form of baptism for Christians. In it, the candidate sinks beneath the water and then is raised up again out of it, illustrative of a death and resurrection. It is further clear from scripture that only those able to grasp the real significance of the act are to be baptised.

Baptisms in the sense that we are now considering do not seem to have been part of Jewish religious practice prior to the commencement of John the Baptist's ministry, though the scriptures speak of the Israelites being baptised into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and of Noah and his family being a figure or picture of baptism. The thought of separation and obedience to the call of God is clear in both cases, and this is also the essence of Christian baptism.

The baptism of John was for those who responded to his call to the nation of Israel to repent of their sins against their God and their failure to honour the covenant which they had entered into with Him. This baptism was a demonstration of their repentance and their desire to wash away their sins. Here we note that this is not the meaning for Christians who are baptised - this is made clear from the account of Jesus' own baptism, for we read - "Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptised by him, but John forbad Him, saying, I have need to be baptised by Thee, and comest Thou to me?" John had recognised the perfect, the righteous One who needed no repentance, but Jesus replied - "Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." So John baptised Jesus in the Jordan river, near a place called Salim, because there was much water there, according to the apostle John's account.

Continuing, we read in Matthew's record - "And Jesus, when He was baptised, went up straightway out of the water, and lo, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him. And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. (Matt. 3:13-17) The dove was a sign given particularly for John's benefit, but here the Heavenly Father was acknowledging the life laid down in sacrifice, a sacrifice to be completed some three and a half years later at Calvary.

Later in His earthly ministry, Jesus told His disciples that - "I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened (pressed) till it be accomplished." Jesus' baptism was an ongoing commitment, begun at Jordan and finished at Calvary. This is the pattern of Christian baptism, in all things Jesus being our perfect pattern.

But the question remains - why need Christians be baptised in water? Is the inner heart commitment not sufficient in itself? As we have seen the inner heart commitment must come first, but let us consider the scriptures for both instruction and example in this matter; they alone can be our true guide in this and all other matters of Christian doctrine and practice.

Firstly, we note our Master's own words to His disciples just prior to His ascension - "Go ye therefore and make disciples out of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the age." (Matt. 28: 19,20) The wording makes it evident that water baptism is here referred to, and indeed in the book of Acts we find that those who believed as a result of the apostles' preaching were baptised in water.

Secondly and most importantly, the apostle in Romans 6 explains clearly the real significance of the inner baptism of heart and mind. In verses 3 to 11, Paul uses the analogy or example of being buried and of being raised up from death to new life. He is speaking here of the reality, but how beautifully baptism by immersion in water pictures that reality.

Thirdly and perhaps most blessed of all to all who truly seek to follow Jesus is His own example. What a privilege it is to follow Him in the waters of baptism, to there declare before witnesses our firm desire and intention, by God's grace, to no longer serve self but to follow our Lord's example of daily obedience to the Father's will to our life's end. This act of consecration, the presentation of Our justified lives to God for His service now and for preparation for the work of the kingdom with our dear Lord, is at the heart of baptism.

In this we follow the Master, not just as a once only offering but daily. Our Lord's words speak to us of this in Luke 9:23 - "If anyone will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." The apostle Paul also, writing to those at Rome who had already given their lives to the Lord, exhorted them to "present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, your reasonable service." (Rom. 12:1) Ours is a daily and lifelong calling.

Who then should be baptised? Into what or whom are they to be baptised? Some preach baptism for remission of sins but Paul in Rom. 10:9 & 13 makes it clear that our salvation from sin and death is alone by faith in Jesus - "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved ... for whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." This is God's gracious gift by faith; only those so justified can come to God in true consecration and witness to it in baptism.

Some baptise candidates into their group or organisation, but the scriptures by teaching and practice show that true baptism is into Christ, to be identified with Him in every facet of life. Here it is that new life in Christ begins; here is the Bible basis for real unity - one Lord, one faith, one baptism. Here in Christ is where alone we can find fellowship with others of like faith in Him.

As already stated, it is only when we have been justified or reckoned righteous by faith in Jesus that we can be acceptable in God's sight, only then have we anything to offer to Him. In baptism, we show forth that, having received God's gift of life through Christ, we henceforth wish to use that life to glorify Him, to bring honour to His name by living so as to please Him and to act towards others in the same spirit of love and goodwill. Paul rejoiced in His Lord and Saviour who "loved me and gave Himself for me." True love is shown in selflessness and sacrifice.

In the early church, the Lord added to the numbers such as should be saved (RSV. "were being saved") - Acts 2:47. These were then baptised into Christ, not into any organisation but into a person, even Christ, into union with Him. How much grander is the Bible concept of baptism than many human adaptations of it! The Bible standard, expressed in Gal. 3:26-29, is clear and beautiful - "you are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptised into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

Throughout it is all Christ - God's children by faith IN Christ, all baptised INTO Christ, all made one IN Christ, all heirs WITH Christ. This is the divine progression with faith always first. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (Rom. 10:10)

By instruction and example, baptism in water is the will of God for all who have come to know Jesus as Saviour and Lord, not instead of the true and vital inner baptism of heart and will, but as a sign and witness that it has occurred. This reality is explained by the apostle in Romans 6; verse 4 reads - therefore we are buried with Him (Christ) by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

How closely the apostle identifies each believer with our Lord Himself, especially when we follow Him in the waters of baptism. Just as Jesus' baptism was the sign of the laying down of His life to do the Father's will, so likewise ours. Speaking for our Lord, the Psalmist declares - "Lo, I come in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do Thy will, O my God, yea Thy law is within my heart." (Psa. 40:7, 8)

The new life which is pictured when the candidate is raised up from the water should have already begun in his or her heart. The apostle tells us - "in whom (Christ) you also trusted after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. In whom, also, after you believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise." (Eph. 1:13) How wonderful that when our hearts turn fully to God by faith, He seals us or marks us out as His children and begins His good work in us.

How completely the symbol pictures the change, the putting off of the old, so that Christ may come and dwell in our hearts by faith and the Holy Spirit begin God's handiwork in our lives. This is the "newness of

life” into which we enter by faith and in which we are to walk, moment by moment, day by day, while life shall last. All that might mar its purity or freshness is to be laid aside as we heed the apostle’s words - “Let us hold fast our profession, for we have not a high priest who cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” (Heb. 4:14-16)

And what, in practical terms, will the commitment symbolised in the waters of baptism entail? We have seen already that it means taking up the cross daily, that is laying down our lives daily in service and sacrifice. One precious promise for all who do so is found in John 15:10,11 - “If you keep my commandments, you shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in His love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.” Truly, it is joy to do His will.

There will surely be times of testing and adversity as our Lord foretold, but the apostle Paul puts these into perspective - “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it. (1 Cor. 10:13) “In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.” (Rom. 8:37)

So as we rejoice to see the witness of each new child of God, as they follow their Lord in the waters of baptism, we pray His continued guidance and blessing upon them, knowing that He who has called them by His grace and drawn them to Jesus is faithful; He is able to finish His work in them to His glory and their eternal blessing.
(DS:1993)

Pass it on

Have you had a kindness shown? Pass it on;
‘Twas not given for thee alone, Pass it on;
Let it travel down the years,
Let it wipe another’s tears,
Till in heaven the deed appears
Pass it on,

True Indeed

Thou must be true thyself,
If thou the truth would teach;
Thy soul must overflow, if thou
Another’s soul would reach.
It needs the overflow of heart
To give the lips full speech



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The Memorial Supper

The Scriptures contain no request by our Lord that 1 His followers should observe His birth but He made special request that all who would be His consecrated disciples should truly celebrate His death. As our Lord's sacrifice as "the Lamb of God" took the place of the annual Jewish Passover ceremony, it is reasonable that the observance of the Memorial of Christ's death be celebrated yearly also, on the anniversary of the institution of this observance "on the night in which he was betrayed."

The Apostle Peter presents the matter of our Lord's sacrifice as our Redeemer beautifully in 1 Pet. 1:18-20—"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conduct received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot; who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you." The perfection of Christ as the Man Christ Jesus is clearly indicated in this passage, and it is just as clear that the Passover lamb which the people of Israel were instructed to sacrifice each year was a type of Christ, our Passover Lamb.

From Matthew's account of the Memorial, we read in chapter 26:26—"And as they were eating"—finishing the Jewish Passover supper—"Jesus took bread"—the unleavened bread of the Jewish supper, picturing His own perfect humanity—"and blessed it"—gave thanks to God for this fitting symbol—"and brake it"—picturing the breaking of His own body—"and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body." In other words, appropriate His perfect humanity, thus gaining justification by faith in the perfect sacrifice of Jesus. As expressed by Paul in Rom. 5:1—"Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

The following verse, Matt 26:27, reads—"And he took the cup"—the cup of the fruit of the vine—"and gave thanks"—thanked God for this symbol of His own blood—"and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it." Again, Jesus was saying, appropriate my blood, my life, my perfect humanity, thus also gaining justification by faith in the sight of God. It is the justified human life that true believers in Christ have the privilege of laying down in the steps of the Master.

A secondary and deeper meaning of our Lord's Memorial the Apostle Paul was used of God to explain so beautifully in 1 Cor. 10:16, 17—"The cup of blessing which we bless is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? for we being many are one bread, and one body for we are all partakers of that one bread." Here we see the oneness of Christ and His members beautifully revealed. So, in observing our Lord's Memorial we not only do so "in remembrance of Christ," but we also signify our own willingness to be broken with Him, and have our life poured out in sacrifice with Him.

"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death, if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as thought I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus"—Phil 3:10-14.

As we meet each year at the Memorial of our Lord's death, it is required that we do so with pure hearts, having sought forgiveness for all shortcomings through the merit of Christ, and thus acceptable in the sight of God. 1 Cor. 5:7, 8—"Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover (Lamb) is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast...with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

The Lord's Table

In memory of the Saviour's love.
We keep this simple feast.
Where every consecrated heart
Is made a welcome guest.

Walk as Children of Light

(Lessons from the Book of Ephesians)

The Christian's walk means his or her course of conduct, including thoughts, words and acts. The Apostle indicates very clearly what this walk or course of the Christian should be, outlining it in seven different ways.

(1) The new creature should **walk not according to the course of this world**, not according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit which now worketh in the children of disobedience (Eph. 2:2). This is the walk of the world, the walk of evildoers, the walk of the children of wrath; it is the very opposite of the walk of the children of the light.

(2) The new creation should **walk in good works**: "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them."—Eph. 2:10.

(3) The new creation should **"walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called."** (Eph. 4:1.) Their vocation is the very highest of all; they are the representatives of the Lord and Master; they bear His name, and should seek in everything to glorify it and never to dishonour it. What we do, what we say, what we think—in fact, even general appearance and deportment, and where we are seen, all reflect more or less upon the great King whose ambassadors we are. Our vocation is that of servants of God, and no earthly vocation should be permitted in any degree to hinder or abridge the influence or the service which we have undertaken as children of God, as joint-heirs with Jesus Christ our Lord, prospective members of His Bride.

(4) The new creation are to **"walk not as other Gentiles walk."** (Eph. 4:17.) We are not merely to refrain from the sins and gross immoralities of the natural man, but we are to allow this principle or spirit to pervade all of life's interests. We are to refrain from following foolish wordly fashions, from being influenced by a wordly spirit; we are to have the spirit of the Lord, the spirit of a sound mind to direct us in our joys, in our sorrows, in all of our undertakings—in fact, whatsoever we do we are to do the glory of God. We are not to be influenced by the spirit of the world, but contrariwise, are to set a proper example for the world in all matters—in gentleness, kindness, patience, faithfulness to the Lord and to duty. The walk of the world is on the broad road; the walk of the Church is on the narrow path. As we progress in Christian experience, we find this path getting farther and farther away from the broad road which the world is travelling, and whoever tries to keep pace with the world will in many respects be apt to find himself leaving the narrow path or otherwise disadvantaging himself as a new creature.

(5) The new creation is to **"walk in love."** (Eph. 5:2.) Their words, their deeds, everything with which they are connected, is to be governed by this law of the new creation—love. "Love is the fulfilling of the law." "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another, as I have loved you." In compliance with this law of love and our Lord's glorious example, the Apostle says we ought to so love one another as to be willing to lay down our lives for the brethren. We should be ready to lay down a few months, a few years; we should be ready at any time we can find an opportunity of service especially along the lines of his or her spiritual or higher interests as a new creature.

This spirit of love is to control our conduct with all; we are to love our neighbours and seek to do them good, to serve their interests. "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour," would not take advantage of his neighbour to cheat him, to injure him in any manner. Love would not prompt its possessor to speak evil of his neighbour, but would lead to a remembrance of the Scriptural injunction, "Speak evil of no man." Love would do this from principle, because it is right; but more than this, love ultimately takes such an interest that the one exercising it does not wish to do anything that would be harmful to another's interests, to his welfare, but rather to do something to his honour and blessing.

Love, progressing as we walk in it, ultimately brings us to that blessed condition where we can love our enemies and be glad of the privilege of doing good to those who despitefully use us, and persecute us.

(6) The members of the new creation are also instructed to **walk as children of light** (Eph. 5:8.) Their course in life is always to be with respect to the things that are just, pure, loving, noble, kind, the things that are in harmony with the Divine character and Word, the things that prove to be of greatest blessing to neighbours and to friends. As children of the light, every day and year will see progress; their light will be shining more and more clearly and accomplishing the greatest good; they will not be ashamed of it, but will set it on a

candlestick, where it may give light to all in the house, to every member of the household of faith. “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”—Matt. 5:16.

(7) The new creation should **walk circumspectly**. (Eph. 5:15.) This word “circumspectly” signifies to look carefully all around at every step. The Christian cannot afford to live carelessly, and as he looks around him and realises the various pitfalls and snares, not only will he seek to make straight paths for his feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way, but additionally he will seek Divine aid and counsel and guidance that he make no mistakes, that every step in life’s pathway will be such as will have Divine approval and glorify God in his body and spirit, which are God’s.

This circumspection of our walk as new creatures is the more necessary because our adversary, the devil, is specially on the alert to ensnare us; and our tests are permitted to be the severer as we come nearer the goal of character.

We should walk circumspectly also because we profess to be of the new creation, begotten of the Holy Spirit and not of the world, but separate from it; and because our lights so shining more or less reprove the world. Therefore the world, instead of sympathising with us, may hate us, and will often watch to see what fault can be found with our walk, or to stumble and trip us. To walk circumspectly is to take note of the various hindrances and stumbling-stones and pitfalls; to hearken to the instructions of the Lord’s Word and to the leadings of the Holy Spirit; and thus to walk carefully; and in so doing to develop the character which is most pleasing to our Lord and Head.

The Apostle says this circumspection is necessary in order to our walking “not as unwise but as wise.” There is a wisdom of the world which is foolishness with God, and there is a wisdom with God which is foolishness to the world. The wisdom of God is to be ours, and we are to exemplify it in all the affairs of life. Hence the faithful, the new creatures in Christ, should be the most exemplary people in the world, the wisest in the management of all their affairs.

Not that the world will always approve but that the end will justify the course which the Lord’s Word directs, and which the wise of the new creation, walking circumspectly, will take.

* * * * *

Let us each one endeavour that by the Lord’s grace we will give more earnest heed to the things which pertain to our heavenly salvation, and that we will seek to walk as children of the light and show a good example to those around us.

Let us endeavour to be examples in the matter of patience and forbearance, in self-control, in meekness and in brotherly-kindness and love. If we do this, then, we will be walking as children of the light should walk, we will be walking as Christ walked, walking in the spirit and not fulfilling the desire of the flesh.

What a great reward will be ours in heaven if we patiently continue in well-doing—walking in the light. “Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee the crown of life,” is the Master’s promise. “Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.”

Lord, for to-morrow and its needs I do not pray,

Keep me from every stain of sin, just for to-day.

Let me both diligently work and duly pray;

Let me be kind in word and deed just for to-day.

Let me be slow to do my will, prompt to obey;

Help me to sacrifice myself, just for to-day.

Let me no wrong nor idle word unthinking say;

Set Thou Thy seal upon my lips just for to-day.

So for to-morrow and its needs I do not pray,

But keep me, guide me, Lord, just for to-day.

Memorial, 1994

According to our usual reckoning, the appropriate time for this year’s observance will be the evening of Friday, 25 March.

For local **arrangements**, please enquire of the usual contact in your area.

The Earth At Rest

"The whole earth is at rest, and is quiet; they break forth into singing." (Isaiah 14:7)

Thank God for the prospect of an unshakable kingdom, whose king shall reign in righteousness and whose princes shall decree justice. (Isa. 32:1, Prov. 8:15) and under whose dominion the whole earth shall be at rest. This is the kingdom which the prophet declares will indeed be "the desire of all nations", when it is once established and its blessings begin to be realised by the world. Yes, truly "the desire of all nations shall come" with blessings of life and health and peace and prosperity and good government.

"The Lord is Risen"

The story of our Lord's resurrection is one of 1 exquisite pathos and beauty. The crucifixion had smitten the Shepherd and scattered the sheep. In grief and silence the faithful few had removed the body from the cross and laid it in the new tomb of Joseph of Arimathea.

It was Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Joses and Salome who brought the spices to anoint the body. In the dim dawn of the day following the Sabbath they stole to the tomb. The thought of the resurrection did not come to them. They thought only that the grave had been rifled. One of them, Mary Magdalene, fled away, blind to everything but her own loss, saying—"They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him"—John 20:13. The angels in the tomb gave to the other two the glad truth—"He is not here, he is risen, as he said." Before this truth was brought home to them they were in despair, their hopes were buried. They had entertained high hopes, but now since Jesus had died, their hopes were withered. How different when the fact of the resurrection was made known—what joy replaced their despondency! It became true to them, "We are begotten to a lively hope by his resurrection." Because He lives, we have ground for hoping that we shall live. In His resurrection lies our assurance.

It is an interesting study to trace the harmony on this subject between the various writers of the Bible. Matthew, Mark and Luke, Peter, John and Paul, all make mention of His resurrection. Each account is different, depending on the point of view of the writer, but they are unanimous in affirming the fact that Jesus died and rose from the dead. Remarkably, it is not difficult to combine these various accounts and arrange them into one connected and complete picture. By so doing, we perceive our Lord's first work of consoling and encouraging.

He first appeared to the women, turning their sorrow into joy. This was early in the morning, the same day He arose. Then He appeared, the same day in the afternoon, to the two disciples going to Emmaus. As a stranger He walked to them, by the familiar way in which He broke bread with them. Unable to contain themselves, they hastened back to Jerusalem to tell the good news. But the Lord was travelling faster than they knew. He had appeared to another. What passed between our Lord and the Apostle Peter we do not know, but we know something of His mercy and grace, and may well understand the peace and comfort which possessed Peter after that meeting. At all events, Peter had not been slow to tell the good news, for when the two came and told their story, the others said—"The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared unto Simon"—Luke 24:34. Later on while recounting their own experiences, they remembered how Jesus had been known by His habit of breaking bread; and He appeared in their midst, saying—"Peace be unto you." So on the very day of His resurrection, He appeared first to the women, next to Peter, then to the two disciples, and lastly to the eleven, each time bringing a sense of comfort, hope and joy. What a day, to be remembered for all time!

A week later He appeared to the disciples again, this time for the special benefit of Thomas, who had been absent on the previous occasion. The next appearing was to James. This is mentioned by Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians. Another occasion is recounted by John in the last chapter of his Gospel. Several of the disciples had gone fishing. They toiled all night and caught nothing. Jesus revealed Himself by telling them where to cast their net. Finally, He took His last leave of them, leading them out as far as Bethany.

They were witnesses not only of all the wonderful things He had done; they were witnesses not only of the fact that He was crucified and buried, but witnesses especially of His resurrection. We are thankful that these records have been preserved for the Church. It is strengthening indeed to faith to trace in the Acts of the Apostles how they who were witnesses of His resurrection proceeded to carry out this commission—"Ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth"—Acts 1:8.

But first they were to receive power. "Tarry ye in Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high"—Luke 24:49. So they waited in prayer and supplication until they received the promise, and then began the work of witnessing. One cannot be but impressed by the prominence given in the Scriptures to the resurrection of Jesus.

Risen Indeed

The Lord is risen indeed;

The grave has lost its prey.

With Him shall rise the ransomed seed,

To live in endless day

The Waters of Shiloah

“Forasmuch as this people refuseth the waters of Shiloah that go softly, and rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah’s son; now therefore, behold, the Lord will bring up upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, even the king of Assyria, and all his glory, and he shall come up over all his channels, and go over all his banks.” (Isa. 8. 6-7).

Deep down beneath Jerusalem there is a strata of hard, impervious rock, sloping very gently towards the south-east. All the rain that falls upon the city and percolates into the ground gathers at last upon that unyielding shelf and forms underground streams which emerge at length as springs upon the hillsides outside the city. By far the most important of these springs is that known as the Virgin’s fountain, halfway down the steep sides of the valley of Jehoshaphat. This spring never fails; the underground reservoirs feed it constantly and from time immemorial it has formed Jerusalem’s most reliable water supply. The Jebusites, long before Joshua invaded the Promised Land with his hosts, had bored a tunnel from the fountain into the mountainous mass upon which their stronghold was built and had then made a vertical shaft to the surface so that they could descend and draw water in times of siege without having to venture outside their walls. In much later times the Israelites—probably in the period between David and Ahaz—had built a covered aqueduct just under the ground to convey the water from the Virgin’s Fountain to the Pool of Siloam, with the same purpose in mind. When Sennacherib invaded Judah in the reign of Hezekiah the son of Ahaz it would seem that this aqueduct had been blocked up and knowledge of its course lost, for Hezekiah set to work and excavated another tunnel through the mountain to convey the water to the Pool of Siloam, which was by then inside the city walls. In our days both Hezekiah’s tunnel and the remains of the earlier aqueduct have been found, the latter buried far underneath the soil and rubbish which has accumulated in the Valley of Jehoshaphat since the days of Isaiah.

It was this lost aqueduct to which Isaiah referred in the text. That overflowing water coming out from the heart of the mountain below the city and the Temple, never failing, always fresh and clear, was a very real Divine provision for the people. It was a kind of literal counterpart of the spiritual provision – sustenance, refreshment, protection –which God had made for his chosen. Quietly, unobtrusively, safe from all attack by enemies, the waters of Shiloah “flowed softly” to meet the needs of dwellers in the city, and in just the same way God’s provision for his people was always there and always effective to meet all their needs and shield them from all harm, provided they would but exercise the faith necessary to avail themselves of its benefits.

But the people would not. They turned away from the gentle, pure, life-giving stream and fastened their covetous eyes upon other waters, waters that were outwardly more spectacular and more pleasing to the natural senses: but waters that, had they but realised the fact, were not waters of life at all. They were waters which in the end brought trouble and disaster and death.

Away across the desert, in the land of Assyria, there was a mighty river. Men to-day call it the Tigris, but the Assyrians gave it a name which meant “shining water”. They had built their capital city of Nineveh upon that river and from there they had set out to conquer the world. The Assyrians are known chiefly to students of the Old Testament for their military skill and their ruthlessness, but they were also an industrious and an artistic people, and they had harnessed their great river so that it became the principal support of their economy. The river and its tributaries had been dammed at various places to create artificial lakes, great reservoirs which stored up the water that came down from the highlands in abundance in springtime, when the winter snows melted. From these lakes they had cut canals, leading in every direction through the desert, and irrigated the soil so that it became one of the most fertile countries in the world. The children of Israel knew of this lovely country, so different from their own rugged, austere Judea—many of them visited Assyria as merchants and brought back tales of its grandeur; Jonah had preached in Nineveh only a century or so before Isaiah’s day—and as they compared the earthly beauty and the man-made efficiency of that widespread network of rivers and canals with their own modest, quiet, hidden stream of Shiloah, they turned away from the living waters and gave preference to the waters of the great river. They forgot that their own stream had never failed them and had always sufficed for their needs, and turned instead to embrace the appeal of a worldly creation the continuance of which depended upon the will and whim of imperfect men.

To-day, the great dams are in ruins, the canals choked up with silt and sand, the onetime fertile fields

returned to desert. The river, once alive with boats and teeming with activity, now winds sluggishly through marshes choked with reeds and rushes. The work of man has utterly failed and all the glories of yesterday have become as a fading flower. But the waters of Shiloah flow still, as abundant and as fresh and pure as in the days of Isaiah. The women of Jerusalem still draw water from the Pool, and the gardens around the south-east corner of the city are still watered from its overflow.

Assyria was the undoing of Israel eventually. Because the people had refused the waters of Shiloah, God told the prophet, He himself would bring upon them the waters of the great river to overflow and submerge them in a great destruction. And so it came to pass. In the midst of their unbelief and wilfulness and apostasy the Assyrian hosts overran their land and took them away into captivity. Thus was fulfilled the word of the Lord *"I will bring upon them the waters of the river, even the king of Assyria and all his glory, and he shall come up over all his channels and go over all his banks"*. That is always the fate of the people that turns away from the Lord's guidance and leading and permits itself to be dazzled by the more spectacular attraction of worldly things and methods. Doubtless the scientifically arranged canals of Assyria were technically much more efficient in watering the land than that quietly flowing underground stream emerging from the rocky hillside outside Jerusalem, but those canals could only be kept in operation by a prodigious amount of labour and when the labour failed, as all human effort and organisation must eventually fail, the wonderful channels with their sluice gates and regulators and mechanical contrivances quickly went out of action and the water ceased to flow and the land dried up and became a desert. The stream that was the river of God has always remained full of water and has always made glad the city of God. Jeremiah saw this very clearly and under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit he cried out aloud *"My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water"* (Jer. 2. 13). How often, in the days that have passed since Jeremiah, have God's people repeated that tragic mistake! And it is not as though there had been no warning, no entreaty. *"O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments"* comes the voice of the Most High, regretful, sad, pleading. *"Then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea."* (Isa. 48. 18). Impossible not to see in that eloquent appeal the picture of the waters of Shiloah, flowing softly, quietly, steadily, surely, through their narrow channel, to supply all the needs of the people of God in the holy city. We may enjoy those waters, in a spiritual sense, if we but rely upon them and turn our backs upon the shining waters that have been gathered together and remain held together by the mind and power of man. David in the twenty-third psalm sings of his being led by the Lord beside the stillwaters, where his soul became restored and where he found the quiet pathways of righteousness. Perhaps he too had followed the course of the Divine sustenance which he knew his soul needed.

This is a great truth, enshrined in this vivid picture. Divine provision for all our needs! The lesson is as necessary to us as it was to Israel after the flesh—perhaps more so, for we live in a day that offers far more in the way of distraction and attraction. There are more theories abroad, more subtle reasonings that tend to turn our minds away from the "truth as it is in Jesus". Especially is it so in this latter day, the day of the world's trouble and world's judgment, when the keenest and brightest of human minds are busy devising plans and schemes to restore the balance of the world without calling upon the aid of God, and the constantly deferred expectations of the "saints" tempt more than a few to give some ear to the alternatives suggested by man. Is that why the forty-sixth Psalm, in the midst of its description of world judgment, reminds us once more of the river of God that will supply all our needs? *"Though the earth be removed . . . though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea . . . though the waters thereof rage and swell . . . though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. . ."* Yet, for all this . . . *"there is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God."* In the midst of the din and clash of earth's kingdoms, locked in deadly conflict, falling and disintegrating into irretrievable ruin, the waters of Shiloah flow softly still, yielding refreshment and strength to all who continue to put their faith in them. *"In quietness and confidence shall be your strength."*

It is only to be expected that this Divine provision for the people of God should evoke a response of praise to God. That at any rate is the theme of the Psalmist's words in the sixty-fifth psalm. The whole psalm is one of praise. It opens with the well-known words *"Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion; and unto thee shall the vow be performed"* and in verses 9 and 10 the singer seems clearly to have brought the underground "river of God" into the scope of his song, *"Thou visiteth the earth, and waterest it; thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water"*. Now this could be a poetic phrase with no intentional application to any particular river, just a rapturous acknowledgment of the blessings of rain and water wherewith the land could bring forth its increase. On the other hand, the expression "the river of God" is significant, and the phraseology of the next verse does seem to indicate that David had the waters of Shiloah very specially in mind when he composed this noble psalm. *"Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly; thou settlest the furrows thereof"* The word for "furrow" is *geled*, meaning a man made channel or a mechanical excavation. It is used to describe the aqueducts which were made all over the land to convey the precious water without risking its loss by evaporation. "Settlest" means to descend, to go down, or to deepen. There is the thought here of the life-giving water descending or flowing down an excavation in the course of its beneficent work, an apt description of the stream from the Virgin's Fountain flowing through the underground aqueduct to the Pool of

Shiloah. In his joy at the continued providence of God thus manifested David cries "thou crownest the year with thy goodness . . . the valleys are covered over with corn, they shout for joy, they also sing." A continuous song of praise is pictured as rising to God from all things in the land, animate and inanimate, because the living water is flowing and does not fail.

In a spiritual sense our lives should be like that. In all our circumstances and in all our activities the background of praise should always be evident. We may not at all times see the river flowing; our ears may not continuously hear the murmur of its waters; the outward evidence of its presence may become for a while hard to discern or appreciate, *but the river is always there*. The waters of Shiloah will never fail, they can never fail, for they come forth from God. And while the waters flow our welfare is assured and we can—and should—continue to give praise to God. Like the sunlit valleys in David's psalm, we can shout for joy; we can also sing!

Isaiah, too, rises to this high plane of praise for the blessings of the river of God, but true to his character he wants to bring all men into the picture and extend his view far beyond the Gospel Age and the Church, into the Messianic Age and the world of men. Neither has he yet finished with those Assyrian canals on which he poured such scorn previously, even though knowing, and declaring, that the great river would triumph temporarily over the river of God insofar as unfaithful Israel was concerned. But Isaiah knew that the great river would be rolled back and the river of God come into its own again, in due time, and by a bold reversal of imagery he sees the quiet waters of Shiloah expand and increase and invade the territory of the great river and reach, with its life giving waters, all the world.

"Look upon Zion" he cries "*the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken. But there the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams, wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby.*" (Isa. 33. 20-21). These "broad rivers and streams" are the ship canals and irrigation channels of Assyria, intersecting the level fields of that almost completely flat country in all direction, used both for agricultural and the transport of men and goods. Shipping of all kinds, from tiny coracles made of wickerwork and covered with bitumen, to boats capable of carrying a hundred tons of goods, crowded those waterways, continually, Isaiah looked at all that in the spirit of his mind, then at the quiet little stream bubbling out of the hillside below the Temple, and said, in effect "In that day when Jerusalem is pronounced holy to the Lord, He will cause those quiet waters of Shiloah to become great rivers and canals overspreading all the land bringing life wheresoever they come. But there will be no ships"; the "galleys with oars" and "gallant ships" were the merchant vessels and the war vessels, for the Assyrians had battleships suited to their day and age; and Isaiah made it plain then and there that the evils of commercialism and militarism will have no place in that new land of living waters which the Lord God is to introduce when the "broken cisterns" of men have passed away.

The waters of Shiloah will not always flow in secret, hidden from sight, disesteemed of men and precious only in the sight of God and those who trust in God. Men will not always look to the shining waters of Assyria for their needs and put their trust in that which is man-made to the ignoring of that which is God-made. The waters of Shiloah will one day flow forth to meet the needs of all the world. It is Ezekiel who makes that so very plain. In his vision of the Millennial Temple he sees waters emerging from underneath the sanctuary, at the south side of the altar, flowing eastward and emerging again under the outer wall at the south side of the east gate. It is an interesting fact that the literal stream that has its source in some undiscovered subterranean recess deep down below the place where Solomon's Temple stood does emerge below the city wall, half way down the side of the valley, on the south of the Eastern Gate, from thence flowing into the Virgin's Fountain and onward to the Pool of Siloam. Ezekiel's description is really a poetic replica of the stream that actually exists at Jerusalem. It is impossible to avoid the thought that he had that well-known stream in mind when he saw the vision. And he saw it going outward into the country, growing wider and deeper all the time, until at last as a mighty torrent it reached the eastern sea, the Dead Sea, and healed those salt laden waters so that they too became fresh and pure. "*Everything shall live whither the river cometh*" he said. (Ezek. 47. 9). And as he looked, he saw trees, trees on both sides, growing rapidly and coming to maturity, evergreen trees whose leaves never faded and whose fruit was borne continually. That fruit, he said, was to be for the food of man, and those leaves for medicine, for the healing of the nations, and the source of the virtue that resided in both fruit and leaves was the river of life in which the trees were rooted, a mighty flood that will encompass all the world and will reach every man, the waters of Shiloah, flowing out from the sanctuary, becoming a river of water of life to which all are invited to come, and of which all are urged to partake. "*The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.*" (Rev. 22. 17.).

The waters of Shiloah will flow to all eternity, for life can only be sustained by the continuing power of God. Through all the long cycles of the endless ages of glory, man will depend upon God for life and will look to him for life, and that life will come ceaselessly, surely, enduringly, out of the sanctuary where God dwells,

and reach to the farthest bounds of his material creation. The waters will never cease, for man himself will never cease to be. In God, the Father of all, men will live, and move, and have their being.

Dwelling in the Lord

To dwell in Christ means to be in the closest relationship with Him; there must be agreement, harmony, and a unity of purpose, producing a feeling of confidence and goodwill. The closeness of this relationship is shown clearly in the beautiful illustration of the vine and its branches. The vine is the stem or trunk that produces and supports the branches which bear the fruit. The branch is part of the vine with which it must remain connected. "Abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit except it abide in the vine, no more can you except you abide in me." (John 15:4) Here the word "abide" has the same meaning as the word "dwelleth" in 1 John 3:24, for we surely dwell in God as we continue to abide in Christ.

We dwell or abide in Him by doing His will, keeping His commandments, and He abides or dwells in us. This union is a double one - we in Him and He in us. To establish and maintain this union it is necessary to keep His commandments; God cannot dwell in us unless we dwell in Him. "If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him." (John 14:23) In Psalm 37:3, we read, "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." Here also is implied a spirit of concord without which God's bounty could not be enjoyed. His commandments must be kept, then the promise of peace and plenty would be fulfilled.

Further, the prophet says, "He that walketh righteously and speaketh uprightly, he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil, he shall dwell on high, his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks; bread shall be given him; his water shall be sure." (Isa. 33:15,16) Again, the condition attached to the promise is righteousness, and he who does righteously has the spirit of God and dwelleth in Him. Under the dispensation existing at the time of the Psalmist and Prophet, the promises were earthly, and to enjoy God's favour it was necessary to keep His commandments, just as it is now if we would receive His spiritual favours.

"Hereby we know that He abideth in us by the spirit which He hath given us." In Romans 8:9 & 14, we read, "But you are not in the flesh, but in the spirit if so be that the spirit of God dwell in you; for as many as are led by the spirit of God are the children of God." Being led by the spirit of God is abundant evidence of the inward presence of God's spirit, which leads us to seek those things which are above rather than mind the things of the earth.

God's own Peace

When the heart has found God's own peace, the peace which knows no explanation and surpasses all our dreams, it has passed beyond the pale of agony to the quietness of a strong repose. Peace is life PLUS God. It is God handling life for us; God dealing with our affairs for us; God interpreting life's experiences for us. Such peace is beyond our understanding, but not beyond our living.

Journeying Homeward

Nothing so establishes the mind amid the turbulence of present things, as both a look above them, and a look beyond them, ABOVE them to the steady and good Hand by which they are ruled, and BEYOND them to the beautiful end to which by that Hand they will be brought.



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A New Year Greeting

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all” (2 Thess 3:18)

As we enter upon another year could we do so ..with better words than these, or words of greater promise? As the old year passes and the new is ushered in, we greet each other with good wishes. Could we do so more fittingly than in the words of our text?

The fashion of this world is rapidly passing away. As we face the future and realize life’s uncertainties, whether we be young or old, if we take our life thoughtfully, and in a Christian spirit, especially if we have consecrated ourselves to do the Father’s will by walking in the footsteps of Jesus to the best of our ability, we feel our need of a higher wisdom, a more pure and enduring energy than our own, to guide our steps, to mould our character, to shape our lot for us.

And so we look up to God and ask, both for ourselves and for the whole dear family of God, his benediction for the year which lies ahead of us, his grace upon all our days and on all our ways – grace sufficient for every time of need, teaching us how to make all things contribute to our highest welfare, thus securing, alike from the bleak winds of adversity as from the warm winds of prosperity, real and lasting benefits.

THE GRACE OF OUR LORD

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with *you*. ” Do not these words meet *your* sense of need, *your* craving for good, *your* hope of a benediction which will make your new year bright with the lustre of a joyous, holy living? To Paul they conveyed and implied so much, they were so bright with hope, that, as another has observed, “they became his standing good wish for those whom he loved.” They appear at the close of nearly all the letters he wrote, in one place reading, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you”; in another, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit”; and here, in our text, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.”

It is entirely possible, however, that the very frequency with which we meet these words, has served to dull their force and clearness. As another has expressed, “People, in reading the Bible, are often not conscious of the extreme listlessness with which they pass along the familiar and oft repeated words of Scripture, without the impression of their meaning being at all present with the thoughts,—and how, during the mechanical currency of the verses through their lips, the thinking power is asleep for whole passages together.”

Perhaps this is true in regard to our text. We may never have asked what the words meant originally, and still mean, what the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ was and is, and in what senses that grace may be with us, and be the crown and benediction of our whole life. It will be worth our while therefore, if we meditate on the text long enough to note that the phrase “grace of Christ” would convey at least three ideas to the members of the early Church, and should convey the same ideas to us; and that if the grace of Christ is to “be with us” or “with our spirit” we must in all these senses reproduce it, and make it our own.

THE GRACEFULNESS OF CHRIST

The first thought which this phrase would suggest to Paul’s readers, especially to his Grecian readers – and most of them were Greeks – would be the gracefulness, the charm, of Christ. They would understand the Apostle to refer to that exquisite sensibility to beauty, the beauty of nature and of man, by which Christ was distinguished; that love of all that is fair and pure and good which gave a beauty, a winning charm, an attractiveness, to his person, his character, his manner and bearing, and to his words, which no heart not wholly dead to beauty and goodness was able to resist.

Both the Puritan concept and the Monastic, or ascetic, concept of Christ have gone far to hide this thought from us – so far that it has been argued from such texts as “His face was more marred than that of any man” that they do greatly err who attribute any comeliness to the Man of Sorrows. It is difficult, however, to believe that One born of a pure virgin and begotten of the Holy Spirit, the spirit of goodness and beauty, could be other than the most pure, beautiful, and attractive of men.

Who can believe that the one perfect man, he whose majestic bearing was such as to elicit from Pilate the exclamation, “Behold the Man!” was destitute of any outward and visible sign of his inward perfection? A lovely spirit does, indeed, transfigure even the plainest features and lend them a charm beyond that of a simply formal beauty; but a lovely spirit in a lovely form is a still more potent force. Hence the great painters who have invested the face and figure of our Lord with all the perfections of manly beauty, and who have added a pathetic charm to that beauty by depicting the perfect face as worn and wasted with thought, with compassion, with all the toil and burden of his great work of love, have reason on their side, and give us, we may be sure, a far truer concept of him than either the Puritan or the Monk.

For the whole story of his life shows both that he was exquisitely sensitive to beauty in every form, and that he had the still rarer power of reproducing that beauty in his words and ways. The whole world of nature lives again in his discourses and parables, to prove how keen he was to note the loveliness of the world around him; while these same parables and discourses are so perfect, both in substance and in expression, as to prove that he could reproduce this beauty in still more exquisite and enduring forms.

What a keen eye for beauty of character, for a latent unsuspected goodness, must he have possessed, who saw in doubting Nathanael, an Israelite indeed; in fickle and impetuous Peter, a steadfast rock; in timid and halting Nicodemus, and in the woman of Samaria, fitting recipients for the deepest truths of his kingdom; in Mary’s waste of ointment, an insight which transcended that of the Apostles; and in the self-humiliation of the woman who was a sinner, a love capable of transforming her into a saint!

He who spoke the most beautiful words that have fallen from human lips; he who clothed perfect thoughts in forms so perfect that the noblest spirits of every subsequent age have held them to be “sweeter than honey” and more precious than “much fine gold,” and yet in forms so simple that the common people have always heard them gladly; he who was at home with all classes, learned and ignorant, rich and poor, powerful or enslaved, who saw good even in the worst, and found something to pity, something to love in even the forlornest outcast; he to whom little children ran for a caress, round whom wronged women and outcast men gathered as to a friend—was there no beauty, no charm, in him? Was there not rather a charm which no open and susceptible heart could withstand?

This beauty, this charm, this gracefulness, is to be with us, is to be ours, if “the grace of Christ” is to be with us. That is to say, the wish, the benediction of our text summons us to cultivate the love of all that is fair, all that is good—all that is fair in nature, all that is good in men; and to reproduce it, so far as we may, in our words, in our manner, in our lives. We are not to be content with being sourly or austere good, but to aim at being winningly and attractively good.

The beautiful mind, the beautiful manner, of Christ, the charm of his character, his speech, his dealings with men and women, be with us all—this is part of what our new year’s wish implies.

THE GRACIOUSNESS OF CHRIST

But graceful manners soon break down under the strain of change, familiarity, or time, unless they spring from and express a gracious heart. And hence we must be reminded of the second meaning latent in our text. For if “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ” would suggest gracefulness to a Greek, to a Jew it would suggest graciousness, a willing, friendly, genial spirit; not righteousness simply, but a genial righteousness; not beneficence simply, but a friendly beneficence.

There are those who are weighted all their lives by an unwilling, a reluctant, an unsympathetic temperament. They do not easily consent to what is proposed to them; their first impulse is to say *no* rather than *yes*. Not only is courtesy difficult to them, but thoughtfulness for others, consideration for their wishes, a lenient judgement of their faults, a kindly interest in that which interests *them*. Their instinct is to differ rather than to concur, to wrangle rather than to assent, to criticize and condemn rather than to work with their neighbours and yield to their influence. Hence, strive as they will – and few but themselves know how hard and bitter the strife sometimes is – they lack the friendly tone, the genial manner, which commands confidence and love, and even when they do good are apt to do it awkwardly and in a way which hurts or offends even those whom they help. They do not give *themselves* with their gifts.

But we find no trace of this stiff, reluctant, self-contained disposition in Jesus Christ. Little though he had to give as the world counts gifts, the world has never seen a benefactor to be compared with him. Not only did he give himself for us all, but he gave *himself* with all his gifts, gave all he had, or all they could take, to every man or woman who

approached him. There was nothing he could do which he was not prepared to do for any who asked his help. So gracious was he, so steadfastly did his will stand at the yielding or giving point, that virtue went out of him without any conscious exercise of will, whenever the hand of faith or need was laid upon him.

How interested he was in all who spoke with him, however ignorant or faulty they might be! How deeply he looked into their hearts; how he drew them on, and drew them out, till they had told him their inmost secret, till they had relieved their bosoms of the perilous stuff hidden there; and then how wisely and delicately he adapted his words and gifts to their needs; as, for example, when he talked with the woman of Samaria by the well! How ready he was to love them, or any trace of good in them, till they rose “to match the promise in his eyes”; as, for instance, in the faith of the Syrophenician woman!

How much good he saw in them which the world could not see, and of which they themselves had lost sight; as, for example, in Zaccheus, that true son of Abraham, whom the Pharisees mistook for a child of the devil, and in the woman who bathed his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head! How quick he was to detect any moment of weakness in those who had a little faith in him but held it with a feeble grasp, and how prompt to strengthen them against any sudden pressure of unbelief; as for example, when he said to the faltering ruler of the synagogue, “Only believe; all things are possible to him that believeth”!

But we should have to go through the whole story of his life to fully recount the innumerable proofs of his graciousness, of his willing and friendly heart; the graciousness which enabled him to give so much, though of outward good he had so little to give, and which made his every gift a charm, an elevating and abiding power, to those who received it, or who listened to the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth.

Yet, with all this graciousness, there was no softness, no weakness, no insincerity, such as is often found associated with a kindly temperament; there was nothing inconsiderate, or indiscriminate, in his boundless charity; no yielding at a single point at which it would have been wrong to yield; no want of faithfulness, or even of severity where severity was needed. He was sincere as he was sympathetic, rare as that combination is. He who cured a sinful man of the paralysis induced by vice, also warned him, “Sin no more, lest a worst thing come upon thee.”

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us all in this sense also. May his graciousness, his kindly consideration for others, his genial, warm manner, his friendly tone, be ours.

THE FAVOUR, THE REDEEMING LOVE OF CHRIST

But perhaps one, at this point, might feel led to say, “Well, if the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ means gracefulness and graciousness, then I am afraid it is impossible for me. For I am neither very graceful nor gracious; and while I am learning to appreciate better all that is lovely and fair, both in nature and in people, to reproduce such loveliness in my own thoughts and words and deeds is another matter, and as for being gracious, that does not come at all easily to me.”

Ah! beloved, if the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ meant only his gracefulness or his graciousness, we would all be in great discouragement. But the word has another, a third, meaning, one with which we have long been familiar. The Apostle reminds us of this meaning in 2 Corinthians 8:9: “Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might become rich.” Yes, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ means also his favor, his active, redeeming, and renewing love, freely bestowed upon us, and because of this we may entertain high hopes of having his grace, in the other two meanings of the word, fulfilled in us also.

In the New Testament, the grace of Christ is constantly used in this third sense, far more commonly in this sense than in any other. Its most frequent use denotes a divine and loving energy or quality which not only forgives, but also cleanses us from, our iniquity; which not only pardons, but redeems us from, our faults and sins; an energy which attends us through our whole career to guard us against temptation or make us strong enough to resist temptation; able to change, elevate, and purify our whole character and disposition, and to recreate us in its own likeness.

Who dare say that, with this giving, and forgiving energy, this redeeming and renewing grace, ever at work upon and in them, they cannot become pure, friendly, and gracious in heart, and, therefore, simple, courteous, and even graceful in manner and in speech? Who dare despair of themselves or give up self-culture as hopeless, if the strong Son of God is ever waiting to help, ever seeking to bestow his gracefulness, his graciousness, to exert his forgiving and redeeming power upon them, to recast their mind and character, and disposition, and temperament, on the larger, fairer, lines of his own?

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us all”; the grace which redeems, renews, recreates the inward man of the heart, and so clothes even the outward man of behaviour with a new and friendlier charm. Amen – so let it be.

(From the “Herald”)

They Had Been With Jesus

How much is told respecting Peter and John, and what their opponents thought of them, in the words of Acts 4:13 - "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus."

One of the remarkable things connected with an understanding of the Plan of God is its effect upon those who receive it - its transforming effect, its renewing effect. As the Lord knew and foretold, the Gospel message has not in general appealed specially to the rich, the great or the learned; these feel themselves above the Master's teachings, and are comparatively satisfied with their conditions.

The Gospel message takes hold chiefly upon those less favoured in this present life, and this is true as well of the special features of truth as of the general features of the Gospel message. In every case, however, the marked effect of the Gospel of Christ is manifested where it is received into a good and honest heart. It lifts up. It gives courage instead of fear. It gives hope instead of despondency. It gives an aim and purpose in life instead of futility. It cultivates the will and manifests itself in the open expression of the eye, the alertness of the step, the increased deftness of the hand, and the loosening of the tongue to speak of the Lord and His grace.

It is well with us, as with the apostles, that those about us should note that we have the courage of our convictions; that we fear the Lord only; that our highest aim is to give out the good tidings of great joy to all who have the hearing ear. But here we need to note more particularly the importance of the second feature of the verse, namely that "they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus" - that they were His disciples, learners in His school. This is truly the important thing for us - to learn of Jesus, to become like Him.

It is right that we should give due weight to doctrinal knowledge of the Divine character and plan, as set forth in the Word of God. But while emphasising this and its absolute necessity to our growth in grace, how important that all the Lord's followers keep in mind those features of the Master's teachings which constitute more particularly His spirit, His disposition. The sum of these is LOVE. Of our Heavenly Father it is declared that "God is love", so also love is the special characteristic of our Redeemer, who was the image, the very reflection of the Father.

The analysis of love, as given by the apostle Paul, may be understood to be an analysis of the Divine character as exemplified in our Lord Jesus - meekness, gentleness, patience, longsuffering, brotherly-kindness, love, And since all His followers are invited to become disciples or learners, under Him as their Teacher, it follows that all who truly learn of Him will gradually attain to these same elements of His character.

How better could we proclaim our relationship to Him? How better could we recommend to others the School of Christ? How better could we show forth the praises of our Master than by living out His example, representing His character before others. Surely, this is the significance of His injunction, "Let your light so shine before men that they, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father who is in heaven." It is proper indeed that we let our doctrines shine out before men, but it is specially important that we let the character of Christ shine out. It is also important that the doctrines and the character correspond and co-attest to each other.

We remember our Lord's words, "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another." This was His new commandment that we should love one another as He has loved us - with a pure, unselfish love, which thinks no evil, does not vaunt self, is not easily offended, does not seek its own - the love which lays down time, energy and even life itself for the brethren.

