



“WHAT SHALL I RENDER UNTO THE LORD?”

(A New Year Meditation)

When we come to the end of a year, we begin to look back and we ask what we may render unto the Lord for all of His blessings to us. Surely, with the psalmist we gladly take up again our Lord's gracious cup of salvation, we call upon His name, and pay our vows unto the Lord, to each other, in the presence of all of His people. At each New Year we look back over the year of His keeping power and we look ahead to see what we might do in the New Year that would bring glory and honour and be more pleasing to our Heavenly Father and to our Lord Jesus, who bought us with His precious blood.. At New Year we may also reflect on how close we are sometimes to God's Kingdom.

Each year brings many changes in the world in which we live, in social, political, religious and financial spheres. None of us is immune from the effects and flow-ons of these changes. How have these changes affected us as the Lord's people? Have they been such experiences as to draw us closer to our Heavenly Father to the extent that He would be pleased with our progress? Have these changes made us more trustful, more zealous in the doing of God's will, or have they made us more fretful, unkind or even angry? Or have they, rather, moved us to reflect more on His rich benefits to each one of us and to remember that in all our affairs our Heavenly Father is still there, our dear Lord is still there, and that if we sin, we still have an Advocate with the Father

So, let us look briefly at Psalm 116, verses 12-14. The Psalmist asks himself and us a definite question - "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits towards me?" He doesn't say, 'what shall I