We may never become entirely satisfactory to ourselves in thought, word and deed while still in the flesh, and we may never, therefore, be entirely satisfactory to others; but we can, we should, we must, and by the grace of God let us each resolve that we will, attain to all of this, so far as our hearts are concerned. Nothing short of this will be satisfactory to our Lord, to whom we are "betrothed" as members of the chaste, virgin church. If we fail to come up to this reasonable, possible standard, we will fail to make our calling and election sure to a place in the Bride company.

But if we do these things, if at heart we are at this standard, if we are daily seeking to live it to the best of our ability, the heavenly Bridegroom will rejoice to own us as His elect. How much indeed depends upon our learning this lesson! "If you know these things, happy are you if you do them." (John 13:17)

"Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure, for if you do these things, you shall never fall; for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," (2 Peter 1:10,11)

The Lord's Requirements

"What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" – Micah 6:8

BASICALLY the Lord's righteous requirements of his people in every age are the same although the details in each age will differ. God's people in the Jewish Age were required to render obedience to the Law. In the present age they are called upon to bear witness to the Gospel, and thus to show forth the praises of him who has called them out of darkness into his marvelous light. And there are other differences of detail in what God requires of his people from age to age, but these are to be accomplished within the framework of those righteous requirements stated in our text – to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.

In so far as the followers of Jesus are concerned, there are many varied allurements which might entice them away from the path of righteousness. One of these is highlighted in the two verses preceding our text. We quote: "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" Then follow the words, "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good," implying that the outline just stated is not considered good by the Lord, and what the Lord does consider good is to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with him.

Satan is too wily a foe to suggest alternatives to the will of God which are related in no way to instructions which God has given. What Satan does is to distort those instructions to give them a meaning which the Lord never intended, and thus to lead the righteous away from the true path of righteousness. The question, "Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old?" takes us back to some of the requirements of the Law. God had indicated that under certain circumstances burnt offerings would be acceptable to him – an evidence of the true heart condition of those who presented them. He also indicated that calves of a year old could be offered acceptably to him as sacrifices.

But the question implied here is, since this is true, could we be pleasing to the Lord simply by presenting burnt offerings to him or calves of a year old? Certainly that would be a simple way of discharging our responsibility toward the great Creator of the universe. But the Lord never intended that any of his people should take this viewpoint of his requirements and ignore every other aspect of his will.

The next question is, "Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil?" Here is a subtle suggestion indeed! In God's dealings with Israel under the Law he did require, in connection with the tabernacle services, the offering of rams, and indicated that this would indeed be pleasing, and in accordance with his will. But this did not mean that all the Lord required was the continual bringing to him of rams to be sacrificed.

The Lord required oil in connection with the typical services of the tabernacle and in the anointing of Israel's kings. But that did not suggest that one could discharge his responsibility to the Lord simply by offering huge quantities of oil—described in the text as "ten thousands of rivers of oil."

The Lord's people of the present age are not asked by him to bring rams and oil as sacrifices. We are invited to present our own bodies as living sacrifices, with the assurance that they are holy and acceptable to God. (Rom. 12:1) There are various facets of the Lord's will in respect to the manner in which we present ourselves in sacrifice, and if we are not watchful the subtle suggestion will appeal to our minds to make a hobby of one or more of these and ignore the others.

The Lord, for example, has indicated clearly that it is pleasing to him for his people to study his Word, that they might become well acquainted with his will and be able to serve him acceptably. But this does not mean that serving the Lord consists entirely of Bible study. Indeed, Bible study itself is but a preparation for the Lord's service, enabling the Lord's people to know what he wants done, and when and how. So, symbolically speaking, if the Lord has asked us to bring one ram for a sacrifice, let us not suppose that he will be pleased if we bring a thousand rams and ignore everything else which he requires.

Oil is something used in the Bible as a symbol of the Holy Spirit, and the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts produces the fruit of the Spirit – love, joy, peace, brotherly kindness, patience. This is, indeed, a beautiful facet of the Christian life. But being a Christian includes other things. There is work to be done – hard work, and loads to lift – heavy loads.

Simply being joyful in the Lord is beautiful, and one of the present inheritances of the new creation, but it is not supposed to supplant the work which the Lord wants us to do in his service. He does want us to have the Holy Spirit, and to pray for more of the Holy Spirit, but he would not be happy if we thought that bringing him ten thousand rivers of oil would fulfill his will toward us.

DOING JUSTLY

The Lord says that one of his basic requirements of righteousness in connection with his people is to do justly. This is simply an expression of the principle of justice as exemplified in the Golden Rule. We might at first be inclined to think that we have already passed this test; that for a long time we have practiced justice in our dealings with one another. But are we sure of this?

The Golden Rule speaks of doing unto others as we would that they do unto us. Perhaps it would be well to ask ourselves each day whether or not we have adhered to this principle. Have we refrained from doing unto others what we would not have them do unto us? Perhaps a sincere effort to do this would make each day one in which we would not only be happier ourselves, but would be a great blessing to those with whom we come in contact. How vital indeed is this requirement to do justly!

LOVING MERCY

The second requirement of righteousness mentioned in our text is to love mercy. Mercy itself is a noble and godlike quality, but the Hebrew word here translated mercy is in many other instances translated loving-kindness. This gives us the unique expression of loving loving-kindness. Are we so fully in harmony with God's righteous quality of loving-kindness—unselfishness—that we can say that we are in love with it?

The things with which we are in love take first place in our hearts. We consider them of the greatest importance. Does the love of God take first place in our hearts? We are told that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son. This means that one of the manifestations of love is unselfish giving, and in the case of our Heavenly Father it was the giving of the dearest treasure of his heart. Are we in love with that thought, and is this love influencing us to loving sacrifice that others might be blessed? How exacting indeed is the requirement “to love mercy,” or loving-kindness!

WALKING HUMBLY WITH GOD

To walk humbly with our God means to be so fully dedicated to the doing of his will that we will not knowingly take a step in life's journey that would be displeasing to him. As long as we are in the flesh we will need to contend with the selfish desires of the flesh, and these desires are almost always contrary to the will of God. If we allow these desires to override the will of God as we go our own way, then we are not walking humbly with him.

To walk humbly with our God means earnestness in our study of his Word to know his will; it means determination to do that will no matter what the cost may be; it means the willingness to give up time, and strength, and money in the service which he has committed to his people in this age; it means doing all these things in the spirit of humility and joy – not rebelling against anything which the Lord indicates in his Word to be his will. All this the Lord requires!

Thou Knowest Lord

Thou knowest Lord, Thou knowest all about me,
And all the winding way my feet have trod;
And now Thou knowest I cannot go without Thee,
To guide me onward through the swelling flood.

Thou knowest my way - how lone, how dark, how cheerless
If Thy dear hand I fail in all to see;
Bright with Thy smile of love, my heart is fearless
When in my weakness I can lean on Thee.

Give me Thy presence! Go Thou, Lord, before me,
Make a plain path where all is rough and drear,
So let me trust the love that watches o'er me,
And in the shadows still believe Thee near.

All He asks

Just to humbly walk with Him,
Where the light is never dim;
Just to listen to His voice,
And to make His will thy choice;

Just to follow where He leads,
Trusting Him to fill all needs;
Just to trust Him and obey,
That is all He asks today.

Underneath are the Everlasting Arms

(CONVENTION ADDRESS)

“The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. – Deut. 33:27.

What wonderful consolations for the saints of God are to be found in the Bible, that “Boon most sacred from the Lord.” How very appropriate and beautiful is the Apostle’s reference to our God and Father, as “The God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulations.” (2 Cor. 1:3,4.)

To that “great cloud of witnesses” tested and approved in former ages, God was faithful in giving all needed comfort and consolation, so that they should not be discouraged in their desire to merit His favor. The stern requirements of the Law, with its inevitable condemnation, did not make up the sum of Divine revelation even in those days before “grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” To Patriarchs and Prophets, and to all who were “Israelites indeed,” this word of comforting assurance was spoken – “For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.” (Isa. 57:15.)

The warmth of His love, his comforting considerations, therefore, could not be hidden entirely from view behind the inflexible demand of a law which said, “This do and thou shalt live.” His character is such that He must and would remember that even those who delighted in His law and trembled at His unalterable Word, were but dust, incapable of perfect goodness, because evil was so painfully present with them. As we are privileged to know Him today revealed in Christ, so He has always been in character, the same unchangeable God.

The fuller revelation that came with the light of the Gospel, wherein Jesus revealed that “God is love,” was marvellously anticipated in those oft-repeated assurances of that fact given to those men and women of other ages “of whom the world was not worthy,” and who, notwithstanding the utter impossibility of gaining life through the law, “had this testimony that they pleased God.” Thus it is that we find, scattered like guiding stars above their pathway, constant reiterations of this love given to faithful ones long before the Gospel’s “exceeding great and precious promises” shed their rays of light upon the path of the Church. To those humble and contrite ones God gave ample assurance that in all their trials and difficulties He was near with His grace to sustain and His comfort to cheer.

When *servants* of God’s household enjoyed such assurances of His abiding presence and protection as was given to this “great cloud of witnesses,” how very near then should He seem to the *sons* of His family now. If to servants He would say, “As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you.” what tender consolations He must speak to His own spirit-begotten children. If to obedient, loyal servants encouragement was given in the knowledge that “The Eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the Everlasting Arms,” what measures of protection and grace will be the present portion of the dear children of His love.

For these, “some better thing” has been reserved in all God’s appointments, embracing present privileges and future rewards. Surely then such favored children must be encouraged as they hear this “voice behind” them speaking in tones of amplified assurance, testifying to the faithfulness of God toward all who love Him. Plainly this voice must give strength as they hear it directing them in the way that they should walk, and additionally, establishing their faith in the promised grace sufficient for every time of need; yea, that God “is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.” (Eph. 3:20.)

Could He say more than He has said in giving us so many “exceeding great and precious promises, that by these we might be made partakers of the Divine nature?” – promises which meet our every experience and need, promises which can never be broken, for they are the promises of One who cannot lie. These precious pledges of God, how dependable they are! Behind us lie long centuries of His care over His people, and the testimony of all such who have preceded us comes floating down with the faith-inspiring assurance that “there hath not failed one word of all His good promises.” (1 Kings 8:56.) Six thousand years of unfailing faithfulness through every possible emergency that could serve to test it –and He has been all this to His people, though none of them have been wholly perfect in their faithfulness to Him.

What more indeed can He say to us then, than we have in these promises—“Wherein God, willing more

abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.” (Heb. 6:17,18) Who then, or what power, “shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.” (Rom. 8:35,37.)

It may well thrill our hearts to recall the love of Christ for His church collectively, and to remember that all the saints making up that Body are His peculiar charge, for we love to share the joy with all who join in love for Him. But he wants us to realise a more intimate and personal place in that special care He exercises over His own. “He calleth His own sheep by name.” This is the picture Jesus gives us of the shepherd’s intimacy which He has established with the sheep who are all His own. What can He mean by this illustration if not to teach us that each one of us may enjoy so close and personal a relationship as this? Beyond question He is “a good shepherd,” and by God’s appointment He is the “great Shepherd of the sheep”; but more precious still, and best of all, is the fact that each one of the true sheep may say, “The Lord is *my* Shepherd.”

His love is an individualising love, and his attentions are blessedly individual and personal too. The attention I individually need is in no danger of being overlooked in His care for all. By His rod and staff I personally am both comforted and corrected. He is my very faithful Shepherd when He leads me beside the quiet waters and into the green pastures, and He is just as faithful and loving when He lays the rod to my back when my feet wander out of the way, or when I follow other voices than His. O how short would have been my enjoyment of those quiet waters and verdant pastures if He had not been a Shepherd of whom I could say, “He restoreth my soul,” or as a better rendering gives it, “He restores me when wandering.” Prone as we are to wander, none but He could be a Shepherd equal to our needs.

Thus again we are reminded of those Everlasting Arms of God’s provision for us – they are always underneath—underneath our need of a “faithful and merciful High Priest,” faithful to commend when we have done well, and faithful to chastise, and to scourge, if need be, “every son whom the Father receiveth.” Acknowledging, then, our need of discipline lest we run to wood-making rather than fruit-bearing, and confessing our repeated failure to be wholly obedient to Him, we cannot but love Him for giving us the corrections we so much need, and especially so when we know that all the while those Everlasting Arms are underneath us. We could not be otherwise than grateful, for “We have had fathers of our flesh who corrected us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but He for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness.” (Heb. 12:9,10.)

How great is His mercy and compassion! What pains He has taken to make it clear that He is “touched with a feeling of our infirmities.” If in contrition of heart we are constantly humiliated by our failure and chagrined by the fact that we might well confess ourselves “the chief of sinners,” what then? O to grace what a debtor we are made! Just when it would seem that there is ground for assured defeat and failure, we discover anew that “The eternal God is thy refuge; and underneath are the Everlasting Arms.” He has anticipated our well-nigh abandoned hope of continuing in His love. He therefore does not come to us and add to our discouragement by saying, What man of you having an hundred sheep, if *one of the best and most faithful of them* wanders away, will he not go out and search for it until he find it? Ah no, our need is to have One “who can have compassion on the ignorant, and them that are out of the way,” and such He assured us He is.

No matter how weak and frail we are, if the heart be true, He abideth faithful, and for us He tells it thus: “What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them (*any one* of them) doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing . . . Likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth.” (Luke 15:4, 5,7.) Truly “the goodness of God leadeth to repentance” and the knowledge of the Everlasting Arms underneath constrains our hearts to more watchful diligence, lest we grieve the patient love of God.

But even if we have not wandered so far afield as this, but seem to have remained within the fold, heeding not the voice of strangers, and zealously intent on obeying the Shepherd’s voice, even then how constantly we are made to realise with increasing clearness the debt of love we owe. Dwelling here where faith may rest in the completeness of His provision for us, what joy there is in remembering that though knowing us as we really are, He loves us just the same. Ah yes, He sees and knows us as we really want to be. No one knows better than He that in attempting to live, we are often spoiling our own work by incongruous temper, or incongruous conduct.

Can we find anywhere a basis for a new beginning in which our confidence, shaken by failure and misunderstanding, can once more lift itself up into joy? Blessed is he who realises in such an hour that he still has left love’s last and greatest refuge, Christ’s knowledge of our sincerity; “Thou knowest that I love thee.” Whatever my own poor, faulty words and ways may say to others, awakening in their minds doubts of my sincerity; whatever the verdicts of others may be concerning me; whatever my own memory holds up before

me of inconsistency and error—"Thou knowest that I love Thee."

In every new experience, in every new temptation, in hours of strength, in hours of contrition, still we say to Him those same words of the deeper, holier fellowship, "Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee."

My beloved Master, "Thou knowest all things." All power in heaven and in earth has been given to Thee. Thou knowest the great secrets of the Father's purposes. To Thee it has been given to know all the contents of the scroll within and without. But of all Thy boundless knowledge, this only gives me courage to come to Thee, and offer Thee this day my faulty life: – O blessed Saviour, "Thou knowest that I love Thee." Here then is the saint's rest; here our faith may drop its anchor in the calm sure heaven of the comforting assurance that "The Eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the Everlasting Arms."



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The Greatest of These Is Love

"And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love"-1 Cor 13:13.

In the above text the Apostle makes mention of the necessary qualities that characterise the life of the Christian. These are faith, hope, and love. Over and over again in his epistles he emphasises the importance of all three of these qualities, and shows that love is the greatest of the three. When the Apostle desires to describe all those elements that make up the ideal character, he uses the word "love"; when he desires to point out a single principle, which, if applied in the daily life of the Christian, will be a simple rule of conduct, he calls it "love." "Now the end of the commandment is love, out of a pure heart." "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the Law."

One has thus most eloquently described this Divine quality as a principle of conduct – "Love is the substance of all righteousness, holiness, duty and obedience . . . It is the simple principle which constitutes the key to everything in the Christian life. It takes all the complexity out of life, and reduces duty to one simple, primal element of love; to love God and our fellow-men, and everything else will take care of itself. In human machinery, simplicity is the essence of power, and the secret of **success**. In God's great mechanism of morals and of holiness, there are two simple principles, like the poles on which this globe turns. The one is faith, the other is love, and like the poles they are true and fixed, whence all life revolves, like the great globe upon its axis, with unbroken uniformity and unwavering tranquillity."

Love is one of the great influential attributes of God's character. It is the inspiring motive that moves Him in dealing with His creatures. Even in man's intercourse with his fellow-men, it is the highest, the most powerful, as a motive of conduct or a principle of action. It has been truly said that "Love will accomplish anything that it undertakes. Love will make any burden light, any task easy."

Love made Paul's privations like the flight of eagles' wings. Love sends out the missionary without any personal interest on earth, to labour and suffer and die in some far distant country, in the very luxury of self-sacrifice and joy. Love will prompt what money could not buy, what force could not constrain, what interest could not urge. Therefore, God has wisely made it the main-spring of conduct, just because it has in it an impulsive force that will lift us to infinite service, and make obedience a delight."

LOVE'S FRUITAGE

In the chapter preceding (1 Cor. 12) the Apostle has been speaking of the miraculous gifts of power that were poured out upon the early Church. In Chapter 13, he is contrasting these gifts of power with this greatest of all gifts, Love. However, the possession of these powers does not in itself give evidence of character. The Apostle says – "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass or a clanging cymbal." How solemnly true it is, says one – "Without love eloquence is vain. Even the gift of tongues is empty and hollow. Even the highest wisdom and the most supernatural light are cold and dead. Even the faith that could remove mountains is barren of real spiritual joy. Yes, even the liberality that can give millions, and the sacrifice that could give life, bring no return to the heart untouched by heavenly Love.

There may be much without love, much that even God may bless to others; but it profiteth us nothing if we have not heavenly charity (love). We do not say that one may have mighty faith without any love; but the faith may be out of proportion to the love, and where this is so, the work will be ultimately blighted and disappointing. Even the greatest sacrifices may be but another form of selfishness, and may have recompense in the glory that they win, or the gratification of intellectual pride, or determined self-will. Love alone is the substance of

things, and the spring of joy and gladness, and perennial life and fruitfulness.”

We might be able to understand theoretically what Divine love in the soul is, and eloquently describe how one ought to act who possesses it; we might be able, even, to detect that slightest imperfection in its manifestation in another, and yet not possess it ourselves. It is possible to be so blind as not to see in our own lives our great deficiency in this greatest of all gifts. On the other hand, it is possible that one may lack all the gifts that make success in the world possible, he may be very deficient in a knowledge of God’s Word, possessing only so much as is required to make one a Christian, and yet be the possessor of this grace of all graces.

LOVE EXHIBITED

This love is exhibited in its greatest degree amongst those who have experienced His favour and have come to love God – those truly His children. “This is my commandment that ye love one another as I have loved you” – John 15:12. “By this shall all men that ye are my disciples if ye have love one to another” – John 13:35. “We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren.” “By this we have known love, because he (Christ) laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren” – 1 John 3:16.

It will be seen from this last quotation that the love required of true Christians one for another is the same kind as that exhibited by Christ Himself and is expressed in the words – “We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.” This is a greater love than that which was required by the Law. That required by the Law is stated to be – “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” Our Lord’s course in the sacrifice of Himself on our behalf, transcends anything required of the Law – in giving His life a ransom for many, He did more than was required by the Law. It is for this reason that it is designated a sacrifice. To do the whole law was His duty; but when He went beyond this and gave His life a ransom-price for mankind, that was a sacrifice, and, as a sacrifice, it was appreciated by the Father, and especially rewarded with more than everlasting life. And the same rule applies to us (His followers); “For as he was, so are we in this world, leaving us an example that we should walk in his steps.”

A PORTRAIT OF LOVE

In the Epistle to the Corinthians – 1 Cor. 13 – we have what may be properly termed a portrait or picture of heavenly love in action; in other words, a portrait of its conduct towards others. These words of Paul may be said to be an analysis of love. As we consider this wonderful analysis of the God-given character of love, it will be noticed that the Apostle describes it in its passive, its active, and its negative qualities, or aspects. By the passive quality of love is meant that quality that enables one to receive injury or suffering without resistance – to passively submit to wrong or injury done, or supposed to have been done to us, and also to patiently submit to the trials, the adversities of life. Three passive characteristics are mentioned:

1. “Love suffers long” (v.4).
2. “Love beareth all things” (v.7).
3. “Love endureth all things” (v.7).

It will be noticed that these passive qualities are the first and last elements mentioned by Paul. Love is first represented by the inspired Apostle as stepping on to the stage of life’s suffering–indeed, “suffering long”; the last view that we have of her in this picture as she passes off the stage, is “bearing all things, enduring all things.” One has thus most eloquently described this passive quality of heavenly love as it is exhibited in its relation to the various difficulties, trials and besetments that are inevitably encountered in this present life – “Heavenly love is introduced to us with meek and bowed head, suffering long; and as she leaves our view, she is still drooping under yet heavier burdens, while her face wears the holy light of unconquerable patience, ‘enduring all things.’ Between these two features: suffering long, and enduring all things: lie all the other lineaments in the face of Love.”

The long-suffering shows its capacity for continual forbearance, or patience under provocation. The “bearing all things”, seems to have reference to suffering wrong without exhibiting resentment, or without interfering – to bear patiently neglect or indignities. Enduring all things seems to have reference to the trials that come in the providence of God – trials that come in connection with serving the Master and His cause. There are, however, two ways of bearing or enduring trial. One is the Stoic’s way, which is to “grin and bear it”, the other is the Christian’s way, the way of love, to sing and bear it.

One writer has thus expressed it – “One is to be ever conscious of how much we are enduring, the other is to be so lifted above it that we almost forget that we are enduring anything, and are so occupied with others that we forget the pressure (of suffering) in the love. That devoted wife who ministers to her suffering husband, night after night, is so full of concern for him, that it never occurs to her that she is losing her rest and risking her life; and it is only afterwards, when the sacrifice has been completely made, that she awakes to realise how much she has endured, So He endured the cross, despising the shame, in the joy of love, leaving us an exam-

ple that we should follow in His steps.”

There are two kinds of trials and tribulations that come to the Christian. One kind includes those that come in the common course of life – the trials that are common to all. To such the Apostle makes reference when referring to their beneficial effect upon Christians. “No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous, but afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby.” Another kind of trials is that which comes because of faithfulness in the service of the Master. Of such were those of Paul and Silas. We read of them that, “When they (the magistrates) had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the gaoler to keep them safely, who having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison and made their feet fast in the stocks. And at mid-night Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God” –Acts 16:23-25. There is nothing that can give greater joy to the true Christian, than to know that he is suffering for his Master.

LOVE IN OPERATION

The Apostle next mentions the active qualities of this heavenly love. We find that there are four:

1. “Love is kind” (v.4)
2. “Love rejoiceth in the truth.” (v.6).
3. “Love believeth all things.” (v.7).
4. “Love hopeth all things.” (v.7).

First the Apostle says, “Love is kind.” The word kind is from the word kin, As used here, it means that one who possesses this heavenly love will treat another as a dear relative, a member of the same family. In one sense it may be said that Love takes all into the family circle of God, and treats them as being closely related to her in that all are objects of God’s love – “For God so loved the world.”

Kindness is defined as a disposition to do good to others, a disposition to make them happy by granting their requests, supplying their wants, or assisting them in distress. It expresses tenderness or goodness of nature, benevolence. “Its manner is gracious, its tone affectionate, its expression gentle, its whole bearing is cordial, it is full of considerate and thoughtful service.”

The Apostle tells us next that, “Love rejoiceth in the truth,” that is, rejoiceth when the truth is honored, or when it prospers, no matter what agency may be employed in its furtherance. It can rejoice in the work of Christ being done by others as well as that being done by itself, and by whatever means the cause of Christ is being promoted. It can say with Paul – “Therein do I rejoice, yea and I will rejoice.” Its interest reaches beyond its own parish and its own little circle. It is in full sympathy with every movement that can promote the cause of righteousness in the world. It longs and prays for the spread of the truth until every creature shall know of God and His great salvation.

“Love believeth all things,” is the next active quality of love. This does not mean that love believes everything it hears, but rather that it believes when things seem all contrary to love. It puts the best construction possible upon another’s conduct. It says, I cannot see the heart, perhaps the new nature has been overcome for a time. Love is always eager to believe the best possible of another. It believes that God is love, even when His severe providences would, to the natural mind, seem to indicate the contrary. It says, “He doeth all things well, sometime we’ll understand.” Those who have come to a knowledge of God’s Plan are enabled to understand the mystery of permitted evil of human suffering and can see that all things will ultimately show that God is love.

“Love hopeth all things.” This may mean that when faith fails, or when one is compelled to believe the worst about another and naturally would turn away from him, hope comes to the rescue, and says, “It is not as it should be, but I trust, I hope it will be yet.” Love hopes to the end. Those who experience this love from another – “the love that will not let me go” – desire in turn themselves to bestow it upon those who are weak and erring.

Who is sufficient

(2 Cor.2:16)

Grant skill each sacred theme to trace,
With loving voice and glowing tongue.
As when upon Thy words of grace
The wondering crowds enraptured hung.

Give strength, blest Saviour, in Thy might;
Illuminate our hearts, and we,
Transformed into Thine image bright,
Shall teach and love and live. like Thee.

LOVE'S NEGATIVES

It is very helpful in our endeavours to develop this love Divine, to note how much of this God-like character of love is displayed in what we are not, and what we do not. The first and paramount requirement of discipleship is that of self-denial. Self-denial is sometimes described as simply saying “no” to oneself. “If any man will be my disciple let him deny self, etc.” Self denial has sometimes been described as a great “not” laid across the pathway of the human nature. We find eight characteristics , or “nots”, mentioned:

1. “Love envieth not.” (v.4)
2. “Love vaunteth not itself.” (v.4)
3. “Love is not puffed up.” (v.4)
4. “Love behaveth not unseemly.” (v.5)
5. “Love seeketh not her own.” (v.5)
6. “Love is not provoked.” (v.5)
7. “Love thinketh no evil.” (v.5)
8. “Love rejoiceth not in iniquity.” (v.6)

The first we notice is, that “love envies not.” (v.4) This has been well called, the innocency or guilelessness of love. Envy is defined as pain, uneasiness, mortification, or discontent at superior excellence, reputation, or happiness enjoyed by another. It is accompanied often with a wish to depreciate the person, and with pleasure in seeing the person depressed or humiliated.

Envy results from pride, ambition, or earthly love mortified that another has obtained what we have a strong desire to possess. Love is not jealous or unhappy at another’s success or achievements, even though that success be along a line that rivals it. Love is glad even to step down and to let another take the place of honor or preference, and itself to vanish out of sight. Love can rejoice in the good of others as heartily as in its own, and it can “thank God for the graces, the services, and the recompense of others as freely as for its own.”

The second negative quality of love, is described in the words – “Love vaunteth not itself.” (v.4). This has been well called the modesty of love. Vaunting oneself means vainly boasting, ostentatiously setting forth what one is or has. It is the offspring of conceit. It may be described as a desire to display, a desire to court the good opinion of others. It does not refer to pride, but something lower than pride – vanity. The vain person has often a very low opinion of himself, and for this very reason desires others to have a higher opinion of his worth than he deserves. He desires to make use of all resources available in creating a reputation beyond his real worth. The desire for display is contrary to the law of love. Anything we do with the consciousness of being noticed, with a desire for the praise of men, is a very low form of selfishness.

Another negative quality mentioned by the Apostle is – “Love is not puffed up” (v.4.) This is well named the humility of love. Love is not puffed up with pride, or swollen with the conceit of its own goodness, importance, attractiveness or achievements. Love has learned not to think of itself more highly than it ought to think. Love looks upon itself as a mere instrument, as a fragile earthen vessel that God may take up and use or that he may lay aside at His will. It has learned to estimate itself as nothing.

“Not I, but Christ, be honoured, loved, exalted;
Not I, but Christ, be seen, be known, be heard;
Not I, but Christ, in every look and action,
Not I, but Christ, in every thought and word.
Not I, but Christ, to gently soothe in sorrow;
Not I, but Christ, to wipe the falling tear;
Not I, but Christ, to lift the weary burden,

Not I, but Christ, to hush away all fear.
Oh to be saved from myself, dear Lord,
Oh to be lost in Thee,
Oh that it might be no more I,
But Christ that lives in me.”

LOVE’S UNSELFISHNESS

The next negative quality of love is well denominated the manners or behaviour of love, and is expressed in the words of the Apostle – “Love becometh not itself unseemly.” Love is always good mannered. Love does not act rudely, discourteously. Love does not willingly offend, hurt, or wound another’s feelings. Love is gentle and considerate in her manner. One has said – “It is wonderful how the spiritual qualities will transform the exterior life of even very ignorant and uncultivated people, and how their very manners will change and become lovely and attractive from the power of the heavenly principle within.” Another way of defining this expression would be – Love does not behave itself indecently, unbecomingly. It is even modest in its expressions of its spiritual enjoyments.

The words, “Love seeketh not her own,” may well be termed the aim or central purpose of love. Love never terminates on itself. Human nature is naturally disposed to look first from the standpoint of self and ask, How will this affect me, or mine? Love inverts the order and thinks first, How will this please Him? How, will this help others? To whatever extent, our purpose or aim in life is to gratify ourselves, rather than that of bringing glory to God or of being of benefit to others; to that extent it is deficient in this heavenly love. One who makes it a rule of life to seek the good of others as the Master did, will find that he has discovered the way to possess true happiness, without seeking it, and to at last attain the heavenly Kingdom. “God will pour in to fill the vacuum, as love pours out and produces it.”

Another negative quality of heavenly Love is described in the words – “Love is not provoked.” This has been rightly called the temper of love. Love is always good tempered. The word “easily” is not found in the original manuscript. Love is never provoked, and never fails in anything. Had Christ even once failed in manifesting any of the characteristics of love; had He lost Himself and become sinfully angry; had He been incited to rage, the world would have no Saviour, no Deliverer. Never for one moment in the contest against sin and evil, or in His contact with the most wicked people, did He ever display sinful anger or wrath. In the shame and spitting before the Jewish council, in the smiting by the officers of the high priest, in the terrible anguish and insults of the cross, He did not in one single instance lose His perfect self-control and gentleness; and, as one has truly said – “If Christ be in us, His love will not be provoked even as of old.”

LOVE’S FORGIVING POWER

Still another negative quality of this Love that comes from Heaven is described in the words – “Love thinketh no evil.” This is variously rendered as – “Love does not surmise evil”, “Love imputeth no evil”, “Love keepeth no account of evil.” In harmony with the last rendering, this is named the memory of love. Concerning certain things love has a poor memory, rather it has the ability to forget as well as to forgive. It has no malignant recollections. It does not forgive and cover over the fault of another today, while carefully keeping it in reserve to use tomorrow if something should provoke a reference to it. It drops the past, it forgets the fault and acts as if it had not been. One has thus commented on the expression, “Love keepeth no account of evil”. – “It lays up no rods in pickle, no grudges for future avenging, no memories to be poured out at the next opportunity in bitter words; but for its own sake, as well as for the others, it loves to forget wrong or injury done to it. It refuses to dwell upon it, it keeps no record of offences, it does not get sullen, and stay until it has had its revenge, by a gloomy moroseness, which has made everybody wretched long enough to inflict a reasonable punishment, and then choose to be sweet again. No; but it quickly forgets the fault, smiles through the springing tears, supplants the cloud with the rainbow, gives, like the crushed geranium leaves, sweetness in return for bruising, and still loves on unchanged. It has no account book, no judgement seat; its only business is mercy, gentleness, and pleasing. It is called to bless and curse not, to do good and not evil all its days; to cheer and comfort, sweeten and lift up; but never to depress, to pain, to judge to harm; even the poor sinner and the erring one are the special objects of its tenderness, and it loves to bless them that persecute, and pour coals of fire upon the head of him that wrongs it.”

LOVE TO THE ERRING

The last characteristic of this negative side of Heavenly love is that – “It rejoiceth not in iniquity.” We do not need to be told that those who possess this Heavenly love are haters of the principle of iniquity. Sin, iniquity, is abhorrent to such. We do not think that this was in the Apostle’s mind when he wrote these words. A characteristic may be referred to here by him that is quite common on the part of the world, a characteristic which Christians are susceptible to if they are not watchful and prayerful, and if they are not partakers of a

large measure of the spirit of Christ, this Heavenly love. His words seem to have reference to one who has been injured, and then the one who has caused the injury has himself suffered retribution, possibly through experiencing the same injury. How strong is the temptation to rejoice and say – “I am glad; he is getting what he deserves because of his treatment of me.” This is not the course of love; no – “Love rejoiceth not in iniquity.” Love is always desirous of returning good for evil.

Another way of interpreting this expression is that – “There is a temptation to feel flattered when we find another doing wrong, especially if it is one who has been longer in the Christian life than we, and from whom we might expect better things. It seems to give a sort of covering to our faults, or at least, a faint excuse; or if not there is a certain sort of Pharisaical triumph that makes us feel that we have got the better of them, and are perhaps a little nearer God . . . Let us be ashamed of such a spirit, and like our Master, let us weep where others fall, even if we have stood. Good Daniel took upon him the faults and sins of his people, and confessed them as his own, and won the recompense of being called the ‘man that was greatly beloved.’ Let us have that love that will blush with shame for our brother’s fault, and for our sister’s false step, that will be so linked with the whole Body of Christ, that if one member suffer, we shall suffer; if one member suffer sin, we shall feel disgraced and defiled and shall find all the strength of our heart flowing out in intercession and restoring love. The most delicate and sacred of love’s ministries is to the erring, and only one who has a very loving heart can deal with the sins of others. Harshness never helps them, censoriousness never heals them, a spirit of judging never uplifts them, but ye which are spiritual restore the one that is overtaken in a fault, in the spirit of meekness. Love always covers the faults of others, by its own sweet disguises, and thus creates the good which it desires in them.”

These eight negative attributes of love, constitute a very large measure of the Christian character. How impressive is the thought that the chief thing we have to do in order to exemplify the Christian profession, is not to do. How often is the case true of us, if we would honor our Lord and Master, and imitate Him, we can best do so by simply keeping still, “holding back the word unspoken, the thought uncherished, the look unexpressed, the deed undone, and maintain a quiet and silent negative, under the pressure of temptation.” Of a certain occasion it is written of our Lord – “He answered them not a word.”

FOLLOW AFTER LOVE

The Apostle concludes his wonderful, Divinely inspired portrait of love in the words of exhortation, “Follow after Love” – 1 Cor. 14:1. The word “follow” would be better rendered “pursue.” The thought contained in the word “pursue” is portrayed in the hunter pursuing his game, or the avaricious man pursuing riches. The meaning is to make the exhibition of this heavenly Love the one great object of our lives. Just as the great inspiring and controlling attribute of God’s character is that of love, as we who understand God’s wonderful Plan for His creatures know, so let the inspiring and controlling attribute of our characters in our dealing with out fellow-men be that of love.

This heavenly love is not earthly in its origin. Indeed, the picture presented in this wonderful description is really that of our Lord Jesus Christ, and it is impossible of duplication by imperfect creatures. The only way to obtain this love even measurably is by coming into an actual union with Christ Jesus. It begins to be realised by receiving His spirit, the holy spirit. This is experienced by receiving Christ as Saviour from the condemnation and guilt of sin, and by yielding up our wills entirely to Him. (See Romans 5:1-5)

Then will come the opportunities to exercise this heavenly Love. In the common, everyday affairs of life these opportunities come. It is under these ordinary circumstances and conditions that this new love, this new life, begins to be tested. It is, however, to be tested to the uttermost. On this account we must not think it strange when, in the Divine providence, we are led into most trying and difficult places, in which our own natural love will utterly fail, and we learn the difference between the natural love and the supernatural – the heavenly love. We thus discover our own natural imperfections, our utter weakness, and in this way we learn to trust in Christ to help in our time of need.

We will be brought into places where we will be wronged, ill-treated, unjustly dealt with, or unappreciated, in order that we may learn to love as God, as Christ loves. It is, under such conditions that we will be tempted to say – “It is not required of me to love those who spitefully use me and persecute me and say all manner of evil against me falsely.” And yet we are compelled to admit that this is the way that God and Christ love. This was one of the ways that Christ, our Master, proved that He possessed this love. We may say – “Who is sufficient for these things? Who is equal to such a love?” The answer must be, No one is sufficient of himself. It is here that we must learn the other lesson, the lesson that Paul said he had learned, which is that our sufficiency is secured by an actual, vital union with Christ by faith and obedience.

Love of Jesus

Love of Jesus, all divine,

Fill this longing heart of mine;
Ceaseless struggling after life,
Weary with the endless strife.
Blessed Saviour, lend Thine aid;
Lift Thou up my fainting head!
Lead me to my long-sought rest,
Never more by care opprest.
Thou alone my trust shall be,
Thou alone canst comfort me;
Only, Jesus, let thy grace
Be my shield and hiding-place;
Let me know Thy saving power
In temptation's fiercest hour;
Then, my Saviour, at Thy side
Let me evermore abide.
Thou hast wrought this fond desire,
And Thou dost with hope inspire;
Thou dost wean from all below;
Thee, and Thee alone to know Thou,
Who hast inspired the cry,
Thou alone canst satisfy;
Love of Jesus, all divine,
Fill this longing heart of mine.

Kingdom Prospects

"BEHOLD, I MAKE ALL THINGS NEW." REV. 21:5

Just as Scripture distinguishes between the saved and the lost, and between different classes of the one and of the other, so it also distinguishes between the future portion of the Church of Christ, that of the Jewish people, and that of the nations of the earth. Too many in their thoughts of the future leave out this last; the destiny of the Church of this dispensation figures so largely in their anticipations, that they seem almost to forget that "the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the *world*," and to lose sight of the blessed prospect that, not only is the present Church to be saved out of the ruined world, to become the Eve of the second Adam, but that the ruined earth itself is yet to be renewed, and to become the happy home of saved nations, who participate in the results of redemption.

The narrowness which sees nothing but the salvation of the Church of this dispensation is born of human selfishness, and not of Divine love; it is founded not on the teaching of Scripture, but on tradition and prejudice. The Bible in this (the Book of Revelation), its last revelation on the subject, plainly teaches that while the peculiar glories of the Church are hers, and hers alone, that while the special privileges of the natural seed of Abraham belong to Israel, and to Israel only, there is yet a blessed future awaiting mankind also under the gracious government of Immanuel; that one of the effects of the completed work of Christ will be to place the saved nations of the eternal Kingdom in a restored paradise, completely delivered from the tempter, and so established in righteousness that the Holy One can take up his abode among them for ever. "He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death; neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

The salvation of the Church of this dispensation is not the whole result of the death of Christ. There is to be in addition the establishment for ever of a kingdom of God, in which his will shall be as fully done by men on earth as it is now done by angels in heaven. The consummation, for which we daily pray, is destined to come at last; and holy and happy service, without a flaw and without an interruption, is yet to be rendered to God, not merely by the glorified saints of the new Jerusalem, but by redeemed nations on the earth, who walk for ever in the light of the celestial city.

Such is the sublime vista of the future of our race, and of our earth in the eternal ages, with which Scripture closes.

— *H. Grattan Guinness*

It is this portion that God has elected to give to the human race. And what a glorious portion! Close your eyes for a moment to the scenes of misery and woe, degradation and sorrow that yet prevail on account of sin, and picture before your mental vision the glory of the perfect earth. Not a stain of sin mars the harmony and peace of a perfect society; not a bitter thought, not an unkind look or word; love, welling up from every heart,

meets a kindred response in every other heart, and benevolence marks every act. There sickness shall be no more; not an ache nor a pain, nor any evidence of decay – not even the fear of such things. Think of all the pictures of comparative health and beauty of human form and feature that you have ever seen, and know that perfect humanity will be of still surpassing loveliness. The inward purity and mental and moral perfection will stamp and glorify every radiant countenance. Such will earth's society be; and weeping bereaved ones will have their tears all wiped away, when thus they realize the resurrection work complete. –Revelation 21:4.

And this is the change in human society only. We call to mind also that the earth, which was “made to be inhabited” by such a race of beings, is to be a fit and pleasing abode for them, as represented in the Edenic paradise, in which the representative man was at first placed. Paradise shall be restored. The earth shall no more bring forth thorns and briers, and require the sweat of man's face to yield his bread, but “the earth shall (easily and naturally) yield her increase.” “The desert shall blossom as the rose”; the lower animal creation will be perfect, willing, and obedient servants; nature with all its pleasing variety will call to man from every direction to seek and know the glory and power and love of God; and mind and heart will rejoice in him.

The restless desire for something new, that now prevails, is not a natural but an abnormal condition, due to our imperfection, and to our present unsatisfactory surroundings. It is not Godlike restlessly to crave something new. Most things are old to God; and he rejoices most in those things which are old and perfect. So will it be with man when restored to the image of God. The perfect man will not know or appreciate fully, and hence will not prefer, the glory of spiritual being, because of a different nature, just as fishes and birds, for the same reason, prefer and enjoy each their own nature and element most. Man will be so absorbed and enraptured with the glory that surrounds him on the human plane that he will have no aspiration to, nor preference for, another nature or other conditions than those possessed.

That the Christian Church, the Body of Christ, is an exception to God's general plan for mankind, is evident from the statement that its selection was determined in the divine plan before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4,5), at which time God not only foresaw the fall of the race into sin, but also predetermined the justification, the sanctification and the glorification of this class, which, during the Gospel Age, he has been calling out of the world to be conformed to the image of his Son, to be partakers of the divine nature and to be fellow-heirs with Christ Jesus of the Millennial Kingdom for the establishment of universal righteousness and peace. – Romans 8: 28-31.

– Charles T Russell

Jesus Only

Jesus only! In the shadow
Of the cloud so chill and dim,
We are clinging, loving, trusting,
He with us and we with Him;
All unseen, though ever nigh,
Jesus only - all our cry.

Jesus only! In the glory,
When the shadows all are flown,
Seeing Him in all His beauty,
Satisfied with Him alone;
May we join His ransomed throng,
Jesus only - all our song!

Good Tidings of Great Joy

(LUKE 2:8-14)

The message of the angels to the shepherds on the plains of Bethlehem becomes more and more precious to every child of God in proportion as they grow in grace and knowledge. As their ears and eyes of understanding open more widely to the lengths and breadths of God's great Plan of the Ages, that prophetic message is the more highly esteemed as an epitome of the entire Gospel. Nor can our attention be called too frequently to the great event which lies at the foundation of that message - the Saviour's birth.

The angelic message was a prophecy of good things to be accomplished for the Church and the world during the Millennial Age. The Church is to have the first blessing. The First Resurrection is to be composed only

of the blessed and holy who shall live and reign with Christ during the thousand years, when Satan shall be bound, and the good influence of truth and righteousness enlighten the whole earth. (Rev. 20:1-6) The declaration of the Scriptures is that the deliverance of the Church will come early in the morning of the millennial day, as the prophet declares, "God will help her early in the morning." (Psa. 46:5)

But much as we rejoice in the glorious hopes of the gospel set before us who now see, who now rejoice with joy unspeakable, we are glad that the divine mercy and love are of such lengths and breadths and heights and depths as to encompass the whole world of mankind, and provide a blessing for every member of Adam's race through Him who loved us and bought us with His own precious blood.

Truly, the more we see of the Divine Plan for our salvation, which began to take shape in the birth of Jesus, the more we feel like shouting with the angelic choir praises to the God of heaven, thankfulness for His mercy to the children of men. It mattered not that the babe born in Bethlehem was the Saviour only in prospect, that He could not be anointed to do His work until He reached manhood's estate thirty years later. It mattered not that even then it would be necessary for Him to lay down His life gradually during the three and a half years of His earthly ministry, to be finished at Calvary. Nor did it matter that His resurrection was still three days after His death and His ascension forty days later; and that the blessing in general would be deferred for nearly twenty centuries thereafter.

As the angels could sing and rejoice at the first budding of the Divine Plan of Salvation, so also can all who have faith in the ultimate outcome rejoice with joy unspeakable and give praise to God in the highest and to His Son our Lord.



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Qualified for the Kingdom

(Convention Address)

"There's the wonder of springtime and harvest, The stars, the moon and the sea; But the wonder of wonders that thrills my soul Is the wonder that God loves me."

One aspect of that wonder of all wonders is that God through the Lord Jesus Christ has qualified us for His kingdom! The word 'qualification' is a very important one. The Australian people have recently held a general election and the question on peoples' minds was - who is most fit, most qualified for the tasks at hand? Americans have not so long ago gone through a Presidential election and the question was - is Mr. Bush who has been in power for four years best qualified to deal with the problems the country is facing or should the people trust someone else?

Mr. Clinton won out because he was deemed to be better qualified to handle the problems of the country. One of the first appointments which he made was of a woman as Attorney-General for the country. However the Congress rejected this appointment because they felt that she was not qualified to fill that position. One of the things which she would have to deal with was that of aliens who come into the country illegally and in fact she had earlier hired three aliens to work in her home. She was therefore not considered qualified for the position.

The apostle Paul says in Col. 1:12 - "giving thanks unto the Father who has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." That phrase 'has made us meet' is from a Greek word which means that God has made us fit, or has qualified us, to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. The same verse in the Diaglott is rendered - "giving thanks to the Father, who called and qualified us for the portion of the saints' inheritance in the light." This is our text for consideration.

The apostle goes on to say - "who delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption and forgiveness of sins." Let us now consider that statement by the apostle, which is part of a prayer, in the context of what he is saying to the Christians in Colosse and what he is saying to you and to me.

As we go through these scriptures, we want to view them as Paul's prayer on our behalf, to personalise the things which he is saying, to realise that he had us in mind, that he was offering his prayer not just for the Christians in Colosse but this was very much the apostle's desire for you and for me.

Verses 1 & 2 of Col. 1 are the introductory comments of the apostle, his salutation or greeting. "Paul an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God and Timothy our brother to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are in Colosse." What a wonderful opening statement - to realise that you and I, in the eyes of God, are called and chosen and His desire is that we be faithful until the end of our lives. So therefore to God we are saints, we are the called-out ones, we are of those who have been set aside by God for His ultimate glory and to His praise.

Paul continues - "grace to you and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ." This is indeed a great desire by the apostle that God's grace, His unmerited favour, might be a portion in our lives, that a desire to serve God might continue to grow in our hearts and minds, as we seek to know that perfect will of God and to accomplish the purpose that He has for each one of us in our lives.

Verses 3 to 8 are a prayer in and of themselves; they constitute a prayer of thanksgiving. It is rather profound that the apostle in this prayer is thankful for their faith, for their love - for the intensity of their faith

in the Lord Jesus Christ and their love for all saints, which he indicates springs forth from the hope that they have in the promises of God, indeed the hope laid up in heaven for them, of which they had heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel.

Elsewhere Paul reminds us that as Gentiles we were at one time without hope but now by the grace of God we have come into that prospect of hope. So Paul says that as a result of their hearing the word of truth and because of the hope which they have in the promises of God, their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and their love for all saints has become known to all. What a wonderful proclamation that is, we have love for one another because we share in the common hope that God has given us of reigning with our Lord eternally.

He is thankful for one other thing which we do not want to lose sight of; he is thankful for Epaphras by whom the Christians in Colosse had been instructed in the gospel. Often perhaps we take one another for granted, when in reality we should be thankful for each other, for those brethren whom God has brought into our lives. Not that we want to be man-worshippers, God forbid, but we have an example from the apostle Paul, who says - "Be ye followers of me, as I am of Christ." So God brings into our lives individuals who do influence us, who do have an impact on our lives, and we need to be thankful for them.

The apostle then proceeds to his second prayer, a prayer of petition, and in this the apostle has two fundamental requests on behalf of all saints. In verse 9, he starts off by saying - "for this cause" or for this reason, a common phrase in God's word. Following what the apostle Paul has just said, based on his appreciation of their faith in Christ, the fact of their intense love for all saints, that they have a marvellous hope in the promises of God, that they were receptive to the word of truth, the apostle acknowledges that all that, in and of itself, is still not enough.

This is a wonderful lesson for us too, that you and I can never come to a point in our lives where we can say that we have reached the pinnacle, attained the ultimate - there is always room for progress, for further development, for the work of the Holy Spirit to be accomplished in us. So Paul is saying - for this reason, the good news concerning the experience that the Christians in Colosse had already had in Christ, he is grateful, but he prays for further enrichment of their lives. So he proceeds in his prayer as we read starting from verse 9.

The prayers of the apostle Paul can leave one exhausted, emotionally exhausted; he says so much in one sentence, clearly the work of the Holy Spirit in one who is open to its power. What is the apostle then saying here - for the reason I have just explained since the day I heard of it from Epaphras, I do not cease to pray for you and to ask, **first**, that you be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. The word 'knowledge' here is from the Greek EPIGNOSIS. The word for knowledge, pure and simple, is GNOSIS, but the word the apostle is using here is defined by Vine as 'thorough, deep and accurate knowledge' of God's divine will. Another commentator says that the word means knowledge which grasps and permeates into the object under study.

What the apostle is asking for therefore is that you and I might be filled with a thorough, deep and accurate knowledge of God's divine will, not just a superficial or inaccurate knowledge. So much of Christendom is filled with inaccurate knowledge concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, concerning who He is and what his relationship is to the Father. We cannot please God when we do not know His Son and therefore Paul would have us possess a thorough, deep and accurate knowledge of God, of the Lord Jesus Christ and of God's divine will.

"In all wisdom and spiritual understanding" -indeed it is only through the power of the Holy Spirit that we come to understand God, only thus we can know the deep things of God. So God would have you and me gain an accurate knowledge of His will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding; not through the wisdom and teaching of humans but through the wisdom and teaching of God's power. But why is it important to have this accurate knowledge of God's divine will? This is very clearly portrayed in the **second** phase of Paul's request, the second fundamental of his petition - that you and I might live a life worthy of the Lord, pleasing Him in every way, that we might walk worthy of Him, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God, strengthened with all might according to His glorious power for all patience and long-suffering with joy.

Let us pause to consider this prayer of petition. Again the apostle Paul is asking for two fundamental things, first that we be filled with this accurate knowledge of God's will so that we might live worthy of the Lord, pleasing Him in every way. Knowledge of itself is dangerous because it tends to puff one up. Knowledge directed and guided by God's Holy Spirit has the end result of changing our conduct, our behaviour, of conforming us to the glorious image of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the purpose of God's workmanship in each one of us; that is the destiny of the Church, the purpose to which God has predestined us - that we might be conformed to the blessed image of Jesus, that we might stand before Him in that day, unashamed, because we indeed shall be what He is.

The end of all knowledge must be to impact on our lives in such a way that there is a complete transformation taking place in our hearts and minds, that we are converted from being human-minded into the mind of

the Lord, into the likeness of Jesus, to a life which is worthy of the Lord and pleasing to God in every way. We must know His will in order to live worthily and please Him. There are indeed four components in a believer's life which ultimately make it worthy and pleasing to God in every way. These are given in verses 10 to 12 of Col. 1 -

1. we must BEAR FRUIT in every good work
2. we must continually GROW spiritually
3. we must be continually STRENGTHENED unto greater patience and long-suffering with joyfulness
4. we must have a spirit of continual THANKFULNESS

First of all, the apostle reminds us that we must bear fruit in every good work and we are reminded of the words of the apostle in Titus 2:11-15 - "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority."

As the grace of God works in our lives, it creates a desire within us to do those things that are pleasing to God, to be fruitful in every way, to bear the fruit of the Spirit, because we desire to be like our Lord Jesus Christ. We are reminded again of John's words in 1 John 3:1-3 - "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God; therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not." (Indeed, if the world does know us, we need to look upon that as a red flag, as it were. Why do they know us? Is it because we are conforming to their standards? The world should not know us, because they did not know Christ.)

John continues - "Beloved, now are we the children of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." What a glorious prospect that is! We do not know what we will be, but we know we will be like Him for we shall see Him as He is! In that prospect, John adds - "And everyone that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." It is that glorious hope that brings about a purification in our lives, a sanctification, because we desire to do only those things that please God in every way. So first of all, to live worthily and please Him, we must bear fruit in every good work.

In Titus 3:8, the apostle Paul says - "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works; these things are good and profitable unto men." We please God when we allow the Holy Spirit to urge us on to the production of the fruit of the Spirit and to the doing of those deeds which are pleasing to our Heavenly Father.

Secondly, the apostle says - not only must we be fruitful but we must also continuously grow spiritually, increasing in the knowledge of God. A good fruit tree not only bears fruit but simultaneously grows stronger. We must continuously grow in the spirit, continuously grow in knowledge. The apostle Peter reminds us in 2 Peter 3:18 - "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen." Again, we can never reach a stage where we feel we have learnt it all. The Bible is an inexhaustible book, it is a book full of gems, and we only begin to scratch the surface of it. God in His wisdom has planned it that way, so that we throughout our lifetime may continue to grow in the spirit, grow in accurate knowledge of God, simultaneously bearing fruit as the Spirit works in our lives.

The third thing that the apostle reminds us must occur in our lives, if we are to live worthy of God and pleasing in every way, is that we must be strengthened by all might according to His glorious power, so that we may ultimately have that patience and great endurance that God would have us display. What does this mean? Nehemiah tells us in Neh. 8:10 - "that the joy of the Lord is your strength." Paul reminds us that we fight not against flesh and blood but against the powers of darkness. The only way that we can survive is to be continually empowered by God, through the power of the Holy Spirit, as we are so beautifully reminded in Eph. 1:16-21 - "I cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him; the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places" 79

The profound reality is that God would have us experience the very power that He used to raise Jesus from the dead; He would have us experience it in our daily walk with the Lord. To be continually empowered by God's power means that we make right decisions in our lives, that every phase of our lives is permeated by God's will, that we desire to do only what will please Him and not what will please men or will please our-

selves: that is to be fully empowered by the Spirit. The same word for 'strengthened' is used in Phil. 4:13 where Paul says - "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me." It is hard to imagine just what the apostle Paul means when he would like us to experience the same power that God used to raise Jesus from the dead. Jesus was in the grave for three days; there was no life there. We cannot begin to grasp the power that was needed, not only to raise Him from the dead but to transfer Him from flesh and blood to a spirit being, given a name above every name, at which every knee must bow and tongue confess; but whatever power it took, God has pleasure in making it available to you and me.

To have our hearts and our minds transformed so that our greatest desire in life is to do only what is pleasing to Him and to fulfil only His will in our lives is to be empowered according to His glorious power. Again the Greek phrase for 'His glorious power' points to a never-ending source of power. When we seem to run out of energy, run out of grace, become discouraged because of circumstances in our lives, the grace of God is there to be tapped into, because the source of God's power is infinite.

Such empowerment by the Holy Spirit, says Paul, leads to great patience, that is, the opposite of cowardice or despondency, a willingness to see things through, knowing that God has a blessing for us at the end of the line. It leads also to long-suffering, which is the opposite of wrath or a spirit of revenge, a spirit of retaliation. We can withstand all things, no matter who hurts us or how badly we are hurt, because we know that this is a part of the training that God has designed for us.

Fourthly, the apostle would have us live worthily unto all pleasing by living a life of continual praise. "Giving thanks unto the Father, who has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." To live a life of thankfulness means that our hearts and minds are set on Jesus twenty-four hours a day and that can be at our work, or at school if we are students, whenever there is a free moment we must let our hearts and minds focus on Him. We must let our lives become lives of praise, lives of thanksgiving, lives that reveal indeed that we have been redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus, that we have understood His purpose for us in this life and that we are looking forward to that grand and glorious day when He shall receive us unto Himself so that we may be with Him throughout eternity.

Our lives must be lives of complete gratitude. Why? Because He **has** qualified us, not that He will qualify us; He has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. The Greek word means that we are made fit by God, there is no fitness in us, of ourselves we are not fit, not sufficient, not competent. He makes us fit, sufficient, competent to inherit with the saints in light. He makes us able to live in His kingdom for He has transferred us from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of the Son of His love. Praise his holy name! (Verse 13)

This is God's doing, it is not ours. God's dealings with the nation of Israel revealed that they, of themselves, were not worthy of life. Of ourselves, we are not worthy of life. We are not fit or sufficient or competent to inherit with the saints in the kingdom of light, but God has qualified us through the Lord Jesus Christ. The Greek word for 'transferred' (A.V. translated) is very specific, a military word which is used when a soldier is taken from one country and transferred to a totally different country. This is a beautiful analogy - that is what God has done, He has taken us out of the kingdom of Satan, the kingdom of darkness, and He has transferred us into the kingdom of His dear Son.

So you and I then are to be living as children of the kingdom, children who experience the fullness of God's power in our lives, children who have been qualified because of the deep love of God for the Church. Nor does it end there - not only have we been qualified as believers to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light, transferred from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of the Son of His love, but God continues to qualify us for greater work which is yet to come. His work continues in us because we are being qualified to function as a kingdom of priests in the age to come. "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years." (Rev. 20:6)

Has any of us ever desired to be Prime Minister or President or Attorney-General of our country? What we are being called to is something far superior to that. We are being qualified to be a kingdom of priests, for a task that will be performed in the next age, and that is the restitution of all mankind. We all know these things, but we need to encourage one another, to stir up our pure minds to remember the calling to which we have been called. God has not only qualified us to be partakers of the saints' inheritance in light, not only transferred us from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of His Son, but He is qualifying us to be a kingdom of priests, to reign with Christ a thousand years, to minister to the needs of humanity, to teach them the righteousness of God. What a standing is ours! Is this not reason enough for us to live lives of thanksgiving and praise; is this not reason to stand out as brilliant lamps in the midst of a dark and decaying world!

Then will be fulfilled the glorious promise of Rev. 22:17 - "And the Spirit (i.e. the Lord Jesus Christ) and the Bride (i.e. the Church) say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come; and let him that is athirst say,

Come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” How wonderful it will be to be a part of a kingdom of priests, to dispense the blessings of God, to restore humanity and bring them into a right relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, as they ultimately accept Him as their Lord and Saviour.

Are we qualified? Yes, we are qualified because it is by the grace of God that we stand before Him in the completeness of our Lord Jesus Christ. Are we being qualified for the majestic role that we have been called to, to reign with Christ for a thousand years? This is up to you and to me, this is the choice we must make, this is the invitation extended to each one of us. Surely, we will desire more than anything else in the world to hear that wonderful statement of commendation, that verdict by our Lord and Master - “Well done, thou good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.” (Matt. 25:21) May God bless us each one as we continue to seek to know His will accurately for our lives.

(A.P: 1993)

Be still and know that I am God

(Psalm 46:10)

Be still, my child, let not some dark foreboding,
Some nameless dread, destroy or steal thy rest;
Bid of things unknown desist its goading;
Thou art my child and should not be distressed.

Be still, my child, nor contemplate disaster;
The Hand that led still leads thee on thy way;
While world events move on - both graver, faster,
For thee they lead to life's eternal day.

Be still, my child, though future ways are shrouded,
What matters it since thou doth walk with me.
Would life be sweeter were its skies unclouded,
Or safer were its future thou could see?

Not so, my child, to have all limits ending,
To see or know all would not give thee rest;
'Twill be to wait on me, depending,
Nor could I, would I, leave my child unblest.

(J Danson Smith)

The Will of God

Laid on Thine altar, O my Lord Divine,
Accept my gift this day, for Jesus' sake;
I have no jewels to adorn Thy shrine,
Nor any world-famed sacrifice to make:
But here I bring within my trembling hands
This will of mine, a thing that seemeth small,
Yet thou alone, O Lord, canst understand
How, when I yield Thee this, I yield Thee all.

Morning Request

Lord, this is the day that You have made,
And all events it holds are in Your hand;

Before Your Throne the schedule's clearly laid;
Lord, help me live this day the way
You've planned.

—Arva Morris

A Sanctified People

The increase in knowledge of the past two centuries has brought many advances and benefits to mankind, but with added sorrows and new difficulties for the root problem of human sinfulness and its consequences upon the race are still with us. Indeed, they will remain until the King, our dear Saviour Himself, takes up His great power to reign in that coming and glorious kingdom, for which His people have so long prayed.

The apostle Paul, writing to his son in the faith, tells Timothy that “in the last days perilous times shall come” and he goes on to detail various forms of ungodly and corrupt behaviour which have probably never been more in evidence than in our day. He further warns that some shall even depart from the faith into unprofitable ways, retaining a form of godliness but in their lives and conduct denying its power. How important that each of the Lord's people not only keep their own zeal aglow but be watchful to help or encourage others who may be disheartened, for surely we are living in perilous days.

The apostle Peter, in turn, points us forward to the time when all those institutions which for so long have been the bulwarks of society will begin to crumble and fall away. Our own eyes and ears tell us that this is already well under way and so the apostle's question comes very pertinently to us - “what manner of persons ought we to be?” Modern translations bring this out even more pointedly to each of us - “what kind of people ought we to be? We ought to live holy and godly lives as we look forward to the day of God and speed its coming.” This exhortation to the “sanctified life” then is daily the challenge for each one of us.

This will need to be lived out in the midst of an unsanctified and troubled world and we do well at the outset to remember that while we cannot be untouched by the problems and fears on all sides, we have a solid base for hope and assurance and, by God's grace, may be able to say with the Psalmist - “God is my refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble, therefore will not we fear.” All of Psalm 46 from which these words are taken might indeed well be our personal motto for each passing year.

One verse that might have our special attention is 1 Thess. 4:3, where the apostle tells his readers, and us - “this is the will of God, even your sanctification” - and then goes on to give practical examples of the sanctified or spirit-filled life. These words were written, as we realise, to those who had already progressed some way along the Christian path. Paul had earlier commended them for their works of faith, labours of love and patience of hope, so here he is evidently referring not to the initial step of discipleship which each had taken but to a continuing and developing process in their lives.

The word “sanctification” is one of the beautiful words of scripture. The Greek words from which it and the related verb “sanctify” are translated originate in a root which has to do with awe or reverence, and the basic thought is apparently of preparation and purification for reverent purposes. The corresponding Hebrew word has the thought of making, pronouncing or observing as ceremonially or morally clean. This word is used of the sanctifying of the tabernacle and its furnishings by Moses, and finally of Jehovah's glorious sanctifying presence in it.

Parallels in the Christian experience come readily to mind. The Lord's people have been sanctified and cleansed by Christ, who “loved the church and gave Himself for it. That He might sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish.” Eph. 5:26. Meantime each member is to be set apart for His service.

Here the apostle speaks of the church as a whole, but this work of sanctification begins in each one as he or she comes into God's family by faith in Christ Jesus. The commission of the risen Christ to Paul on the Damascus road was to preach the gospel to the gentiles, so that they too might “receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in Jesus.” Acts 26:18 (N.I.V.) Faith is the starting point; without faith none can be pleasing or come to God at all, but once justified by faith, the work of sanctification can go ahead as each day passes. For it is in His people that our Heavenly Father graciously deigns and desires to dwell by His spirit.

Paul had to remind the Corinthians more than once of this - “know ye not that your body is the temple of the

Holy Spirit, which is in you, which ye have of God and ye are not your own?" 1 Cor. 6:19. and again - "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 no the unclean thing and I will receive you." 2 Cor, 6:16. This is exactly the thought of sanctification - separation, cleansing and departure from all that would defile and render unfit for holy service. Such words as those of the apostle are surely the remedy for any spiritual complacency.

The process of sanctification then is the work of God's Holy Spirit in our hearts, as we read in 2 Cor. 1:21 - "He which establisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God who hath sealed us and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." Again in Tit. 3:5, Paul reminds us that God's salvation is not the product of any good works of righteousness on our own part, but is being worked out in us by "the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit." By His spirit, the new mind, the mind of Christ, is being developed within each one of God's children, so that their delight will more and more be to do their Father's will.

As already noted, our sanctification is a continuing process; it commences as we first come into Christ by faith, it continues daily and culminates only when the earthly course is complete. It is furthermore a co-operative process, in which the Christian himself or herself has a part to play. Just as we are told to work out our own salvation because God Himself is working in us, so here too each one has a responsibility. In our Lord's prayer for His people, He asked the Father to "sanctify then through Thy truth; Thy word is truth." This is the source and secret of the sanctified life, to have His word abiding in our hearts, guiding every thought and word and action.

This work of sanctification, we can be sure, will not continue regardless of our own will and actions. If we would be pleasing to God and be used by Him, separation of ourselves from all that is contrary to or competitive with His will for us will be necessary at all times. Paul's advice to the younger man, Timothy, is good for all God's children, regardless of age - "in a great house there are not only vessels and some to dishonour (or less honour). If a man therefore purge himself from these (that is, the ungodly and unprofitable things he had previously described), he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work." 2 Tim. 2:20,21. The process of sanctification in each one is the work of God's Holy Spirit, implanting and developing within heart and mind His word, which is the word of truth. This alone is truth, this alone can sanctify, this alone can bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. There are three aspects to this process, as reflected in the Old Testament tabernacle arrangements; first he cleansing, then the anointing and then the setting apart for holy purposes. In like manner, it is the privilege of the Lord's people today to be prepared and fitted for His service.

This is God's will for us and must surely be the heart's desire of every child of God, our hope, our resolve, that we may be His sanctified people, each one a cleansed and purified vessel of our Lord, set apart for consecrated service, that each heart may be a place wherein He will delight to dwell by His Spirit, and that our lives may be such that He can use in however small a way to His Praise.

May the words of the apostle to the Christians at Thessalonica encourage us also, as we press on in the narrow way:

"We are bound to give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." 2 Thess. 2:13.

Our God is faithful, our God is able.

They who trust Him wholly find Him wholly true.

This Day Is Thine

This day is thine, a shining gift from heaven,
Gleaned for thy use from treasuries of time,
Given in trust to hold until the even,
This day is thine, a sacred charge sublime,

This day is thine, to be what thou shalt make it,
Hidden in self or used in service fine;
When thou shalt bring it back to him who gave it,
What will it be, this golden day of thine?

This day is thine, thy yesterdays are finished,
Soon will the present join the changeless past;
Will its bright hours be greater for thy keeping

Or by the dreaded rust of waste o'ercast?

This day is thine, there may be no tomorrows,
This day is thine from dawn till setting sun;
May thou at even, like a worthy steward,
Hear in thy heart the Master's words, "Well done."

—Verna Whinery

A Personal Testimony

In younger days the driving force was to learn, to acquire knowledge and understanding of God's Word and Will. The intellect was sharper, points were quickly picked up. It becomes more difficult with the passing of the years, not only to tackle the knotty problems presented, but to retain the knowledge acquired. No matter how much we learn, acquired knowledge seems but to impress "how little we know." The creations of our Creator are unfathomable, a mine that will never fail to yield treasure. The experiences of this short life upon earth will prove but an initial stepping stone, serving as but preparation for the unfolding of glories to come, not only for those who walk the "narrow way" in the steps of Christ now, but for all men in "due time."

When the author of "The Divine Plan of the Ages" commenced his work over a century ago and pointed out that God's Word held out no hope for "this present evil world", but that it would bring about its own destruction and pass away in a great time of trouble, he was bitterly assailed by many. He sought no vindication of his work apart from the Holy Word of God itself. It alone never fails. The same author went on to show that the end of such a world would not prove a calamity for mankind, but the opening up of a new order of things which would usher in untold blessings. The "times of restitution of all things spoken of by all God's holy prophets", was as sure to come as the morning follows the night. Today, a century on, the opposition to his first claim is fading; the ultimate collapse of "this present evil world" is so obvious. No society based on greed and selfishness can survive indefinitely, but the second part of the message - that the collapse of the present order will introduce the Kingdom of God upon earth wherein only absolute righteousness will prevail - is not yet so patent. Faith is required to accept it and that is still sadly lacking. When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?

The mills of God grind slowly, but they are sure, and we must wait. There is still much not clearly comprehended in detail in the prophecies of God's Word, but the main outline of God's purposes relating to the salvation of men through Christ, can be clearly traced by the Bible Student today. Yet, only too few people are interested-

Of all we meet on life's great stream,
There's but one here and there
Who treasure most the better things;
Each man to self most tightly clings,
For self he toils, for self he sings,
Except one here, and there.

I am fully assured that the Bible is God's Holy Word; it alone contains the words of life. Other schools of learning have their place if based on God's Word, but without it all knowledge will prove empty glory.

We've travelled together, my Bible and I;
Through every condition, with smile and with sigh.
In darkness and sunshine, in tempest and calm,
Our friendship's unchanging, my Lamp and my Psalm!

This wonder of wonders, that breathes from above
A sweetness of spirit and goodness and love,
Is due to our God who is gracious and high,
He brought us together-my Bible and I!
(Psalm 119:105)

The search for further details of Truth continues. The Bible is the Text Book. (W.S: 1974)



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Patient Endurance

“Ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might inherit the promise.” Heb. 10:36

The Apostle is addressing the Christian church—You who have left the world, have accepted Christ as your Standard bearer, as well as your Redeemer, and who are seeking to walk in his steps, and you have made consecration of your life to the Lord—“Ye have need of patience.” To a certain extent you did the will of God when you made your consecration to be dead with Christ. But that will of God was more deeply impressed upon you when you began to realize more than at first what this sacrifice would mean, and that only those who suffer with Christ shall reign with him.

“After you were illuminated” you saw the matter clearly, and “endured a great fight of afflictions.” This was well. But Paul goes on to show in the context that some, after having demonstrated their zeal for a certain time, become cold. They become weary in well doing. And he tells us that these thus cut themselves off from the favours, privileges and blessings belonging to the church of Christ. His exhortation is that those who are still loyal to God at heart continue so and exercise patience, remembering that this is one of the cardinal graces of Christian character. Many have naturally a little love, a little gentleness, a little patience, a little meekness. etc. But after we begin to grow in the graces of the Holy Spirit, we need patience to control the flesh, the spirit of the world, the spirit of selfishness.

The will of God is in one sense of the word the standard of God—full perfection—that we should be like our Father which is in heaven. But God remembers that we are fallen creatures, and that we cannot do perfectly. Our text does not mean that we must do the will of God in the perfect and complete sense; but rather, as the Apostle elsewhere says, ours is a reasonable service. When we present our bodies living sacrifices to God, it is our reasonable service. God does not expect us to do that which is impossible.

THE PURPOSE

What is this will of God? Stated in concrete form, “This is the will of God (concerning you), even your sanctification.” (1 Thess. 4:3) As the Apostle teaches, consecration is a full and complete setting apart. If we do such a setting of ourselves apart at the beginning, then the Father sanctifies us—begets us as new creatures, and sets us apart. So we have, first of all, our setting of ourselves apart; and then God’s acceptance by our begetting of the Holy Spirit as new creatures, and his continued work in us.

We are doing the will of God when we fully consecrate ourselves to him, and attain a place in the new creation. But he wills to put us to the test. How much do we love God? How sincere are we? A soldier in an army might be loyal in time of quiet, but how would he be in time of stress? Would he desert the flag then, or would he prove himself a good soldier? He would need a great deal of patience. If he says he loves his country, his endurance and faithfulness will be tested in her time of need. He must go on picket duty; he must sometimes do menial work. He must endure wearisome marches, and many privations. All these things are required of a faithful soldier. If he is faithful, he is likely to be promoted, honored, for his faithful service.

So we are tested as to our loyalty. What are we willing to endure for Christ’s sake? How fully are we submitted? How deep does our submission go? Are we wholly in harmony with the will of the Lord? Is our interest merely superficial, or does it enter fully into our hearts? The question is not merely, Shall we make the consecration?—but after the Christian has taken all of these preliminary steps, to what extent will he manifest patient endurance and obedience and loyalty?

God puts us to these tests because he has great honors to bestow on those who will be overcomers. They are to be a select company, and these will receive the promise. As the Apostle says, it is after we have proved our loyalty to the very last, that we shall receive the promise; i.e. its fulfilment.

THE PROMISE

When, where, what is the promise? Undoubtedly the promise will be received in the resurrection. The promise includes all that God has in reservation for them that love him—that love him more than they love houses and lands, or children, or parents, or friends, or husbands or wives, or self, or any other thing.

The particular promise that the Apostle refers to here is The Promise. All our hopes and blessings are centred in the original promise made to Abraham, when God brought him out of the land of Chaldea into the land of Canaan. God promised Abraham that in his seed should all the families of the earth be blessed. That has been the great promise for encouragement to the seed, to give them patience and fortitude. This is the essence of the promise—that those who receive the promise shall be the seed of Abraham to bless the world. The faithful in Christ will be associated with him in his kingdom—will have the honor of blessing all the families of the earth under this kingdom. Every creature of God shall then be brought to a knowledge of his truth, and shall have the opportunity of being restored, if he will, to perfection, to all that was redeemed on Calvary.

Now, the opportunity is different. Now the selection is being made of those who will inherit the promise as the seed of Abraham. “If ye be Christ’s then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” The Apostle is in our text urging that we continue to be Christ’s and to abide in him. All those who thus remain in him to the end will be glorified with him. In order to remain faithful, we must have his spirit of devotion.

NOTABLE EXAMPLES

James exhorts the church saying, “Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience.” Those whom the Apostle addressed already knew of the sufferings of Jesus. They already know of the faithfulness of the apostles. And now he was calling the attention of their minds to something additional. He is urging, Look back into the past, and see that patient endurance has been characteristic of all who have lived holy lives. These examples should be lessons of encouragement to us, in addition to those we have in the living brethren around us!

Then there is always something to be gained in casting the mind backward. The things close at hand are too near to be seen in their proper light. It was fitting that the Apostle should call attention to those faithful ones of the past, so that we might be encouraged to note what God desires. In those who are his, he desires a willingness to endure patiently and loyally, thus manifesting true character, that which greatly pleases him.

As we look back over the Old Testament record of the Prophets, we notice that many of them displayed this very quality referred to by the Apostle as loyalty to the Lord, a willingness to suffer afflictions for his sake, and not as experiences brought through chance upon them by the people. We see Moses—how willing he was to suffer affliction because of his faith in the promise made to Abraham and his conviction that the promise would come true. He preferred to suffer with the people of God rather than to live at ease in the royal family of Pharaoh, into which he had been adopted.

We see in Job another example of patient endurance of tribulation and of strong opposition for a considerable time. We see the same in Jeremiah—how much his faithfulness cost him of hardship, and how patient he was. We see the same in Daniel the Prophet—his faithfulness to the Lord, his patient endurance of whatever God permitted to come against him. And so with others of the prophets. And we read their experiences were written for our admonition, our instruction. Although they belong to one dispensation and we to another, yet their experiences furnish us good lessons.—1 Cor.10:6, 11.

PERSONAL APPLICATION

Applying these lessons to ourselves, we may say that to whatever extent we may be privileged to speak the Word of God and to suffer persecution therefore, if we take it with patience, it will bring us a corresponding blessing and commendation from the Lord, But we cannot think it would be pleasing to him if, when we suffer, we think, Oh, how terrible, terrible, terrible! Such an attitude would not be taking his Word for it, that “All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution,” and that all things shall work out for our good.—2 Tim. 3:12; Rom. 8:28.

When Job was rich, prosperous, God tested him by taking from him all his family, all his wealth, his health, and even allowing his wife to turn against him. Yet in all this Job did not turn against God. He did indeed express wonder, but he looked to the Lord in faith and said, “Through worms shall destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.” I shall yet receive the manifestation of his favour, and learn what he means by these experiences, these afflictions, coming upon me. “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.”—Job 13:15.

After his testings had been accomplished, God gave him back children, houses, lands, friends. And these coming in abundance shadowed forth the blessings of restitution—how the tribulations of mankind will eventually work out for good to those who will love God. If those who are now suffering affliction because of their loyalty to the Lord, because of their trust in his arrangements, will take afflictions and trials joyfully, these will surely work out good to them—a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”

Our Father, which art in Heaven. . . Matthew 6:9

Our Lord, of course, never intended that these words should be repeated sonorously, ritually, and mechanically, as in the liturgies of Christendom today. He was teaching great principles of intercession. In these few words He shows that every prayer should be an expression of intimacy, dignity, reverence, intelligence, and obedience. There should be simplicity with sincerity, brevity with beauty, and all in a spirit of trust and dependency. Well might we say, as did those early disciples, “Lord, teach us to pray.”

– Jim Flanigan

Alone With Christ

Alone with Christ! Alone with Him
In sweet communion blest.
O happiness beyond compare,
In which the soul finds rest.

Alone with Christ! How sweet the thought
To listen at His feet
And hear His tender, gracious words,
His loving smile to greet.

Alone with Christ! How blest to know
In all our griefs and fears
He hears the harsh reproachful words
That cause such bitter tears.

Alone with Christ, Who knows so well
The depth of human pain
In hearts that yearn for sympathy,
Alas, so oft in vain.

Alone with Christ! Alone with Him,
In dark Gethsemane’s hour;
When hearts lie crushed beneath their load
He lifts them by His power.

Alone with Christ! O portion sweet,
When earthly friends forsake
To share with Him the fellowship
Of which His saints partake.

Alone with Christ! Oh joy divine!
Alone with Him each day,
To breathe out from our inmost heart
What tongue can never say,

Alone with Christ! O joy complete!
O richest, fullest store.
To be with Jesus here `tis bliss,
And life for evermore.

M. W.

Last of all He was seen of me also (1 Cor. 15:8)

A RISEN SAVIOUR

Paul was discussing the resurrection of the dead. He realized that on that great fact rested the weight of the Gospel message. It was easy enough to prove that Jesus had died, but to an incredulous world it was difficult to prove that he had risen from the dead; and whoever could not believe that great fact could not believe that

other great facts which stand or fall with it.

For instance, the Apostle presented that Jesus had left the heavenly glory and had become a man for the purpose of meeting the demands of the divine law against Adam and his race, involved by him. He could show the reasonableness of this logic. He has proven that as the whole world was condemned to death through Father Adam's disobedience it was absolutely necessary for an untainted life to be sacrificed in order to meet the penalty and to secure the release of the condemned race.

The Apostle had declared that Jesus had been faithful in his ministry in fully laying down his life and that the entire matter was pleasing and acceptable to the Heavenly Father. If so, surely God would not leave his Son in death, but would raise him from the dead. This fact the Apostle had repeatedly enunciated, showing that our Lord entered into his glory and reward and ascended up where he was before—to perfection on the spirit plane.

But all these claims fell lightly upon some of his hearers, who claimed that it was much easier to believe that Jesus never died at all, but merely transmuted, than to believe that he died for our sins and rose again for our justification; hence the Apostle's frequent reference to Christ's resurrection and his insistence upon it as absolutely necessary to Christian faith, for not only would the Heavenly Father's favour toward the Lord Jesus thus be shown, but the bulk of all the holy prophecies would remain unfulfilled unless Jesus arose from the dead.

In other words, a dead Redeemer would be of no advantage; matters would be just as unfavourable for the sinners as though Jesus had never come at all. Additionally, if the resurrection of Jesus was a questionable matter, how could those who disputed that great fact acknowledge the resurrection of the church and of the world? Paul emphasizes this also, declaring that "there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust," as a result of the redemptive work of Jesus—his dying for man's sins and his resurrection to glory to carry out the blessings secured by his death.

SEEN BY PAUL ALSO

Prosecuting his argument, the Apostle marshaled the whole chain of witnesses, except the women who first saw the Lord on the morning of His resurrection. He says, "He was seen of Cephas (Peter); then by the remainder of the twelve; then of above five hundred brethren at once; later, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles," when he ascended. Then comes the text: "Last of all he was seen of me also."

There is something pathetic in this reference to his own glimpse of Jesus. It called up the period of his own bigoted persecution of the church. It reminded him of his own responsibility in connection with the death of Stephen, and of the blind hatred which led him to persecute inoffensive fellow-creatures, simply because they believed that Jesus died and rose again, the very thing which he was now trying to testify to all having the hearing ear.

His memory went back to the madness which he had manifested in pursuing Christians even to Damascus, haling them to prison. Again he saw the great, blinding light from heaven, above the brightness of the noonday sun, his fall to the earth, and heard the voice speaking to him, saying, "Saul, Saul, why persecute thou me?" (Acts 9:1-9; 26:12-19) Again he remembered his astonishment at learning that those whom he had persecuted were not renegade and deceived Jews, but highly esteemed and acknowledged by this Great One, a wonderful sight! If Messiah was so great, so glorious, so powerful, he could believe in him, he could reverence him.

The objection which all Jews had to Jesus, and what they considered absolute weakness, was his apparent inability to accomplish the things foretold by he prophets. They said, It is foolish to think of a man without an army and without wealth claiming to be a king. It is still more foolish for him to claim that he is the Messianic king, who is to be above all kings, and before whom every knee shall bow and every tongue confess.

To them it seemed that when he was crucified a demonstration had been given that he was not the Messiah. Was not the Messiah to live forever, and was he not to reign successfully as King of kings and Lord of lords? Was it not, therefore, proven that any man whom the Jews or the Romans could crucify, could put to death, must have been an impostor? The persecution of the followers of Jesus was merely with a view to stamping out a new religion, which, it was feared, would do harm to Israel in that it would call in question the hopes of Israel respecting a coming King and his kingdom. Thus Saul of Tarsus had felt himself fully justified in persecuting all of that way of thinking—for "the good of the cause," as so many persecutors have said.

PAUL'S NEW VIEW

The honesty of Saul of Tarsus led him to be just as honest after he got his eyes of understanding open as he had previously been with them closed. It took him a little while to get the proper focus; then he saw and could explain to others the necessity for the death of Jesus and how it was typified in the sacrifices of the law and how the divinely arranged plan had made this great sacrifice in order thereby to more fully show forth the divine justice, wisdom, love and power.

Now he saw, not only the need for Jesus to come in the flesh and to give himself a ransom-price for all, but he saw equally the necessity for his resurrection, not in the flesh, but in the spirit, that he might be a fully qualified Ruler and Saviour—not only to save his people from the Romans, the Assyrians, and from all other human enemies, but also to save them from Satan, from sin, from sickness, from sorrow, from death. Ah, now he saw how great Messiah must be in order to meet the necessities of the case!

The matter changed immediately in his mind; instead of a human Saviour and Messiah and an earthly king, God had prepared a Heavenly One, partaker of the divine nature, glorious, far above angels, principalities and powers and every name that is named. Now he saw that the sufferings of Jesus had a twofold value. First, they were necessary for man's release from the death sentence, and, secondly, they were necessary as a demonstration of the loyalty of Jesus. Now he saw that

God, in preparing to bring many sons to glory, determined first to prove the loyalty of him whom he had invited to become the Captain of our Salvation, and that this was done by the arrangement which necessitated Jesus' death.

The climax of the argument was reached when he found that God not only had raised up Jesus from the dead, but that additionally he had bestowed upon him the glory, honor and immortality of the divine nature, of which Saul had a demonstration or proof in the blinding flash of light which felled him to the earth, and in the voice which said to him alone, "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest."

"We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." 1 John 3:2.

Fear Not, Little Flock

THOUGH the church of Christ is a little flock, it is of priceless value. It has been purchased with his blood. It is the flock of God, however divided and distracted; and though scattered in the dark and cloudy day, yet it will be gathered together at last by our Lord Jesus Christ, that great Shepherd of the sheep.

But even now it is under his care, his supervision, his control, and no grievous wolves can devour those who listen to God and to the Word of his grace. No one can pluck even the feeblest lamb in all that flock from the hands of the Heavenly Father. The Great Shepherd cares for his little ones; and as there are flowers that bloom in desert wastes and lonely valleys which are seen by no human eye and watered by no human hand, but are as fair and fragrant as those which share the most costly culture, so the Good Shepherd feeds his own flock in the wilderness, in green pastures, and by the side of still waters; restores, and guides, and comforts, and protects them, even to the end.

"He shall feed his flock like a shepherd," and while he feeds them, how blessed to know that "he that keepeth Israel shall never slumber or sleep."

Repentance

(A helping hand for beginners) (Convention Address)

One of the earliest messages in the New V/Testament and therefore in the Gospel Age was the call to repent. *"In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."* (Matthew 3:2) Indeed this was the first public instruction recorded in the New Testament. It demands earnest consideration.

John the Baptist was certainly addressing Israel and many see the call to repent as particularly related to the many breaches of the Law God gave to Israel. From our vantage point, however, we ought to see the message as a call for repentance from all sin and, more importantly, as applicable to all people. The Apostle Paul declared to the people of Athens that this is exactly what God requires. *"And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:"* (Acts 17:30)

THE MEANING OF REPENTANCE

Dictionaries describe REPENTANCE as 'compunction or contrition for wrongdoing or sin', regret for any past action', 'penitence' and 'sorrow'. It seems that it can refer either to the 'act of repenting' or to the 'state of mind in which penitence is felt'.

However the meaning given by The Macquarie Dictionary as the theological meaning of the word 'contrition' is particularly interesting. It refers to 'perfect contrition' as 'sorrow for and detestation of sin with a true purpose of amendment, ARISING FROM a love of God for His own perfections' (God's own perfections). That 'perfect contrition' is contrasted by The Macquarie Dictionary with 'imperfect contrition' arising 'from some inferior motive, as fear of divine punishment'.

THIS IS REPENTANCE

As explained, that definition is applied to the word 'contrition' which in turn is one of the meanings of repentance. For our understanding of what repentance means, it is well worth repeating. It is 'sorrow for and detestation of sin with a true purpose of amendment, ARISING FROM a love of God for His own perfections'. The contrast is also good. Repentance arising from some inferior motive, such as fear of divine punishment is certainly less than perfect.

In this matter the dictionary is more in accord with the Bible than the large denominational institutions. Most organised religions teach that fear is the only way to get men to turn to God. The Bible says otherwise. *"Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?"* (Romans 2:4)

The reality is that *"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love."* (1 John 4:18)

GOD'S PLAN

The beginner needs to see how repentance fits into God's Plan. He or she must be led to understand that God is still in the process of creation. He is creating a perfect world. It requires perfect people to dwell in it. To make people perfect, God has exposed them to sin but has given each a free will and a conscience to know what is right and what is wrong. It is more than a set of rules. It is an instinctive awareness that God is, that God is good, and that He requires His creatures to be good also.

Completion of God's perfect world will require much instruction in the resurrection. Foremost will be people becoming aware that all the troubles in this present world have resulted from mankind departing from God's standard. After coming back from the grave, people will know immediately that God is, and will be quick to understand that Christ's sacrifice has ransomed them from the death they deserved as sinners.

Until the resurrection, most of mankind will not have eyes to see and ears to hear the lesson behind the thousands of years of pain and suffering which has resulted from the one disobedience of Adam. Once having been redeemed and become aware of the consequences of disobedience, surely most of mankind will then obey God in their own absolute free choice.

Whether it be in this Gospel Age or after resurrection into God's Kingdom, eternal life involves a necessary progression. This could be described as a divine staircase and the principal steps can be called CONVICTION, REPENTANCE, SUBMISSION, ACCEPTANCE, FAITH, JUSTIFICATION, LOVE. For those called of God in this age, there is the invitation to the further step of CONSECRATION and God's response BEGETTAL.

STARTING POINT

Some may be surprised that there is a step before repentance. Indeed some may consider conviction as part of repentance and accordingly it is fitting to mention it here.

Conviction is the awareness of our undone condition. That is to say we stand convinced or convicted by our own knowledge, or by God's word, that we have fallen short of God's standard. Conviction must come first, simply because one does not repent unless there is some action or state requiring repentance. Similarly one cannot be saved unless one knows of one's need to be saved. The surfer who does not know he is caught in an undertow does not signal for a life-saver.

CONVICTION – WHY REPENT?

One of the most difficult things for a beginner to understand is that he or she is a sinner. They think "I have not killed anybody. I do not steal. I do not go around injuring people." They feel "I am as good as the next person". The problem is simply that the next person is not good enough.

"As it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one:" (Rom 3:10)

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;" (Rom 3:23)

The Living Bible makes this point well: *"For the truth about God is known to them instinctively; God has put this knowledge in their hearts. Since earliest times men have seen the earth and sky and all God made, and have known of His existence and great eternal power. So they will have no excuse."* (Romans 1:19-20)

If some breach of the written law is sought, then the command not to covet will condemn everyone. Less definitive but even more common is failure to love one's neighbour as one loves oneself, and failure to love one's enemies. More to the point however is that each of us has been distant from God and the standard of conduct necessary for a perfect world.

REAL REPENTANCE

Repentance ought to follow close behind conviction but it must be real. To be content with old habits is the converse of repentance. The heart must earnestly want to come to God's standard for repentance to be real. Whilst we will often fail to attain that standard, the sincere desire must remain.

Awareness of guilt means nothing if one wants to be a sinner. The surfer in an undertow who wants to commit suicide does not signal for a lifesaver. Repentance opens the way for faith - faith in Jesus Christ as the only Saviour Who can possibly save us from the natural penalty of our sins. As the Bible says, in Romans 6:23, *"The wages of sin is death"*.

"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." (1 Tim.2:5,6)

"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

"To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." (Acts 10:43)

CONVERSION – TURNING AROUND

The call for repentance sometimes stands alone and sometimes is linked with other expressions such as faith. Acts 3:19, however, takes us back to the meaning of our word. "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19)

The dictionary proviso - "with a true purpose of amendment" - indicates that, at least in the 'contrition' meaning of repentance, conversion is part of 'repentance'. The reason 'conversion' was not included as a separate step on the Divine Staircase is simply that it was regarded as part of repentance. Acts 3:19 then is repeating the conversion aspect of repentance. It certainly needs heavy emphasis.

The point is that it is not sufficient to regret, even to regret deeply. There must also be a turning point around to go towards God instead of away from God. Natural man goes away from God having been born a sinner and having inherited a sinful nature. Additional to being convicted or convinced of this fact and regretting it, it is also necessary for salvation, either now or in the resurrection, to change direction. Of course, the earlier one draws nigh unto God through Jesus Christ, the greater the spiritual profit.

"Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you." (James 4:8)

THE LOVE OF CHRIST CONSTRAINS US. (2 COR.5:14)

Paul made it clear that the natural response to Christ - to a real appreciation of God's goodness - His grace - His free gift of His Son to take away our sin - is just such a change of direction. In Romans 6:2, Paul said *"How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"*

The context repudiates any suggestions of *"Do whatever you like, it will only mean that God will pour more grace upon you."* *"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"* Surely, an awareness of the pain of real repentance should prevent anything contrary to God's will.

MOVING ON

Repentance is not an end in itself. To be repentant and stop there, would be very cold comfort. Regretting the past and turning around naturally means that the one who repents wants something better.

Although the further steps on the divine staircase are not really part of our subject, some view further up the staircase is necessary to inspire and encourage over the difficult step of repentance. Indeed, some knowledge of the step of accepting Christ as one's own personal Saviour and being aware of His ability to save is needed to make real repentance bearable:

"For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." (2 Tim 1:12)

Even further ahead, there is comfort and the prospects of great joy in Paul's report of his own position:

"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Phil 3:13-14)

FORGETTING OLD THINGS

The prize of the High Calling is a great incentive but outside our present scope. The thought of *forgetting those things which are behind* is however appropriate to repentance. After turning around to go towards God,

one ought not to hanker after the same old things. Remember Lot's wife. The way to God is full of interests in the good things of life.

J.B. Phillips renders part of 1 Peter 1:14 "Don't let your character be moulded by the desires of your ignorant days." How then should it be moulded? Paul explained this to the Galatians "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another." (Gal 5:13).

There is another way in which we should be *forgetting those things which are behind*. The burden of past actions could be too heavy. Without taking away the knowledge and therefore the lesson, the beginner must realise that the burden can be safely left at the feet of our Saviour.

DETESTING SIN

The lesson behind repentance is, of course, the seriousness of disobedience to God. That is shown by its heinous effects. We repent of the sinful nature with which we were born recognising that it was the result of Adam's disobedience. Additionally, we repent of our own sins and deplore the fact that they added to the burden which our Saviour carried to the cross.

The importance of that lesson can be seen when we realise that all the suffering in the thousands of years since Adam first let sin into the world followed from that one act of disobedience. In the resurrection, all will need to be very aware of the seriousness of sin. It cannot be permitted to occur again.

Obviously, God requires us to detest sin. That is the six thousand year lesson. It is a major part of repentance.

SORROW FOR SIN

As the beginner progresses, the question will arise - to what extent will or should repentance or sorrow for sin remain with us? It can be said that we will always regret having sinned, but where does sorrow for sin end and anguish over sin begin? We are promised peace, but peace requires release from anguish.

In a sinless society, awareness of past guilt would be punishment enough. Continuing, deeply sincere repentance might well be too heavy burden to bear - but Jesus said "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matt. 11:28) We can safely lay this burden at His feet.

At the same time, sorrow carries its own blessing. Remember the beautiful record of the meal at Simon's house in Luke 7:40-47. It is suggested that the memory of past failures and the knowledge that our Lord has redeemed us will lead to deeper appreciation of Christ's love. That appreciation will in turn strengthen and enlarge our love for Him.

Simon thought harshly about the woman at Jesus' feet. Our Lord responded with the parable of the creditor who forgave two debtors one with a large debt and one owing less. Simon acknowledged that the one forgiven most would love most. Jesus confirmed this and said "to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little."

IN CONCLUSION

The arrangement is miraculous! We sinned - Jesus Christ died to redeem us. We come to realise all that he endured; we detest sin. God raised Jesus from the grave. We remember our sin and repent, accepting Him as our Saviour. He shares the burden of our repentance. Our love increases - how we feel the embrace of His love!

Romans 5:1 told us that faith and peace go hand in hand. The message to Simon surely enlarges that duo to an eternal foursome:

REPENTANCE, FAITH, PEACE and even more LOVE.

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The King's Template

(Convention Address)

A NEW AGE There can be no doubt that the first advent of our Lord Jesus, the Christ or Anointed of God, commenced a new era in God's dealings with mankind. Throughout His ministry, He revealed God's loving nature and taught a special kind of Kingdom based on God's love and goodness.

Can there be any doubt that, when all have eyes to see and ears to hear, almost everyone will rejoice in God's provision and hasten at the opportunity to be in that Kingdom. This is to be a Kingdom in which Jesus Christ Himself will be King and all of mankind could be His subjects.

For the Kingdom to be open to all mankind, it was necessary for those already dead, and those yet to die, to be resurrected from the dead state of nothingness. Although the extent of this resurrection was quite different from the understanding of God's teachings held by the establishment, Christ did preach that *"The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth."* (John 5:28,29).

But He did much more than tell us about the Kingdom and the resurrection. By paying the penalty of Adam's sin, the sin which passed sinfulness to every one of Adam's descendants, our King made possible that resurrection of all people.

HOW TO START

To begin a new age, it was first necessary to define in what way it differed from the previous age. Very early in His earthly ministry, Jesus Christ summarised those differences in the platform known as the Sermon on the Mount, found in chapters five, six and seven of Matthew's Gospel.

It also established the principles or rules which are to prevail throughout the Realm. Even more, the Sermon on the Mount is the basis for developing the character of all His subjects —the Church now — later all who in full light and knowledge will choose to live.

Accordingly, it is suggested that the Sermon on the Mount can well be regarded as the King's Template.

THE TEMPLATE

A template is something that delineates a pattern to be copied. It may be a few marks on a piece of paper when a door lock is purchased. It may be a stencil. It may be a detailed outline to help in making something quite complex. A common form of template is a sheet of any material from which shapes or letters have been cut out to permit designs or characters to be copied many times.

To see the Sermon on the Mount as the King's Template is to apply that group of messages as the pattern or design He is using in this Gospel Age to form His Church.

Christ's Template particularly specified the attitudes which are to prevail in the hearts of His subjects. It is a model to be used in conforming each subject to the image of God's Son. The Template is not easy to follow but development to so high a standard requires a precise pattern.

Whilst the Kingdom described is yet future, there was then and is now a sense in which the Kingdom is already present. This must be where Christ rules in the heart of a believer. Surely a Kingdom exists wherever the King reigns supreme. Acceptance of the King's requirements and the endeavour to follow them indicate a desire to be part of Christ's Kingdom. Where Jesus Christ is King in this heart or that heart, there exists Christ's Kingdom.

COMFORT

The Sermon began with the wonderful words of comfort known as the Beatitudes. To study them is to rejoice in them. We cannot be surprised that wisdom from above led our King to begin His promulgation with words of encouragement and comfort.

Before laying down rules that are difficult, He gave those He called then and us now something to hold on to. Being aware of our frailties, He knew of our need; the Beatitudes give the very comfort and assurance required. *(These are a rich study in themselves).*

ANGER AND CONTEMPT

Our Lord gives blunt warnings against anger and contempt. Anger is an emotion which takes control away from our reasoning capacity. Obviously a proper society requires its rational beings to be in control of their emotions.

Contempt for others is a different problem. It forgets that the others were created by God and to some extent belittles the work of His hands. Admittedly, the features leading to any contempt would have been a spoiling by man of God's handiwork but the fact of creation requires respect for the being itself.

INTENT

The Sermon on the Mount or King's Template places importance on the intent behind the action. It is not sufficient to avoid doing wrong, we are also to control our desires so that we do not want to do wrong. This is not easy but it does have an inbuilt blessing. When we do not desire wrong, it is easier not to do wrong.

God seeing the intent of our hearts has another blessing for us. When we fail to achieve some good or when our efforts to help someone end up hurting them, the fact that God knows the intent of our heart is re-assuring.

OFFENDING EYE

Respect for others and indeed for self demands a minimum standard of conduct. When we fall short of this, we should be aware of it, endeavour to correct the fault and confessing it to God seek His help to overcome.

The suggestion of plucking out the offending eye is not intended to be taken literally. The body designed and created by God is to be respected. Our Lord's words here are a way of placing relative importance on the offence.

TRUTH

An essential ingredient for the Kingdom to be an harmonious society is truth and honesty. Where truth prevails in all things, there is no need for oaths to identify which things are true. In other words, the use of oaths to confirm the truth of some things clearly implies that things not sworn to may be suspect.

In the Kingdom there will be no need for oaths. This should be so now for all followers of our King. Some think the law of the land requires oaths but, in this land anyway, our law accepts a simple affirmation. It appears that civil authorities have more regard for the instructions in Matthew 5:34-39 and James 5:12 than the regard held by ecclesiastical authorities.

Avoiding oaths is easy and despite the teachings of some religions, our Template says they should be avoided even now. Not so easy is the other side of the requirement. Footstep followers are to be truthful in all things. How we need help from above!

RESIST NOT EVIL

This is one of the hardest rules to understand. That is not to say it should be cast aside. Perhaps the circumstances at the time indicated some particular types of evil faced by the believer which should not be resisted. It was a country occupied by a foreign power.

Our Lord was not a revolutionary. He put more weight on preparation for the future of Righteousness. Remember His discourse with Pilate.

Another explanation is in the Twelfth of Romans *"Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil but overcome evil with good"* (V.19-21)

LOVE IS PARAMOUNT

The Template certainly sets out some difficult instructions. Perhaps we could look now at probably the most difficult. *"But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you."* (Matt 5:44).

All would quickly appreciate the clear implication that this calls for love of all mankind, even our enemies. There is no exclusion of worshippers of any form of golden calf, let alone those who believe different doc-

trines.

It is hard enough to love the unlovely, but to love one's enemies seems almost impossible. Just as well nothing is impossible to God. We must NOT try to water down the requirement. The verb rendered love is 'agapao', as intense as any love and well distinguished from instinctive or family love. It is a voluntary love which means that it is in our control whether or not we have this love. If that were not so, it could not be commanded. There is no way out. To obey Christ's instruction we have to make ourselves love our enemies.

Indeed, when we compare and contrast this instruction with our Lord's indication of the two great commandments of the Old Testament, it is clear that the command to love our enemies is the one fundamental in the Template. This must be so because it embraces and prevails over all other features demanded by our King's Template.

Our Lord knew it was hard. He said "*Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.*" (Matt 5:48) At the time He, too, was a man in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. In chapter seven He again acknowledged the difficulty in the words "*Enter ye in at the strait (or difficult) gate.*"

FATHER IN HEAVEN

Five times in the sermon our Lord used that term '*Your Father which is in Heaven*'. This poses the question as to whether the term should be understood as a reference to God's universal Fatherhood of all mankind or His particular Fatherhood of those begotten again from above by His Holy Spirit.

Like many others this question requires us to study God's word for ourselves and come to the conclusion to which we feel God's word is leading us. For the present question, we should look to the introduction and to the postscript of the Sermon mindful that the message is also for the profit of people of today.

PRAYER

Two of the most helpful passages in the King's template are His instructions on Prayer. Both seem to emphasise the personal nature of prayer. This can be contrasted with ceremonial prayer. Whilst it is only fitting that all things should be done decently and in order, there is a danger that ceremony may replace sincere prayer with the vain repetitions our Lord warns against.

It is interesting that neither of the passages on prayer in chapter six mention our Lord Himself as a means of access to God. We certainly have it elsewhere in His teachings. No doubt His intent here was to further emphasise the relationship of a child to a Father who loves the child. Love and reverence are to take away any terror fear.

The petition 'Thy will be done' can be seen to include a request for help in complying with the Template. Seeking His will to be done in all things implies that it should be done in the one praying. The same expression can also be seen as an acknowledgment of God's power over all things indicating that everything that has come to pass must have been in accord either with God's deliberate will or at least His permissive will.

MODEL PRAYER

It is suggested that the passage known generally as the Lord's prayer was not intended to be recited by rote except for the purpose of learning the principles involved. Indeed it is full of instruction on principles. One can see individual petitions representative of prayer elements such as —

Address	Our Father Which art in Heaven
Praise	Hallowed by Thy Name
Faith	Thy Kingdom come
Trust	Thy will be done
Intercession	On earth as it is in heaven
God's Grace	Give us
Daily Provision	Our daily bread
Forgiveness	Forgive us our debts Acknowledgment As we forgive our debtors
Dependence	Deliver us.

PROVIDENCE

How beautifully our King pointed out to us God's provision for our every real need. The birds and the flowers are reminders of the beauty of the righteousness which will glorify all aspects of society in the Kingdom. Physical needs are of little significance compared with attitudes of love and selflessness. However, we are assured that the unimportant temporal needs will be added when we seek God and His righteousness.

It should be recognised that the word 'first' in chapter 6:33 means 'firstly in importance'. There is nothing wrong with giving time priority to this seeking but the real emphasis in the Template is the weight or zeal to be given to this search. Looking for the Kingdom and God's righteousness is to be the most important thing, first in our desires and highest on our list of treasures.

THOUGHT FOR THE MORROW

When proper regard is given to the Kingdom, here and in the future, the worries of the world around us are relatively unimportant. Certainly we are to value life. It is God's first gift to each one. This also calls for prudent conduct of our own affairs and dealings with others.

However, the assurance of God's providence must take away all fear. It is worrying thought or anxious thought that must be dispelled. How impressive is the language of the King James version "*Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the thins of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.*" (Mat 6:34) This last phrase must mean "Wait until the future problem is here before you worry about it and then you may see it is not a worry at all."

JUDGING

The mote and the beam are a strong picture against judging others. Whenever we look at the Sermon on the Mount or the Sermon on the Plain we are reminded how difficult it is to control our own thoughts and actions. To judge another would be to pretend that we have full control of everything we do and to think that we have sufficient wisdom left to control others.

GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT

We are told to "*Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.*" (Mat 7:7) In Luke 11:13 these words are specifically associated with the Heavenly Father giving the Holy Spirit. "*If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?*"

We tend to think of the gift of the Holy Spirit particularly as the begetting again from above to newness of life, God's response to the sincere consecration of a believer called to the High Calling. However we should not think of God as restricted to a single function of His Holy Spirit. In Old Testament times God frequently blessed by His Holy Spirit in various ways. There is no reason to think He should not be able to do so now, or in the resurrection, as it pleases Him.

THE GOLDEN RULE

The principle most quoted from the King's Template is the Golden Rule. "*Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.*" (Matt 7:12). It is usually converted to modern language, the shortest form being "Do as you would be done by."

How different the true Golden Rule is from those of this evil world like "Do as you are done by." or "He who has the gold makes the rule."

We have already considered the breadth of the command to love set out in the King's Template. It is now suggested that the Golden Rule lays down the depth of His command to love. But this aspect of the Template is not new. It is really saying the same thing as the Law of 1918, Leviticus 19:18 that is, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." He who loves his neighbour as he loves himself would surely do to the neighbour that which is best for the neighbour.

The Golden Rule does not call for unwise indulgence. We ought not to want unwise indulgence upon ourselves. The inspired words of Paul help in this regard. "*Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification.*" (Rom 15:2) Of course, edification is not mere lifting up but actually building up of character.

IN CONCLUSION

The Sermon on the Mount did not have the television coverage of the recent Olympic Games, but it did rock the then known world. Moreover, it has had a greater influence on the history of mankind than any other oration. However, the effects to date are really nothing when compared with the future changes which will bring all mankind into conformity with the King's Template.

This Sermon on the Mount is probably the best description we have of the social structure of resurrected mankind in the Ages after the millennium reserved for correcting all the troubles of our present world. When every subject in Christ's Kingdom has come to fit the design in that Template, they will be living in a beautiful world. They will then give all the praise to God for that wonderful achievement just as we now praise Him for the prospect of it.

While restricted by the earthly vessels of this life, we will often fall short of the standard in the King's Tem-

plate. Fear of failure is no argument to lay it aside. If we regard Him as our King, we will do our best to do just as He wants us to do. To this end, we must not forget the power available to us. (FMG:199 2)

“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of sound mind.” (2 Tim.1!7)

Blessed Bible

What divine fulness pervades the Word of God; with several precious truths often latent in one short passage, awaiting those who will “search the scriptures.” John 5:39. (W P W McVey)

Standing At The Portal

(A new year exhortation)

At the close of another year, it is surely good for each of us to look back over the past twelve months and recall both the blessings and trials of the way, to meditate upon the lessons our Heavenly Father has sought to teach us, above all to realise just how He has faithfully watched over and cared for us. Perhaps at the time and in the midst of the experience, we were too close to events, too emotionally involved, to fully see His hand and to recognise how He was monitoring our way, and we need to pause to reflect and then to thank and praise Him for His unfailing love and mercy to us in Christ Jesus.

But what of the year before us? Around us, the world is in turmoil and while most in this country still have food and shelter, there are financial crises, employment problems, increases in crime, violence and anti-social behaviour. As foretold in God’s word, seemingly all those things which can be shaken are indeed being already shaken, so that only the unshakeable will remain. Praise God, our trust is in Him who is unchangeable, whose mercies fail not but are new every morning.

The following new year exhortation was written and published one hundred years ago —its message remains just as relevant today:

“Our day is peculiar in many respects. Not only is it a day of blessings, advantages and conveniences beyond any other, but it is a day of dissatisfaction and discontent beyond any other. Not only is it a day of greater light and understanding respecting the Lord’s plan, but it is a day in which the great enemy of the truth is permitted to spread before the awakening nominal and real church more sophisticated delusions in the name of “new light” than ever before. Not only is it true that a man or woman has five times the opportunity for usefulness in God’s service, ever before enjoyed, but it is also true that business, worldly pleasure and ambition are five times as active and powerful to keep us back from this possible usefulness. It behoves us, therefore, not only to awaken to our present privileges, blessings and opportunities, but to keep awake to them. He who does not realize that this will require a constant battle with selfishness, within and without—with the world, the flesh and the devil—is very liable to fall into the snare in learning of it.

Nevertheless it is possible, even now, for the intelligent Christian to have absolute contentment, to escape the errors of our day and to keep himself actively in the love and service of God. This blessing, with the peace that passeth all understanding, is, however, only for the few: for those whose faith is resting in the perfect work of Christ—in the ransom which He gave—and who are fully consecrated, heart and body, to the Master’s will and work and way in every matter. Such He does not leave in darkness and doubt in this day when the hearts of the worldly-wise are “failing them for fear and for looking after those things coming upon the earth,” but to them are fulfilled the promises—“He will show you things to come”; “Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free”—free from the bondage of error, free from the bondage of fear, and from those other bondages of creeds of men and of social and religious societies into which fear is driving many under the plea of “union”..

But while we do well to remember gratefully the mercies of the past year and to rejoice in the grace sufficient with which it was so richly supplied, it is wise for us to look carefully to our steps for the year beginning. While we did not fall last year, some did. Our trials and testings may be more severe during the year beginning, and unless we feel our own insufficiency and look to our Master continually, we shall be liable to depart from humility, to become puffed up with pride and haughtiness, the sure precursors of a fall. And again, if we look merely to our own weaknesses we will become so discouraged as to yield readily to the adversary’s assaults. Our only safe position will be to feel humble and to realise our insufficiency, to trust implicitly and always in Him who has promised that He will never leave us, nor forsake us. (If there be any breach between us, if any leaving and forsaking, it will be on our part, not His.)

We can safely trust our all to Him who assures us that “all things shall work together for good to them that *love* God (with all their hearts)—to those called according to His purpose.” We need have no fear of the ultimate results, so long as we find *our wills* fully submitted to our Master’s will, and our hands and thoughts filled with His work. We may have full confidence, and may rest in peace upon the promise, “He will not suf-

fer you to be tempted *above that ye are able*, but will with the temptation provided also a way of escape.”

“Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. Whom resist (by standing) steadfast in *the faith*, knowing that similar afflictions are being accomplished in your brethren in the world.”-1 Pet. 5:8,9.

The more we realize that we are in the harvest—the winnowing and testing time—the more we should each seek to follow the Apostle’s advice, “Make straight paths for your feet lest that which is lame be turned out of the way.” Each of us has learned some of his weak or vulnerable points of character, and each should seek, not only to strengthen these weak points but also specially to fortify himself against temptations and besetments of the adversary upon those weakest points, lest he thereby be turned out of the straight and narrow way.

This means a circumspection of our affairs in general. Home affairs, business affairs, all should be ordered and systematised with a view to protecting our own weak points to the Lord’s praise and to the good of ourselves and others. Let us see that our hearts are fully given up to the King, and then with the wisdom which He will supply to those who seek it, divide our time and talents among our various duties so as to spend and be spent more to the honour of the Lord and to the service of His truth, and we will find ourselves liberally repaid in spiritual favours.”

“Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Let all your deeds be done in love.” 1 Cor.16:13,14.

The King In His Beauty

(Isaiah 33:17)

“Thine eyes shall THE king!” The very same

Whose love shone forth upon the curseful tree,

Who bore thy guilt, who calleth thee by name;

THINE eyes shall see.

“Thine eyes shall see the KING!” The Mighty One,

The Many—crowned, the Light-enrobed; and He

Shall bid thee share the kingdom He hath won;

Thine EYES shall see.

And “in His BEAUTY!” Stay thee, mortal song,

The “altogether lovely” One must be

Unspeakable in glory — yet ere long

Thine eyes SHALL see.

Yea, though the land be “very far” away,

A step, a moment, ends the toil for thee;

Then changing grief for gladness, night for day,

Thine eyes shall SEE!

(Author unknown)

Stephen — Preacher and Martyr

“Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” — Rev. 2:10

It is not surprising that, with all the fire of zeal and love, active amongst the early Christians, the Adversary likewise was on the alert and active in stirring up persecution against the primitive Church. The first Church at Jerusalem had prospered greatly. Not only was the Lord’s blessing upon the Apostles in their ministries, but

upon others of the Church also, who, full of love and zeal for the Truth, told the good tidings as they had opportunity. They had the Gospel message in its purity, and it was a pleasure to tell it.

The message itself incited love and devotion, and kindled a flame of sacred love in their hearts which tended to make each believer a burning and a shining light, as the Lord Himself had enjoined.

There had arisen in the early Church the need for a class of servants who were designated as deacons, and Stephen, a young man of prominence and zealous for the truth, had been chosen for this office. However, we hear very little of him as a deacon, for he evidently excelled others and went past his office as deacon and attained fame as a preacher. In personal character he is described as being full of grace and power. (See Acts 6:8-15).

Stephen's Preaching

His zeal for the Master's cause and the spread of the Gospel message led him into public discussions, and his opponents, finding their arguments inferior to his, were angered instead of convinced. This shows their insincerity. Had they hungered and thirsted for the Truth, they would have been glad to receive it from Stephen, or from anybody. Let us beware of such a spirit in ourselves, knowing that it is dangerous. In this case it led on to murder; not merely the murder accomplished when Stephen died, but they were murderers in advance, from the Lord's standpoint, because hatred of him was in their hearts. "He that hateth his brother is a murderer." They had, however, respect to the outward forms of the Law, and sought a pretext to justify them in killing their opponent.

Had they no fear of God! Apparently it is possible for men to get into such a condition of heart that they will not only speak evil of us and plot mischief against us, but to the extent that they can do so will be glad to put us to death. This is a part of the murderous spirit, whether they stop short of the actual death or not. It went to the limit with Stephen and with our Lord, and it may do so with us some day.

Stephen's opponents were crafty. They hired witnesses to describe the teachings of Stephen in an unjust manner, saying he talked dishonorably of the law and of Moses. Blasphemy in that day was the worst of crimes. As a result the people, the Elders, the scribes, came upon him, seized him and brought him to the Council, or place of trial. Then the prejudices of the people were again appealed to through witnesses who perverted the truth, saying that Stephen was continually saying things against the holy city and temple and the Law and claiming that Jesus would destroy the place and change the customs. There was, perhaps, considerable truth in this statement, rightly understood.

Stephen was the first to grasp and proclaim the truth that the old forms of worship must disappear before the new, a transition that has been difficult for the Church to negotiate to this day. This process cost the early Church a long battle, in which Paul was the magnificent champion of the new liberty, but it was Stephen's inspired genius that first saw the truth and his bravery started the battle. He began to shake the Church loose from the narrowness and bondage of Moses (necessary and good in its day) and to let it out into the glorious breadth and liberty of Christ.

So today in traducing the Lord's true servants, some may tell partial truths, which really are false-hoods. It is a weakness of human nature to suppose that such misrepresentations are excusable. They should remember how impossible it is to deceive the Holy Spirit, as Ananias and Sapphira learned. The lesson to the Lord's faithful is that it is far better to be the sufferer under such circumstances than to be the one who causes the suffering and who must eventually answer for his crime.

"As the Face of an Angel"

There is an inspiration of the heart and an illumination of the features which accompanies the presentation of the Truth by those who are indwelt by the Lord's Holy Spirit and who are speaking as His ambassadors. Many have observed the bright and shining countenance of some who since Stephen's day have been zealous and faithful in proclaiming the truth. Doubtless this is akin to what is mentioned in our lesson respecting Stephen's face — that it was bright, happy, radiant "as the face of an angel." An angel is a messenger, and if Stephen, by the grace of

God, was permitted to be the Divine messenger or mouth-piece and permitted to convey the "good tidings" to others, surely, then, we also are angels in the highest sense conceivable. No wonder there is no need since Pentecost that the angels should appear in human form! The children of God, indwelt by His spirit, can be God's mouthpieces in the very highest sense.

Stephen's sermon is not directly a part of the lesson, but indirectly it should be borne in mind. It was a comprehensive view of Divine favour in Israel, bringing the matter down to date and showing Jesus, the son of Abraham according to the flesh, rejected and crucified by those who should have received Him. This was the galling feature of the Gospel among the Jews — their responsibility as murderers of their Messiah. We read that His hearers "gnashed on him with their teeth."

“Cut to the Heart”

This action signified chagrin, disappointment, savage animosity. We read that they were “cut to the heart.” Stephen’s words were sharp and their force consisted not in any angry or bitter denunciation, but in plain, simple narration of the Truth. This should be the style of all preaching. It is not necessary for us to say angry or bitter things. The Truth itself is “sharper than any two-edged sword,” and needs no unkind language, no profanity, no epithets to drive it home. Where immoderate and unchristian language is considered necessary it is a sure sign that the argument is correspondingly weak, and it warns us to beware. The Truth itself is mighty, even if spoken by a little child. Another has remarked:

“By his whole handling of the history Stephen made it plain that he was not hostile to Moses and was a loyal Jew. But he also showed that God had not tied Himself down to any ‘place’ or ‘custom’ in administering His grace, but had revealed Himself in many places and through many Prophets.

Interwoven with this truth, it was also shown that these Prophets had been rejected in the same narrow and ungrateful spirit that was then intensifying itself into final hardness of heart. At this point, Stephen seems to have seen his judges stiffening themselves against the Truth in unbelief and rage, and he cut his address short with a terrible arraignment of their guilt in betraying and murdering the Righteous One.

All this is not ancient history, but may verily be re-enacted in our day and in our hearts.” Hearing Stephen with impatience, aggravated by the fact that his argument was true, they were gnashing their teeth with chagrin, because they were unable to detect a flaw or an excuse for his death.

Finally, however, when he declared that he saw a vision of Christ at the right hand of God, his statement of the matter furnished the excuse they had been waiting for, and, seizing it, they rushed upon him, crying out in a loud voice and stopping their ears, as though to convince one another that to willingly hear anything more on that line would be a participation in the blasphemy. They rushed him out of the city gate and stoned him. A young man, Saul, supposedly an officer of the Council, being present, gave his sanction by taking charge of the outer-garments of those who stoned him to death.

Such a martyrdom is not the style in our day; hence none of us will probably suffer death in that form. We have more refined forms of persecution. Christian people may get themselves into such a wrong attitude of heart as to think that they do God service in hurling slanders at those who have sought to do them good. And indeed who does not know that the blow of slander may be even more cruel and even more painful and more shameful than the literal stoning? We ask ourselves what was the matter with those Jews who thus maltreated both our Lord and Stephen, and the answer comes back, “Ye have not the love of God in your hearts.” Similarly we must answer in respect to those who in our day persecute through slander, vituperation, evil-speaking, evil surmisings, evil insinuations, etc.

“Father, Forgive Them”

Stephen’s attitude of heart towards his enemies indicates that he had not only received the Holy Spirit, but that he had it as a living power, and that its fruitage was in his heart. He had only love for his enemies. Having done his very best to serve them with the Truth, he had prayers for them in return for their imprecations and their cruel stones. He prayed, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.” So far as he himself was concerned, he had no desire that they should be punished. This beautiful condition of heart should be ours. “Owe no man anything but to love one another” — and to desire one another’s welfare is the application of the Divine rule to all the affairs of our lives.

We read that Saul (afterwards Paul) was amongst those who consented to this martyrdom. How strange the anomaly — that so many should think to be right and to be the Divine service, that which we know to be very reprehensible in the sight of God! Seeing such great blindness on the part of one who subsequently declared, “I verily thought I did God service,” should surely cause us to be very circumspect, very critical, in respect to our thoughts and deeds. We must remember that it is not a question of whose servants we claim to be, but, as our Lord said, “His servants ye are unto whom ye render service.”

“He Fell Asleep”

No suggestion was given that the first Christian martyr passed immediately to heaven, and that with his expiring breath he became more alive than he ever was. On the contrary, here as elsewhere in the Scriptures, death is pictured as a sleep.

“Asleep in Jesus, blessed sleep, From which none ever wakes to weep.”

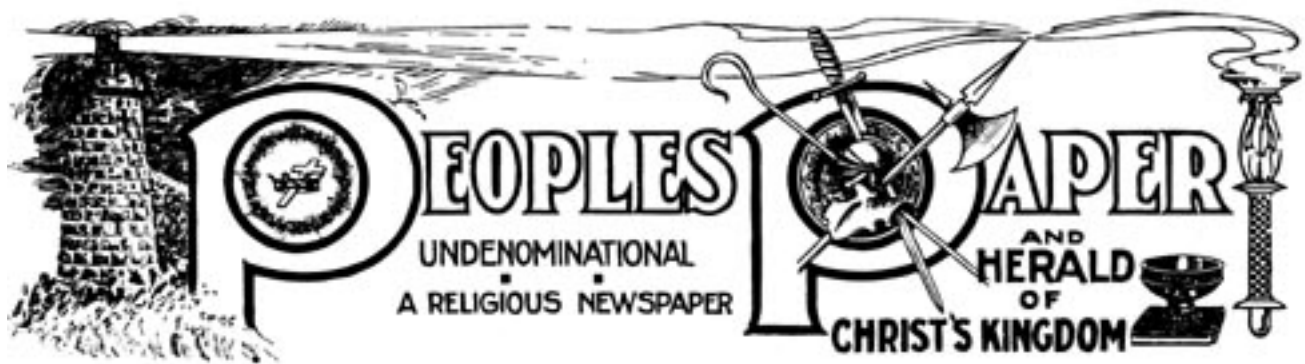
How glad we are that this is so! The Awakening time will be after the close of the reign of sin and death; after our Redeemer’s Second Advent, when the power Divine will be in control, instead of that of the prince of this world. Truly, “Weeping may endure for the night,” but it ceases with our sleeping, and “joy cometh in the morning” of the resurrection. — Psalms 30:5

“Scattered Abroad”

The Death of Stephen marked the beginning of an epoch of persecution, especially in Jerusalem, where for some years peace had prevailed and the message of the Gospel found considerable root in the hearts of “Israelites indeed.” The Lord allowed these new beginners to attain a fair degree of development in grace and knowledge, and then permitted the persecution which scattered them everywhere throughout Judea and Samaria. The effect was that, so far from the Truth being injured, it was carried to larger numbers, for every true disciple is a light-bearer. Saul was one of the chief persecutors, apparently. We read that he made havoc of the Church, entering every house, and, armed with the necessary legal authority, he effected the imprisonment of many, and thus led to the scattering of others. But in some unaccountable manner this persecution seems to have passed by the Apostles. The Lord probably wished to keep Jerusalem as the centre for the Apostolic ambassadors of the Truth for a season.

The lesson for us all is faith, courage, zeal, a loyal heart, a shining face, love and prayers for our enemies, and to see that we learn a lesson from the evil course of others — “See that no man render evil in return for evil,” as the Apostle says.

The fact that the Jews had not power to put our Lord to death, but did have the power to stone Stephen, is explained by the fact that stoning to death for blasphemy was the divinely instituted punishment, according to the Law. But the Jews, being subject to the Romans, were not permitted by them to exercise the death penalty. Following the death of our Lord, Pilate was ordered to Rome to stand trial on certain charges brought against him, and thus the Roman power in Palestine was somewhat abated, and the Jews, in the absence of a dominating force, exercised their own laws. *“They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit.” — Acts 6:5.*



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Resurrection For All

(Convention Address)

The subject of the resurrection is a basic and fundamental one which most are very familiar with. Nevertheless, it is good to be reminded of such things, as the apostle tells us in 2 Peter 1:12,13. This is not only for our own sakes, but so that we may give a ready answer to others.

Some today who do not understand the wideness of God's mercy insist that there is not to be a resurrection for all - not for those who are really wicked, those destroyed in the flood or in Sodom and Gomorrhah, or for those killed in the great time of trouble which is to come upon the world in Armageddon. They say also that there is no hope for father Adam. How do we answer these things? Any doctrine we hold must first be scriptural, it must also be logical and reasonable. It must bring honour and glory to our great Creator and show Him to be just what the Scriptures say He is, a God of love.

Is there to be a resurrection for all? Those whom God has called now, the members of the true church, have already in this life received a resurrection, not a literal one but a figurative one. Romans 6:3,4 says "know ye not that so many of us as were baptised into Jesus Christ were baptised into His death; therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." When we go down into the waters of baptism to symbolise our consecration, what a beautiful picture it is of going down into death and being raised up again into life. We have already passed from death unto life, as our Lord said in John 5:24 "verily, verily I say unto you he that heareth my word and believeth on Him that sent me hath everlasting life and shall not come into condemnation, but has passed from death unto life." Our Heavenly Father views us very differently from the rest of mankind, we already have life, we are no longer under the Adamic death sentence which still rests at the present time on the unbelieving world. This life that we have is provisional. Throughout our earthly sojourn we are being tested and tried. As Jesus said "be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life." This is the crown of eternal, immortal life. This is our day of judgement, we are not to receive a further opportunity in the next age, that is the world's day of judgement. We have already come under the provisions of the ransom. This lifetime is our opportunity for eternal salvation.

Is there to be a resurrection for all? Yes, in the fullness of time, all will come under the provisions of the ransom, be saved from the Adamic death sentence and be granted a full trial for everlasting life. This is the thought in 1 Timothy 2:3-4 which tells us "God will have all men to be saved and come unto the knowledge of the truth." None can receive eternal salvation without first coming to a knowledge of the truth. So this passage means saved in the same way we are saved at the present time, saved from the Adamic death sentence. The Greek word here translated "knowledge" has the meaning of "accurate knowledge". In God's due time all are to come unto an accurate knowledge of the truth and be fully enlightened.

The scriptures indicate that there could be some who will not receive a literal resurrection, those who have been called and fully enlightened, have come under the provisions of the ransom and later deliberately and wilfully turned their backs on the Saviour and rejected the only way provided by our Heavenly Father. As we read in Hebrews 6:4-6, "for it is impossible for those who were once enlightened and have tasted the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come, if they should fall away to renew them again unto repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh and put Him to an open shame". It is not that God has rejected these, quite the opposite, they have rejected Him and the gracious provisions He has made for them, and they are quite unrepentant. As the scripture says, "it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance." We would hope that there would be few of this class.

Life on whatever plane of existence is a priceless gift which our Heavenly Father gives freely, but He does

not force it upon any. Those who accept must do so upon His terms, namely, acceptance of Jesus as their Ransom and obedience to God, We must do our Heavenly Father's will. This has all been made clear to us now, in the next age it will be made clear to all mankind. Many find it hard to understand why the world in general is not on trial now, why they are not being judged for their actions. There is a very simple answer, that is, accountability. How accountable are they? Only those who are fully enlightened are fully accountable.

We think of the case of Jonah who was sent to preach to Nineveh. When the Ninevites repented and God did not destroy them, Jonah was most upset and displeased with God. We find God's reply in Jonah 4:11, "and should not I spare Nineveh that great city wherein are more than six score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand and also much cattle." This is true of the world today as far as spiritual things are concerned, they cannot discern between their right hand and their left. The sparing of Nineveh seems to typify the salvation that is coming to the world in the next age. Jonah, in this illustration, would picture a class that is not very pleased with the thought non-Christians of this age will receive an opportunity in the next. But we rejoice that God's plan is one of universal opportunity for salvation, for the church in the present age, those whom God is calling and drawing to Jesus, and for the remainder of mankind in the next age.

Heb 6:4-6 makes it very clear that the unbelieving world is not on trial at present. We are given there a list of things that must occur before they are placed on trial, before there is any possibility of their coming under the ultimate penalty. Firstly, they must have been once enlightened, that is, fully enlightened as to all the details of the divine plan. Then it says, "and, have tasted of the heavenly gift", that is understood the call and purpose of the church, the exceeding great and precious promises that are ours. The passage goes on, "and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit". This narrows it down to those whom God calls and draws to Jesus. Those who accept that call, and only those, are made partakers of the Holy Spirit. The portion ends, "and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come." It is crystal clear that at the present time God is not dealing with or judging those he has not called and enlightened. That is why there is to be a resurrection for these in the next age, that is their day of judgement and testing. As Jesus said in John 12:47-48, "if any man hear my words and believe not, I judge him not, for I came not to judge the world but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him, the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." This confirms again that those who do not believe, those who are unenlightened, are not being judged now but will be judged in the last day, the 1000 year millennial day. They will be judged by the words of Jesus which, as our Lord said, were not His own words but God's words. These will then taste of the good word of God, come to understand it, and have to conform their lives to the righteous principles contained therein, if they wish to obtain everlasting life on earth.

We have further confirmation of this in Romans 11:31-32, "even so have these also now not believed that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy, for God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all". This passage is speaking of the nation of Israel but the same principle applies to both Jew and Gentile. Even though they might have failed miserably in this life to come up to the divine standard, if they did so in unbelief, God can show mercy to them in the next age. This is just the opposite to the belief of many, who say God will have no mercy on those who do not believe in the present life.

No one of course can receive eternal salvation in unbelief. When these who are now in unbelief come back in the resurrection, they will then believe on Jesus Christ and the value of his ransom sacrifice will be applied for them. During the gospel age, God is selecting those who are rich in faith, accept His word, and are prepared to believe without seeing the actual evidence with their own eyes. In the next age it will not be a matter of faith to the same extent as it is today. Who can fail to believe, when they see the glory and power of God displayed by the resurrection, when they themselves, their friends, their relations, are brought back from the grave?

Some say "if there is to be a resurrection for all regardless of how they behaved at the present time, why bother to consecrate our lives to God and walk in the narrow way of self sacrifice? Why not live now for our own enjoyment, eat, drink and be merry and wait for our opportunity in the next life?" There are several answers to that question. Firstly, today is the only day of salvation for joint heirship with Christ as a member of His Bride. We are called to something that is very special, not just an ordinary calling, but as the scriptures describe it, "a high calling", and a "so great salvation". We are called to be part of God's own family, the divine family on His plane of existence, immortality. Not that we have any desire for honour or preeminence but we know this is what God has called us to, this is what God wants for us. So to be pleasing to our Heavenly Father we strive to be worthy to have part in the first resurrection as a member of his own Heavenly family, His spiritual children. Nevertheless our attitude should be that we will be happy and content with whatever position we are allocated. As the Psalmist says, even if it is only a doorkeeper in the house of the Lord. The motivating factor in running in the race for the prize of the high calling should be one of service, that is what we have been called to, at the present time especially service to the brethren, in the next age to all of God's family on the earthly plane. Also we receive a blessing at the present time, as our Master said in Mark 10:30

“ye shall receive a hundred fold now in this time”. We have the joy of fellowship with our brethren, a fuller and richer life, and the peace of mind that the knowledge of God’s plan brings, especially in the difficult days that we live in.

For another answer to the question, as to why become a disciple of Jesus now, let us look at Revelation 20:6. “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ and shall reign with Him a thousand years.” Look at that one little sentence “on such the second death hath no power.” In John 5:29, our Lord indicates that two classes are coming forth in the resurrection, one to a resurrection of life, the other to a resurrection of judgement. The class mentioned in Revelation 20:6 upon whom the second death has no power, are those who receive the resurrection to life. What a wonderful blessing! This alone is sufficient reason to become a disciple of our Master now. What a joy when we awake on resurrection morning to know that we have life in the full sense of the word, life that will not be taken away from us again; to know that our period of test and trial is over. This is in contrast to those who have part in the later resurrection, the resurrection to judgement. When they awake, their period of testing and trying is just beginning and it seems that it may not be fully complete until the thousand years are over, and Satan’s little season of release is finished.

We have been looking at the logic of why the world is not on trial for life or death at the present time. We saw one reason is that they have not been enlightened by receiving the Holy Spirit. Another very basic reason is that they are already under a death sentence, the Adamic death sentence. This is what our Lord meant when He said, “let the dead bury the dead.” There are two classes of people in the world, those who have life, the true church, only these yet come under the provisions of the ransom. As- it says in Hebrews 9:24, “Jesus has appeared in the presence of God for us,” i.e. the Church. The value of His ransom sacrifice has been applied to these, so they have been released from the Adamic death sentence. The world must also be released from this death sentence, before they can be placed on trial. The church must be completed before this occurs, then the value of the ransom will be applied to the remainder of mankind, and their trial for life begin.

The understanding that the unbelieving world cannot die eternal death at present is very strongly implied in the term “second death”. Right from Adam’s day until now, all have died in Adam, which is the first death, so no one can become subject to second death until released from first death, the Adamic death. Can we not see how reasonable our gracious Heavenly Father’s plan is in giving all these a resurrection and opportunity for everlasting life in the next age. Not only is it reasonable but it is scriptural as we have already seen.

A very clear statement is that of our Lord in John 5:28,29, already referred to. “Marvel not at this for the hour is coming in which all that are in the grave shall hear His voice and shall come forth, they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgement”. Many seem to feel that God cannot be this kind and merciful and that they must find some way of changing this passage. There can be no exceptions to this statement that “all in their graves are to come forth”, apart from those already mentioned, who have had a full opportunity, have been spirit begotten and have later deliberately rejected Jesus as their Saviour. This may seem at variance with the statement before us that all in their graves are to come forth, but we are not always given all the truth in any one place, we find a little here, a little there. We formulate a doctrine on the basis of the scriptures as a whole. We harmonise scripture with scripture, we modify one scripture with another. (e.g. Matt. 21:22 with 1 John 5:14)

So we read John 5:28 in conjunction with the scriptures as a whole. Nowhere in the scriptures are we told of any other class that will not come forth in the resurrection, so to say that those drowned in the flood, those destroyed in Sodom and Gomorrha, those who die in the time of trouble, are not to receive a resurrection has no scriptural backing. We could term this a man-made doctrine. In fact, the scriptures indicate that the people of Sodom and Gomorrha will come back in the resurrection, (Mark 6:11, Matthew 10:15, Ezekiel 16:53.) Some have insisted that not all the dead are meant in John 5:28,29, but only those that God has in His memory. This thought is based on the fact that the Greek word translated “grave” literally means “memorial tomb”. The Greek word concerned is translated - grave 8 times, sepulchre 28 times, tomb 5 times. It seems clear that no such thought of God’s memory is intended. This is simply the regular word of that day denoting a grave. For example in Mark 5:1-3, we have the account of the man with the unclean spirit who made his dwelling among the tombs. This is the same word again. It is plain that it applies to all in the graves, regardless of who was buried there. Vines dictionary says of this word that “it primarily denotes a memorial, also a monument, anything done to preserve the memory of things or persons. Among the Hebrews, it was generally a cavern closed by a door or stone, often decorated”. Obviously this was done to preserve the memory of a loved one, just as we erect a tombstone or a plaque today. Clearly, the term “memorial tomb” has nothing to do with God’s memory but human memory of departed loved ones.

The apostle Paul, in Acts 24:15, confirms once again the resurrection of two classes. He says “and have hope towards God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust”, meaning believers who have been justified and unbelievers who have not been justified.

Paul said this is the hope he has; he obviously means hope for both classes, not only for the just. And we could consider other such scriptures as Heb. 2:9 “that He (Jesus) by the grace of God should taste death for every man,” and John 1:9 “this (Jesus) was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.”

Many say, yes we accept that life is offered to all, to any who become believers and accept Jesus, but they must do so in this life. We can answer with such texts as 1 Timothy 4:10 which tells us that God is “the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.” This text is very plain because it contrasts the two classes. True, in the present age, God’s special interest is in believers, but He is the Saviour of all men not just those who believe at the present time. As we read in 1 John 2:2, “He is the propitiation of our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” He is the propitiation at the present time for the Church’s sins, but in addition to this, for the whole unbelieving world in the next age.

Those who say that there is no hope for father Adam do not fully understand the workings of the ransom. While Jesus tasted death for all mankind, he did not die for each person individually, but for Adam, thereby redeeming all in Adam. As we are told in 1 Corinthians 15:21-22, “for since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead, for as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” The all that are made alive in Christ are the same all that die in Adam i.e. all mankind. Romans 5:14 shows that Adam was a type of Jesus, and in 1 Corinthians 15:45, Jesus is described as “the last Adam”. In 1 Timothy 2:6, we are told that Jesus gave Himself a ransom for all. The Greek word here translated “ransom” means corresponding price. Adam was a perfect man before he sinned, the perfect man Jesus was the corresponding price, hence He is described as the last Adam. How could the first Adam not benefit from the provisions of the ransom when it was exactly a corresponding price for him? Had Adam not sinned, he would have been the life giver and father of all mankind, but since he did sin, the second or last Adam took his place and became their life giver and father. This is the thought in Isaiah 9:6, where Jesus is described as the “everlasting father”. Some translations render this passage the “father of the age to come.” What a beautiful thought that is, the father of the age to come! Surely the resurrection and opportunity for all is one of the things that attracted us to the truth. This doctrine above all others displays our gracious Heavenly Father’s true character and His love for all His human family. (JGT: 1993)

“O the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! or who has known the mind of the Lord? or who has been His counselor? or who has first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto Him again? For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things to whom be glory forever. Amen” (Rom:11:33-36)

“If God seems far away, guess who has moved.” (Wayside Pulpit).

Daniel, The Beloved

(Convention Address)

DANIEL is certainly one of the great figures of the Old Testament. Like Joseph, he rose to a position of high authority in an alien land and served with great distinction. He is spoken of three times as a man greatly beloved of God and a review of his life, his piety and his utter consistency of character clearly show why he was so highly esteemed and much used by God.

Outside of the book which bears his name, little is known of Daniel. Interestingly, he is mentioned by Ezekiel, an approximate contemporary, as a standard of righteousness, along with Noah and Job, and of wisdom. He is not recorded by name among the illustrious band of faithful ones in Hebrews 11, but would certainly be among “the prophets, who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions.” Heb.11:33.

His lifetime spans the whole of the Jewish captivity in Babylon, where Daniel was taken, with other hostages, on the orders of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, after he had taken Jerusalem and subjugated Jehoiakim, king of Judah. Some indication of Daniel’s background is probably to be gained from Dan.1:3,4, where it states that Nebuchadnezzar directed that the hostages be taken from those of noble birth, skilful, well-educated and able to conduct themselves in a royal court.

Considering the long period of Daniel’s stay and service in Babylon, he must have been quite young at the time of his being taken there, and historians and scholars suggest that he would have been only about 16 or 18 years of age at that time. He was nevertheless evidently already well informed not only in secular subjects but also in the religion of the true God of Israel. This becomes apparent quite early in his determination not to be defiled with the foods provided for the hostages but even in this matter to serve God.

The earliest years of Daniel’s life would have been spent under the reign of Josiah, one of the good and faithful kings of Judah. The record of his reign reads, in brief - “he did that which was right in the sight of the

Lord, and walked in all the way of David, his father, and turned not aside to the right hand nor to the left.” 2 Kings 22:2. He saw how the nobles and people of Judah had so grievously departed from God’s ways and sought earnestly to restore true worship, so that it was said that “like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the Lord with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might - neither after him arose there any like him.” 2 Kings 23:2.

Despite all Josiah’s endeavours during his 31 years reign, however, the nation soon lapsed back under his son, who reigned only 3 months before being deposed by Pharaoh-Nechoh, king of Egypt, who installed Jehoiakim as his vassal king over Judah. Only 3 years later, Nebuchadnezzar came up against Jerusalem, as already seen. All this happened within 4 years of Josiah’s death, in fulfilment of earlier prophecies, of Isaiah to King Hezekiah, as recorded in Isa.39:6,7 and of Jeremiah in Jer.25:11.

The early formative years of Daniel’s life would have therefore been spent during the latter years of the good king Josiah. If as seems probable Daniel was of noble birth, he would no doubt have thus become acquainted with the ideals and endeavours of Josiah. For it was during his reign that the book of the law had been re-discovered in the house of Jehovah, and in this Josiah read the warnings against the waywardness and disobedience of his people. This he sought valiantly to turn round, but alas without any lasting success.

It was accordingly only a few years after Josiah’s death that Daniel and all the other hostages were taken into the Babylonian court and the account given in the book of Daniel begins to unfold. Three other young men among the captives are also brought to our attention; these were also possessed of remarkable faith in the power of their God and their testimony under trial (Dan.3:17,18) stands as their monument and as a challenge to the Lord’s people of every age - “If it be so, our God is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king, but if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image thou hast set up.” Our God is able, but if not!” What faith is there.

In passing, the meanings of the names of the four young men are interesting and suggestive of Godly parentage:

Daniel “God is my judge.”

Hananiah “God is gracious.”

Mishael “This is as God.”

Azariah “God is a helper.”

It is no doubt significant that these names were very soon changed in the Babylonian courts. Whose is the name we bear, as Christians? Do we always honour it as we might, for our Lord is also able?

For us, being invited to partake of the food and drink provided in the royal court would probably not present any very great problem, though most Christians would generally favour a simpler diet. But for a pious Jew, the law made specific provision as to what was clean and permissible and needed to be observed carefully as an act of obedience and as a mark of separateness from other nations. To avoid partaking in Daniel’s circumstances would present a problem in the ordinary course, but we read that “God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs.” Dan.1:9. As a result, the young Hebrews were allowed to adhere to their preferred vegetarian diet, which had proved superior.

For the Lord’s people of every age, there is a need of separateness, and for great care over the nourishment we take in. In place of the world’s delicacies and delights, our Heavenly Father has provided in His dear Son, the pure Water of Life and the Bread of Life for our sustenance. For the young in Christ, He has given the pure milk of His word and for the more mature the meat of the word for our growth and development. As the hymn-writer puts it - “My table is furnished with bounty so free, My soul on Thy word is well fed.” This is better fare than in any earthly royal court.

Already the character of Daniel, under the hand of the Lord, was becoming evident and had made an impression on the master set over him. We are warned in the New Testament to beware when all speak well of us; this may well indicate too close identification with the worldly and failure to stand up for our faith. But at the same time our behaviour, our demeanour, should always be such as to command at least the respect of reasonable people and we read of Jesus in His early years that He “increased in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man.” This is of course the right order - God first.

Because of their faithfulness, God gave all four young men knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom, but Daniel was also given understanding in all visions and dreams. Much of the book of Daniel, from Chapter 2 on, is taken up with accounts of these means of prophecy and these reach right down to our own day and even beyond. It has been said that the book of Daniel not only preserves links in the chain of world history but also provides vital keys to interpretation of all prophecy, including the final book of our Bible - the Revelation

of Jesus Christ, given through the beloved apostle John.

We might indeed see a character link between Daniel, the man greatly beloved of Jehovah and the beloved apostle of our Lord, whose visions recorded in Revelations and given some seven centuries after those of Daniel are, as it were, a continuation and fuller development of them. Both men greatly loved God and were greatly loved for their faithfulness, both were used to bring messages to God's people, not only of immediate local significance and encouragement but of universal and dispensational importance. Both lived to a very great age, both were given final messages of personal assurance.

After a training period of three years, Daniel and his companions were brought to stand before the king but very soon a test of faith was to come upon them. The king had had a most disturbing dream but could not recall it. So he asked his local wise men to tell him what it was and what it meant. Not surprisingly none could and the king ordered all his counsellors, including the four Hebrews, to be put to death. But Daniel and his companions prayed and we read that God answered and further that Daniel blessed the God of heaven for that answer. Thankfulness to our Heavenly Father not only for specially answered prayer but for His daily care - how important it is.

The vision itself, we are now all familiar with - a great image of a man, with head of gold, breast and arms of silver, belly and thighs of brass, legs of iron and feet of part iron and part clay. But even more significant for us - a stone cut out of a mountain, not by human means, that smote the image on the feet and brought the whole image down and itself, that is the stone, became a great mountain filling the whole earth. What a truly remarkable panorama of world history there is in what God made known to Daniel, bringing us right down to the final setting up of God's kingdom.

We might think it strange that such a far-reaching vision or dream should be given to a heathen king and in keeping with his times no doubt a rather despotic one. But it did have an influence on Nebuchadnezzar even at that time for he had to acknowledge that Daniel's God was a God of gods and a Lord of kings. So he set Daniel and his companions over the affairs of his kingdom, with Daniel himself in the presence of the king, who was himself pictured in the image's head of gold. But of what far greater blessing and enlightenment has the dream and its interpretation been to God's people particularly in these last days, when we see the signs of the nearness of the setting up of that great stone kingdom of God.

For we, who live in these last days, have as it were an unbroken link with Daniel the prophet greatly beloved of God, who lived and prophesied so long ago in that first world empire period pictured in the head of gold. We clearly are living in the days of the ten toes kingdoms, when the marvellous stone of no human devising will shortly cast down and replace all the kingdoms that have gone before. John writes in Rev.11-15 - "the seventh angel sounded, and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever." How sorely that everlasting kingdom of peace and righteousness is needed today.

For the revealing of the dream and interpretation to the king, Daniel took no credit to himself - "this secret is not revealed to me of any wisdom that I have more than anyone else"; rather he gave thanks: "blessed be the name of God for ever and ever; for wisdom and might are His. "Any service that we can render for our Lord or for His people is a gracious privilege and no cause for pride for "what have we, that we did not receive?" "For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake." 1 Cor.4:7, 2 Cor.4:5. This is the true perspective of all God's servants and was the spirit of Daniel.

After Nebuchadnezzar's death, the kingdom under Belshazzar soon fell to Darius the Mede, who set over the kingdom three presidents answerable to himself. Of these, Daniel was first in rank, indicating that Darius also recognised the skills and qualities of Daniel, the testimony to him being that "an excellent spirit was in him." This soon provoked envy among the other presidents and the 120 princes set under them and they sought to find fault or error with Daniel but could not do so.

Their final conclusion was - "we shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God." Dan.6:5. Though not meant that way, what a wonderful testimony to Daniel's conduct and consistency of life this was. It sets the standard for the people of God in every age. Daniel's life was open for all to see, yet his detractors could find nothing to accuse him of. While evidently continuing to maintain his own religious duties, his attendance upon the king's business was complete and loyal. Yet all the time his heart was with God's chosen people, as we see later in the account.

The Lord's people are always to be peaceable, law-abiding, diligent and conscientious, seeking to comply not only with the letter but also the spirit of the laws under which they live and which in turn protect them to at least some extent. The only limitation is that which led Peter and John to proclaim - "we ought to obey God rather than men" - when they were ordered to cease preaching the gospel. So it was with Daniel, who was confronted by the statute which the king had been deceived into signing - "that whosoever shall ask a petition of any god or man for thirty days, save of thee (the king himself), shall be cast into the den of lions." No doubt

the king's vanity had been appealed to.

The conspirators had well read Daniel's character, and we are not surprised to read - "now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees, three times a day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime." Dan.6:10. In those days, observance of religious duties was more open and the structure of dwellings would have added to this, making Daniel's actions very obvious.

It has been suggested that Daniel may have been able to comply with some lesser requirement, such as praying less openly but there could be no compromise for Daniel nor can there be for any of the Lord's people in the matter of the One they are to worship. Unlike other nations, Israel's law was very clear - "the Lord our God is one Lord" and "thou shalt have no other gods before me (Jehovah) thou shalt not bow down thyself to them or serve them." So Daniel continued his habit and pattern of prayer "as he did aforetime". While he did nothing extra to provoke trouble, his loyalty to the one true God of his people did not falter.

It is unfortunately possible for Christian people to bring trouble upon themselves needlessly and there is no credit with God in suffering for folly or wrongdoing. The Christian standard, as it no doubt was for Daniel too, is - "as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all".... "be not overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good".... "render to all their dues." To suffer for righteousness' sake is praiseworthy in God's sight and Daniel's faithfulness and steadfastness were wonderfully rewarded by God, as we read in Dan.6:19-23.

Even Darius, who quickly realised that he had been deceived, sought by every means to save Daniel from the lions, and when he could not, he spent a sleepless night, concerned for this man whose noble qualities of character, so different from those of his other counsellors, he had come to appreciate. But God still had further work for Daniel and we read - "so this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian." Dan.6:28. Daniel indeed lived on to a great age, his final vision being received when he would have been nearly 90 years of age.

But before this, further visions were given to him concerning the four great world empires that would ultimately be overcome by the all-consuming kingdom of God, and of events that would occur during those periods. Through it all, we cannot fail to note his deep love and concern for his own people. Though a faithful servant of the powers that be in Babylon, his heart was at all times with his people in their captivity and we read in Dan.9:2 - "in the first year of his (Darius') reign, I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish 70 years in the destruction of Jerusalem."

As a true patriot and as a worshipper of Jehovah, Daniel felt great sorrow over the nation's punishment at His hands and so he besought God that, now the 70 years foretold had come to an end, the nation's return might be no longer deferred. What a wonderful response Daniel received through the angel Gabriel - "at the beginning of thy supplications, the commandment came forth and I am come to show thee, for thou art greatly beloved." Dan.9:23. Still today, our Heavenly Father knows before we ask the desires and intents of our hearts and waits ready to answer and bless the prayer of faith that first and foremost seeks to know His will.

As well as the assurance of his prayer being answered, Daniel was also given a remarkable prophecy of events that would affect his people right down to the time of Messiah the Prince. Students of the Bible are agreed on the accuracy of this prediction of Messiah's advent at the end of the 69th week or 483 years taking a week to represent 7 years, and the further prophecy of the nation and temple being left desolate. But this grim picture, as far as Israel was concerned, was not left as God's last word to the greatly beloved Daniel - he was assured that at the time of the end and after great trouble, Michael (Who is as God), the great Prince who "standeth for the children of thy people" would come and that "at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." Dan.12:1.

God's closing words to Daniel furthermore speak of the resurrection to everlasting life being given to those found worthy, of the "wise" shining as the stars and leading many to turn to righteousness. How these assurances to Daniel remind us of our Lord's words in Matt.13:43 - "then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" - and of the grand times of restoration or restitution spoken of by Peter. Though no doubt much comforted by the assurances given to him, Daniel was not granted full understanding of them; rather he was told to "shut up the words and seal the book even to the time of the end; many shall run to and fro knowledge shall be increased."

The personal promise to this man beloved of God concludes the record - "go thou thy way till the end be, for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days." Dan.12:13. Daniel heard the words of the Lord but was not given to fully understand, as was the case with all the prophets of old, who wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit prophesying of the grace that should come upon the gospel age heirs of salvation and testifying of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. Meantime, Daniel was to rest in the sleep of death, awaiting that "better resurrection" which the faithful ones of old all looked forward to.

In many ways, the prophecies of Daniel provide the key to the understanding of Bible prophecy in general. How all-embracing they are! They cover an outline of world history, the first and second advents of Jesus, his rejection and the casting off of Israel, later their restoration under Michael their Prince, and the resurrection and restoration of the “many” of mankind. How wonderfully was this saint of God used! Over 2500 years later, we rejoice to see what he heard in secret becoming plain and the signs of the soon fulfilment of the glorious things foretold.

One commentator has said that “Daniel’s undeviating integrity as a worshipper of the one God in an alien, dissolute society, as first minister in the first of the world empires, gives him a place among the highest and holiest the world has seen.

To be used by God, even in smaller ways, requires that the child of God be separate from the world, single-minded in faith and devotion to His service, of humble mind, diligent in searching the scriptures, instant in prayer. In all these ways, Daniel stands out as a shining example. When he stands in his lot at the end of the days, what a wonderful guide and standard he will be to the world of mankind, along with all the faithful of old times! These were not offered a heavenly reward, but we are told that they looked for a city which has foundations whose maker and builder is God. How well Daniel will be equipped for service in that everlasting kingdom!

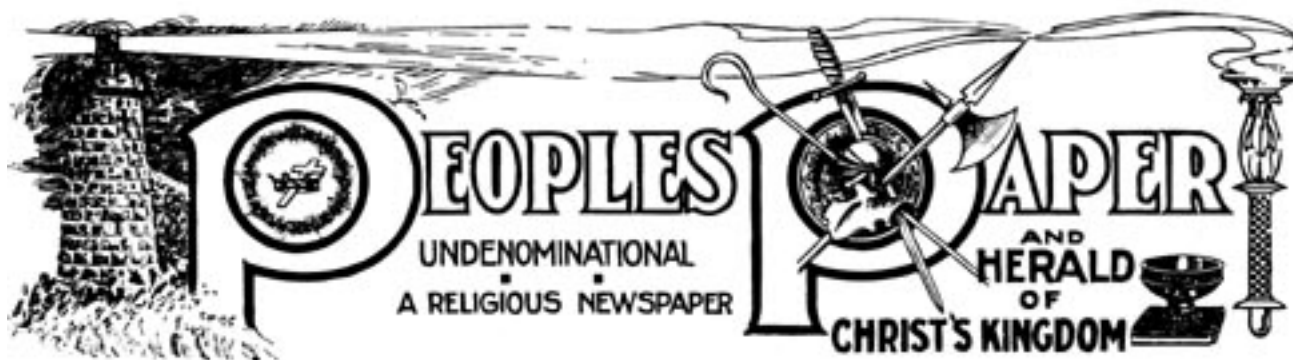
The same faithfulness, as that of Daniel, is required of us who have been blessed with a heavenly calling. May each of us, in our day, stand as Daniel did for truth and righteousness. (DS: 1992)

Dare to be a Daniel,

Dare to stand alone,

Dare to have a purpose true -

Dare to make it known.



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Christ in You, the Hope of Glory

(Col. 1:27)

OUR text describes an exceedingly precious experience. There are various scriptures which make reference to this happy condition; for example: "If Christ be in you" (Rom. 8:10), "Christ liveth in me" (Gal 2:20), "until Christ be formed in you."—Gal. 4:19

The Bible also describes the Lord's true people as being "in Christ," giving the thought of membership in his body—"So we, being many, are one body in Christ."—Rom. 12:5

To the fully consecrated children of God, both of these scripturally described conditions, "being in Christ," and "Christ being in us," are joyous realities, which become increasingly rich as progress is made in the Christian life. Once they were not children of God, but "were by nature the children of wrath, even as others"; "in darkness," and without any proper direction in life, not having heard the glorious true Gospel of the kingdom. But happy indeed was the day when, hearing the true good news, they yielded to God's gracious drawing power, and appreciated, little by little, the grandeur and beauty of the Gospel message being revealed to them in the Scriptures.

Realizing their own unworthiness, and real need of a Saviour, they accepted Jesus as their personal Lord and Redeemer, By faith they accepted the righteousness from God on account of their faith in Christ Jesus, and fully consecrating themselves to God, the Holy Spirit then truly worked within them.

Here was the beginning of a new life, and they could gratefully exclaim in the sentiments of I Peter 1:3, 4, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven." They now had a blessed hope of an actual birth to the divine nature in the first resurrection.

Christ Jesus was now their "Head." Indeed, they rejoiced to know that he is the Head over all things to the church, which is his body. Just as the human body is made up of many members, so also is The Christ. The Greek word translated Christ corresponds to the Hebrew word rendered Messiah, and in either language the significance of the word is "the Anointed."

The anointing process was pictured during the Jewish Age at the installation into office and the anointing of the kings and the high priests of Israel. The oil used in that ceremony was, according to Exodus 30:22-33, a peculiar kind, which might not be used for any other purpose. Similarly, the anointing which our Lord and the members of his mystical body have received is different from anything else in the world. It is the anointing of the Holy Spirit—the spirit of truth, the spirit of righteousness.

"YOU ALL KNOW IT"

In proportion as we, here and now, have the Holy Spirit, in that proportion we are faithful members of the body of Christ, and have the anointing in us. As the apostle says, "The anointing which you received from him abides in you"; "You have an anointing [unction, AV] from the Holy One; you all know it." (I John 2:20, 27, Diaglott) It manifests itself to us as it would not to the world.

The signification of "unction" (AV), and of its Greek original, chrisma, is smoothness, oiliness, lubrication. From custom, the word carries with it also the thought of fragrance, perfume. How beautifully and forcefully this word represents the effect of God's influence toward goodness upon those who come under this antitypical anointing—holiness, gentleness, patience, brotherly-kindness, love!

What a sweet, pure perfume does this anointing of the Holy Spirit of love bring to all who receive it! How-

ever ungainly, or coarse, or rude the outer man—"the earthen vessel"—how soon it partakes of the sweetening and purifying influence of the treasure of the "new heart," the new will within, anointed with the Holy Spirit and brought into harmony with whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report.—Phil. 4:8

Just as the anointing of kings and high priests of old in Israel was the divine evidence that they were accepted to office, so was it with Jesus. It is described in Acts 10:38: "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power." Our Lord was thus set apart for a very high office, that great antitypical King and Priest "after the order of Melchisedec"—a priest upon his throne.—Heb. 5:6

During the Gospel Age, God has been, and still is, setting apart those who are to be members of the body of Christ—taking out a people for his name. (Acts 15:14) These are invited to be (with Christ) kings and priests unto God. "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light."—I Pet. 2:9

Consequently, when one who is begotten of the Holy Spirit, and by the Word of truth, here and now is received (through full consecration) into this body of the Anointed, under the headship of Christ, he or she comes under the anointing of the Holy Spirit. And it is of vital importance that we remain in Christ so that we continue to experience, in a growing measure, the sweet, fragrant influence of this anointing—this "Christ" within us.

"LED BY THE SPIRIT"

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." (Rom. 8:14) The Lord's true people are aware that it costs something to be led by the Spirit. And in all the tests and trials full, complete consecration is to be maintained. Not even a little of our own will should be retained, because "self" is to be put completely in the background. This means a new direction in life, because of the anointing with the Holy Spirit, and on account of being fully led by the Spirit of God. What are some of the evidences of our being thus led?

We are not now conformed to this world, but are being transformed.

We are subjects of a new kingdom, and are being instructed, disciplined, and trained with a view to our development as sons of God.

We are minding the things of the Spirit, and not the things of the flesh.

We seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God; and our affections are on things above, and not on things of the earth.

Through the Spirit we mortify, or put to death, the deeds of the body, fervently desiring to be more and more conformed to the image of God's dear Son.

We seek to have a growing knowledge of the manifold wisdom of God as revealed in the Holy Scriptures, according to a plan of the ages, which he has purposed in Christ Jesus.

We lay hold upon the exceeding great and precious promises in God's Word, that by these we might be partakers of the divine nature.

We let our light shine before men, holding forth the Word of life.

It is our privilege and joy not only to suffer for Christ, but also to suffer with him.

We drink of the cup of which he drank, and are baptised with the baptism with which he was baptised.

We realize that to be planted together in the likeness of his death means that we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.

Whoever find on self-examination that they have these foregoing evidences in their own hearts can be fully assured that they are "in Christ", members of his mystical body and, as a result, anointed with the Holy Spirit. Such can gladly and gratefully testify in the words of the Apostle Paul, "Christ liveth in me."—Gal. 2:20.

CHRIST FORMED IN YOU

The Apostle Paul wrote very pathetically to the Galatian Christians, "O my little children ! whom I am bearing again, till Christ be formed in you." (Gal. 4:19, Diaglott) The apostle sought, by the Lord's grace, to nourish and sustain those 'seeds!' (as it were) of spiritual being in those Galatian Christians by his own personal work and influence until they would be able to appropriate for themselves the God-given elements of spiritual life contained in the Word of truth.

How important that we, who hope to have a share with Christ in the glories of the heavenly phase of the kingdom, and in his glorious future work of establishing God's kingdom in the earth, see to it that, as individuals, Christ is now actually formed in us:

A living Christ, our spirits need,
A loving Christ, our souls to feed.
A dying Christ our ransom he,
A risen Christ, to set us free.
What more our need? A Christ within,
A life with God, afar from sin.
A Christ whose love our hearts shall fill,
And quite subdue our wayward will.

Because this is to be the personal condition of every heir of the heavenly kingdom we, individually, give diligence to make our own precious calling and election sure, and assist others to do the same.

And we must not be satisfied when those within the range of our influence are merely begotten, in the early stage, by the Word of truth, but by instruction, example, and assistance, labour diligently to have Christ formed in them. So far as possible we wish to help their faithful walking, that they also may eventually be “partakers of the divine nature,” in the first resurrection.

Experiencing, here and now, this treasured anointing by the Holy Spirit, our heart’s sentiments are those of the Lord Jesus when he exclaimed, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.” —Luke 4:18,19

Jesus here quoted from the prophecy of Isaiah 61:1, 2, and applied the words to himself. And because his faithful Spirit-begotten followers are members of his body, it applies to them also.

The purpose of our being anointed by the Holy Spirit is that we might “preach,” or be “ministers” of God and of his truth. We today can extend those prophetic words of Isaiah, quoted by Jesus, and proclaim additionally, “the day of vengeance of our God,” thus announcing on every suitable occasion the scriptural explanation of present world distress, also the glorious outcome, and indeed declare the whole counsel of God, as revealed in his Holy Word.

“QUENCH NOT THE SPIRIT”

This “anointing,” this “Christ” in us, is the prelude to the glory which God has promised to those who are faithful, even to be joint-heirs with Christ beyond the veil, and to be privileged to assist in the honoured and glorious work (as Abraham’s seed) of bringing earth’s dead millions from the tomb, and richly blessing all the families of the earth.

We should heed the admonition not to quench this anointing or Holy Spirit: “Quench not the Spirit.” (I Thess. 5:19) On the contrary, with the Lord’s help we are to cultivate, develop, give special attention to this treasured anointing—realizing that we as yet hold it in an earthen vessel.

“Abide, sweet Spirit, heavenly Dove, With light and comfort from above; Be thou our Guardian, thou our Guide, O’er ev’ry thought and step preside.”

The Shepherd’s Psalm

(Convention Address)

THE Book of Psalms, it can be safely said, has had more influence and has accomplished more good than any other collection of poetry ever written.

There are many beautiful poems but none with the sentiments of the Psalms which seem to touch every soul at every turn, in sorrow, and in joy. Of the 150 Psalms, Bible scholars attribute 73 to the writings of David. What a wealth of experiences David had to draw on as inspiration for these beautiful songs!

The Hebrew definition of Psalms gives the meaning of praises, a term that reflects much of the book’s contents. The title given to Psalm 145 is Psalm of Praise. Its name in the Latin and English bibles comes from the Greek PSALMOI which means twangings (of harped strings) or songs sung to the accompaniments of harps. Several of the Psalms have been written to music and even with the English translation little is lost of their meaning or beauty.

Probably the most well known of all of the Psalms is Psalm 23, the Shepherd’s Psalm. One scholar (Beech-

er) wrote of this Psalm “It is a nightingale amongst the Psalms, it is small, of homely feather, singing shyly, out of obscurity, but it fills the air of the whole world with joy”. Another commentator writes, “This is the Pearl of Psalms, whose soft and pure radiance delights every eye”.

Commentators feel that Psalm 23 was written quite late in David’s life. As a result, he could call upon all of his experiences of life and of his intimate relationship with God. He could draw on his experiences as a young lad attending to his father’s sheep. He remembered being anointed with oil, as we read in 1 Sam 16: 11,12—”And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all thy children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and behold, he keepeth the sheep. . . And he sent, and brought him in. Now he [was] ruddy, [and] withal of a beautiful countenance and goodly to look to. And the LORD said, Arise, anoint him: for this is he”.

He remembered the battles with his enemies with the Lord on his side, especially with Goliath, as we read in 1 Sam 17:45 - 50. “Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou has defied. This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the LORD saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the LORD’S, and he will give you into our hands. And it came to pass, when the Philistine arose, and came and drew nigh to meet David, that David hasted, and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine. And David put his hand in his bag, and took thence a stone, and slung it, and smote the Philistine in his forehead, that the stone sunk into his forehead; and he fell upon his face to the earth. So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone and smote the Philistine, and slew him; but there was no sword in the hand of David.”

He desired to build a house for God, to replace the temporary tabernacle which he felt did not do justice to God. We read in 1 Chron 17:1 - 4 -”Now it came to pass, as David sat in his house, that David said to Nathan the prophet, Lo, I dwell in an house of cedars, but the ark of the covenant of the LORD remaineth under curtains. Then Nathan said unto David, Do all that is in thine heart; for God is with thee. And it came to pass the same night, that the word of God came to Nathan, saying, Go and tell David my servant, Thus saith the LORD, Thou shalt not build me an house to dwell in:” At times, he was very close to God working in full harmony with him; but on this occasion, David’s will was not God’s will for him.

“THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD, I SHALL NOT WANT.”

The opening line of the Psalm tells of the intimate relationship that David had with his Lord. “The Lord is my Shepherd” tells of the covenanted relationship that the psalmist had with Jehovah. Only those who have a covenant relationship with God can properly appreciate the sentiments that David expresses in the following verses and how they apply in their lives, David had this relationship with God through the covenant which God had made with his favoured nation, Israel, at Mount Sinai. The Israelites had a covenant to walk in the Lord’s ways and to obey His statutes, and in return God covenanted with them that, in proportion as they would walk in His ways, He would bestow His blessings upon their every interest.

Only a few of the Israelites were trying to keep their part of the covenant, but David apparently was one of these, for the Lord declared him “a man after his own heart”. If he failed God, he confessed, repented, received his punishment, and rejoiced when restored to God’s favor, striving in the future to maintain his fellowship with God. David also gives a beautiful picture of the relationship between Christ and his Church,, Jesus speaking to his disciples in John 10 :14 says “I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep and am known of mine”

We too have a covenant relationship with Jehovah through Christ our Shepherd. If we accept this relationship with our Father, we can appropriate the various pictures of this Psalm. The world as a whole has no idea of this relationship. Jesus declares that there is only one way to enter the sheepfold, namely through the door. John 10: 9 “I am the door, by me if any man enter in he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture”.

To fully understand the sentiments of the Psalm, we must realise there is a great difference between the shepherd in olden times in Palestine and the care of sheep as we know it today. It was the eastern shepherd who illustrated our heavenly shepherd’s care for his little flock. An eastern pasture is vast, often boundless, it has to be extensive for the greater part of it is barren, in fact, the Hebrew word for desert and pasture is the same. It consists mostly of dry stony soil out of which for the greater part of the year the sun has sucked all life. In this desert, the breaks are few and consist of paths, gorges or thickets where wild beasts lurk, as well as oases of pleasant grass and water. It is evident that the person and character of the shepherd meant a great deal more to the sheep than it does with us. With us a flock of sheep without a shepherd is a common sight but unheard of in the east.

As a rule, a shepherd during David’s time owned the sheep that he cared for, he was no hireling, he asked

and received no wages, he was acquainted with all of his sheep. He was quick to discover and supply their individual needs; it was his duty in the morning to lead his sheep out and find good pasture for them. He needed to be familiar with the territory to know the special places where good pasture could be found. It was his duty to find quiet waters where they could quench their thirst and shady places to protect them from the heat of the noonday sun. He had to defend them when attacked by their enemies.

It was his duty to seek out straying sheep and to bring them back to the fold, to carry the weak lambs in his arms and tenderly to lead those who were lame or footsore. Occasionally he would be called upon to protect his sheep against the ravages of the wolves and bears who were lurking near some of the best feeding places, preying especially upon the weaker sheep. When the day was done, before darkness set in, the shepherd led them back to the fold. If any were wounded, he poured oil into the wound and bathed the bruises. When he found one hot and thirsty, and almost exhausted, he filled the large cup that hung by his side with cool water and gave it drink. The day's toil was over and the Shepherd settled down to guard the sheep over night.

David could not have put his faith in God more strongly than in the words "I shall not want". He shows us the trust that we too are to have in our Heavenly Father. Isaiah tells us in 33:15, 16—"He that walketh righteously and speaketh uprightly, . . . Bread shall be given him; his water shall be sure." "What a beautiful promise to us from our Heavenly Father. Jesus speaking to his disciples during the sermon on the mount, Matt. 6:25-34—"Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, neither gather into barns; yet your Heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought saying, what shall we eat? or, what shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (for all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness: and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself."

The Lord's sheep, abiding in perfection of relationship with Him, will lack nothing. Their every need will be supplied. This may not mean great earthly wealth, fame or name or luxury. The Lord's blessings to natural Israel were earthly blessings, supplying their every earthly need; but his blessings to spiritual Israel are spiritual blessings. Psalm 84: 11 "no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." again re-affirms God's commitment to his sheep.

"HE MAKETH ME TO LIE DOWN IN GREEN PASTURES: HE LEADETH ME BESIDE THE STILL WATERS".

Although the experiences of the Lord's sheep include many experiences in the parched wilderness of sin, yet he graciously gives them experiences in the oases of divine favour. These are not always with immunity from trial but certainly are seasons of rest and refreshment. The Psalmist assures us that, as the Lord's sheep, we will be provided with green pastures and cool refreshing waters of truth. Moreover, while being spiritually fed and refreshed, we shall have the peace of God as is implied in the suggestion that the sheep will lie down in green pastures. We may truthfully say, "The peace of God which passeth all understanding" rules in our heart. Which of the Lord's sheep has not found such green pasture of spiritual refreshment in his private devotion and studies or when assembling together with those of like precious faith to study and pray and give thanks for the Lord's goodness and mercies?

The still waters are contrasted with the rushing torrents of the mountain slope. They are not stagnant waters but rather smooth flowing so that the sheep can receive proper refreshment. The Hebrew meaning is water of quietness and Christ speaking in John 14:27 tells us "Peace I leave with you my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth unto you. Let not your heart be troubled neither let it be afraid". Alas! not all of the sheep have full confidence in the Shepherd and are fully resigned to have no will but His. Some are continually getting into trouble because they wander off into the desert straying far from the Shepherd. Only after difficult experiences do they return to the quietness offered.

"HE RESTORETH MY SOUL: HE LEADETH ME IN THE PATHS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS FOR HIS NAME'S SAKE."

"He restoreth my Soul" These words are amongst the most precious of this priceless Psalm. They are words that everyone of God's children will have been able to say on many occasions, We are often tempted and troubled by the world; this can lead us into lethargy and indifference and as a result we need our souls restored. If He alone was always followed and if His commands were instantly obeyed, we would not need this restoring.

In order that we may follow in His footsteps and become living sacrifices, holy, acceptable to God, our reasonable service, our Lord provides the right paths which are advantageous to our development in righteousness. These paths are not always easy, they can be difficult and trying. How fortunate are we that our Master has trod the pathway before us, so He knows of the difficulties, the dangers, the snares, the pitfalls by the way, so that we are not tried beyond our capabilities. He leads us not contrary to our wills but in harmony therewith, to prove what is good, next the acceptable, and finally the perfect will of God, as Paul tells us in Romans 12 :2 “Be not conformed to the world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.”

“YEA, THOU I WALK THROUGH THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH, I WILL FEAR NO EVIL: FOR THOU ART WITH ME; THY ROD AND THY STAFF THEY COMFORT ME.”

The whole of mankind is walking through this valley of death as the result of the sin of father Adam, living with the daily prospect of death. Adam had fallen from the mountain top of life, he lost his footing there and descended into the valley of the shadow of death. Mankind as a whole fear this valley as they can see no way of escape. Scientists have for years been trying to find the key to increasing our life span, looking for the fountain of youth, even to deep freezing of the human body in the hope one day of finding the secret to eternal life. Mankind’s journey through this valley is one of sickness, pain, sorrow, culminating in death. As the Apostle Paul states-Romans 8:22,19 “For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now .. waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God.” The world is yet to realise that only through Christ and his Church during the Millennial Age can they be lifted out of the “valley of the shadow of death”, back to the heights of light, love and Divine likeness.

The sheep however that hear the Shepherd’s voice and follow his directions, although still in the world, walking through this valley, learn to be neither careless nor anxious as they walk. Fear and tremblings, doubts and perplexities are replaced with the realisation that God through his Son has provided a way out of the valley of the shadow of death” He has assured us that death shall not mean extinction of life, but merely, until the resurrection, an undisturbed sleep in Jesus. As we are told in 1 Cor 15 :55 “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” No wonder then that the world looks upon these sheep with amazement as they pass through this valley singing, and rendering praise unto the Lord. They surely “fear no evil” as their shepherd has promised “I will never leave thee or forsake thee”

“Thy Rod and Thy Staff they comfort me” tells us of the ways in which God looks after us as we walk. The Shepherd’s crook or staff was used to assist the sheep out of difficulties, to defend it from its too powerful enemies and to chasten it when inattentive. The word staff means “a support, a stay.” The rod was also used to count the sheep to make sure all were present. How glad we are to know that all power in heaven and in earth is committed unto our Shepherd and that under both his protecting and correcting care we are safe from all foes, and nothing can by any means do us harm.

“THOU PREPAREST A TABLE BEFORE ME IN THE PRESENCE OF MINE ENEMIES”

The figure of the shepherd caring for his sheep is still before us in this verse, and it serves to illustrate the love and care of the Great Heavenly Shepherd for His people. A very important part of the Eastern shepherd’s duties would be that of preparing a suitable pasture for the sheep under his care. Not only must he find a supply of water, and plenty of the right kind of grass for the sheep, but he must also prepare the pasture in the sense of driving off the wild animals and reptiles which may be lurking around. The shepherd walking ahead of his sheep would be able to note any poisonous grasses and avoid such places; also the presence of snakes would be detected; and wolves and hyenas would need to be guarded against. How true of the Good Shepherd who provides the food for His trusting ones, but sees to it that no poisonous elements shall get into it. He sees to it that they are not injured thereby. The Good Shepherd has spread a table for his trusting sheep in this time in the very presence of enemies, but we need to listen and thus keep ourselves in his love and care, by earnest efforts to know and do his will.

“THOU ANOINTEST MY HEAD WITH OIL, MY CUP RUNNETH OVER”

Throughout the Psalm, the leading thought is that of the Lord’s love and care and interest in His people, illustrated by the figure of a shepherd caring for his sheep. The Psalm has sung the whole round of the day’s wandering—all the needs of the sheep, all the care of the Shepherd. Now we close with the final scene of the day. At the door of the sheepfold the shepherd stands, and he carefully inspects each sheep as they pass one by one before him into the fold. He has the horn filled with olive-oil and he has at hand a supply of Cedar-tar, and he anoints a knee bruised on the rocks, or a side scratched by thorns. If one is simply worn out and exhausted, he bathes its face and head in the refreshing olive-oil; he takes the large two-handled cup and dips it brimming full from the water he has brought for that purpose, and he lets the weary sheep drink. There is nothing finer in the Psalm than this. God’s care is not for the wounded only; it is for those who are just worn and weary, to the point that we can say his mercies and goodness are such that our Cup overflows, all our needs are fully

supplied.

“SURELY GOODNESS AND MERCY SHALL FOLLOW ME ALL THE DAYS OF MY LIFE”

These words seem to indicate the ending of the day's experiences, a realisation that the Shepherd's care has lead them safely through another day, and the feeling that while we too are under his watchful eye and obey his commands, we have safety and peace. The sheep have all been led home and are safely sheltered in the fold. David in reflection could see the pictures of his childhood experiences associated with the watching over of his father's sheep, and how these reflected the care Jehovah had shown him as he led him from his position as shepherd boy, through divine intervention, to become King of Israel and to grow old in service to his people and to Jehovah. His life had been a combination of various scenes, experiences both joyful and sorrowful. As he looked back over the long years of his earthly pilgrimage, memories of his life as a shepherd came to mind inspiring him to use these experiences, in caring for his sheep, to create this beautiful song telling of his own life of faith and trust in God.

The roles have been reversed, he no longer thinks of himself as the Shepherd, responsible for all the sheep's needs, but as one of the lowly sheep requiring the protection of the Great Shepherd, Jehovah. He tries to peer into the dim unknown future with a confidence brought about by a long experience. "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the (remaining) days of my life." Only one who had experience of trials and adversities, as well as the blessings that inevitably come in this life on earth, one who had come to realise the need of divine mercy and grace, could have written these words. These words describe the experience of learning good by coming in contact with evil, even at times being overcome by evil, realising that amid the scenes of human life, the only power to deliver us from evil comes through the goodness and mercy of the Lord.

The power to bless, to heal, to work deliverance, is expressed in the Psalm as coming not from man but from God. Every verse covers some aspect of God's dealings with those who put their trust in him. David firmly believed that Jehovah was deeply involved in every aspect of his life, that He was full of compassion for him, remembering him in his weakened fallen nature.

Who can define goodness? Applying goodness to man and his dealings with his fellow man is difficult, nearly impossible, to sum up in one word, but God's goodness to imperfect ones who fear and reverence Him is not measureable. His benevolence of heart is manifested in His gifts of grace, and his discipline.

Mercy is defined as that benevolence, mildness, tenderness, which disposes a person to overlook injuries or to treat an offender better than he deserves. It is the disposition that tempers justice and induces an injured person to forgive trespasses and injuries and to forbear punishment, or to inflict less than the law or justice will warrant. It is said that no word in our language precisely fits the meaning of mercy.

“AND I WILL DWELL IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD FOREVER”.

The shepherd's song is finished, the sheep are all at rest, safe in the good shepherd's fold, home at last.

To dwell in the house of the Lord forever will require a change. We have but temporary abode on earth waiting as strangers for our calling home to be with our Master in the Heavenly mansions or abodes, as some translate the word. This is the promise of Christ when He went away to prepare a place for his disciples. We can only imagine the joy that is set before us when we can dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

We realise more and more as we look back over the way, that He has been with us all the way during the sunny, days, cloudy days, days of joy, days of sorrow, days of trial, days of toil and days of weariness. Along with David we can say that surely goodness and mercy have followed us all the days of our lives and we look forward to dwelling in the house of the Lord forever.

RC: 1992

Crucified & Risen

“Jesus our Lord Who was delivered for our offences and was raised again for our justification” Rom. 4:25.

“IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME”

At this time of the year, our thoughts turn particularly to those momentous events in Jerusalem nearly 2000 years ago.

There it was that our dear Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, He who was holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners was cruelly put to death upon a Roman cross. There He suffered and died, “the just for the unjust”; there all the various types and prophecies of the Old Testament found their fulfilment in that One whom John the Baptist had earlier announced as “the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world”.

So at this season, in remembrance of Him, Jesus our Saviour and Lord, we keep that simple Memorial service which He Himself instituted in that upper room, so long ago. We see again in the elements the giving of

His life, the shedding of His blood, ultimately for the blessing of all mankind, but here and now for all those who have ears to hear His loving “follow me.” Again we take to ourselves the merit of His blood and feast on Him who is the Bread of Life. We recall our privilege of following in His footsteps, to be dead with Him, of fellowship with Him in lives of obedience and sacrifice, and we renew our vows of consecration to His service.

“For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show forth the Lord’s death, till He come,” 1 Cor. 11:26. May each dear child of God be richly blessed as once again we heed His loving words. “This do in remembrance of me.”

“HE IS RISEN”

But how thankful we are that the story does not end at the cross. Praise God, we serve a risen Saviour, and once more we can rejoice as we read the words of the angelic messengers to the two Marys who had gone so early on the first day of the week to the tomb where Jesus had been laid. “He is not here, He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay, and go quickly, and tell His disciples.” Matt. 28:6,7. The account goes on to tell that the two women departed quickly with fear (awe) and great joy and ran to tell the disciples. What joyous, awesome news indeed!

The resurrection of Jesus is truly the key to all the hopes of the Lord’s people, as so beautifully reasoned out by the apostle Paul in the great resurrection Chapter 1 Cor. 15. Our Lord’s own words to His disciples, in His tender last-night discourses recorded by John, might well be thought of as a “text” for the apostle’s masterly exposition. Yet a little while and the world seeth me no more, but ye see me; *because I live, ye shall live also.*” John 14:19.

The well-attested fact of Christ’s resurrection is, furthermore, the assurance of the resurrection in due time and order of all mankind; firstly, the faithful followers of Jesus of this age in the “first” resurrection (Rev. 20:6), then the faithful servants of God of old times in that “better” resurrection, for which they looked (Heb. 11:35), and, finally, the remainder of mankind in the resurrection to judgement. John 5:29.

Well may we marvel at the fullness and the comprehensiveness of God’s love and wisdom, as seen in His plans and guaranteed by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

“O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!” Rom. 11:33.

Note: It is planned to include the address “Resurrection for All” in our next issue.

Master, Speak!

Master, speak! Thy servant heareth,
Waiting for Thy gracious word,
Longing for the voice that cheereth;
Master, let it now be heard.
I am listening, Lord, for Thee;
What hast Thou to say to me.

Speak to me by name, O Master,
Let me know it is to me.
Speak that I may follow faster,
With a step more firm and free.
Where the Shepherd leads the flock
In the shadow of the Rock.

Master, speak, and make me ready,
When Thy Voice is truly heard,
With obedience, glad and steady



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The Mystery Of His Will

(A study of God's Plan in Ephesians 1)

(Contributed Article)

The Church at Ephesus was established by Paul 1 and his associates, as we have it recorded in Acts 19. It was established on Paul's second missionary journey, and then "God gave the increase". It progressed well — so much so that Paul saw good to write this very spiritual epistle to them. Yet, later on, as is seen in the message to this Church in Rev. 2:1, sadly, the progress was not maintained as it should have been, and this fact brought reproof from the One who walketh among the candlesticks.

This fact constitutes a warning to us that it is not sufficient that we run well for a while, but as runners in a foot-race today cannot win if the effort is not maintained, so with us, the effort must be maintained for the full length of the way if we are to win in the end.

After the usual greetings, the Apostle in verse 3 ascribes praise and honour to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. Blessed be the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ — or as one translation has it, Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has given us these spiritual blessings. "Spiritual" means non-carnal, that is not of fleshly or earthly kind. These spiritual blessings are only for the regenerate, for those begotten of the holy spirit of God; "the natural man understands not the things of the spirit of God, neither can he know them for they are spiritually discerned" — 1 Cor. 2:14.

The word "heavenly" means literally "above the sky", therefore refers to the celestial places, but the word is used figuratively here, not literally. "Heavenly places" are used to refer to what has been revealed to His people by the holy spirit and illustrated in the type — namely, in the Holy and the Most Holy of the Tabernacle.

At the present time, that is during this Gospel Age, the saints are depicted as in the Holy of the Tabernacle, eating of the shewbread — the word of God — and enjoying the light from the candlestick, which represents the light of the holy spirit illuminating the word of God, the shewbread. Thus they have meat (food) to eat the world knows not of. The incense of the golden Altar is for their benefit also, this incense representing the perfect sacrifice of Jesus; this incense of His making the sacrifice of his body members acceptable. Rev. 8:3, 4 says much incense is offered for, or with, the prayers (and sacrifices) of the saints, so that they should be acceptable to the Heavenly Father.

We note that some are made to sit together in heavenly places (or as the Diaglott says, "heavenlies"), *plural* in both instances, so the reference could be to that which was typified by the Holy and Most Holy places of the Tabernacle, the Holy being a type of the condition we enjoy now of being spirit-begotten sons of God, and the Most Holy representing our condition when born of the spirit, glorified together with our Head, "which hope we have as an anchor of the soul." That is the hope we have in view, and we hold it prospectively but with strong faith in Him who has promised it.

In verse 4, "We were chosen in him before the foundation of the world." God's plan was made *before* this time; He determined to have a spiritual class of the divine nature to be the bride of Christ, a new creation, *before* the foundation of the world. God did not devise His plan as he went along, that is as each contingency occurred. Even with His Son, it is written, that He was "the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world", and He planned for

the Body of Christ that they should be holy and without blame before Him. While it is probable that the reference here is to the time when the Church is glorified and with her Lord and standing before Him (“before” meaning directly in front of Him), yet there is a way by which his saints can be blameless before him now, in the sense in which Zacharias and Elizabeth, the parents of John the Baptist, were blameless in keeping the commandments of the Law — not faultlessly, but blamelessly when the imperfections of the flesh were taken into account.

Verse 5: Verse 4 ends “holy and without blame before him”. The words “in love” seem to belong to verse 5 (not to v. 4) as in the Diaglott — “Having *in love* previously marked *us* out for sonship through Christ Jesus for Himself according to the good pleasure of His (God’s) will.” The *Father’s* love is manifested by His love and mercy in making His plan this way; the *Son’s* love is manifest in giving His life for His bride. This meant great sacrifice on the part of both Father and Son. The Father gave His son, the dearest treasure of His heart; the Son gave all that He had, His life, for His bride.

The bride was a predestinated *class*, and the word means to limit in advance, to predetermine. The church, the bride, was a predetermined class, and Rev. 7:4 says the *number* was predetermined as 144,000. But they were not predetermined as individuals — they were a part of God’s plan *before* the foundation of the world.

The members were to have the spirit of sonship (the Diaglott translation of the verse) — a begetting of the holy spirit from the Father received at their consecration. However, this is only a begetting; we must live up to the terms of our consecration vow if we would be full sons and eventually be born on the spirit plane of being. We must pass the tests the Heavenly Father sends. Even our Lord Jesus had to be tested. “Though he were a Son (begotten at baptism) yet learned He obedience by the things He suffered.” He passed successfully every test the Father permitted, and later received glory and honour and immortality, the divine nature, as a reward. The saints also have this hope of the divine nature through faith in the merit of the sacrifice of God’s Son, Jesus.

So, as verse 6 says (Diaglott) — through the love of God “we have been graciously favoured in the beloved one.” We deeply appreciate God’s mercy and favour towards us, and yet in time to come after receiving the reward we will appreciate more fully His goodness when we are richly endowed with all the good things the Father has promised to them that love Him. But even now we rejoice in the sunshine of His grace. We have redemption through Christ’s blood, such deliverance from sin and Adamic condemnation being only for the Church now, but for all the faithful of mankind in the Millennial Age.

Passing on, verse 8 says that God caused the riches of his grace to abound towards us in all wisdom and prudence. “Abound” means to superabound, to be in excess, so we have the thought of good measure, pressed down, flowing over. Instead of “abound”, the Weymouth translation uses “lavished”. Reading verses 7, 8 and part of 9; “It is in Him and through the shedding of His blood that we have our deliverance, the forgiveness of our offence, so abundant was God’s grace, which He, the possessor of all wisdom and understanding, lavished upon us, when He made known to us the secret of His will.”

So God’s grace “has abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence” — prudence meaning mental action or activity, that is intellectual or moral insight. God, then, acted toward us in all wisdom in giving us such a good hope through grace, and also God, in thinking of a bride for His Son to live and reign with Him in the heavens, did so with all intellectual and moral insight and foresight. He acted not lightly, but with careful deliberation, because this class were to be given the reward of immortality.

Verse 9: “Having made known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself.” It gave God pleasure to do this, it gave Him satisfaction or delight as the word “pleasure” means. The word “mystery” means a secret-something known only to the initiated. And who are the initiated? We answer, those who have come into Christ by vowing to live as He did. It is to these only, the truly faithful, that the great hope of reigning with Christ as His joint-heirs is promised. They belong to a special class by consecration and the receiving of God’s holy spirit; we could say they belong to an exclusive order, a humble position now, but in time to come, glorious; but above all, useful. (2 Tim. 2:20, 21).

1 Pet. 1:8-12 speaks of this *so great salvation* being placed before the Church, such a salvation that holy men of old and even the angels searched the Scriptures for information concerning this so great salvation (Heb. 2:3). Then Col. 1:26,27 speaks of this same thing — “the secret which had been hid from ages and generations but is, now made manifest to the saints. To whom God would make known what is the fellowship of this secret (secret order) among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

So this so great salvation was the secret, and those called to it are to be a new creation, a new group or company in the heavens, possessing the divine nature and working for the uplift and blessing of all people under the headship of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in the Millennial Age. The Old Testament writers could not see or

understand some of the things they spoke of prophetically. No doubt Abraham wondered what the full significance of the promise to him meant when God said, In thee and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. In Hebrews 11:13, it says that, like others who lived before Christ, Abraham could not see clearly the fulfilment — he saw the fulfilment of the promise afar off, that is indistinctly.

The Apostle Paul was an instrument in God's hand in revealing the deep and hidden truths of God's word, and he deeply appreciated this favour as we see from the exultant way he has written here in Ephesians. Also in Rom. 16:25-26, he speaks of his privilege of "the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations (or people, Jews and Gentiles) for the obedience of faith."

Here Eph. 3:9-12 from Weymouth is good. This is "the stewardship of the truth which from all the ages lay concealed in order that the church might now be used (i.e. in time to come) to display to the powers and authorities in the heavenly realms the innumerable aspects of God's wisdom. Such was *the eternal purpose* which He had formed in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have this bold and confident access through faith in Him."

Verse 10: "In the dispensation of the fulness of times" — Here first of all we should note the basic meaning of "dispensation", which is "an administration of a household or estate, especially of a religious economy". It is God who has this administration to fulfil all His plans on time, that is at the fullness or completion of the time allotted for each feature of His plan. This word "dispensation", meaning "administration", when used as a verb means stewardship; so God has this stewardship, and He is a good and perfect steward of His economy. *Times* in this verse means set or proper times, as also in Gal. 4:4. "In the fullness of time God sent forth His son", and in the fullness of time God will gather all things together under Christ.

In verse 10, we are told that it is God's purpose to reunite all things under one head, even under the Anointed One (Diag.). Weymouth's translation says, "And this is in harmony with God's merciful purpose for the governments of the world when the times are ripe for it — the purpose which he has cherished in His own mind of restoring the whole creation to find its one Head in Christ; yes, things in heaven and things in earth, to find their one Head in Him."

We note that it is "all things in heaven and earth" that are to find their one head in Christ, and we find through the Scriptures (2 Pet. 3:12,13) that the present heavens or ecclesiastical powers are to be removed and a new heavens, Christ and the saints, are to be the new spiritual ruling powers. These shall teach mankind through the Old Testament saints, these forming the new power or authority on earth, and thus a new earth or society shall take the place of the old in this universe. Also, those spirit beings who are at present out of harmony with God will have to repent and serve God again, or be destroyed. (1 Pet. 3:17-20). So we see that restoring the whole universe to find its one Head in Christ will not be fully accomplished until the end of the Millennial Age, when Satan, and all the evil angels who do not reform, as well as the disobedient of mankind, will be destroyed in the second death.

Verse 11: In verse 10 the Apostle has spoken of all things being gathered together in Christ, and now in this verse he says that we share in this wonderful heritage of reuniting all things under Christ, having been chosen beforehand in accordance with the intention of Him whose might carries out in everything the counsel of His *own* will (Weymouth). God has no need to consult with others about His plans.

Verse 12: Those who have first trusted in Christ are the called and faithful of this Gospel Age. We could perhaps think of the Apostles as being special and worthy of additional praise, and certain individuals in the Church since, but it seems Paul had in mind the whole anointed company made up of members from both Jews and Gentiles. In speaking of those who first trusted in Christ, there is the inference that some will trust later, and so we are led to think of redemption for the world in the Millennial Age. The Church, the bride, are, as we have seen, a predestinated class, predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will, and it is to *these* God has given this prior hope that we should come into Christ, be incorporate in Christ.

This is to be a great honour to those who attain to such a position and condition of glory, honour and immortality. It is indeed! but what else is said here — that we should be to the *praise* of *his* glory. Let us note Weymouth's translation — "that we should be devoted to the extolling of his glorious attributes — we who were the first to fix our hopes in Christ." That rendering conveys a good thought — that we should be ever grateful for the love and benevolence of God who, through favour, grace — amazing grace, will grant us so high a favour or blessing, exalting the bride to be forever with Him in the heavens.

In verse 13 the word "sealed" should be noted; it means to stamp for security, or preservation, to keep secret. This seal is the holy spirit, and it is God who grants us the holy spirit; it is a secret sealing, unknown to the

worldly; it is for our preservation as new creatures. In the Diaglott it is called the spirit of the *promise*, as it came by promise of Jesus, who called it the comforter (John 16:7). Also it was promised in the Old Testament, in Joel 2:28-32, which was quoted by Peter in Acts 2:17 when he spoke of the initial giving of the spirit at that time.

In addition to the holy spirit being called a seal, in verse 14 it is called the earnest of our inheritance. The word “earnest” means a pledge or down payment, that is a payment in advance of the blessing to come to us when born of the spirit. It ensures our share in the inheritance of the saints with Christ Jesus our Head so long as we are faithful to our covenant of laying down our lives in God’s service as Jesus did — until the redemption (the ransom in full) of the purchased possession, i.e. the whole anointed company, the church, into the glory and honour promised as joint-heirs of Christ. In Heb. 9:15 the eternal inheritance is also mentioned, and Col. 3:23,24 adds — “whatsoever ye do (particularly service to the Lord) do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance, for ye serve the Lord Christ.”

Verse 14 ends with the phrase, “to the praise of His glory”, as does verse 12, and there we quoted Weymouth’s translation, “that we should be devoted to the extolling of God’s glorious attributes”. It could be added that that is a *present* as well as a future privilege. The motivating force which inspires this is that our God is a God of love, and therefore not selfish — love seeketh not her own. Long ago God was alone, and He wished to have company, and first of all He created his Son, the firstborn of all creation, but He did not create Him of, or in the form of His own immortal nature, for He had a plan for Him and would *later* grant Him the divine nature. But God wanted to have more than one with the immortal nature, He wanted to have a number, a family of his own nature, and in Revelation 7:4 it says 144,000 as noted before.

His Son was to be given the divine nature if He was willing to give his life in sacrifice for mankind in His Father’s plan. So as God knew mankind would fall into sin, the Father planned that His Son should die as a ransom for them, “ransom” meaning a price to correspond. (An angel could not have died as a ransom, because of a different and higher nature, and not of equal value.) Then God, by selecting others from amongst mankind to be exalted to live with Him, Christ Jesus, was able to display more fully His great traits of character, His love, His condescension. His magnanimity by stooping to call some of fallen mankind. In this way, God could display the grandeur of His character most effectively to the rest of mankind and also to the fallen angels, who could be moved to repentance by such an example. Thus in the ages to come the love of God will be the theme of the saints in glory and this theme, this great truth, the love of God manifest in his redeeming grace for *all* mankind who will be obedient, will inspire rejoicing and thankfulness in every redeemed heart in ages to come.

In verse 15, the Apostle Paul begins a prayer of thanks to God for this church. He prayed in a similar way on several occasions when writing to the churches he had been instrumental in establishing. To the church at Philippi he wrote, “I thank my God upon every remembrance of you. Always in every prayer of mine making request with joy, and that He which hath begun a good work in you shall perform it unto the day of Christ.” (Phil. 1:3-6). Yes, this great apostle felt the care of *all* the churches, and thanked God for them.

Verse 15 in the Diaglott reads, “On this account, I having heard of your faith” etc. This expression shows a connection with the previous verses, a reference to the magnitude of the reward, the inheritance set before the faithful followers of Christ, a reward due to all the faithful and elect when their course is fully run.

The Apostle in his prayer was desirous that the Ephesian church, having some knowledge of the great hope for the church, should continue to progress, and this prayer applies to us as well. While giving thanks to God for those at Ephesus who had heard the word so readily, and since hearing it had progressed so well, he desired earnestly that they should continue to progress in “the spirit of wisdom and revelation in (of) the knowledge of God.” Revelation means disclosure, and the Apostle desired that the disclosure or understanding of the deep truths of God’s word should be revealed to them more and more. (*This is the thought* in verses 15, 16 and 17.) Therefore, he says, on this account, or in view of the rich inheritance promised to the saints, they should be earnest in their endeavours to prove worthy and grow in grace and knowledge of God as each day goes by.

We must have the *wisdom* spoken of here, “the spirit of wisdom and revelation”. These things would not be given miraculously, but would need to be developed, and this would come only by the study of God’s Word and the indwelling of the holy spirit. We should not be content with the elementary things, with the milk of the Word, but seek the strong meat that we may grow thereby (1 Pet. 2:2). Col. 1:9 (Diaglott) is in harmony — Paul prayed for the Colossians, according to the Diaglott, “We do not cease praying on your behalf, that ye may be filled as to the exact knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.”

Verse 18, “The eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know (that is with all its value) what is the hope of His calling and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.” The Diaglott says,

“among the saints”. (see later comment).

Verses 19 and 20 continue according to the Diaglott translation, “And what the surpassing greatness of His power towards us who believe, according to the energy of His mighty strength which He exerted in the Anointed One, having raised Him from the dead, and having seated Him at His own right hand in the heavens” — such power being readily available to all His saints now to aid them in making their calling and election sure. Let us always realise this, and avail ourselves of that power, living as we are in the hour of temptation at the very end of this Gospel Age.

Verse 21: So our Saviour, God’s beloved son in whom he was well pleased, was greatly exalted by his Father; “He exalted him above all angels and archangels of every rank and above every name that can be named, whether in this present age or in the ages to come” (T.C.N.T.) Christ Jesus has become the high priest of good things to come, and we cannot visualise all the blessings He will bring either to His body members or to the world of mankind, but as verses 22 and 23 say, God has put all under His feet in His plan for Him, and has “constituted Him a head over all things for that congregation” which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all.” The words “fullness” and “filleth” are closely related words. Fullness meaning repletion or completion, and filleth meaning to make replete or complete. The Christ complete, the composite Christ — mediator, priest and king — will meet these requirements, for when the Christ head and body is complete, this feature of God’s plan will be replete, i.e. completely filled — the mystery or secret purpose of God will be finished — consummated. Will this not be the crowning feature of God’s eternal purpose? Is this not what God has desired to have, a new creation, to be joint-heirs with His Son and of the same divine nature?

So we may think of God as a father and head of a family, a great king dwelling contentedly with a retinue of helpers gladly and willingly carrying out his purpose for the blessing of all mankind. The Diaglott translation of verse 18 supports this view, where it says “God’s inheritance *among* the saints”. This is what God has desired, a blessing and pleasure and an inheritance reserved for Himself. Psalm 132:13,14 tells of this, “For the Lord hath chosen Zion (the church), He hath desired it for His habitation. This is my rest forever, here will I dwell, for I have desired it.”

Verses 15 -18 of that Psalm go on to speak of the blessings to be dispensed to the world in the Millennial Age. “I will satisfy her poor with bread, I will clothe her priests with salvation, and her saints shall shout aloud for joy. There I will make the horn (power) of David (the Christ, the antitypical David) to bud. I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed (a lamp of light and truth). His enemies I will clothe with shame (they will look to him whom they pierced, Zech. 12:10) but upon him (Christ) the crown shall shed its lustre” (R.S.V.). And rightly so, as He is the one who in the Father’s plan made these blessings possible to the church and all mankind.

So we praise God from our hearts for the unspeakable gift of His beloved Son, sent forth to be a ransom for all, this truth to be called to the attention of all in God’s due time. (WJH: 1992)

The First 75 Years

This issue completes 75 years of publication 1 of “Peoples Paper — and Herald of Christ’s Kingdom”. When the first issue came out in 1918, those responsible could hardly have envisaged such a milestone being reached but in the Lord’s providence this ministry has continued until now.

Over the years, the People’s Paper has been a means of contact and blessing to Christian brethren and friends in Australia and overseas, with reports of convention and other addresses, articles on doctrinal and devotional topics, personal reports, etc. and for this, thankful praise is given to our gracious Heavenly Father, who has provided at all times, through His people, for the maintenance of this and the other activities of the Berean Bible Institute.

Though there were evidently two earlier issues, the starting point for the present Peoples Paper seems to have been the issue dated June 1918, numbered Vol. 1, No. 1. All subsequent issues are numbered from this one, which outlined the background to the establishment in that year of what is now the Berean Bible Institute. The Mission of Peoples Paper, as stated in the June 1918 issue, is reprinted hereunder.

For the present, it seems to be the Lord’s will that the publication of Peoples Paper should be continued, and the prayers of the Lord’s people are sought for His guidance and His blessing of this ministry, realising that “unless the Lord build the house, they labour in vain who build.”

Mission of Peoples Paper (from Vol. 1, No. 1, June 1918)

The mission of “Peoples Paper” will be to be a comfort and encouragement to the people of God and to proclaim the glad tidings of the coming Kingdom of Christ to all people. The intention will be to “speak the truth in

love”, so that even where difference of thought with others may be expressed, it will seek not to offend, but to reason along scriptural lines with hope of attaining unity in the faith once delivered to the Saints.

Unto You Is Born a Saviour

Once more we are coming to that season of V the year when, with many around the world, our hearts especially turn again to the birth of our dear Saviour as the Babe of Bethlehem.

How beautifully that careful researcher, Luke, has recorded for us the events leading up to and including that time. In his gospel account, we read of Zacharias and Elizabeth, “righteous before God”, to whom was to be born John, the “prophet of the Highest” and the herald of our Saviour. Here we learn of the wondrous announcement of the angel to Mary, the one “highly favoured of the Lord”, and listen to her heartfelt song of praise to God.

“And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary, for thou has found favour with God, and behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Highest, and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David.” Luke 1:30-32.

Following Jesus’ birth, Luke invites us out into the fields and with the shepherds we hear again that wondrous message: “Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people, for unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. ‘ Luke 2:10,11. What a message! Announced to a few simple shepherds but of import and ultimate blessing to all mankind.

Later, Luke takes us with Mary and Joseph and the newborn child up to the temple with their simple offering and we hear the gracious and prophetic words of the aged Simeon: “Mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.” Luke 2:30-32. Here too we meet Anna, prayerful, dutiful prophetess and listen to her speak of Jesus and redemption in Jerusalem.

In such circumstances, our dear Saviour came into our world. While we need must look forward and realise the purpose of his coming as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, and recall all that it entailed in suffering before final victory, yet for a while, with Luke and with Matthew also, may we reflect again on the lovely story of our Saviour’s birth, and be thankful to God for His unspeakable Gift.

Christlikeness - The Evidence of Sonship

“He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk even as he walked “ — 1 John 2:6

To abide in Christ implies that one has first come into him. This gives us the thought of a body. The Scriptures everywhere represent the church as being this body, with Jesus as the Head. “God gave him to be Head over the church, which is his body.” During the Gospel age an invitation has been given to certain persons to be of this body of Christ. There is only one door by which these may come into the body. It is the door of sacrifice, baptism into Christ’s death. We are accepted only by giving up our own will, and taking instead the will of God. We pledge ourselves to walk in Jesus’ steps, to become his followers, his disciples. We are buried with him and rise to walk in newness of life. — Romans 6:4.

But it is not sufficient that we take these steps, not sufficient that we have received the holy Spirit, and have been accepted of the Father. We should be sure that we continue to abide in Christ. Let us ask ourselves, Are we having the experiences common to all who are associated with Jesus? One of the ways to be sure that we are abiding in him is to realize that we still love him. Another is to know that we are still in harmony with God’s Word. A third way is that we have no will but the Lord’s will. Still another is to have his peace in our hearts and lives as the ruling and controlling influence.

Profession Insufficient

Many have made a profession of being members of the body of Christ who do not give evidence of being his. Our text says that any one who professes to be in Christ ought so to walk even as the Master walked. And how did the Master walk? He lived daily in harmony with the will of the heavenly Father. He was fully submissive to the Father’s will. And this meant sacrifice unto death — the cruel death of the cross.

Whoever has our Lord’s spirit, and is controlled by the same will, is a member of the body of Christ, and will seek to walk after this fashion, to do the will of God in all things. This will mean a walk of holiness, of full devotion to God, and of opposition to sin. Whoever is consecrated to God is opposed to every sinful thing; for God and sin are in opposition. God stands for his own righteousness, and sin is a violation of that righteousness. (1

John 3:4). Whoever walks as Jesus walked is in harmony with the divine Word and will. We are not to trust to our impressions, our own conceptions of what is right and advantageous, as many others do; but the Word of the Lord is to abide in us, and to govern our lives. Jesus said, “I came not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me” — “everything written in the Book.” And so it is to be with us. We must abide in him, walk in him, and be willing to do “everything written in the Book” — not merely forcing ourselves to it, saying, I will take this course; but saying, “I delight to do thy will, O my God; thy law is written in my heart.” — Psa. 40:7,8.

Proofs of Sonship

All who have accepted Christ claim, in a general way at least, to be sons of God, that Christ is their Elder Brother, and that they belong to this great family that God is selecting from the sons of men. They consider themselves heirs with Christ to the great kingdom to come. But not all who claim to be sons of God are such. A great many are making this claim. Statistics tell us that there are millions of professed Christians; but we cannot think that many of these millions are sons of God. The Apostle Paul calls our attention to the fact that since we cannot read the hearts we must go by the professions which others make by mouth and by conduct. But professions of the mouth are not to be taken as final. We know that those who are sons of God will be led by his Spirit. “As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.”

God’s children, begotten of his holy Spirit, will make some manifestation of their harmony with this general Spirit of God. If they are, therefore, walking in unrighteousness, making no endeavour to stem the tendencies of sin in themselves, if they prefer error rather than truth, their fruits condemn them; for God stands for truth, as was exemplified in our Lord Jesus.

Whoever, therefore, has the Spirit of God, is willing to sacrifice himself that he may serve the truth. He loves the truth, and will manifest this fact by the spirit of love and zeal. Satan is the personification of sin, envy, hatred, malice, strife. Righteousness, love, joy, peace, are fruits of the holy Spirit. Wherever we see the works of the devil manifested we have reason to question that such a one is a child of God. The spirit of envy, the spirit of hatred, the spirit of malice, the spirit of opposition to the truth, the spirit of unrighteousness — these are to be repudiated and overcome by all who would be sons of God.

Yet despite one’s best efforts, he might still find in his flesh tendencies to sin which would give him a great deal of trouble. He may take courage for the assurances of the Scriptures that the Lord looketh on the heart. Likewise in regard to others, we should judge according to the endeavour, the intention. Wherever the Spirit of God is, there is the spirit of love. And this spirit will make one wish to make reparation, if he has done wrong or been in error. To do so shows that it was not his spirit, his will to do wrong, but that he was merely entrapped for a time. But one who continues to do according to his natural tendencies, with no evidence of going in the right direction and of serving the truth, has reason to doubt that he is a child of God.

Walk As He Walked

The Apostle’s thought seems to be that those who profess to be the Lord’s followers, profess to be Christians, should see to it that their walk in life is in harmony with their profession. The word disciple signifies one who follows — as a pupil follows his teacher. We recognize Christ as our Redeemer and also as our Pattern, our Instructor, in the glorious things which the Father has invited us to share with our Saviour. If, therefore, we say that we are in him, this profession should be borne out by our walk in life. We should walk as he walked.

But we are not perfect — how can this be done? The answer is that we “are not in the flesh, but in the spirit.” God does not look upon our imperfect flesh. As New Creatures we are not fleshly beings, but spiritual. The Apostle is in our text speaking of that walk that the Master had after he made consecration. He walked in this way three and a half years. It was a walk, not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. And so with us. We are walking, not according to the flesh, but according to the new creature. We reckon ourselves dead according to the flesh, and the Lord so reckons us. If then, we are dead to the flesh, we are not to walk according to the desires of the flesh.

We are to walk as our Lord walked, in our general deportment. We are to love everything that is good and to avoid everything that is evil. We are to walk as nearly as possible in the footsteps of our Lord and Exemplar. We cannot in an imperfect body walk up to all the perfection of Jesus, who was perfect in his flesh as well as in his spirit. But we are to walk as he walked — in the same path, in the same direction, toward the same glorious goal toward which he walked. And so doing, faithful day by day, we shall by his grace attain the same exceeding great reward.

Pure In Heart

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they Shall see God.” Matt. 5:8.

The sixth of the Beatitudes calls for “purity 1 of heart” in all who would attain to the greatest blessings God has to bestow; purity of heart — purity of motive, of intention, of effort, of will — purity in the sense of sincerity, of transparency, of truthfulness.

The thought of “pure in heart” is not perfection of conduct nor of word, nor of thought, but perfection of intention as respects all of these. Our desire and effort must be for perfection — in thought, word and deed. The standard before us to which our hearts, our wills, must give assent is the divine standard. “Be ye perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect.” (Matt. 5:48) God has set no lower standard than this absolute perfection, but he has provided for us grace, mercy and peace through Christ, if we will walk in his footsteps, — this purity of heart being one of the essential steps in the narrow way.

Only the pure in heart have the promise of seeing God. They continue faithfully to the end of the pilgrimage, not only attaining the likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ in the present life (Rom.8:29) in their purity of heart, purity of intention, sincerity of their efforts toward God and men, but eventually according to the Lord’s promise, they shall, by the power of the first resurrection, be changed from earthly to heavenly, spiritual conditions. Then, as the Apostle declares, “we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.” And when we have thus become changed to be like the glorious Son of God, who is “the express image of the Father’s person,” we shall be able also unquestionably to see the Heavenly Father himself, and shall be introduced to him by our dear Redeemer — “complete in him,” without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.” — 1 John 3:2; Heb. 1:3; Eph. 5:27; Col. 2:10.

In this, as in the other blessings, a portion, a foretaste comes in the present life. There is such a thing as having the eyes of our understanding opened, that we may be enabled to “comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ.” (Eph. 3:18) But not all have this opening of the mental eye; not all are privileged to see the glories of Jehovah’s character in symmetrical harmony, divine justice, wisdom, love and power co-ordinated and co-operating in unison for the blessing of every creature, according to the purpose which God purposed in himself before the world was.

But who may enjoy this blessing, this clearer vision, and who may, by seeing it, be enabled more and more to grow in likeness of that glorious perfection? Only “the pure in heart,” only the sincere, the honest-hearted. Those who have a double mind, a double will, are Scripturally said to have a double vision, a double eye. They see spiritual things proportionately indistinctly. Many of God’s people have failed thus far to grow up into Christ in all things, they see something of the heavenly things, and something of the earthly; they see but dimly and indistinctly the lines of the divine character, and proportionately they lack ability to copy it. Let all who have named the name of Christ seek more and more to have but the one Master, and an eye single to his glory and service — a pure, a sincere, a faithful heart.

“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no one shall see the Lord’ Heb. 12: 14

O, Let my love be such to Thee,
That I may ever grateful be
To suffer stigma, brand or shame,
And count it honour for Thy Name
Who didst so much for me.



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Seek Ye First the Kingdom

Matt. 6:33.

(Convention Address)

Our Lord had come to fulfil the Law and to open up “a new and living way” to eternal life. This way to life, while requiring a higher standard than that of the Law, would be a way by which life could be gained, because provision was made for the imperfections of the flesh, so that the heart and will would be accepted instead of actual perfection of word and deed.

John the Baptist had realised his privilege of introducing the Bridegroom, saying, “He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.” He was quite content to realise himself merely as the friend of the Bridegroom. He was not part of the Bride, no, just the friend of the Bridegroom, the one introducing Him. Our Lord confirmed this in Matt. 11:11.

Up to that time Israel as a nation had represented God’s kingdom — an earthly kingdom. From that time the heavenly kingdom was proclaimed. “The kingdom of heaven is at hand” was the message at that time. “The law and the prophets were until John.” A new age was now commencing, during which time the Israel of God, the Church, would be chosen to be joint-heirs with Christ, to bless all the families of the earth. The Lord was then present, directing the closing-down of the Law dispensation. As the “Lord of the Harvest,” His fan was in His hand to thoroughly purge His floor, gathering true Israelites into the garner, the chaff to be burned up in the “wrath to the uttermost”.

The New Way

Jesus explained the principles which would prove whether or not a follower was really an overcomer, and worthy to be a sharer in the Kingdom. While the principles of God’s throne are always righteousness and truth — justice — yet the new way of harmony or at-one-ment with God was different from the way which was offered under the Law. There was no fault to be found with the law itself. It was holy and good; yet by the deeds of the law no man could be justified. The righteousness of the law was unattainable by poor, frail humanity, weakened by the fall, seeking but ever failing to attain to the righteousness which was required. Paul describes the pitiable condition of even the conscientious Jew under the law — Rom. 7. 1425.

Here, then, was the way out, as Paul declares (Gal. 3:13), “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law.” “He was born under the law that He might redeem them also under the law.” The Law (he says) was our school-master to bring us to Christ. That is, the Law proved that man, by his own works, even under the favourable conditions of God’s Law, could not attain righteousness. “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith.” (Heb. 10: 20-22.)

It was this new and living way, with its heavenly hopes and spiritual life, “glory, honour and immortality,” as a reward for faithfulness that Jesus came proclaiming, and inviting the “Israelites indeed” to enter.

In this kingdom of heaven which was proclaimed, they were to sacrifice the selfish ambitions of the world, and seek the spiritual things, not by way of the Law, which was by works, but by a new and living way, which was

justification by faith; not the righteousness which is of the Law, but that which is by the faith of Jesus Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith. (Gal. 2:16).

So we are not to seek to justify ourselves by any good deeds we might be able to do, but seek first the kingdom **of** heaven and its righteousness, which is by faith. That does not mean, however, that we are to be careless about good works. While realising that “Nothing in our hands we bring, Simply to Thy cross we cling,” our faith in Christ would be dead if we did not strive to walk as He walked, and to speak as **He** spoke, and thus show our faith by our works.

Consecration

During this Gospel Age it has only been “such as the Lord our God doth call” that could seek the kingdom. We were all born in sin and shapen in iniquity, and it was in the Lord’s grace that we were led to realise our need for the Saviour, and to long to be at peace with God and free from sin. When thoroughly longing for holiness and to be right with God, it was impressed upon our minds that this was the thing of first importance, “to seek first the kingdom.” It was only as we came to recognise God’s mercy in Christ in providing the means for our justification that we found the peace and joy of reconciliation with God.

This however, did not gain for us the kingdom. Thus far we had sacrificed nothing. Certainly, we had turned away from sin and determined to live a good life as far as we possibly could. But now comes the invitation, to “take up the cross and follow Christ,” to deny ourselves, to offer ourselves in full consecration to God, devoted like Jesus to do God’s will even unto death. This is a great step to take; to be willing to be nothing — **to** be counted, as Paul says, as the offscouring of the world — to suffer persecution, to be ignored, misunderstood, and to suffer loss for Christ’s sake, **to** die daily, to be dead with Christ, to endure just whatever the Lord may permit **to** come to us.

From a human viewpoint the true Christian life is not inviting, but even the appreciation of the loving sacrifice given to redeem us from death would lead the grateful heart to say, “Lord, I am thine, entirely thine.” “**I** am not my own, I am bought with a price, the costly blood of Thy dear Son. **It** is but the reasonable thing to do to give myself entirely to Thee, so here **I** give myself, it is all that I can do.”

Patient Continuance

However, the kingdom is not gained by our consecration, our promise to do God’s will even unto death. **It** is one step, but our whole contract must be carried out. Our consecration is but the entry to the race, we must so run as to obtain. **It** is but the beginning of the good fight **of** faith. We must so fight, not as one who beats the air, but as one in deadly earnest, beating down every stronghold of error in our hearts and minds, casting down every vain imagination, and bringing every thought into the obedience of Christ.

It was comparatively easy to seek first the kingdom of God and its righteousness, which is of faith and not of works of the law, but it **is** more difficult to keep all of our thoughts, words and doings in line with this standard, “Seek first the kingdom.” How is it that there is danger of losing our first love? Our love responded to the Lord’s invitation, “Seek ye my face,” with the words, “Thy face, Lord, **I** will seek”. **It** is one thing to express such love and zeal when filled with a sense **of** God’s love, but our faith and love must be able to stand the stress of trial.

We must, like our Master, learn obedience and be prepared in the fire of experience; we must prove our loyalty under the severity of adverse circumstances. We must have a perfected character which will be true to our duties and obligations. We have a good number of obligations, to our families, towards husband or wife, to parents, and so on. Many have obligations to employers, all indeed have daily obligations to others and there is a test going on as to our loyalty to our various obligations. “Loyalty” is a beautiful word. There is a great loss of loyalty in the world around us today, but as the Lord’s people we should be loyal to each other, as members of one body, seeking to uphold one another for the glory of our Head. Our character is to be proved, our loyalty, by how we meet these tests.

Character is proved in all the small affairs of our daily lives; the place where it is developed, and where it may be manifested and proved and tested in the best way is in our homes — how we are living there. Are we seeking to manifest the law of gentleness and love and peace and joy towards each other? The **Lord is** watching us to see just how we are doing things, whether **His** love is filling our hearts more and more, and finding expression **in** all our thoughts, and words, and doings. How we need to have that Christianity which is just as careful of our conduct in our homes as in public. We should have the loyalty to principle that will enable us to live for Christ just where we are placed.

In this way, then, the Lord is permitting us to be tested; our faith is being proved. We need to remember that

“like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth those that reverence Him.” He knows our frame, and just how the trial of our faith is going on. This trial, as Peter says, is more precious than gold, and the Lord is patiently watching in loving interest to see how well we are standing the test; watching to see us victorious, overcomers. He is watching if we are seeking first “the kingdom of God and its righteousness.” There are so many pitfalls, other interests and pleasures, that our great enemy will take every advantage of, to blot out our one great aim.

We have all, no doubt, repeatedly resolved to more earnestly make God first in everything, and no doubt also have been astonished to realise how much we have come short, how often have failed, and allowed self to come in. Many inducements are held out which may prove our undoing. We must judge ourselves in these matters, and correct ourselves. Only if we keep God first shall we obtain the kingdom. How serious is the warning in Heb. 2:1-3! Dare we neglect so great salvation!

While we have so much to encourage us in promises of grace and strength for every time of need all along the way, and of so great a reward, how serious is our position if we have put our hand to the plough and look back. Our Lord counsels us to “remember Lot’s wife.” How trivial are the things that cause some to look back! We counted the cost when we made our consecration, and signified in the waters of baptism our willingness, our desire, to be “dead with Christ.” Having made that stand, shall we allow the drawings or the allurements of the world or the flesh or angels to prevent us from seeking God first? All is lost if we turn again to the doomed city, as did Lot’s wife. How much then it really means to us — even the loss of all if we lose this chief aim of our life.

God First

As each year passes, our text verse might well go with us, to help us to examine ourselves. Could we have a standard as good as this which the Lord gave at the beginning of His earthly ministry, at the opening up of the call or invitation? “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.” O, that nothing, nobody, come between — God has a right to our whole attention, all our talents, all our wealth, all our powers of mind and body. When He says, “My son, give me thine heart,” He is asking for His own; yet He is not demanding our consecration. He has however privileged us with the most gracious and wonderful call, the invitation to become joint-heirs with Christ in His kingdom.

God Himself has pledged to take care of those who will go with Him. It is for us daily to remember our great aim — seeking first the kingdom; God to be first in everything. No one else has loved us so much, no one has such claim on our hearts, our love. Even in adversity and under the deepest clouds of distress, it is to be God first. Although He may permit affliction and gloom as a trial of our faith, He is watching to see us victorious. Soon the sunshine of His face will dispel the clouds and comfort our hearts, and bring us joy and peace. (P.P. 2/1940)

Watchfulness and Obedience

“Come, My people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee; hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the Lord cometh out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.” — Isa. 26:20, 21.

The greatest comfort which God’s people enjoy is based upon their appreciation of their real and close relationship to Him as their Father and to Christ Jesus as their Redeemer and Head. Without such knowledge it is impossible to estimate the true value of God’s Word, and equally impossible to draw from it the help, instruction, and directions which it contains.

Our text suggests at once by its confidential tone that those so addressed do stand in this true and loving relationship to Him. “Come, My people,” speaks of His tenderness and loving care for those who recognize their continual need of the Divine protection. For such,

*“There is an eye that never sleeps
Beneath the wing of night;
There is an ear that never shuts
When sink the beams of light.”*

Every true earthly father invariably gives the closest attention to the interests and persons of his children, and always provides means and suggestions for their safety, both for mind and body; and the father of experience should always be able to do so with a measure of success. But the Heavenly Father transcends in knowledge, foresight, and skill all human capability, and He sees just where the danger lurks and advises or commands as the need arises.

The Prophet's words in our text indicate two things — a place of safety and a time of great danger. The commanding voice of the Lord is there heard through the Prophet's lips, yet the tones are the softened ones of true parental love, saying, "Come, My people, enter thou into thy chambers."

It is appropriate here to ask, Can we with any accuracy locate the time or period to which this prophecy may be applied? Shall we look for it in Isaiah's day only, or does the picture point us still further? No doubt a large proportion of Old Testament prophecies link themselves to their immediate environment at the time of their utterance, and as a noted writer says, "In such cases (and they are very numerous) the literal application is the true spiritual one."

Many unwise and unproductive efforts have been made to spiritualize practically all the best of the prophetic utterances and thus to "heap upon the Jew all the curses, and transfer to the Christian dispensation all the blessings." Surely such treatment cannot be "rightly" dividing the word of truth." It should not be difficult for Bible students to decide after examination where to place or apply such prophetic lines as bespeak the work, the sorrows, or the joys of the experiences of God's people — prophecies which may well refer to ages future from the prophets' days. An example of such prophecy, surely lies before us in our text, which closes the 26th chapter of Isaiah.

In That Day

The phrase which opens this beautiful section of Scripture would well support this view. It says "In that day" certain gracious favors will have been received by some of God's people and responding acclamations will be accorded to Him; and if we compare the other many references to "that day" we shall be obliged to carry the prophetic words in many instances forward to the time when God shall begin gathering His people to Himself and destroying "them which destroy the earth".

The Prophet Isaiah was one of a minority who maintained the faith of Abraham, approved the Law of Moses, and looked for the consolation of Israel. He knew by heart all details of God's faithfulness to His people from the day that He brought them out of Egypt; and the Prophet's business here was to enthuse the mind of the few faithful ones, who were living in silent semi-isolation, among a decaying and faithless nation. No doubt his message was a means at that time of reviving the hope and cheering the hearts of many; though the real beauty and the far-reaching effect of the message were to be seen and felt in far future times, by those for whom it was written, "Shut thy doors about thee; hide thyself as it were for a little moment."

It is indeed for us that these bright beams of heavenly light have been projected through the ages, in order that we may be in a watchful attitude and hence be enabled to render obedient service to our Lord.

In the Secret of His Presence

Without doubt, when the Prophet's mind was thus pondering the vivid picture of Israel's great deliverance out of Egypt that eventful night, and conjuring up all the wondrous details which Moses had faithfully handed down, he broke forth under the Holy Spirit's influence into the beautiful words of our text, reminding his hearers again that the only place of safety was "in the secret of His presence" — "the secret place of the Most High."

That night in Egypt and its calamitous ending for Egypt was marked by a peculiar inactivity on the part of God's typical people. No one, not even the leader of Israel, was asked to take part in the destruction. No one of Israel was asked for advice, and as far as we know no one of Israel did take part or give advice. Here, then, is a lesson on watchfulness and obedience for us. Should not we be at least equally as careful as they, in observing the Lord's ways and requirements in this our day? The words of Isaiah quoted above seem full of added meaning when we contemplate the passover night.

No words could have been better framed, nor echo more fittingly the instructions which Moses enjoined that night: "Go thou in Israel, for behold Jehovah cometh out!" Israel was safely housed and protected, while Egypt reaped a whirlwind of sorrow. Nor could the Divine love have been better expressed: "When I see the blood, I will pass over you" — I shall know you are inside, watchful and obedient. And the Prophet echoes, "Come, My people, enter in" — remain in the secret place till instructed to come out.

This same beam of prophetic light shows us also that a night is fast approaching; indeed, it has well set in, and it is for us to hide ourselves in the secret place, and be sure not to be found among the disobedient in earth's present danger zone. For surely the greatest deliverance of all is imminent, in which God will complete the number of His elect who have cried day and night unto Him. This great deliverance will be carried out under the instructions of our Lord, earth's new King, and He will marshal them safely into the heavenly and true Canaan of rest, even in the First Resurrection. An abundant entrance is guaranteed to the faithful. — 2 Peter 1:11.

Though centuries had passed since the momentous night in Egypt, in Isaiah's mind the events and details of that great deliverance were as fresh as ever; but with the majority of Israel they were long forgotten and treated as idle tales.

As a result obedience and watchfulness toward their God was at a discount. So today, many who should be on the alert to watch for the Lord's guidance and to give instant and careful obedience to all His minute instructions, are either oblivious of the true issues and carelessly cutting adrift from the anchor of hope, or are being feverishly hurried into unauthorised activities, foreign to the original God-given instructions.

In illustration, suppose a great fire occurs in one of our great cities. How quickly there arrives upon the scene the well equipped and experienced staff with all their modern means for coping with the conflagration. How unwise would any citizen be who would interfere with their work or dare to instruct them. The citizens' place or duty on such occasions is to be out of the way and not in the way. So when the great God of truth and righteousness rises up to quench the fires of human passion, or to reverse the picture, when the "fire of His jealousy" is ignited for the destruction of all His opponents, for the disintegration of every work of evil, and for the disarming of all the forces of error and darkness, where should His people be? Surely, says the Prophet, "hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast, for the Lord cometh out," etc.

Why was it necessary in Isaiah's day to warn the typical people so seriously? Because the proprieties of the true worship, both in time and methods, had been long neglected, and innovations of unholy character had prostituted the truth; hence Jehovah's movements and work were unseen and unheeded.

Taking Heed to God's Word

In further illustration, how much sorrow would the beloved David have avoided if both he and the priests with him had given more heed to the detailed instructions of God's law through Moses. They would have avoided the error of bringing the ark to Jerusalem — a right thing in the wrong way — they would have avoided pushing the work of God forward by unlawful and worldly methods. So again, when David devised his plan to build a house to the Lord — a right thing at a wrong time — disappointment would have been saved had he been more careful in ascertaining the Lord's mind correctly.

Many since David's day, right down to the present, have been actively engaged in more or less extensive though questionable methods of forwarding the great work for human deliverance with the paraphernalia of human schemes; and to that end they have vainly endeavoured to build a house of God in which they might secure the "ark" and thus claim for their own particular community, sect, or organization the sole right to give forth the Divine decrees and thus be (or claim to be) the only true source of light, etc.

All who are deceived by such are bound to lose ground and become deficient both in obedience and watchfulness, giving heed to seducing spirits rather than to the Lord's directions.

The Rest of Faith

God's people still must walk by faith; faith's "doors" must be closed around them, and within those closed doors only will they remain safe and unharmed. While the world is full of sorrow and doubt and apprehension of the future, the Lord's people are calm and content. Neither should they take part in anything which would irritate or annoy their fellow creatures, whose cup of sorrow is already overfull. We can well afford to wait, and with Solomon can truly say, "There hath not failed one word of all His good promise." (1 Kings 8:56.)

We may know with confidence that no necessary information will be withheld from those who with watchfulness and obedience are awaiting the Lord's command, through the antitypical Moses—the present Lord—to "go forward." Let us not attempt to emerge from our hiding place until we are fully assured of His voice and of the nature of His command.

Estimating Costs

(Luke 14:28)

(Young People's Address)

Younger brothers and sisters often have to face major decisions in their teens, and twenties, with perhaps very little knowledge, and without the benefit of previous experience. This is the time when many decide on a professional career, get married, start families, and make other decisions which affect them to more or less degree for life. Some may also start considering the most important matter of all, a decision which not only affects them at the time but also in the future. That decision is whether or not, or when, they should make a commitment and

consecrate their lives to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Whenever we make any important decision, there are always many questions we need to answer. For a moment imagine embarking on a business venture. You and your business partners will sit down and try to work out every conceivable detail of the project, such as

1. what are the objectives
2. what should be the plan of action
3. when is the best time to commence the project
4. what benefits should you expect from it
5. how secure is the project
6. what are your liabilities should something go wrong

The project will also involve some considerable costs, and you hope to have sufficient resources to cover them, so the next thing to do is to sit down with a sheet of paper and make a vertical line down the middle. On one side you write down all the things that will need to be paid for, your risks and liabilities and your best estimate of how much they are likely to cost you. On the other side of the line you list all the assets you have at your disposal, including any credit that you perhaps have been given. Then you add up each of the two columns and the relationship between the totals will indicate either the likely success or failure of the entire project.

Our Lord Jesus Christ encourages us to prepare a similar balance sheet when we are considering following in His footsteps, so let us turn to our key text — Luke 14:28-30: “Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.” (N.I.V.)

We read in this chapter (Luke 14) that there were large crowds following Jesus. Many of them had different reasons for doing so, no doubt some wanted to listen to His teaching, some because Jesus would feed them when they became hungry (see John 6:26), while others hoped to catch Him saying or doing something that would be unlawful. But to all those who truly want to become His disciples, He has a word of caution: “Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me, and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.” Matt. 10:37,38.

Our Lord does not wish to deliberately turn anyone away, He just does not wish us to be misled into thinking that being His disciple is going to be without any personal sacrifices. Other records of His words confirm this:

(a) Matt. 7:13,14 “Enter through the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.”

(b) Matt. 10:22,24,25 “All men will hate you because of me. A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master... if the head of the house has been called Beelzebub, how much more the members of his household.”

(c) John 16:1-3 “All this I have told you so that you will not go astray. They will put you out of the synagogue, in fact a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is doing a service to God. They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me.”

It is difficult for younger Christians to imagine this kind of persecution, especially in so-called civilised countries, but only our Heavenly Father knows to what kind of tests each one as an individual may be put in the future. In Luke 21, Jesus speaks of the times of the end: “Before all this, they will lay hands on you and persecute you. They will deliver you to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name... and they will put some of you to death. All men will hate you because of me. (vv.12,16,17)

The apostle Peter in his first letter also mentions suffering: “Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the suffering of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when His glory is revealed”. 1 Peter 4:12,13. How skilfully he counterbalances the suffering and pain of trials and the glory and honour which are to follow. In 1 Peter 1:6,7 we read further: “though now for a little time you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials, these have come so that your faith — of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire — may be proven genuine and may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed.”

The importance of weighing up carefully the costs of following Jesus before such a serious step is taken is shown by His words in Luke 9:62, “No one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.” To turn back after once being fully enlightened by God will result in very great loss. For our occasional human mistakes and failures, however, full provision has been made, “if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness... if anybody does sin, we have One who speaks to the Father in our defence — Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.” 1 John 1:9, 2:1.

Returning to our key text, which is about estimating costs, we note that it does not just end with adding up costs. Jesus tells us to do this, but then to compare the costs with the resources we have. Considering these will be far more encouraging; for a start let us turn to a favourite verse — John 3:16: “For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.” There is nothing new to tell about Christ’s great atoning sacrifice; it is indeed the great resource that we should use on our balance sheet. Without this resource, no further work could commence, no sacrifice of our own could be accepted.

Jesus invites us: “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me. For I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” Matt. 11:28-30. Further He assures us: “Whoever comes to me I will never drive him away.” John 6:37, and “In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.” John 14:2,3. These are truly wonderful promises; they may sound simple, but it is such promises that give courage and strength to go on.

In John 1:12 we are told: “Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God.” and in Romans 8:16,17: “The Spirit testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs, heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in His sufferings in order that we may also share in His glory.” Do we ever imagine what it would be like to be born into some prominent, perhaps royal family? There is surely no comparison between being born of God, being called God’s children, and being born into even the wealthiest, most prestigious family on earth!

Let us look at what else we are promised, in Jesus’ own words:

(a) John 8:12: “I am the Light of the world, whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

(b) John 6:35: “I am the Bread of life, he who comes to me will never go hungry.”

(c) John 4:14: “Whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst, indeed the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

We are also assured that for any sacrifices we make, we will receive a far greater reward. Speaking to the disciples and then to all believers, our Lord said: “I tell you the truth; at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on His glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And **everyone** who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. Matt. 19:28,29.

We are also encouraged to pray and ask for our needs. “I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.” John 16:23. When Jesus says to “ask in my name” He means to “use my name as a reference, as a guarantee that you are asking in the same way, in the same spirit, as I would ask.” By comparison, we read in James 4:3 how not to ask: “When you ask you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on pleasures.”

Jesus also says: “If you love me, you will obey what I command, and I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counsellor to be with you forever — the Spirit of Truth — I will not leave you as orphans” John 14:15-18. Then in verse 26: “But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”

We also have a strong support in our Christian family members — Jesus once said that those who do God’s will are to Him His brothers and sisters and mother. In Romans 12:5, the Lord’s people are compared to members of one body, where each member belongs to the other. In Galatians 6:2 we are told to carry one another’s burdens, and in this way to fulfill the law of Christ. We have each other to share in joys and sorrows, in our victories and falls, and we can count on each other’s love, support and prayers.

We could find still more examples of positive influences on our consecrated lives, but these should suffice to inspire us to look deeper into the costs of discipleship. As we weigh up costs and resources, may we each find a healthy surplus on the credit side and resolve to follow Jesus.

“Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say I find no pleasure in them.” Eccl. 12:1. N.I.V. (RJ: 1991)

Timothy, A Good Minister of Jesus Christ

(continued from previous issue)

“Stir Up The Gift” (2 Tim.1:3-8)

Paul’s reflections on the trials likely to come upon Timothy would no doubt have had much to do with the Apostle’s prayers for Timothy “night and day”; and he now writes with a view to strengthening him along these lines, reminding him of the genuine faith and piety which he had inherited both from his mother and his grandmother, and assuring him that he believed that this had laid a deep foundation of true piety and faith in Timothy’s own heart. We notice the fact everywhere kept prominent in the Scriptures that according to the Divine arrangement not only are the sins of the parents visited upon the children for several generations, but also that the faith and godliness of the parents, when rightly based on the Word of God and the true promises of that Word, lay the foundation of character in their children, upon which there is the greater hope that a life of godliness and usefulness may be built.

Not only does the Apostle strengthen Timothy’s mind by a remembrance of the goodly heritage of faith and piety received from his mother and grandmother, but in addition he reminds him of the grace of God specially conferred upon him (Timothy) at that certain time when he made a full consecration of himself to the Lord, to be God’s servant; when the Apostle, exercising his power as an Apostle, and as was common in those days, communicated to Timothy by supernatural power an outward gift or token of the Holy Spirit, through the laying on of his hands. The Apostle had evidently either heard or surmised that Timothy was allowing the fervor of his zeal for God to die out, and hence here he urges him to “stir up the gift of God which is in thee.” The Greek word here rendered “stir up” has the significance of *re-kindle*: as though the Apostle said, Re-kindle your gift by renewed energy.

The next verse enforces this view, implying that the Apostle thought that Timothy was in danger of being overcome by *fear*, so as to allow his zeal to abate. Hence he reminds him that the spirit of the Lord imparted to His people is not a spirit of fear, but on the contrary a spirit of power, energy, zeal awakened by love; loving devotion to God, and a desire to please and serve Him; loving devotion to the truth, and a loving devotion to God’s people and a desire to build them up in holy things, and to do good unto all men as we have opportunity. Yet, lest Timothy should get the thought that the spirit of God led only to a zeal of energy — that might at times be unwise in its exercise and do more harm than good — the Apostle adds that the spirit of God which He bestows upon those who are begotten as His sons is a spirit of a “sound mind” — a mind that is fortified and strengthened by the Word of the Lord on every subject, and hence, while thoroughly fearless of man, is wise in judging of times, seasons, and methods for using the energy of love which burns as a fire within the consecrated heart. Would that all of God’s children might appreciate, and more and more obtain, the spirit of a sound mind, by which all of their talents might be used, not only fearlessly but wisely, in the Master’s service.

“Wise Unto Salvation”

Continuing his exhortation’ (3:14,15) the Apostle impresses upon Timothy two things (1) that he had been taught of God, and (2) that this teaching of God had come to him through the Scriptures, which he assures him are sufficient to bring him all the way to the complete realization (in the resurrection) of that salvation which God has provided through faith in Christ Jesus. It will be well for us all to remember that all the graces of the spirit, all the progress in the knowledge of Divine things to which we already have attained, that may have really helped us nearer to God and to holiness, have come to us through the Scriptures of the Old Testament and through the words of our Lord and His inspired Apostles: nor will it ever be necessary to go to other channels for the true wisdom which would prepare us for the salvation promised.

Proceeding, the Apostle shows (Ver. 16,17) that the Scriptures which God inspired are profitable in every direction, and quite sufficient for the man of God, needing no supplements of visions or dreams, either his own or other. They are profitable for doctrine, containing the full statement of the Divine Plan; and no human authority is competent to add thereto. Who hath known the mind of the Lord? Who hath been His counselor? They are useful also for reproof toward others. No words that we can use in correcting the errors of others either in word



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Looking Unto Jesus

(Convention Address)

At one time, people used to think in terms of lasting values, but in the fast-changing world of today, it would be difficult to say just what is a lasting value. Wherever we look, everything is in a state of flux and change.

In such conditions, each Christian can be grateful to our Heavenly Father for His wonderful love and unmerited favour. A scripture verse which we all might apply to ourselves, to our own previous condition and to our own development, is Eph. 2:12. There the apostle says: "at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world."

How thankful each of us can be to our Heavenly Father, how we can praise Him in the presence of His people with all sincerity, confessing that while we in no way deserved His favour toward us, yet we greatly treasure it and praise the Lord for His wonderful love and mercy in that "now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." Eph. 2:19.

How true are the apostle's words in Eph. 5:14 "wherefore He saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." For many years, as His people, we have enjoyed the Lord's marvellous light, His leading and His care, and His wonderful provisions for us. Even His great sacrifice on Calvary is the precious provision of our Heavenly Father, for there is no other way of salvation. No wonder the apostle could say: "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." 1 Cor. 2:2.

All the Lord's people are seeking to walk in the light of our Lord, we are looking to Him in all circumstances of our lives, happy or unhappy. In times of gladness, we thank Him, even though we realise that earthly joy is of a transient nature — it is here today and gone tomorrow. In times of sadness, we look to Him for consolation, for His over-ruling and his strength to overcome such experiences. Indeed, whatever we do, we look to our Lord Jesus.

For every Christian, the purpose of the knowledge and acknowledgment of the Lord is to look to Him and to grow in His likeness. "Speaking the truth in love (we) may grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, even Christ." Eph. 4:15. Our looking unto Christ in all situations of life does not depend on our own wisdom, our education or ability, for as Jesus said to His disciples while He was with them during His earthly ministry: "The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house of Beelzebub, how much more them of his household." Mat. 10:24,25.

Every disciple of Christ has gone through practical experiences of privation, difficulties and persecutions; this has been so from the beginning even till now. But we realise that the Divine wisdom and the Divine mercy are revealed to babes, not to the wise of this world, nor to the powerful who can manage and change many things. Our Lord said: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father; and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him." Mat. 11:25-27.

Then come our Lord's words of invitation: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will

give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” Mat. 11:28-30. How often we think of these words of our Lord and apply them to ourselves in the many problems and difficulties of this life, realising how much we need the attitude of meekness of our Lord, to come and take His yoke upon ourselves, to be meek and lowly of heart ourselves, and so to find His rest to our souls. We know that Christians throughout the Gospel Age have experienced persecution and troubles, to greater or less extent, but that this is part of normal Christian development.

When we consider our Lord, did He live His life and was His earthly ministry peaceful and restful, with everything plain sailing? No, He continued to endure the contradiction of sinners against Himself and had to carry on His work in the face of persecution and difficulty. But our Lord revealed that wonderful truth of Divine love when He declared: “God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” John 3:16. His preceding words tell how this was to be accomplished: “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:14,15.

We are all familiar with the experiences of Israel during the forty years of wanderings in the wilderness after they left Egypt. Very often their’s was quite a difficult situation and we read in Num. 21:5-9: “the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread (the manna). And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died. Therefore the people came to Moses and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee; pray unto the Lord, that He take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole, and it shall come to pass, that everyone that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.”

What an amazing story! It was as if a look at that serpent of brass (or copper) in itself contained some kind of anti-venene, to counter the venom of those serpents; these it seems were Egyptian cobras, very deadly snakes. It was just a look at that serpent on the pole which was sufficient for the person to recover and feel no ill-effects. In itself, this was a miracle, but again consider how it happened. A man or a woman was suddenly bitten by a snake; unless they believed Moses’ words, they would just lie down and die. But on the other hand, whoever believed Moses and the instructions of the Lord, lifted their heads in faith and looked to that snake on the pole — these did not suffer any ill-effects and recovered.

And so our Lord compared Himself to that brazen serpent, saying: “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up.” With the brazen serpent, it was a Divine ordinance, God ruled it that way. And so it is with our Lord — if we have faith enough, we look to be the Lord. We look to Him for forgiveness of our sins, for that covering robe of His righteousness. By virtue of His blood shed on Calvary for us, He is our wisdom, He is our justification, for we know that it is only through acceptance of our Lord as our personal Saviour that we have a right to life. So we look to Jesus in all the affairs of our lives, for encouragement, for strength, for everything. For us, He has become our “all in all.”

It is the Divine ordinance that only through faith in Christ as our Saviour can we have life. Similarly, those Jewish people of old, those Israelites, had to lift up their heads and look toward that pole where the serpent of brass was glistening in the sun and that alone saved their lives. Speaking of God’s provision for us, the apostle John writes: “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” 1 John 4:9,10.

The Christmas season is the generally accepted time of our Saviour’s coming into the world as the Babe of Bethlehem. He came as a little child, but with what rejoicing! The shepherds there in the fields were told to go and see Him and they went and they saw Him, just a new-born child but how they rejoiced. The angels too rejoiced and praised God. Only a small beginning but what a wonderful thing. Thirty years later, when our Lord at His baptism became the Messiah in His full authority and began His ministry, it reached out first to those that heard and believed in Him. That was the time when Divine mercy and Divine forgiveness was turned to the people. Before that, there was no way out, the Jews were under the Law of Moses but were in bondage to the law, because none could keep it perfectly; even if 99 per cent of it were kept, failure in one point resulted in the law condemning that one to death.

So the apostle John writes: “The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” John 1:17. That is the grace extended to and accepted by us, when we first looked towards our Lord. He is our Saviour, in

due time we accepted Him and we became reconciled to God, who is now able to overlook all our imperfections because He looks to us through the merit of the sacrifice of Jesus. Nothing of this is of ourselves, though we are trying to do our best, are trying to look to our Lord and grow into His likeness, and surely enough are being transformed by the Spirit of God dwelling within us. But still we are imperfect and it is only through the merit of Christ's sacrifice on Calvary that we are acceptable to God and have right to life.

The same apostle puts the situation simply and positively "He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." 1 John 5:12. In other words, the person who does not accept Jesus is still under condemnation. The apostle Paul writing to the Corinthian brethren points to the Divine grace revealed to us as part of His plan of salvation. "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation." 2 Cor. 5:18. This ministry is first for the believers of this gospel age; we are reconciled to God by faith in our Lord and in His great sacrifice.

The ministry of reconciliation has only a small beginning however in this gospel age; during the millennium when the kingdom of God is established, uncounted billions of people will come back from the grave and will be restored. To them too will that gospel be preached — that ministry of reconciliation will reach them too and they will have the possibility of being saved and living forever. But it will still need to be by faith, for that is what God desires. For as the apostle writes under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit: "without faith it is impossible to please Him; for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." Heb. 11:6.

In the same chapter, the apostle goes on to describe, as it were, a gallery of the great victors of faith, beginning with the first martyr, Abel, then going on to Enoch, Noah, and so on. Finally he says that time would fail him to tell of everyone who pleased God, not through keeping of the Mosaic law but by faith. Then to conclude the chapter he writes: "these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise, God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." Heb. 11:32,39,40.

Then as if to show supreme faith and the pinnacle of faithfulness and loyalty, he exhorts us to be "looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin." Heb. 12:2,3. What an encouragement we have — to look to our Lord, to look to Him for everything. We look to Him for wisdom, for our salvation, for redemption and for the great reward He promised when he said: "I go to prepare a place for you and... I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." John 14:2,3. Where the Master is, there will be His servants!

So let us look unto Jesus, our confidence and trust in Him will bring great reward in our own lives here and now and in the work of restoration of all mankind in the age to come. Especially in these insecure times, when there is no such thing as a lasting value or a secure tenure, our Lord is the best and indeed only security. He is our Leader, He is our elder Brother and we can depend on Him for all things. (SS:1991)

Justification, Sanctification, Redemption

These are the three steps by which we are to reach "the prize of our high calling"—glory, honor and immortality. Not one of these steps can be omitted by those who win the great prize, nor can they be taken in any way but their order as directed in the Scriptures.

Justification

Justification comes first as a necessity, because, all the human race being sinners, as such God could not either sanctify or glorify them; therefore, by some means, they must be "made free from sin" (brought to a condition of sin-less-ness) in order that they might "have their fruit unto holiness" (sanctification), and eventually receive "the end thereof—eternal life" (redemption). Rom. 6:22.

As sinners, men "are not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can, they be." (Rom. 8: 7). We are "made free from sin" by faith; that is, we are told of God that a ransom has been given for our sin, and that if we by faith accept the ransom, He no longer regards or treats us as sinners, but as perfect and sinless beings. This cleansing from sin is a complete work. You are justified — reckoned of God just and perfect, but it cannot be seen with the natural eye. You cannot realise that physically you are any more perfect than before you believed yourself justified. It is entirely by the eye of faith that you know yourself now as a being, justified freely from all things. God's word declares it and you believe Him.

We need not fear that our justification is incomplete, for Jehovah Himself is the justifier, as we read, God is "just

and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (Rom. 3: 26); and again, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? it is God that justifieth.”

Upon what grounds does God reckon human sinners as justified or righteous persons? Because the ransom for our sins has been paid by Jesus, who “Himself bare our sins in His own body on the tree.” (1 Pet. 2:24). For “Christ suffered, the just for the unjust (sinners), that He might bring us to God” (1 Pet. 3:18) as justified beings. Jesus was treated as a sinner on our behalf, and we are now treated as just persons on His behalf. As we read again, “Ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus.” (1 Cor. 6:11). And again, “Being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.” (Rom. 5:9). But *only believers are justified* during this Gospel age. They who do not believe that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He rose again the third day for our justification (1 Cor. 15: 14; Rom. 4: 25), are not justified: “Ye are yet in your sins.” So we read, God, “is the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” Again, “All that believe are justified from all things” (Acts 13:39), and “A man is justified by faith.” (Gal. 2: 16 and 3:24).

When we believe the “good news” of our justification, it causes us joy and peace to realise that we may now come to God; and we no longer dread but now love God, because we see His goodness and love, for “herein is the love of God manifested.” (1 John 4:9).

We are thus brought into fellowship with God as justified human beings—“Being justified by faith, we have peace with God.” (Rom. 5:1). Few, very few, lay hold upon justification fully; few believe God that they “are justified from all things” and are in God’s sight clothed in the spotlessness of Jesus, in whom was no sin; consequently very few have the joy and peace which spring from believing. And it is no uncommon thing to hear, in church meetings of all denominations, men and women tell God that they know themselves to be “miserable sinners.” No wonder they agonize and daily ask the forgiveness of those sins which God’s word declares *are* forgiven. 2 Pet. 1:9. They know not that they partake of the justification by believing. If they would only believe God, they would have the realization of forgiveness, and consequently joy and peace. “For without faith it is impossible to please God.” Beyond this point of rejoicing in a consciousness of forgiveness of sins, and acceptableness in God’s sight, few Christians go.

Did you ever think why God has made known to us our justification now, but keeps it hidden from the great mass of the race until the millennial age, though the ransom price is eventually to release all mankind from sin and its penalty, and bring them to the same condition of acceptance—sinlessness—perfection which we now enjoy by faith! It is because God has a plan which he is working out according to the counsel of His own will, and a part of that plan is that He will select from among mankind a number who will eventually be transferred from the earthly conditions and human nature to spiritual conditions and the “divine nature” to be “heirs of God, joint heirs with Jesus Christ our Lord.”

God’s object in the development of this “little flock” is two-fold: first, He will make them everlasting monuments of His goodness, to be known and read of angels and men. As Paul expresses it (Eph. 2:7), God’s plan in the development of the Gospel church of overcomers, is, “that in the ages to come, He might show the exceeding riches of His grace, in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.” The second part of God’s plan, in which we are directly associated, is that he purposes to use us during the next Millennial—age as kings (rulers) and priests (teachers), when we shall reign with Christ a thousand years. (Rev. 5: 10, 20:6). Thus shall the “seed,” of which Jesus is the Head, bless all the families of the earth. (Gal. 3:29).

No sinners are called to have part in this “high calling, which is of God in Christ Jesus.” True, Jesus called “sinners to repentance”—so does the word of God, and all His children seek to bring men to repentance and faith in Christ and consequent justification. But only the justified ones are called to be “kings and priests unto God, and to reign on the earth. ‘ It is worse than useless to present the grand prize for which we run to the attention of sinners—the unjustified. For the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned—they are foolishness unto him. Therefore, “cast not your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.”

This being true, that none are called to the high calling except the justified ones, the fact that you know of your justification may be the proof to you that you are one of those whom God has “called” to spiritual life and joint-heirship with Jesus. What a blessed privilege to be called with such a high calling. Now do you realise that you are called to be a member of the bride of Christ? Then remember who called you—God; and that “Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it.” (1 Thess. 5: 24). Our Father mocks none with a call which they cannot attain to. His grace is sufficient for us.

All who are called may take the second step—

Sanctification

To sanctify is to set apart or separate to a special purpose or use. God's will is that all justified ones should be sanctified or set apart to His service as we read: "This is the will of God even your (believers) sanctification." (1 Thes. 4:3). There are two parts to sanctification—first ours, secondly God's part. As we have seen, God provides for our justification as men and then calls us to set apart-sanctify-or consecrate to him, that justified humanity. When we thus consecrate or give up our will, our time, talent, life and all we have and are to God, and ask Him to take our little all and use it as seemeth to Him good, and agree to let the will of God dwell in us richly—when we have done this we have done all that we can do; and here God, who accepts of every such sacrifice, begins His part of the sanctification work. He begins to use this will resigned to His care and "to work in you both to will and to do" in harmony with His will. From that moment it is no longer you (the human) but "Christ in you." Even the earthly (human) body, under the new controlling will (God's) is used in God's service and is thereby made holy.

From this moment when we give—consecrate—ourselves, we are reckoned dead, as human beings; for the human will should be buried from that moment forward; and when the will of God—the mind of Christ—the Holy Spirit takes possession of us so that it becomes our will and our mind, we are called "new creatures"—we are thus begotten to newness of life. This new creature is only an embryo being. It is not complete; but it grows and develops as "we all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Cor. 3:18.) Thus as new spiritual creatures we grow in His likeness during the time we abide in this earthly condition. As the spiritual nature grows stronger the human nature grows weaker and is the easier to keep dead, for I must not only give up my will to God, but keep it in a surrendered condition, "keep my body under"—under God's will.

As the new spiritual nature grows, it longs for its perfection when it will no longer be trammelled and fettered by human conditions, but be "like unto Christ's glorious body." This is promised us—we have been begotten, and by and by shall be born of the Spirit—spiritual bodies, for "that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit," just as truly as "that which was born of the flesh was flesh." Our begetting we have and our spiritual life is begun. It is to be completed, perfected, when this corruptible and mortal condition shall give place to the incorruptible, immortal conditions of the spiritual body. This is at the moment of resurrection to those who sleep in Jesus—raised spiritual bodies; and it will be at the moment of change to the living (from the fleshly body to their own spiritual bodies—theirs as new creatures.) Thus, "we which are alive and remain shall be changed in a moment." 1 Cor. 15:52.

This change of residence or condition, from the earthly body to the spiritual body is the third step of our development, viz:

Redemption

This redemption from the present earthly conditions finishes and completes our salvation and the glory and power will follow.

Toward this, the end of the race, we are looking with longing eyes, "Ourselves, that have the first fruits (begetting) of the Spirit, even we groan within ourselves waiting for sonship—the redemption of our body" (the body of which Jesus is the Head and all overcomers are members.) Rom. 8:23.

Let us recall to mind the steps: First, justification of the human nature; second, consecration or sacrifice of that human nature to God, its consequent death and the beginning of our existence as a spiritual new creature in the human body during the present life; third, the completion of our new, divine nature by the power of God, when we will be made like unto Christ's glorious body—who is the express image of the Father's person. What a glorious, high calling it is to which we are called!

How can each one of us make this glorious calling sure? Surely by continuing to maintain daily our consecration vows, giving over all things to our Heavenly Father for Him to use as He sees best. For the apostle assures us: "If ye do these things ye shall never fall; for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." 2 Peter 1:10,11. God will assuredly keep His part of the agreement for "He is faithful who promised." Heb. 10:23.

*"All for Jesus! All for Jesus!
All my being's ransomed powers;
All my thoughts and words and doings,
All my days and all my hours."*

Provoking To Love

“Let us consider one another, to provoke unto love, and to good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more as ye see the day drawing on.” — Heb. 10: 24-25.

“The word “provoke” signifies to arouse or I incite, or stimulate to activity. It is generally used in an evil sense, but is applicable, as in our text, to describe an incitement to good works, good thoughts, etc. The tendency of fallen human nature is toward things that are mean and selfish, and the natural bent is to incite or provoke or encourage similarly mean and unworthy thoughts, actions and words in others, and it has become a proverb that “Evil communications corrupt good manners.” Everyone of experience knows this general tendency of evil to beget evil, and to corrupt and to pollute what is nobler and purer than itself; hence we have the Scriptural pronouncement, “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.” Those who neglect this counsel need not be surprised if they are continually falling into temptation, and if the influence upon their own lives results in a measure at least of ungodliness and sin, and disfellowship from those things which are noble and true and pure.

But the “New Creature in Christ Jesus” is one in whom the transforming influences of the Lord’s Spirit have already begun — one who has a new heart, a new will, a new disposition. With such “old things have passed away and all things have become new,” they have been begotten again, i.e., re-begotten, to new hopes, new wishes, new ideas of propriety. Instead of the earthly wisdom and way, with its “bitter envying and strife,” which “descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish,” they have now the wisdom that is from above, and a heart (a disposition) to appreciate and pursue its counsels, which are, first purity, then peaceableness, gentleness, meekness, mercy, good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the disposition of this class, in proportion to their attainment of this heavenly wisdom and new nature, will be to “provoke” or incite or encourage one another, and all with whom they come in contact, to similar goodness of thought and word and act, in harmony with the heavenly wisdom which is guiding their own course.

The New Nature

This is laid down in the Scriptures as an unvarying rule; “A bitter fountain cannot send forth sweet water, and a good fountain cannot send forth brackish water.” A thistle cannot bear grapes, and a grape-vine cannot bear thistles. It is the Master Himself who says: “By their fruits ye shall know them.” If, therefore, we desire to prove ourselves, and to judge respecting our progress in mortifying (putting to death) the old nature, and our growth in the new nature, we will judge ourselves by this standard, answering to ourselves the question, Is my own spirit (disposition) one which delights in sin in its various forms (not necessarily in its grosser forms of murder, theft, etc., but in its more refined forms, falsity, envy, strife, vainglory, slander, evil-speaking, evil surmises, etc.), or is my delight increasingly in righteousness, truth, goodness, gentleness, meekness, patience, love? If the former, we are yet, either wholly or partially, in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity, and have need to go at once to the Great Physician, and to submit ourselves to His radical treatment — the cutting off of sin, the mortifying of such fleshly desires, etc. If the latter be our condition of heart, we have cause for rejoicing, yet no cause for pride or boastfulness; for we can say no more than that we only have done our duty, having merely learned, and that imperfectly, the lessons set before us by our great Teacher.

The Apostle is addressing the Church, the consecrated New Creatures in Christ Jesus. This is shown in the text, for he classes himself with these, using the word “us”; it is also shown by the context. He calls the attention of the consecrated to the influence which goes out from each to each, and the consequent importance that the influence shall always be stimulating, or provocative of that which is good. No doubt the Apostle found in his day, as we find now, that many who are consecrated at heart fail to see clearly how this consecration should associate itself with and mark itself upon our every act and word.

Consider One Another

We are not to be reckless of each other’s interests. In our contact with each other, whether a personal contact or a contact by mail, we are to “consider one another”. We are to consider what would be helps, and what would be hindrances, what would be encouragements, and what would be stumbling blocks; and we are to do all in our power to assist one another to run with patience the race for the heavenly prize. If we are truly consecrated to the Lord, we can do nothing “against the truth, but (every effort must be) for the truth” (2. Cor. 13: 8). What a burning and shining light every Christian would be if their every act were considered and shaped for the benefit of those with whom they come in contact! What a blessing it would be in the home! What a blessing it would be in the church! This loving consideration is what the Apostle is urging upon us: Consider one another to provoke (incite, encourage), to love and to good works.” Avoid every word and every act, so far as possible, that might incite to

hatred, envy, strife, bitterness (and bad works, corresponding to these feelings), all of which are “of the flesh and of the devil.”

The Apostle links this advice with the exhortation to forget not the assembling of ourselves together, as the Lord’s people. None of us is so strong in the new nature that we can disregard the fellowship of kindred minds. But even if we did feel sufficiently strong for ourselves, the spirit of love in us should so control that we would delight to meet with “the brethren” for their sakes. We are more or less like coals of fire, which, if separated, will tend to cool rapidly, but which, if brought together, will tend to increase in fervency the entire mass. Our Lord has encouraged His people to seek each other’s fellowship for companionship in the study of His word, and in prayer. He indeed has pronounced special blessings upon the meeting together of His people even if they be only two or three.

Our Privilege

The “provoking” of one another to love and good works, the extending of true Christian fellowship and the exhortation and encouragement of each other in the Narrow Way are very real and precious privileges of all God’s people. They are ministries which all are invited to take up, as they have talent and opportunity, remembering the apostle’s words:

“God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shown toward His name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.” (Heb. 6:10)

Timothy, A Good Minister Of Jesus Christ

“Very little can be known of Timothy outside of the New Testament records. His birthplace was that of either Derbe or Lystra, though it is not certainly known which. From the account given in Acts 16:1 it is stated that the Apostle Paul found him in those places and it appears that he had not been acquainted with Timothy before. His mother Eunice was a Jewess and evidently a woman of unusual piety as was also Timothy’s grandmother, Lois. Though his father was a Greek, he was evidently not unfriendly to the Jewish religion, for Timothy had been carefully instructed in the Scriptures.

It is claimed that it was about A.D. 51 or 52 when the Apostle Paul came to Derbe and Lystra and became acquainted with Timothy; and though there is no way of ascertaining the exact age of Timothy at that time, it is reasonably presumed that he was then a youth. (1 Tim. 4:12.) From what is said concerning him he was undoubtedly a young man of unusual hope and promise and there were some special indications that he would rise to a place of influence and power as a religious man and would fill an important position in the ministry of the Gospel. - 1 Tim. 1:18.

The records indicate that Timothy was already a disciple, a Christian convert when the Apostle Paul first met him, but the means by which he became converted are not known. His mother too had been converted to the Christian faith before (Acts 16:1), so that they seemed well known to the Christians of the neighboring towns of Lystra and Iconium. It was some six or seven years before Paul met with Timothy that he and Barnabas had preached the Gospel in Iconium, Derbe, and Lystra and it is not improbable that Timothy had been converted in the meantime.

Introduction To The Ministry

Barnes in a very interesting way observes several things that “appear to have combined to induce the Apostle to introduce him [Timothy] into the ministry and to make him a travelling companion. His youth; his acquaintance with the Holy Scriptures; the ‘prophecies which went before on him,’ his talents; his general reputation in the church; and, it would seem also, his amiableness of manners, fitting him to be an agreeable companion, attracted the attention of the Apostle, and led him to desire that he might be a fellow-laborer with him. To satisfy the prejudices of the Jews, and to prevent any possible objection which might be made against his qualifications for the ministerial office, Paul circumcised him (Acts 16:3), and he was ordained to the office of the ministry by ‘the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.’ (1 Tim. 4:14.) *When* this ordination occurred is not known, but it is most probable that it was before he went on his travels with Paul, as it is known that Paul was present on the occasion, and took a leading part in the transaction. - 2 Tim 1:6.”

Some account of Timothy’s travels and collaboration with Paul are given in Acts 16 to 18. It is clear from this and references in Paul’s epistles that Timothy enjoyed the apostle’s full trust and affection. Of Timothy’s later life, there is no dependable evidence. The belief that he was “bishop” of Ephesus rests mainly on the subscription to 2 Timothy—not any real authority.

“Timothy was long the companion and the friend of the Apostle Paul, and is often mentioned by him with affectionate interest. Indeed there seems to have been no one of his fellow-laborers to whom he was so warmly attached. See 1 Tim. 1:2,18, 2 Tim. 1:2, 2:1, 1 Cor. 4:17, where he calls him ‘his own son,’ and ‘his beloved son’; 2 Tim. 1:4 where he expresses his earnest desire to see him, and makes a reference to the tears which Timothy shed at parting from him; 1 Cor. 16:10, 11, where he bespeaks for him a kind reception among the Corinthians; 1 Cor. 16:10, Rom. 16:21, 1 Thess. 3:2, and especially Phil. 2:19, 20, where he speaks of his fidelity, of his usefulness to him in his labors, and of the interest which he took in the churches which the Apostle had established.” (Barnes).

Advice For All Christians

Paul’s letters to Timothy are amongst the most valuable of the New Testament writings. Indeed they contain sound advice to all Christians, especially to such as are young in the truth, and particularly if they have consecrated their lives to the Lord and His service, and are seeking to be useful according to their consecration as His ministers or servants—whether in a public or in a private service, according to their talents and opportunities.

Paul introduces himself not by calling attention to his personal qualities as a logician, nor by boasting of any service which he had performed as the Lord’s servant and minister of the Truth; but, properly, by reminding Timothy of his apostleship, specially commissioned by the Lord to introduce His Gospel, and specially prepared for the work by being made a witness of the Lord’s resurrection, having been granted a glimpse of His glorious person on his way to Damascus and commissioned to declare the conditions for the fulfilment to men of God’s promise of life, provided in Christ Jesus.

Although the Apostle had no natural children of his own, his tender address to Timothy as his “dearly beloved son,” and his invocation upon him of a Divine blessing, shows that he lacked none of those fine, noble and endearing sentiments, which belong to a true parent. Indeed, the very fact that he had no natural children seems to have broadened the Apostle’s sentiments to such an extent that figuratively he took into his affections, as his own children, all who accepted the Gospel. We remember that he frequently used this figure of speech, “Although ye have many teachers, ye have not many fathers in the Gospel”—“I have begotten you in my bonds.” On another occasion he represents his efforts for a development of a fully consecrated Christian life amongst the believers under the figure of a mother travailing for her children. This being true of the Apostle’s general sentiment toward the household of faith, it would be much more true in the case of Timothy who had so nobly and truly filled the part of a son to him.

We note the Apostle’s care over this younger brother in the Truth, in whom he sees such great promise of present and future service. He realizes, perhaps better than Timothy does, the snares of the Adversary, by which one placed in so prominent a position is likely to be assailed. Would he become heady and high minded?—Would he lose his faith in the cross of Christ?—Would he fall into the snare of some of the philosophies, falsely so-called?—Would he become vainly puffed up by a fleshly mind, and get to feeling himself to be a “somebody?”—Or, would he, on the contrary, be a faithful soldier of the cross, meek, humble, gentle toward all, an example both in faith and practice to those with whom he came in contact?

And withal, would he hold fast to the Scriptures and be apt to teach others to look to this Divine source of information? He remembered that heretofore Timothy had been so close to himself in the work that he had been measurably shielded from many trials to which he would now be exposed; and yet, no doubt he realized that, if Timothy would be prepared to take the work of a general minister, which Paul the prisoner and growing old must shortly lay aside, it was time that he was learning how to stand, complete in the strength which God supplies through His Word, without leaning so particularly, as heretofore, upon any earthly prop.

To be Continued.



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Hope

(Convention Address)

“And now abideth Faith, Hope, Love, these three, but the greatest of these is Love.” 1. Cor. 13:13.

The apostle in these words highlights the supremacy of love, but it is also clear from them that faith and hope are also great qualities. So how would we define the second of these —Hope? Dictionaries and other sources are in general agreement on the meaning of hope, for instance:

- (a) Strong — anticipation, usually with pleasure.
- (b) Vine — favourable and confident expectation.
- (c) Reader’s Digest (in a Note) — enjoyment of the future in advance.

A reporter in a daily paper, in a search for the meaning of hope, referred to it as an “eternal generator” — the hope of attaining something drives men and women to the extreme of endurance to attain the goal desired. This accords with what the apostle Paul states in Phil. 3: 8-11. “I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.... that I may know Him (Jesus), and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death, if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.” If by ANY means I might ATTAIN unto the resurrection — this was indeed Paul’s great hope.

A Lively Hope

The apostle Peter describes the Christian’s hope as a lively or living hope. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.” 1 Pet. 1:3,4.

True faith and living hope must be based on the sure promises of the word of God. This contrasts with the empty hope of many. Some hope that they may win a lottery, believing that wealth will bring them happiness. With very many, their hope is never realised, while some, After they have perhaps gained some wealth, find that it can only provide temporary realisation of their hope and often merely creates a desire for more.

The hope set out in the Scriptures for the Lord’s people, however, is based on that which we can be absolutely sure will be fully realised, provided only that we remain faithful to our Lord and do not let that hope become dimmed, for “He is faithful who promised”. Heb. 10:23.

We learn from Heb. 11:1 that faith is the substance or basis of things hoped for. The greater our faith, the greater will the hope shine out before us. This is well brought out in Rom. 5: 1-5. “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” (vv 1,2) These two verses show the progression of the Christian from the time he or she is drawn by the Father to have faith in Jesus. Faith-justification means we have peace with God, then we have access into His grace or favour, in which we stand. This favoured position of consecration, this “fa-

your upon favour” (John 1:16) we have received, leads to our rejoicing in the great hope of the glory of God.

The following three verses (vv 3-5) show how our hope increases. The Amplified Version brings out well the thought. “Moreover, let us be full of joy now! Let us exult and triumph in our troubles and rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that pressure and affliction and hardship produce unswerving endurance; and endurance (fortitude) develops maturity of character — that is, approved faith and tried integrity; and character (of this sort) produces (the habit of) joyful and confident hope of eternal salvation. Such hope never disappoints or eludes or shames us, for God’s love has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given unto us”.

Patience of Hope

To wait patiently for something indicates that we are hoping for it. An example of this is brought out in 1 Thes. 1: 3, where Paul writes — “Remembering without ceasing your work of faith and labour of love and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God, our Father.” The church at Thessalonica was a persecuted church and the apostle commends them for their faith and love and hope. Patience under persecution had only sharpened their faith and hope in the promises that were to be fulfilled in Jesus.

There are other scriptures which tell of the importance of patient, cheerful endurance in hope, such as Heb. 10: 3 5-3 7. “Cast not away therefore your confidence which has great recompense of reward. For you have need of patience, that after you have done the will of God, you might receive the promise. For yet a little while and He that shall come will come and will not tarry.” This clearly implies that after one makes a vow to do the will of God, there is a testing time before that one realises his or her hope.

Luke 8: 5-8 recounts the parable of the sower. Jesus speaks of the seed of truth falling on four different kinds of soil — by the wayside, upon rocks, among thorns and upon good ground. He went on, on this occasion, to tell the meaning of the parable in Verses 11-15. “Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. Those by the wayside are they that hear, then cometh the devil and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. They on the rocks are they who when they hear, receive the word with joy, and these have no root, who for a while believe and in time of temptation fall away. They which fell among thorns are they, which when they have heard, go forth and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life and bring no fruit to perfection.—But they on the good ground are they, which, in an honest and good heart having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.”

This parable describes the various ways in which Christians may be turned away from the realisation of their hope. Only they who bring forth fruit with patience will realise their hope. The first three classes described in the parable are those who make a start along the narrow way but then allow hindrances to prevent them from fulfilling their consecration.

Various hindrances can indeed arise to prevent one from carrying out his or her commitment to the Lord, probably more so than ever before. The rush and tear of life that surround us today can allow weeds to grow unchecked and to choke the growth of the Christian. The apostle Paul admonishes — “See that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise; redeeming the time because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be ye filled with the Spirit.” Eph. 5: 15.

Victory for Christians can be gained only if they continue faithful with hope undimmed. In Matt. 24: 13, Jesus told His disciples — “He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved.” Heb. 6: 10,11 tells us further — “For God is not unrighteous to forget your labour of love which you have showed toward His name in that you have ministered to the saints and do minister. And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end.”

Assurance of Hope

Note here the reference to the full assurance of hope. Later in the passage the apostle links this up with the hope set before us. “That you be not slothful but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” Here again the point is made that faith and patience are needed to ensure the hope is realised. “For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no greater, He swore by Himself, saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And so after he had patiently endured, he obtained

the promise.” Heb. 6: 12-15.

The apostle then brings the lesson home to the Lord’s people of this age. “For men verily swear by the greater and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us, which hope we have as an anchor to the soul, both sure and steadfast and which entereth into that within the vail, whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made a high priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec.” Heb. 6: 16-20.

Hope is here likened to an anchor. A ship in a storm drops its anchor to hold it from drifting, possibly on to dangerous rocks. Most importantly, the anchor needs a strong line or cable to hold the ship. So in the picture, the anchor represents our hope the cable represents our faith. If we lose faith and let go of our hope, it will be like the ship breaking loose from its anchor, to drift possibly into grave danger and to be damaged or lost.

Hope — An Anchor

So our hope is the anchor to our spiritual life. If our love for our Lord is strong and our faith remains firm, our hope will hold fast “within the vail”, that is to say, to those precious things promised to us beyond this life. There Jesus has already entered, as our forerunner, a high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. The apostle John enlarges on this — “Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the children of God ...beloved, now are we the children of God and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone that hath this hope purifieth himself as He is pure.” 1 John 3: 1-3.

Thus we can understand what this great hope has done for us. Above all, it has given direction to our lives and a confident expectation for the future. It is a force operating in our minds and lives to urge us onward to the ultimate goal, that of being fitted for usefulness to our Heavenly Father and our Lord Jesus, in a small way now but more so in the age to come. But beyond the hope of the church of this gospel age, we know and rejoice that there is hope for all mankind. This in God’s due time will include the blessing of all who will be willing to accept the conditions of salvation in the new age.

One reason why the truth of the plan of God means so much to us is that we have learned that His love embraces not only a hope for His people of this age but a hope for all the families of the earth in God’s due time. Such thoughts are old but ever new and have been an anchor to the hope of the church all down the age. The gospel age church has assuredly a favourable and confident hope for the future, which in anticipation it can already enjoy in some measure.

Such hope can indeed be said to be an “eternal generator” urging those who possess it to the extreme of endurance to attain the goal set before them. Paul said of our Lord that “for the joy set before Him, He endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” Heb. 12: 2. So too may our hope sustain us day by day, as we seek to run with patience the race set before us. (JBH: 1991)

Parting of the Red Sea

(News Item)

Two expert oceanographers have developed 1 what they say is a plausible explanation for the parting of the waters which enabled the Israelites under Moses to escape from the Egyptians. They have calculated that strong winds blowing along the narrow, shallow Gulf of Suez, a northern extension of the Red Sea and the likely site of the crossing, could account for the phenomenon.

Their report adds: “whether this theory explains the crossing or not, (we) believe it should not affect the religious aspects of the Exodus.... Some may even find our proposed mechanism to be a supportive argument for the original Biblical description of this event.” (*From the New York Times, published in The Age, Melbourne*)

NOTE: The Bible Study Monthly (Mar/Apr 1992) carries a review of a book — “Look for the Ancient Paths” 11 Beresford King-Smith. (92 pages, 16 maps, 16 illustrations.) This presents the results of an investigation of the

route of the Exodus based on the premise that the events as related are historically true and the reviewer considers that overall it should be useful to students of the period.

It is available direct from Bethany Enterprises, Moorwood Lane, Nuneaton, Warks CV10 OQH, England at £UK.4.95, incl. postage, or through the Institute at \$A 11.00.

PEOPLES PAPER
AND HERALD OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM

While it is our intention that these columns be used for teachings strictly in accord with the Lord's Word we cannot accept responsibility for every expression used either in the correspondence or in the sermons reported

The Whole Armour

(Convention Address)

In nearly all ancient civilisations, armour was used for the protection of fighting men. It was usually made of metal, sometimes of leather. Websters Dictionary defines Armour as protective covering for the body in battle. The word "Armour" appears 24 times in the Bible, and Strong's Concordance defines the Greek word as full armour or whole armour, or as one hymn puts it — the "panoply" of God.

In Eph 6: 10 & 11 we read "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the Adversary". Note that the apostle is very specific that we need the whole armour because the conflict will be with the prince of darkness himself, and that God is the supplier of this armour. The apostle then presents us with a sequence of 7 individual pieces of the soldier's armour, that when put on together form the whole armour of God.

What is to be protected by the armour? Paul writes in (2 Cor. 5: 17), "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." The Christian is a new creature in the sense that he, as an individual, has a new mental outlook on life. He is under the influence of the Holy Spirit of Truth.

The Christian through these influences, and a willingness of mind, has the viewpoint of Christ, who said "Not my will, but Thine, be done." (Luke 22: 42). As Christ looked upon life from the standpoint of God's plan as revealed in His Holy Word, so does the Christian. Therefore, the armour of God is for the protection of his mental state, the new mind, the viewpoint of Christ, which the Christian has adopted as his own. Let us examine each piece of armour, and as we do so, we shall find that the use for each piece has a purpose and a protective power.

We have to go back some 2000 years and visualise what a soldier looked like in the ancient world when he went out to battle. i.e. a Roman Soldier. The FIRST piece of armour is the girdle of Truth (verse 14). In olden times, a girdle was used to bind up the garments while work was performed. Therefore a girdle could be a fitting symbol of work or service. The girdle of truth could signify that the Christian is a servant of the Truth. We find this clearly taught in the Bible — that a Christian is an ambassador for Christ holding forth the word of reconciliation. (2 Cor 5: 18-20 Phil 2: 16).

How is the girdle of truth a protecting power? The piece of armour called the girdle of Truth protects the mind against all teachings or tendencies which draw the Christian away from being a servant of the Truth. The girdle of Truth, therefore, is really the definite teaching of the word of God. If the Christian understands this teaching, and brings his heart into harmony with the spirit and intent of it, he has set up in his mind a barrier to all hostile or intruding teachings, Thus the Christian is protected against the world and the Adversary.

The SECOND piece of armour is stated as "the breastplate of righteousness" (v 14). The fact that it is spoken of as a "breastplate" covering the vital organs of the body (including the heart) suggests that it is extremely important. There are two very prominent teachings in the Bible covering the thought of righteousness.

The first one relates to the righteousness that is in the perfect human sacrifice, the man Christ Jesus. In Heb 7:26 we read he was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." He gave himself a ransom sacrifice for Adam and his race. We, being sinners, can approach God only through faith in the perfect sacrifice of Jesus. We recognise that only as we are covered by the merit of our Lord Jesus, do we have a standing in God's presence. Christ is spoken of as our Advocate in 1 John 2: 1, and an advocate is one who "stands beside" as an attorney pleading one's cause. This is an important teaching, and protects us from all ideas which would provoke in us a

feeling of actual personal perfection. “The breastplate of righteousness” accomplishes this proper state of mind, and keeps us humble and thankful.

The second prominent teaching, covering the thought of righteousness, is the one that teaches us that we must be righteous, just, honest in thought and motive. The Christian is to “love righteousness and hate iniquity,” (Heb 1: 9) even as our Lord did. This teaching will protect one when temptations present themselves to the mind. Many temptations may prompt us to be a little dishonest or unjust for selfish reasons. If one has on the “breastplate of righteousness”, he will resist these temptations and thus be protected from them.

The THIRD piece of armour is for the feet — “And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.” (v. 15) The word preparation is translated from a Greek word, the root of which is to prepare, make ready. Therefore the meaning would be that this piece of armour prepares one to walk in the Narrow Christian Way. The explanation is beautiful and simple. The gospel of peace is really the good news of the Kingdom of God. It is good news to know that a literal kingdom is to be established here upon earth when God’s will shall be done here upon earth as it is done in heaven (Matt 6:10). Then all wars and troubles and death will cease. In due time those who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake under new conditions, when the Son of God shall be king. (Dan 12:2).

The Christian has been convinced of the truthfulness of this good news. He has accepted it. He has done more — he has responded to the invitation to walk in the footsteps of the Redeemer, which means that he stands for the same ideals and purposes as Jesus did. The Christian lays down his own life as a willing sacrifice in the service of God, which is the service of the Truth and on behalf of the Lord’s people. In connection with all this are certain precious promises of God’s watchcare and affection. The precious promises also include a rich reward at the end of the Christian way, of “glory, honour and immortality.” (Rom 2:7).

The good news of the coming kingdom of God, the invitation to walk in the footsteps of the Redeemer, and the precious promises bring to the Christian a state of mind called the “peace of God” (Phil 4: 7) In the midst of the difficulties of life and the troubles in this world, and even while he walks in the “valley of the shadow of death,” (Psalm 23: 4) the Christian has peace of mind. No wonder the third piece of armour is spoken of as sandals protecting the feet. Without the “peace of God” the Christian would not be prepared to go through such difficulties. God in a very simple way protects the Christian against discouragement, and provides him with joy, peace and hope.

In still another way the Christian is protected by the sandals of the preparation of the gospel of peace. The Christian is taught to use his faculty of readiness to resist the tendencies of the old will to be selfish and self-reliant. He must be a fighter in the good “fight of faith.” (1 Tim 6:12). He must endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. (2 Tim 2:3) However, he must not use his fighting qualities against his fellow man, but only against evil in himself, and in defence of the Truth. Therefore he is taught to be a peacemaker — “blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God” (Math 5: 9).

The Christian is taught to prefer peace to uncontrolled aggression. Thus the Christian is protected against any natural tendencies he might have to argue or fight just for the sake of opposing something. When the Christian understands that the ultimate object of discussion or resistance is to establish peace upon proper grounds, how it helps him to be self-controlled and kind! Even when the Christian finds it his duty to speak sharply he is protected against bitterness and unrighteous anger by the sandals of peace.

The FOURTH piece of armour is the “shield of faith.” (V. 16) “Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.” The words “above all”, suggests that the shield is extremely important. How true! If one does not have the faith, or confident belief in the teachings of the Bible, he is not a Christian, neither can he stand the assaults of the adversary. Faith is increased and strengthened in at least 3 ways:

1. By the knowledge of the attributes of God as revealed in His plan of loving kindness;
2. By a consideration of fulfilled prophecy;
3. By the witness of the Spirit.

In the first way, how it increases our faith to understand that our Creator is loving and kind, even in permitting the reign of evil for a time! How our gratitude goes out to Him when we are assured that eventually this earth will be

made a paradise, man's eternal home, and that the dead will be awakened from the tomb to live forever, if obedient to the laws of righteousness; the wicked only shall be destroyed! How it increases our faith to know that God's special reward to the church — joint heirship with His Son — is an evidence of His infinite wisdom, and generous love.

In the second way, how it increases our faith to understand prophecy and to be able to appreciate the significance of world events! More than 2,500 years ago, Daniel prophesied (Dan 12: 4) that in the time of the end there would be a "running to and fro, and an increase of knowledge, and a time of trouble such as never was upon the earth." And now the Christian can see the actual fulfilment of these events in the modern contraptions enabling man to "run to and fro" in cars, aeroplanes, rockets, etc.; in the increase of man's knowledge; and in the distress of nations, which is indeed the greatest "time of trouble" (Dan 12: 1) the world has ever known.

In the third way, how it increases the Christian's faith to be able to detect in his life the witness of the Spirit! If he can trace in his life the fulfilment of the Spirit, the intention, the purpose of God (as revealed in the New Testament), then he has reason to rejoice and be full of confidence and trust. God has written us a letter, by His Holy Book. A letter is one's mind or purpose expressed in words. If our minds (spirits) witness or show a fulfilment of God's purpose in us, then our spirit witnesses with God's Spirit that we are God's children.

In this turbulent and changing world there is much to challenge faith, unless faith is founded upon something sound and understandable! Increase of knowledge has stimulated the minds of all to think. As a result, religious beliefs have suffered. The Bible has suffered too, because many had the erroneous thought that the Bible encouraged ignorance. In this time when knowledge has increased, the Christian has his portion of knowledge to enable him to exercise a strong faith in a reasonable and proved Bible beyond any doubt.

The FIFTH piece of armour is the "helmet of salvation" (v. 17) As with the other pieces of armour, so with this one, the position gives us a clue as to its function in protecting the Christian. "The "helmet" being worn upon the head suggests a protection in the form of knowledge, intelligence, information. Christians all down through the Gospel age have had knowledge from God's Holy Word. This knowledge has been an explanation of God's plan of salvation, enabling them to grasp His will concerning them.

It has been suggested that in the end of the age, the Christian is provided with a much larger helmet than was provided for God's people in the past. We are living in a very different time. Daniel said that in the time of the end, knowledge would be increased. This is true. The disciple of Christ has need of a larger helmet to enable him to stand in an intellectual world. The increase of knowledge has discredited many former beliefs that were not well founded in Scripture. Just at the right time the Christian has been provided with concordances, Bible dictionaries and numerous translations of the Scriptures.

All of this is of tremendous importance to God's people, in view of the numerous appeals to the mind from all quarters and on every subject. Libraries and second hand book stores give evidence of the time in which we are living. There are thousands of books, each one possessing a power to affect the mind in some way. How bewildered the Christian would be if he were not provided with the helmet of proper knowledge of the Bible, the Word of God. His helmet proves that the Bible is true, shows what God's plan of loving kindness is, refutes arguments against the Bible, explains prophecy, and intercepts the significance of world events. Thus Christian belief is founded upon proper knowledge which cannot be refuted.

The SIXTH piece of armour is the "sword of the spirit, which is the Word of God." (v.17) This is the only offensive piece of the Christian's armour. Like all other weapons, it can be used properly or improperly. The sword of the spirit is not intended to be used to cut and wound others, but is intended to be used in defence of one's own position and for one's upbuilding. Our Lord Jesus gave us an illustration of its use in defence of His position in Matt. 4: 1-10, where we read how in three ways Satan tempted Him.

These temptations were suggestions to our Lord's mind by the Adversary. We know our minds are capable of forming pictures by our imagination. Such was the case with our Lord. He was not literally taken to a pinnacle of the temple, nor was He literally taken to a mountain top. Rather, his mind formed impressions suggested by the Adversary. It is important to observe the use our Lord made of the sword of the spirit in resisting the temptations. Not once did he bitterly accuse or threaten Satan. Instead, he countered the Adversary's argument with the well chosen and properly applied Scripture. In all three temptations He extinguished the Adversary's intent with "It is written", the sword of the spirit. Satan used the sword of the spirit too, in the second temptation; but he misap-

plied it in his attempt to invite our Lord into unrighteousness.

The sword of the spirit is also for the purpose of destroying everything contrary to the knowledge of God, so that every thought may be brought into full obedience to Christ. (2 Cor. 10: 3-5). So we can see the purpose of the sword of the spirit, according to this scripture, is to put aside all teachings and influences that are against the knowledge of God.

The SEVENTH and final piece of armour is described (v.18) as “praying always”. — The verse reads: “praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.” A good soldier of the Lord Jesus must keep in touch with headquarters; this he is privileged to do by coming daily to the throne of grace in prayer. We read in John 15:7 — “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you.”

One of Satan’s chief lines of attack is to cut off our communication with the Lord. In Mark 14:38, our Master warned, “Watch ye and pray lest ye enter into temptation.” By watching and praying always, besides having on the whole armour, we will progress. With all our armour, we need to cultivate and use the privilege of prayer.

It is a very great favour to be allowed to approach the supreme ruler of the universe and we should come therefore in a spirit of deep appreciation, earnestness, humility and reverence. The apostle adds the words “watching thereunto” — this calls for an attitude of mental alertness. We should also take heed as to the things for which we ask and be sure that we seek those things which we are promised and are entitled to ask for.

Our Lord frequently called attention to the fact that we should be persevering in prayer. Perseverance is an essential quality in the sight of God. It includes patience, carefulness and interest. Our praying should be in the spirit, in other words, from the heart. The very isolation of our Lord from all human help drew Him the nearer and more frequently to the Father in prayer and communion. As we grow in this character likeness, we will, like Him, “pray without ceasing”, rejoicing in the Lord and recognising Him as the centre of all our hopes.

When all the armour is properly worn, a state of mind is created, which is quite as important as the armour itself. Our Lord was 40 days and 40 nights in the wilderness, weak and exhausted physically, yet when He came forth He was strong in mind, strengthened by the word and the spirit of God. The Christian too must be moulded around the word and spirit of God; when this is fully grasped, then we know the means by which we are strong in the Lord and the power of His might.

So may each one of us put on and keep on the whole armour of God; by so doing we will be alert to danger signals and fully prepared, “able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.” (AK: 1991).

Out of the Abundance of the Heart

“Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by the words thou shalt be condemned.” (Mat. 12:34, 37).

The words of our Lord indicate that the heart and the mouth are under very special scrutiny, the former representing the individual character, and the latter being an index of the character.

It is in this same view of the matter that these words of wisdom were penned — “Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life. Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee.” (Prov. 4: 23, 24.) The indication is clear that a right condition of the heart is necessary to right words, for “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh,” as experience testifies to every man. It is therefore just that our words should be a criterion of judgment in the Lord’s estimation, as He tells us they are.

Our first concern, then, should be for the heart, that its affections and dispositions may be fully under the control of divine grace, that every principle of truth and righteousness may be enthroned there; that justice, mercy, brotherly kindness, faith, meekness, temperance and love may be firmly fixed as the governing principles of life. If these principles be fixed, established in the heart, then out of the good treasures of the heart, the mouth will speak forth words of truth, soberness, wisdom and grace. Of our Lord Jesus, whose heart was perfect, in whom was no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth, it was said, “Grace is poured into thy lips,” and again, “All bare him

witness and wondered at the gracious words that proceedeth out of his mouth.” (Psa. 45: 2; Luke 4: 22.)

So wise, just, and true were the Lord’s words, that though His enemies were continually seeking to find some fault, it is said, “They could not take hold of his words before the people; and they marvelled at his answers, and held their peace.” (Luke 20:26). And others said, “Never man spake like this man.” (John 7:46.) Thus our Lord left a worthy example to His people, which the Apostle urges all to follow, saying — “Let your speech be always with grace (with manifest love and kindness) seasoned with salt.” (Col. 4:6) And Peter adds, “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God,” — wisely and in accordance with the spirit and mind of the Lord. Again, it is written, “Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips that they speak no guile.” “Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles.” “The words of a wise man’s mouth are gracious words, but the lips of a fool will swallow up himself. The beginning of the words of his mouth is foolishness; and the end of his talk is mischievous madness.” “Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God, for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth; therefore let thy words be few.” (Psa. 34:13; Prov. 21: 23 Eccles. 10:12, 13; 5: 2.)

Job, in the midst of all his afflictions was very careful not to sin with his lips. He knew that his words would be taken by the Lord as an index of his heart, and he was careful to keep both the heart and his words right, saying “What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil (or troubles for disciplining). The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” (Job 2: 10; 1: 21.) There was no spirit of rebellion in a heart out of whose abundance came such words of loving submission, patience and faith under severe testings, and that, too, without a clear vision of the divine wisdom in permitting them.

The Psalmist puts into the mouths of God’s consecrated and tried people these words of firm resolution — “I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue; I will keep my mouth in a bridle, while the wicked is before me.” (Psa. 39:1). How necessary to the stability of Christian character is such a resolution, and the self control which develops under an adherence to it. The world, the flesh and the devil oppose our way; there are fightings within and storms without, and many are the arrows and darts aimed at the righteous, and the safe attitude of the Christian in the face of the opposition of the world is to be silent, and to allow the Lord to work all these trials for our good, for the servant is not above his Lord. As Jesus took the opposition of sinners against Himself with such humble patience, so we too should “go therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach;” as He said, “Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man’s sake.” So the Psalmist suggests, saying — “I was dumb with silence; I held my peace even from good” (or from doing what seemed good in my sight). Again it is written — “He that keepeth his mouth, keepeth his life, but he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction.” (Prov. 13: 3.)

So we see what importance the Lord attaches to our words, for if our words are rebellious, or disloyal, or frivolous, or flippant, or unkind, unthankful, unholy, or impure, the heart is judged accordingly on the principle that “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” Thus, our words in all the varied circumstances of our daily life are bearing testimony before God of the condition of our hearts, and the Psalmist puts this prayer into the lips of all the Lord’s people — “Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips. Permit not my heart to incline after any evil things. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer. My lips shall utter praise, when thou hast taught me thy statutes. My tongue shall speak of thy word; for all thy commandments are righteousness. Let thine hand help me; for I have chosen thy precepts. I have longed for thy salvation (and for the perfection and beauty of holiness), O Lord; and thy law is my delight.” (Psa. 141:3, 4; 19:14; 119:171-174).

In many things we are all faulty. If any one does not err in word he is a perfect man, able to control the whole body. (James 3:2.) But such a man does not exist; we all need to continually plead the merit of our Saviour and Advocate, while we strive daily to perfect holiness in the reverence of the Lord. Therefore, let our words be few; let them be thoughtful and wise, as uttered before God, and not rash, hasty and ill considered. Let our conversation be as becometh the Gospel of Christ. “Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.” (Phil. 4:8.) Thus, out of the good treasure of the heart, we shall be able to speak words of truth and soberness, and so honour and glorify Jesus and our loving Heavenly Father.

I Will Abide With Thee

I will abide, though night is drawing nigh,
Though clouds and darkness now obscure the sky.
I know thy sorrow, see thy falling tear —
Give Me thy hand, for I am very near.

The earthly joys are passing fast away;
Lean thou on Me and I will be thy stay.
My grace is all-sufficient, rich and free.
Have perfect faith—I will abide with thee.

My eyes are watching o'er thee, troubled child,
My arm shall guide thee, though the path be wild.
Midst storms and tempest, to My bosom flee,
Be not afraid—I will abide with thee.
A little while and then it will be light,
Thy faith shall be exchanged for perfect sight;
No fear to vex thee, nothing to molest,
For thou shall be with Me in perfect rest

When friends may fail thee, I will be thy friend,
My love shall last until thy journey's end.
And when heaven's golden gates thine eyes shall see,
I will eternally abide with thee.

(Inspired by the much-loved hymn “Abide with Me”)



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Fellowship One With Another

(Convention Address)

“ But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.” 1 John 1:7.

The first few verses of John’s epistle introduce us to two separate but closely related aspects of the Christian life. In verses 3 and 4, the apostle is explaining the purpose of his letter and indeed of his ministry. “That we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ. And these things we write unto you that your joy may be full.”

The basis of fellowship one with another is that joint fellowship which each one has with the Father and the Son. This basic fellowship or communion is intensely personal and individual, for each must come by faith to God through Christ to know His salvation. Even after each has personally confessed Him and committed his or her life to following the Saviour, there are still the personal experiences of life to be met up with.

We remember Jesus’ kindly words to Peter when he had just been told by Jesus what his lot would be in later life. Peter seeing John said to Jesus—“Lord and what shall this man do?” To this Jesus replied—“If I will that he tarry till I come what is that to thee? Follow thou me.” John 21:21,22. Jesus was not recommending a total lack of concern for the welfare of other followers, but gently teaching Peter the lesson of personal discipleship. For each individual Christian since Peter including ourselves at this end of the age are in constant fellowship with our loving Father and with His dear Son, so that even if we were deprived of all human association with others, we should still not be alone.

But the communion of each one with the Father and the Son should and surely does lead into that fellowship which the apostle John describes in our text. “If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another and the blood of His Son Jesus purifies from every sin.” (N.I.V.) This is certainly one of the greatest treasures and privileges of the Christian way, that fellowship one with another—the fellowship of kindred minds, like to that above. “That they all may be one, as Thou Father art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us.” John 17:21. This was our Master’s prayer and the bonding agent of this unity, this fellowship, is love.

“A new commandment I give unto you that ye love one another, as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” John 13:34,35.

What then is behind the thought of the fellowship that is so precious in Christian discipleship? The word so translated is elsewhere given as communion, contribution, communication, while related words are translated partaker, partner, companion. The basic thought in every case is of jointly sharing or jointly participating in some activity, experience or blessing. One commentator has written thus—“Fellowship is a specifically Christian word and denotes that common participation in the grace of God, the salvation of Christ and the indwelling of the Spirit which is the spiritual birthright of all Christian believers. It is their common possession of God which makes them one. Our fellowship with each other arises from and depends on our fellowship with God. This then is John’s objective—through proclamation of the message of life in Jesus Christ to bring each of his hearers and readers into relationship with the Father and hence to each other.”

It is not surprising therefore to find the New Testament writers encouraging believers of all ages to foster and develop the spirit of fellowship. This is best achieved by each one striving by God's grace and by faith to draw daily closer to the heavenly Father. For as we draw nearer to Him and become the more engrossed in His love and power and glory, then the human frailties from which none of us is free will fade and we will see more of God's workmanship and the likeness of our Saviour in each one instead.

Having seen that the basis of mutual fellowship is the personal relationship with God through Christ, we note that the apostle Paul in Eph. 4:46 lists those things which all true believers share and upon which real unity in the Spirit and productive fellowship rest. "There is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in you all." One body of His children, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one baptism, one loving Father—what a heritage is ours!

This oneness is particularly brought to our attention each time we remember our Saviour's death in the Memorial observance. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread." 1 Cor. 10:16,17. These rich verses remind us not only of the common basis of our acceptance with God and the source of our new life in Christ, but also of our privilege of sharing with our Master and with each other in all the experiences and sacrifices of the Christian way, that way which our Saviour has already trodden before us.

Let us consider some of the aspects of this fellowship with one another which should be the gladly accepted and cherished lot of every child of God. In Eph. 4 after referring to the one body, the apostle next mentions the one Spirit and it is surely by that one Spirit that each one is begotten into the family of God. "In whom (Jesus) also after ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." Eph. 1:13. "As many as are lead by the Spirit of God, they are the children of God." Rom. 8:14. Each one has been marked out as a child of God, a member of the one family, and the apostle writing to the Philippians challenges them and us to live out that family relationship.

"If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind." Phil. 2:1,2.

This fellowship in the Spirit should be productive in each one of love for those things that are best in God's sight, that edify and build up. This communion should be developing in us each a greater love for God's word and a delight in the precious truths and promises which it contains.

The privilege of sharing in such riches is beautifully portrayed in Mal. 3:16. "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." The promise follows in verse 17. "And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels." They that feared the Lord spake often one to another. We need not to be told what sort of things they spoke about, but we remember the much later record of the noble souls at Berea, who "received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether these things were so." Acts 17:11. The personal study of God's word is always important, but shared fellowship in its treasures is a rich experience which none should ever neglect. For just such reasons, the apostles and those who followed them set up, under God's leading, local churches—assemblies of believers, as soon as possible, wherever the gospel went. Today we are blessed that we can freely meet to praise God and meditate upon His word.

"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as ye see the day approaching." Heb. 10:25. If these words of the apostle were so important in his day, how much more so now, when all the signs about us speak of the near and fast approach of that day. This assembling is a two-way matter, for each of us has something to give and something to receive from that gathering of ourselves together. In each case, this is of the Lord, who promised—"I am with you always, even to the end of the age," but by God's grace He can use anyone of His people to be a channel of His blessing.

In another lovely picture, the apostle represents the individual members of the church as parts of the one body, dependent on each other, but each under the headship of one, even Jesus Christ. "For by the one Spirit are we all baptised into one body and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member but many

and whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it, or if one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ and members in particular.” 1 Cor. 12:12-27.

In such an intimate relationship, the fellowship of shared experience will be a further bonding agent. The apostle Paul in all his ministry for his Lord was eager and thankful for the fellowship of the brethren far and near, for their prayers, for their material support, for their constant remembrance of him. How precious is this privilege and joy of all God’s people—to bear one another up before the throne of grace, to give the word of encouragement or gratitude, to extend the helping hand in time of need! Yet it is possible to neglect or overlook the privileges of this aspect of our fellowship in Christ. In Phil. 1:5, the apostle thanks the brethren for their “fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now” and still today we also can support those who labour for the Lord in the gospel. Like the Philippian of old who shared with Paul in the work of the gospel, and to whom therefore we also owe some debt, we can be partners, albeit in a small way, with those whom the Lord calls and enables to help spread the wonderful message of the gospel of the kingdom.

In 1 Pet. 4:13-16, we read further of the privilege of the fellowship in sufferings with Christ. “Rejoice, in as much as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye, for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you..... if any suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed but let him glorify God on this behalf.” Here again, the individual believer’s fellowship, his participation or sharing in sufferings is first and foremost with Christ, for His name and His cause. But this is also a shared experience with all the Lord’s people and in the preceding verse, the apostle has had to remind his readers—“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.” In some form or other, this fellowship of suffering is the common lot of every Christian. We may not always know just what fiery troubles others are going through, but all have the assurance of Rom. 8:17—“if children, then heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together.”

Nor can we always appreciate what chastisings, what afflictions, the Father may be allowing others to endure for their character development and faithfulness, nor can they ours, but we know that every true child of God must receive some share. We know also that it is in love and not in anger that all His chastenings will come. So we all have the opportunity to seek and strengthen and support and comfort one another in the fellowship of trial and difficult experience. James tells us to “count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations, knowing that the trial of your faith worketh patience.” Jas. 1:2,3. But he also stresses the need for practical expression of concern for the welfare of other brethren and Paul in writing to the Galatians urges them—“as we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.” Gal. 6:10.

The fellowship of the Lord’s people provides scope for practical help as well as the ministry of comfort and of prayer. Furthermore, because of diversity of background, personal qualities and temperament, it provides a school in which we may learn and perfect the graces of kindness, long-suffering, forbearance, forgiveness and, above all, love—the bond of perfectness. Col. 3:12-14.

Then there is the ultimate glorious fellowship which all the faithful saints of the gospel age will enjoy together with Him whose prayer for them was—“Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory.” John 17:24. “We know that when He (Jesus) shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.” 1 John 3:2. What perfect fellowship will then be ours, first and foremost with our dear Saviour and with our loving Father in heaven, but also with each one of the Lord’s people! How important it is then that our present fellowship with all those who name the name of Christ in sincerity and truth be characterised by that selfless love which our Master commanded of us! How necessary it is that we remember that our real “citizenship is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our lowly body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body.” Phil. 3:20,21.

This glorious hope, these grand expectations, are the heritage of all the Lord’s people; how they should cheer and encourage us on as members of that one great communion of Christ’s brethren. By our words, by our actions, by the witness of our lives, we can help each other along the way. This is our privilege, indeed it is our duty, to be gladly and lovingly accepted by every child of God. He can bless this ministry of service through every passing year for each one of us, as long as we maintain that close fellowship with the Father and His dear Son, and walk in the light as He is in the light. This alone is the context, the climate, in which true fellowship can develop and bring mutual blessing to each one.

In summary, we might say that our fellowship one with another entails:

1. a fellowship in common loyalty—in allegiance to and loving communion with the one gracious Heavenly Father and His Son, our Saviour.
2. a fellowship in the same walk in light—in single-minded desire to think and speak and act as children of light, seeking only that which is true and pure and will stand the searching test of light.
3. a fellowship in mutual love—in willing obedience to our Lord's command and in recognition of His life manifest in each of His people.
4. a fellowship in shared experience—in readiness to accept from God's hand whatever He sees best for the honour of His name and for our growth and fruitfulness.
5. a fellowship in Christ's sufferings—in determination to follow Him whatever the cost, laying aside every weight and looking to Him.
6. a fellowship in the one hope and calling—rejoicing together in confident trust that what God has promised He can and will richly fulfil in and for us.
7. a fellowship in Christ's glory—seen only yet in prospect and experienced only in foretaste, but finally to be realised in all its fullness. "I go to prepare a place for you that where I am, there ye may be also."

“In Remembrance of Me.”

The Scriptures contain no request by our Lord that his followers should observe His birth but He made special request that all who would be His consecrated disciples should truly celebrate His death. As our Lord's sacrifice as “the Lamb of God” took the place of the annual Jewish Passover ceremony, it is reasonable that the observance of the Memorial of Christ's death be celebrated yearly also, on the anniversary of the institution of this observance “on the night in which he was betrayed.”

The Apostle Peter presents the matter of our Lord's sacrifice as our Redeemer beautifully in 1 Pet. 1:18-20—“Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conduct received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot; who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you.” The perfection of Christ as the Man Christ Jesus is clearly indicated in this passage, and it is just as clear that the Passover lamb which the people of Israel were instructed to sacrifice each year was a type of Christ, our Passover Lamb.

The sprinkled blood of the Passover Lamb was the means of saving Israel's firstborns from death in Egypt, as well as being the means of delivering all Israel out of Egyptian bondage on that special Passover night so long ago. That was a wonderful deliverance! What shall we think and say, however, about the saving of the spiritual firstborns unto God of this Gospel Age, and the ultimate deliverance of all the human race from the bondage of sin and death, because of the sacrifice of the antitypical Lamb of God, even Jesus Christ? Truly this wonderful prospect fills us with joy and thankfulness beyond description!

From Matthew's account of the Memorial, we read in chapter 26:26—“And as they were eating”—finishing the Jewish Passover supper—“Jesus took bread”—the unleavened bread of the Jewish supper, picturing His own perfect humanity—“and blessed it”—gave thanks to God for this fitting symbol—“and brake it”—picturing the breaking of His own body—“and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.” In other words, appropriate His perfect humanity, thus gaining justification by faith in the perfect sacrifice of Jesus. As expressed by Paul in Rom. 5:1—“Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The following verse, Matt. 26:27, reads—“And he took the cup”—the cup of the fruit of the vine—“and gave thanks”—thanked God for this symbol of His own blood—“and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it.” Again, Jesus was saying, appropriate my blood, my life, my perfect humanity, thus also gaining justification by faith in the sight of God. It is the justified human life that true believers in Christ have the privilege of laying down in the steps of the Master.

A secondary and deeper meaning of our Lord's Memorial the Apostle Paul was used of God to explain so beautifully in 1 Cor 10:16,17—"The cup of blessing which we bless is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? for we being many are one bread, and one body for we are all partakers of that one bread." Here we see the oneness of Christ and His members beautifully revealed. So, in observing our Lord's Memorial we not only do so "in remembrance of Christ," but we also signify our own willingness to be broken with Him, and have our life poured out in sacrifice with Him.

"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death, if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus"—Phil. 3:10-14.

As we meet each year at the Memorial of our Lord's death, it is required that we do so with pure hearts, having sought forgiveness for all shortcomings through the merit of Christ, and thus acceptable in the sight of God. 1 Cor. 5:7,8—"Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover (Lamb) is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast...with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

A Purchased People

The Apostle Peter (1 Pet 2:9) speaks of the I consecrated followers of the Master as being a peculiar people. The Greek word used by him has the thought of a "purchased" people, or a people acquired by purchase. The thought is essentially the same as that outlined by Paul in Titus 2:14. This people is purchased at a great cost, even by Jesus' laying down His life for them. Acquired at so great a sacrifice they are precious in His sight, a very special treasure.

A Chosen Generation

Peter mentions other characteristics of these peculiar people. He says, for example, that they are a "chosen generation." In 1 Peter 1:2 we are told that these people are "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience." Paul explains the manner in which God's foreknowledge operates in connection with this elect people, saying, "Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son."—Rom. 8:29.

Here again we are reminded of the condition requisite to being the peculiar people of God, that condition being zeal for good works. God has predestinated that each one of this class must be conformed to the image of Christ. The zeal of God's house consumed the Master, and if we are like Him, then the same zeal will consume us. The Master's zeal was for the good work, of God, and our zeal must also be for God's work. It will not do merely to be zealous. Our zeal must be controlled by the will of God, then it will result in blessings to others and to the glory of the Lord.

God wants us to "give diligence to make our calling and election sure," and if we do, we will become more and more conformed to the likeness of His beloved Son. (2 Pet. 1:10.) To be like Jesus we need to get acquainted with Him. We can do this through the Word. As we note the details of His consecrated life we are at once impressed with the full extent to which he sought to know and to do His Father's will at all times and under all circumstances. In the most trying moment of His earthly career He lifted up His heart to God and said, "not My will, but Thine, be done."—Luke 22:42.

Jesus was faithful in prayer, and could say to His Father, "I knew that Thou hearest Me always." (John 11:42.) Jesus let His light shine so faithfully that it finally cost Him His life. Jesus was ever on the alert to bless others, even the little children. Such is the portrait of the Master and God has predestinated that if we are to be a part of the "chosen generation" of this age, we must be conformed to the Master's image.

A Royal Priesthood

"Ye are a royal priesthood," the apostle asserts. Here again the language God employed to describe his typical people is applied to spiritual Israel. Israel was designated "a kingdom of priests," but in order to make good that

title continued zeal for the doing of God's will was necessary. (Exod. 19:5,6.) This zeal was lacking, and now the title is transferred "to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof."—Matt. 21:43.

The priests of Israel represented God among the people. Their work was twofold. They offered sacrifice, and they dispensed the blessings of God to the people vouchsafed by the sacrifices. All Israel was to be a nation of priests in representing God before the rest of the world, but failed to actually attain this high position of divine favor. Now the title and privilege goes to God's peculiar people of the Gospel age. In 1 Peter 2:5 the apostle explains that the consecrated are "an holy priesthood" to "offer up sacrifices." Peter also says that we are built up a "spiritual house." This is a reference to the symbolism of the temple as the meeting place between God and Israel. The people came to the temple to receive God's blessings. So God's peculiar people are to be the channel of divine blessings to the whole world when the work of sacrifice is complete. What wondrous grace is thus bestowed upon those who are "zealous of good works."

A Holy Nation

To be holy means to be pure, unadulterated, and God expects that His peculiar people will be undivided in their devotion to Him. He does not want us to be "double minded." There may be little danger today that we will worship Moloch or other heathen deities, but there are, nevertheless, many "idols" which our wayward hearts may set up, and through the worship of which we would become unholy in our devotion to God. There is the god of pleasure; the god of wealth; the god of ease; the god of pride and ambition; and there is the "self" god. To qualify as a part of God's holy nation of today the divine will must reign supreme in our hearts and lives.

God wants us to be "obedient children, not fashioning ourselves according to the former lusts. "But as He which hath called you is holy," says the apostle, "so be ye holy in all manner of conversation." Then the apostle quotes from the Old Testament, "Be ye holy; for I am holy." (1 Pet. 1:14-16; Lev. 11:45.) The entire text in Leviticus from which Peter quoted, reads, "For I am the Lord that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt, *to be your God*; ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy."

God is there reminding Israel that He was exclusively their God. Later, through Amos, God declared, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth." (Amos 3:2.) God is pure and sinless from whatever standpoint we may view Him, but in these passages he seems to be emphasising the point that He had not been a God to any other nation except Israel. It is upon the basis of this holiness toward them, that He asks them to be holy toward Him. He had no other people; they were to have no other gods.

The same thing is true today. God loves all nations, and has provided blessings for them but He considers the "holy nation" only as being His peculiar people. To these he becomes Father, Helper, and Friend. He engraves them upon the palms of His hands; they are as dear to Him as the apple of His eye. His name is written in their foreheads. He provides for all their needs; gives them strength when they are weak; comforts when they are sorrowful. In the end, He will exalt them to His own nature and glory. They are a peculiar treasure unto Him, and no good thing will he withhold from them.

God's Praises

After applying these various symbolically descriptive titles to the followers of the Master the apostle explains the practical significance of what they all imply, saying, "that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light." (1 Peter 2:9.) This, after all, is the objective of the "good works" for which God's peculiar people should be zealous. All that is done by them, both in this age and in the next, shows forth the praises of God.

The Millennial age work of healing the sick and raising the dead will certainly show forth God's praises. When the knowledge of God's glory fills the earth as the waters cover the sea, all mankind will praise the Lord. Then every creature in heaven and in earth will be praising Him that sitteth upon the throne, and will also give glory to the Lamb that was slain. (Rev. 5:13.) But those who are privileged to share in that future work of filling the earth with the glory of God will be those only who previously have zealously sacrificed all their earthly interests in showing forth the praises of the Lord in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation among whom—now this side of the veil—they shine as lights.

The extent to which the light of the Gospel penetrates the darkness of this world is not the responsibility of the

Christian; but we are responsible for letting the light shine. Whether men hear or not does not affect the responsibility imposed upon us by divine grace to show forth the praises of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvellous light. We are a royal priesthood to this end; we are a holy nation for this purpose; we are a chosen generation to be the light of the world. A consuming zeal for carrying on this good work as God directs in His Word, and recognition of the fact that it is all by grace that the privilege is extended to us, will mean that God will continue to encircle us with His love as His peculiar people.

This does not mean that we can earn our way into the Kingdom. It does not mean that salvation is of works, and not of grace. It *does* mean that we will be demonstrating our faith by our works; and that, realizing we have been bought with a price, we do not belong to ourselves, but to Him, and are to be His servants forever. It means that we qualify to be God's peculiar treasure by showing our appreciation of what He has done for us. If we really appreciate His love, we will want to tell it and live it out, and by doing this, to show forth His praises.

Matthew the Publican

"I am not come to call the righteous but sinners. "Luke 5:32.

It has been truly said that "the story of Matthew X is an emphatic witness to the truth that the Gospel is no respecter of persons, and that even in the selection of His more immediate followers Jesus thought not of anything in their outward surroundings, but simply and solely of their spiritual fitness for their new task." Surely the Saviour made no mistake in calling Matthew to be one of twelve Apostles. His life subsequent to his call gives evidence of having been most fruitful, and to him was assigned the honor of giving to the followers of Christ a most inspiring account of the life and ministry of our blessed Redeemer.

It was in or near the city of Capernaum that Matthew received the call from the Master. This city where our Lord had been teaching and healing, was situated on the sea of Galilee. It was a city of considerable commercial importance, and undoubtedly the lake-shore in that vicinity was quite populous. The tense of the Greek would seem to indicate that our Lord kept going by the sea-shore, stopping here and there to discourse to the people, multitudes of whom flocked to hear Him. It was during this journey that He passed Matthew, formerly known as Levi, a custom-house agent of the Roman government — a revenue collector, who was attending to his business, and whom our Lord addressed, saying, "Follow Me," and who obeyed the call to discipleship.

Many get a false thought from the brevity of the narrative, and infer that Levi (Matthew) had never heard of Jesus before, and that our Lord, as He passed him, cast upon him some kind of a spell which led him to instantly drop his business. On the contrary, the Lord and His disciples were well known in that vicinity and probably Matthew had not only knowledge of our Lord, but also faith in Him, as the Messiah. Not until then, however, had Jesus invited him to become one of His immediate disciples; not until then, therefore, could Matthew essay to become such. There evidently were many who heard the Lord discourse time and again, and who were to be reckoned as amongst His friends, but who were by no means invited to become special followers, companions and associates in the ministry of the Gospel, as were the Twelve.

Nor are we to suppose that Matthew left his money-drawer open, and his accounts with the Roman government unsettled, to immediately follow the Master. Rather, we may assume that it may have taken days, or possibly weeks, to straighten his affairs and to enable him to respond to the Lord's call to apostleship. We should remember that the history of several years, and many discourses, conversations and incidents, are crowded in the gospel narrative into very brief space.

Publicans Despised

The office of a publican offered many opportunities for dishonesty and extortion, bribery, etc., but we cannot suppose that Levi was one of these dishonest publicans, for had he been so we may be sure he would not have been called to the apostleship and would not have responded to the call, for we are not to forget that it is written, "No man can come to Me except the Father which sent Me draw him."—John 6:44.

Quoting Peloubet's Notes as to the general character of the publicans: "To become a publican in Palestine nineteen centuries ago a man had first of all to sell his country. The publican was the embodiment and representative of the foreign government. And to become a publican, in the second place, a man had to sell his conscience. The publican's trade was a dishonest trade. Taxes today are fixed by responsible and representative bodies, and the tax-gatherer, as a result, can never exact more than is due. But taxes long ago were 'farmed'. The taxes of a town or

district or province would be sold to the highest bidder, and that highest bidder would then be allowed to squeeze out of the people of his district what money he could. It was a system that encouraged corruption and extortion.

Matthew was a man of influence, and as soon as he accepted the Lord's call, and responded by consecrating himself and his all, he set about to use his influence in drawing others to the Savior. He would announce his own devotion to the cause in such a manner and under such favorable circumstances as if possible would win some. To these ends he arranged a banquet for the Lord and His disciples at his house, and invited many of his friends and business associates. These are called "Many publicans and sinners."

We have seen why the publicans were ostracized by the scribes and Pharisees—not always because they were wicked, but because their business was disesteemed: and being thus cut off socially from the ultra-religious, the publicans were forced to have most of their social intercourse with the non-religious, by way of contrast called "sinners." By the term sinners we are not necessarily to understand vile persons and evil-doers, but rather persons who did not profess nor attempt the holiness claimed by the Pharisees—persons who did not claim to be absolute keepers of the Divine Law—who did not profess to make the outside of the cup or platter absolutely clean, though perhaps in many instances the inside was as clean or more clean than were the hearts of the Pharisees, who professed perfect holiness.

Matthew Ready

The words of Dean Farrar are well in place at this point: "But He who came to seek and save the lost—He who could evoke Christian holiness out of the midst of heathen corruption—could make even out of a Jewish publican, the Apostle and the first Evangelist of a new and living Faith. His choice of apostles was dictated by a spirit far different from that of calculating policy or conventional prudence. He rejected the dignified scribe (Matt. 8:19); He chose the despised and hated tax-gatherer. It was the glorious unworldliness of a Divine insight and a perfect charity, and Matthew more than justified it by turning his knowledge of writing to a sacred use, and becoming the biographer of his Savior and his Lord.

"No doubt Matthew had heard some of the discourses, has seen some of the miracles of Christ. His heart had been touched, and to the eyes of Him who despised none and despaired of none, the publican, even as he sat at 'the receipt of custom', was ready for the call. One word was enough. The 'Follow Me' which showed to Matthew that his Lord loved him, and was ready to use him as a chosen instrument in spreading the good tidings of the kingdom of God, was sufficient to break the temptations of avarice and the routine of a daily calling, and 'he left all, rose up, and followed Him,' touched into noblest transformation by a forgiving and redeeming love."

A Consecrated Home

Matthew's endeavour to bring his friends and associates into contact with the Master and His teaching is certainly commendable, and is a good illustration of what each one who enters the Lord's flock should do. Each should seek to exert his influence where it is greatest, amongst those with whom he is acquainted and who are acquainted with him, and upon whom either his past honesty and good character should have an influence, or else those to whom his radical change of life would be the most manifest.

Another lesson for us is the propriety of using hospitality as a channel for the advancement of the truth—the homes of those who have consecrated themselves to the Lord should be consecrated homes, in which the first consideration should be the service of the Master; and its influence should be to draw out friends to the Lord, that they might be taught of Him. Too frequently the consecration of the home is overlooked and antagonistic influences are permitted to dominate, with the result that neither the Lord nor the Lord's people are entertained, nor His Cause served in them. Such a house and home loses a great blessing.

Spiritual Food

It would seem from other narratives of this same banquet (which was probably several weeks after Matthew's call) that a large number of people were gathered at Matthew's house aside from those who partook of the banquet (Luke 5:29), and from the connection of the narrative it is supposed that it was on one of the regular fast days of the Pharisees. These facts led to the question:

Why does your Teacher associate with these people, who do not profess sanctification? The objection was not

because our Lord taught the publicans and sinners, but because He ate with them, which implied a social equality, and the Pharisees evidently recognized that our Lord and His apostles were professing and living lives of entire consecration to God.

In answer to this query our Lord said, “They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick”—the implication being that the physician had a right to go to and mingle with those whom he sought to relieve, and might mingle with them in whatever manner he saw to be expedient for their cure. This language does not imply that the Pharisees were not sick, and that they did not need our Lord’s ministry, though the fact was that not admitting that they were sin-sick they were not disposed to receive his good medicine of doctrine.

The same thought is otherwise expressed by our Lord in the same connection, saying, “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” Any one who considered himself to be righteous would be beyond the call of repentance. His first lesson would be to learn that he was not righteous, not perfect; hence our Lord went chiefly to those who admitted that they were not righteous, and whose hearts therefore were better soil for the truth than others. Our Lord intimated this in His parable of the publican’s and the Pharisee’s prayers, assuring us that in God’s sight the publican had the better standing, because of his acknowledgment of imperfections and his petition for mercy.

To all who feel their need, who hunger and thirst after righteousness, the Lord is gracious. Such a one of nobler spirit must Matthew have been, whom our Lord knew and called to His service.

(from the “Herald”)



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Think on These Things (Phil. 4:8) (Convention Address)

What things should we be thinking about? What should be the character of our thoughts? Thoughts are the beginning of all things — the creation of the universe began with a thought.

Thoughts are the seeds which are planted to make our characters grow. Each person is like a farm; Paul wrote to the Corinthian church: "Ye are God's husbandry." The thought is—you are God's farm. As with natural farms, there is great diversity. Sometimes we come to a farm where everything looks nice—rows of corn appear lush and everything is green and thriving. There are no weeds, indicating good cultivation. It is refreshing to see a farm like that. However, we may then see another farm where the rows are crooked, the crops do not look well, weeds are thriving and there is evidence of neglect. It is so with the individual. One has a character like a nicely cultivated farm—patience, love, zeal, godliness, earnestness and other grand qualities are growing in his or her character. Another whose character is like the farm overgrown with weeds is growing envy, jealousy, malice, strife and all kinds of evil fruitage. Just as a farmer plants seed to raise crops, so something is needed to raise or grow a character. The little seed which the farmer plants corresponds with the little thought which we plant. The seed is very small yet it produces a large plant. A thought also is a very small thing, yet how much will grow from it.

"Be not deceived, God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, but he that soweth to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting." (Gal. 6:7,8) When Paul says "he that sows to the flesh" he refers to those who think thoughts out of harmony with God's will—thoughts in keeping with the spirit of the flesh. If we entertain such thoughts, we are sowing to the flesh. When we read "whatever he sows, that shall he reap," we tend to think of this more along the lines of actions. But why do we do what we do? We begin by thinking—our thoughts determine where we go, what we do, how we spend our money, what words we speak. Everything starts with a thought. The same apostle further states: "I have sown, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase." Here again he refers to thoughts; when Paul came among them he planted certain thoughts in their minds which they never had before. Apollos encouraged these thoughts and finally God brought them to fruition.

If we are trying to serve the Lord, and a wrong thought comes to mind, then if we plant that thought we are sowing corruption and we will reap corruption. We may not be lost on that account, but we are making it harder for ourselves and if we get into the kingdom, we will have a lower place because we were willing to retain these wrong thoughts. If you or I entertain the thought that God may desert us, we are entertaining an untrue thought and as we do so, it will begin to develop the weeds of doubt. If we go on to harbour these, we may lose our faith. When a thought of this kind comes to our mind, let us reason that it is impossible for God to forget His promises, it is impossible for Him to go back on His word, it is impossible for Him to desert His child. "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

The two words—thought and think—can have different meanings:

THOUGHT — idea, notion

THINK — deliberate, meditate, reflect, contemplate

We are not to blame for our thoughts, but we are to blame for what we think. We are not necessarily to be commended for our good thoughts, nor blamed for our bad thoughts. But if we entertain them, that is a different matter.

“As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.” Let us take for our guidance in this matter the apostle Paul’s final admonition to the Philippian church, as recorded in Ch. 4:8. In this chapter, Paul is giving instructions to the church as to how they should build themselves up in the most holy faith. Preceding the text scripture, he gives the following thought: “Therefore my brethren whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord my beloved. Rejoice in the Lord always, again I say rejoice. Let all men know your forbearance. The Lord is at hand. Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God which passes all understanding will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 4:1, 4-7 RSV)

Then in the text scripture, Paul imparts to us very detailed instructions on what to think about: “Finally brethren whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.” (Phil. 4:8 KJV); and continuing on into the next verse: “What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, do, and the God of peace will be with you.” They should have heard and seen that these good thoughts had brought the peace of God to Paul. In verses 7 and 9, we see that they also can bring us this peace which passes all understanding. If we have this peace, we can then rejoice in the Lord, have no anxiety about anything and let our requests be known to God.

The Manna Comment for April 27 says, in part: “To have the mind of Christ is indeed the one requirement of lawful striving.... a mind which humbly and faithfully submits itself to the will of God, as expressed in His great plan of the ages, and which devotes all energy to the accomplishment of His will, because of an intelligent appreciation of the end He has in view.” All know what a great influence the mind has over the body. The more we think on good things, the better we will be; and just the opposite, the more we think on evil things, the more evil we will become. If a thing has none of the qualities of the text scripture, then we should not think on it at all. But if we think on those things which have the wisdom and depth which comes from God alone, then a wonderful change of character is effected. We must desire to be led by God and to conform our thoughts to His. Thoughts can be controlled, just as words and actions can be controlled.

“My son, be attentive to my words; incline thine ear to my sayings. Let them not escape from your sight; keep them within your heart. For they are life to him who finds them, and healing to all his flesh. Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life. Put away from you crooked speech and put devious talk far from you. Let your eyes look directly forward and your gaze be straight before you. Take heed to the path of your feet, then all your ways will be straight.” (Prov. 4:20-26 RSV) “Out of the heart flow the springs of life.” The heart is the governing power of mankind and represents the will and intention. It must be kept true and centred in God. But the will is subject to many influences and if our thoughts are impure, unjust or unholy, the power of the will becomes weaker. The thoughts of those who are striving to make their calling and election sure must not be permitted to dwell on evil things, but must be disciplined to dwell on the deeper things of the word of God. The new heart is to be kept loyal to God, to the principles of righteousness and to His covenant, to be active in love and helpfulness and in the cultivation of thoughts in accord with the divine.

The Criteria

Turning to the text scripture (Phil. 4:8), the first test quality for our thinking is: “Is it TRUE?” This is the first consideration in any matter. Webster defines true as—reliable, certain, in accordance with fact, agreeing with reality, not false. We know that the word of God is true, and that He will be true to His word, as we read in Psa. 119:160—“The sum of Thy words is truth, and everyone of Thy righteous ordinances endures for ever.” We know that He is the only true God (Jer. 10:10) and that His ways are true (Rev. 15:3). And no person was truer than Jesus—He was the True Light, the True Vine, His word was true and He was the True and Faithful Witness.

But does our text mean to think on anything that is true? There are hundreds of branches of science, each based upon profound truths. Are we to seek to master these, to think upon these things? And beside these, there are many unwholesome, scandalous and trivial things which are also true. Are we to fill our minds with these? Of course not! The apostle’s words require some qualification, a right dividing of the word of truth. (2 Tim. 2:15)

When Paul directs us to think on whatsoever things are true, he is speaking of the Truth, as the Lord’s people use and understand His precious words, a knowledge of the great divine plan of ages, the only way in which the scriptures are seen to be both beautiful and harmonious. As we contemplate and meditate on the truth, let us thank God for

1. the plan of salvation, revealing God to be a God of love, compassion and mercy,
2. the philosophy of the ransom, whereby Christ died for all—that God will have all to be saved and come

to a knowledge of the truth, the times of restitution of all things, which God has spoken by all His holy prophets since the world began, the great mystery of Christ, the Head, and the church, His body—"Christ in you, the hope of glory."

3. the exceeding great and precious promises of God,
4. the special care of God over the church, leading them in the narrow way, and
5. His divine plan of ages, and our part in it, whereby if we are faithful, we may be actually God's instruments in bringing these things to pass, and thus the blessing of the whole world.

"Make me to know Thy ways, O Lord; teach me Thy paths. Lead me in Thy truth and teach me, for Thou art the God of my salvation; for Thee I wait all the day long." (Psa. 25:4,5 RSV) Love for truth lies at the foundation of a righteous life. If we want to be the precious treasure of the Lord, if we want Him to claim us as His own, we must establish habits of thought which will keep the truth fresh, lively and inspiring to us. Whatsoever things are true, of the truth, think on these things.

But the truth of a thing is only one of the tests we should apply. Another is—"Is it HONEST?" Honest means trustworthy, honorable, genuine, real, respectable, showing fairness and sincerity. There are many things that are true, but dishonorable and not worthy of our thought. Honesty is a basic quality; we cannot even start our Christian walk without it. When the apostles chose seven helpers, they chose men who were of honest report, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom. "Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles, that whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation." (1 Pet. 2:12 KJV) We should be honorable in all our affairs, confessing to being children of God and walking in the footsteps of Jesus. All should see to it that they are honest in treatment of neighbours, in treatment of the brethren, and above all in their confessions respecting their God and their faith. All of us desire honesty in ourselves, as well as in others. "Repay no one evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all." (Rom. 12:17 RSV)

We should dismiss all thoughts that are dishonorable and unworthy. Rom. 13:13 admonishes us to walk honestly, as in the day. That day points us to the millennial day, when all will have to walk honestly, if they are to receive the earthly blessings of that age. As new creatures, we have a much higher calling and should voluntarily give the same meticulous attention to our conduct now, as in that day. We know that God is honorable and that He should be honored, along with our Redeemer. Any dishonorable act of ours will bring dishonor on God's name. We desire to bring honor and glory to His name, so whatsoever things are honest or honorable, let us think on these things.

Things that are JUST—here is another test quality we should look for. Justice should be the rule of our lives. Webster gives just as - lawful, right, fair, proper, righteous, upright. We know that God and His dear Son Jesus are just, as we read:

"There is no God beside me, a just God and a Saviour, there is none beside me." (Isa. 45:21 KJV)

"By myself I can do nothing. As I hear from God, I judge and my judgment is true, because I do not live to please myself, but to do the will of God who sent me." (John 5:30 JBP)

That which is just is that which is right; justice and righteousness are synonymous terms. The golden rule—"Do unto others as you would have others do unto you"—is the rule of justice.

We have no right to expect more than justice; whatever we receive more than justice is love or favour. God will be pleased with nothing less than our continued opposition to every form of unrighteousness. Many claiming to be Christians are blind to justice and righteousness in the affairs of life. They have too much mercy on their own shortcomings and not enough on the shortcomings of others. The October 14 Manna comment reads: "We are to grow in love and love is the principal thing, but before we can make much development in the cultivation of love, we must learn to be just, right, righteous. It is a proper presentation of the matter that is given in the proverb that a man should be just before he is generous. All love that is founded upon injustice, or wrong ideas of righteousness, is delusive, is not the love which the Lord will require as the test of discipleship."

We are to learn to apply this test of justice to our every thought, word and act, at the same time learning to view the conduct of others, so far as reason will permit, from the standpoint of mercy, pity, forgiveness, helpfulness. We cannot be too careful of how we criticise, of every thought we entertain, of every plan we nurture, so that the lines of justice shall in no way be infringed willingly by us. We should think not only of the good things, the higher things, but the blessed things to come, and thus have our minds busy thinking on whatsoever things are just. Once it becomes a habit, it will be a constant delight.

Whatsoever things are PURE—this is the next test quality. To be pure means to be free from anything that adulterates, free from defects, perfect, faultless, free from sin and guilt. Our thoughts should avoid anything that while not impure in itself might have the effect of arousing impurity in another. The heart that is corrupt expects and looks for corruption in others. But the pure avoids evil surmisings. “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” (Matt. 5:8 KJV) The heart refers to intention or will. Purity of mind and conduct must be developed insofar as is possible. This must command our best efforts; we are to love and cultivate that which is pure to such an extent that what is impure will become painful to us and distressing, and we shall desire to drop it from memory. This will be accomplished only by continually thinking upon those things that are pure. To think on the purest of things, we must of necessity lift our mental vision to as high a point as possible. Peter said that we are to purify our lives by obedience to the truth and sincere love for the brethren. (1 Peter 1:22)

The scriptures speak to us of the pure doctrine and the pure messages of truth given by the Lord for our enlightenment: “The promises of the Lord are promises that are pure, silver refined in a furnace, on the ground, purified seven times.” (Psa. 12:6 RSV) “Thy promise is well tried and Thy servant loves it.” (Psa. 119:140 RSV) “The wisdom that comes from above is pure.” (Jas. 3:17 JBP)

The early church had the pure truth; the apostles kept them straight in doctrine. “For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.” (Acts 20:27) But when the apostles died, the light began to fade and perverse, impure doctrines were introduced. (See Acts 20:29,30) During the Dark Ages, the truth all but disappeared, but the Lord determined to restore the truth to the household of faith at His second presence and did so by the hand of a faithful and wise servant. “Contend for the faith, which was once for all delivered to the saints.” (Jude 3) These pure truths are worth thinking about, fighting for and holding on to.

Think on those things that are LOVELY. This calls our attention to the need not to allow our minds to dwell upon things that are not lovely—we might permit our business to so fill our thoughts that we think continually on that particular thing. Constant thought on these lines is not profitable to the new creature. We must endeavour to bring our thoughts into subjection and train them along the lines that will transform us into the glorious character-likeness of our Lord. The dictionary defines lovely as—beautiful, exquisite, morally or spiritually attractive, having those qualities that inspire love, affection or admiration. How wonderful if our minds were filled only with lovely thoughts! These relate to the things of character, such as the fruits of the Spirit outlined in Gal. 5:22,23—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. If we cultivate these in our hearts, we become more and more God-like, but if we fail to do so, the works of the flesh and the devil will be developed.

There are so many lovely things that we can think about:

1. The divine plan of ages is lovely,
2. God the author of the divine plan is most worthy of love,
3. An object of great loveliness is Jesus—we never tire of thinking of Him, the author and finisher of faith,
4. Our opportunity to reign with Him, if faithful, is also a lovely prospect.

So let us think upon whatsoever things are lovely.

If things are of GOOD REPORT, then they are reputable, well thought of, respectable, not sub-standard, but gracious (as translated in RSV). Two references to this great quality are:

“But Thou Lord art a God merciful and gracious.” (Psa. 86:15 RSV)

“And He began to say to them, Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing. And all spoke well of Him, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth.” (Luke 4:21,22 RSV)

The word used includes the thought of being reputable (Diag.), that which would be well thought of by reputable people, or those of good repute. It would not mean that it was necessarily well spoken of by the world. Jesus was of good report but was reviled by the world, which said all manner of things against Him falsely. We need to be so careful in our daily lives, that the only thing which we would suffer for would be that we are Christians.

Just as good report can build one up, so evil report can injure one's reputation. Fallen human nature is inclined towards evil, and a human trait is to believe evil more readily than good of a person. This is bad enough, but worse, the good things we know about anyone are often forgotten, but the evil things we think we know are repeated and circulated, often with relish. This could have terrible results and seriously hamper usefulness in the Lord's service. It makes no difference whether the evil thing is true or not; just because it may be true is in itself no reason for telling it. Our thoughts must be gracious, reputable and of good repute if we are to be faithful and give our will to God. Whatsoever things are of good report, think on these things.

If there be any VIRTUE, or as Webster defines it, excellence in general, moral excellence, good quality, goodness of character; things that are in any degree noble...noble words, noble deeds, noble sentiments of anyone—if we meditate on these, we will find ourselves growing towards those ideals and upon these, our mind—the new nature feeds. Peter tells us:

“His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us to His own glory and excellence. For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge.” (2 Peter 1:3,5 RSV) We need to listen carefully to his following words (verse 8):

“For if these things are yours and abound, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Thinking on these things will keep us fruitful in the knowledge of God. The people of God who follow the instructions of the divine word become noble people, helpful people, possessed of the spirit of a sound mind. These will also extol the virtues of God Himself, understand more of His glorious character, see that His every act is motivated by love and that He loves us, particularly and individually. If there be any virtue, think on these things.

The last of the eight great qualities is PRAISE. Praise is defined as a simple, basic word implying an expression of approval, esteem, commendation or of lauding the glory of God. We should not even think about praising ourselves, and yet we should try to make our actions praiseworthy. We are to think mainly about the praise of God. Praise to God is an acceptable act of worship. Many psalms speak of praise, such as:

“Praise the Lord. I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart, in the company of the upright, in the congregation.” (Psa. 111:1 RSV) “Praise the Lord! O give thanks to the Lord, for He is good.” (Psa. 106:1 RSV)

Can we imagine any more sincere or enthusiastic occasion of praise than that of the man lame from birth who was healed by Peter and entered the temple, walking and leaping and praising God?

In Acts 16:23-26 we read that Paul and Silas had been brutally beaten in Philippi and were put in chains. At midnight they sang and praised God and the other prisoners heard. Suddenly there was a great earthquake, all the doors were opened and everyone's bonds were loosed. Do we want doors opened, bonds loosed or problems solved? Let us praise God, extol His virtues, name and recount every wonderful thing we can remember about Him—His personal attributes, His marvellous works of creation, His divine plan so just and yet so merciful, the precious gift of His Son, His incredible provision that we might be associated with Jesus in His kingdom, His providences in our lives, His exceeding great and precious promises, and there are still many more things for which we may praise Him. Let us think indeed about praising God from whom all blessings flow.

These are then the eight scriptural qualities which things must have, before we think upon them. They are to be:

1. True - 2. Honest (honorable) - 3. Just - 4. Pure - 5. Lovely - 6. Of good report (gracious) - 7. Virtuous (excellent) - 8. Praise-worthy

And we need further to remember:

“As a man thinketh, so he is.” (Prov. 23:7) “Whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.” (Gal. 6:7)

Every thought should therefore be challenged because it affects our words and our conduct and extends to others. We should desire to have in our hearts and minds things that are positively good, beneficial and uplifting. Desires for earthly things have a natural attraction for all mankind, but if we want to keep ourselves in the love of God, we must put our affections on heavenly things and continually keep on weeding out earthly desires and attractions. We can hardly over-estimate the importance of right thinking, because of the great influence of the mind over the body. Let us take pleasure in the cultivation of the fruits and graces of the Holy Spirit. Thus we shall become transformed by the renewing of our minds and come nearer to the glorious likeness of our Master, being changed inch by inch, step by step, little by little during this present life.

Let thoughts of the blessedness of our future work in co-operation with Christ, of the magnitude and benevolence of the divine plan, and of the glory and blessedness of our gathering together into Christ, when the work of the present age is finished, fill our minds and inspire our hearts. And further, let us also receive the additional comfort and blessing of personal communion and fellowship with God through prayer, the study of His word and the assembling of ourselves together for worship and praise. Those who are thinking on the true and lovely and good and beautiful things will speak to each other of these things, hence the importance of having our hearts filled with good things, in order that out of the abundance of our hearts, our mouths may speak continually that which the Lord would approve and that would bring blessing to all who hear. (A.A. 9/91)

THINK ON THESE THINGS!

A New Year Prayer

Another year is dawning;
Dear Master, let it be,
In working or in waiting,
Another year with Thee.

Another year of mercies,
Of faithfulness and grace;
Another year of gladness,
In the shining of Thy face.

Another year of progress,
Another year of praise,
Another year of proving
Thy presence all the days.

Another year of service,
Of witness for Thy love;
Another year of training
For holier work above.

Another year is dawning;
Dear Master, let it be,
In working or in waiting,
Another year for Thee.
(ER.H.)

Precious Promises
(Convention Address)

“May favour and peace be multiplied to you by a knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; even as His divine power has granted to us all things relating to life and piety, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue; on account of which very great and precious promises have been bestowed on us, so that through these you might become partakers of the divine nature, having fled away from the corruption that is in the world through lust.” (2 Peter 1: 2-4 — Diaglott)

For whom do these words apply? Were these instructions given to sinners? Is this the way sinners approach God? No, these instructions are addressed to those justified through faith in the blood of Christ, as shown in Verse 1: “to those who have obtained an equally precious faith with us, by the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ.” To become a believer in Jesus Christ, a justified and consecrated believer, is not enough. There has to be a progress while in these earthly bodies; if we are faithful, this will be completed in the first resurrection. The apostle’s thought is that of continuous progress.

Many might think of additions and subtractions of grace and peace, finding and losing, but Peter speaks of multiplication. “May favour and peace be MULTIPLIED to you.” Many again lack a knowledge of the things necessary to preserve to them the favour and peace found in Christ as their Redeemer, and lack sufficient understanding to multiply their favour and peace. These are mentioned in 1 Cor. 3:1; “And I, brethren, was not able to speak to you as to spiritual, but as to fleshly persons, as to babes in Christ.”

The true foundation upon which to build is faith in the righteousness of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, faith that His sacrifice for sin was once for all, a full and complete ransom price for Adam and all his posterity, so that all may be brought to a knowledge of Christ in due time. It is those who build upon this foundation who may hope to multiply their grace and peace. But how? Peter answers: “through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.” To some it may seem that we come to know God and to know that there is a Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, but a knowledge of God is much more than this. It means an intimate acquaintance with the Father and with the Son, a knowledge of the mind of Christ, which itself is a full and clear representation of the mind of the Father.

We grow in this knowledge by study of the Word of God and by ascertaining how divine justice, wisdom, love and power operate. These are progressive studies. Peter shows us that, through this knowledge of God, there are imparted to us all things related to life and piety or godliness. To know God, as Peter here explains, means an intimate knowledge and it is only when we see the beauties of His character that we can become intimately acquainted with Him. The influence of this knowledge and fellowship reacts upon our hearts and has a cleansing and sanctifying effect. "But we all beholding the glory of the Lord in a face unveiled, are transformed into the same likeness, as from the Lord, the Spirit." 2 Cor. 3:18.

The apostle Paul prays that believers may grow in the knowledge of God, as in Eph. 3:14-19: "For this cause I bend my knees to the Father, from whom the whole family in the heavens and on earth is named, that He may give you according to His glorious wealth, to be powerfully strengthened through His spirit in the inner man; that the Anointed One, through the faith, may dwell in your hearts; that, being rooted in love and well-established, you may be fully able to understand with all the saints, what is the breadth and length, and depth and height, to know even that which surpasses knowledge—the love of the Anointed One; so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."

The world in general does not know God, and it is evident also that many professing Christians know little about Him. Paul explains to us that Satan is particularly interested in hindering any from obtaining the light of truth. He declares in 2 Cor. 4:4: "the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." Here we see the constant conflict of darkness against light; the darkness hates the light for all who see and rejoice in the light are the children of the light. After the image of the Lord has been impressed upon their hearts, they become light-bearers, reflecting to others the light shining on them from the divine source.

On account of this call of God, great and precious promises have been given to His people. These are so many and so precious that it is difficult to know which to rank first. But perhaps the first of all is the precious promise that, although what we shall be like has not yet been made known, "when He our Lord shall appear, we shall be LIKE HIM, for we shall see Him as He is." "If I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself." "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I overcame and am set down with my Father on His throne." "They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels." (my treasured possessions).

"For these light afflictions do work out in us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." "Then we will be heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in His sufferings, that we may also share in His glory." "To him that overcometh I will give authority over the nations, just as I received authority from my Father." (1 John 3:2, John 14:3, Rev. 3:21, Mal. 3:17, 2 Cor. 4:17, Rom. 8:17, Rev. 2:26,27)

These are only a few of all His exceeding great and precious promises; they are summed up by Peter, who says that it is God's will and purpose that through these we might become partakers of the divine nature. Who could have thought of such a thing? Our earthly minds might have thought to reach human perfection, or even to go to heaven as an angel, but though the angelic nature is higher than the human, that is not what God has promised. No, He has promised the overcoming church, the little flock, that they shall share the divine nature of her Lord, as well as share in His heavenly kingdom. We cannot really comprehend why the great Creator should exalt to His own nature, but we accept that the lengths and breadths of His grand designs surpass all human knowledge. Having been privileged to see something of His glorious character, shall we not want to attain to all He might be pleased to reveal to us? to be partakers of His likeness, more and more acceptable? and finally to be actually and everlastingly accepted in our beloved Lord? This will indeed be the full realisation of the blessings and promises God has given us.

Such promises and such knowledge should inspire our hearts to love and sacrifice, as the apostle John tells us in 1 John 3:3: "Everyone having this hope in him purifies himself, as He is pure." May the exceeding great and precious promises of God continue to sustain us in the narrow way. (D.O.)

A Peculiar People

"Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." —Titus 2:14.

A Special Treasure

The Greek word translated “peculiar” in our text, according to Prof. Strong, means that which is special, or beyond the usual. The apostle’s thought evidently is that this people whom Christ purifies unto Himself are esteemed by Him and by the Heavenly Father as a special treasure. Similar language is used by God concerning natural Israel. We read, “Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is Mine. And ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.”—Ex. 19:5,6.

High indeed was the possibility of Israel’s relationship toward God, but it was dependent upon continued faithfulness in obeying His voice and keeping His commandments. As a nation Israel failed all along the line; and finally, when the nation rejected Jesus, was cast off from all hope of enjoying the chief place of favor in the divine arrangement. Concerning this Paul explains: “Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded.”—Romans 11:7.

The apostle explains, however, that a remnant of individuals from among Israel qualified for the chief blessing. This agrees with the statement concerning Jesus which says that “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not; but as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God.” (John 1:11,12). But there were not sufficient who received the Master to make up the foreordained number of the special people, so the remaining ones were called from among the Gentiles. Explaining this Paul says that the Gentile branches were grafted into the Jewish olive tree to take the places of the natural branches that were broken off because of unbelief. (Rom. 11:17-30). This is a “graft” which is “contrary to nature,” because usually it is tame branches that are grafted into a wild root; and the nature of the branches determines the kind and quality of the fruit. But not so with the Gentiles grafted into the Jewish tree.

Zeal For God’s Will

Israel’s standing as God’s peculiar treasure continued only as long as the nation was zealous for hearing and obeying the voice of God. So we, who have come into this favored position as spiritual Israelites can hope to be reckoned among God’s choice treasure only if we are “zealous for good works”. “Take heed,” the apostle warns, for if God spared not the natural branches He will certainly not spare us if we become unfaithful. Evidently the one characteristic above all others which commends an individual to God is that of zeal for doing His will. Without this zeal no one can hope to be a part of God’s peculiar people.

The example of zeal which we should endeavour to emulate is that which was displayed by Jesus. The zeal of God’s house consumed Him; and we are called to follow in His steps. Jesus’ zeal was manifested in the sacrifice of His earthly life on behalf of the church and the world. We are invited to lay down our lives for the brethren, and also to be baptized for the dead. Jesus’ sacrifice constitutes the basis of redemption for both the church and the world, and we are invited to share with Him in administering the benefits of the ransom. No matter how much zeal we might display, our sacrifice would not be acceptable apart from the Master’s; but because we serve in His name we have the assurance of being “holy and acceptable.”

Redeemed and Purified

In our text the apostle tells us that Christ “gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity.” As members of the condemned and fallen race we were contaminated with sin, because “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” (Rom. 3:23). Jesus’ redemptive work makes it possible for us to be made free from “the law of sin and death,” and acceptable unto God by Him. But the mere fact that we accept this provision of divine grace is not sufficient to constitute us a part of God’s peculiar people. In addition to this we must be “purified.”

This purification is effected by our obedience to the truth—the “washing of water by the Word.” This is a cleansing from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit. It is the washing away of selfishness and self-will so that the divine will may reign supreme in our hearts. This cleansing must be thorough if we are to be God’s peculiar people. It must be more than a mere passive submission to His will. It must be a consuming zeal for the accomplishment of the divine will irrespective of what the cost to us may be. To thus be purified will mean that we are, indeed, a people “zealous of good works.”

These “good works” for which we will be zealous are God’s works. It was so in Jesus’ case. He came, not to do His own will and work, but the will and work of His Father. In a prayer to His Father, Jesus said, “As Thou has sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them in to the world.” (John 17:18). This is a wondrous partnership in which we are invited to share. We can add nothing of value to the partnership, and the only way by which we can commend ourselves to the Lord is through our zeal for the work that is being done. As “workers together with Him” are we endeavouring to set everything else aside in order that we may zealously engage in that which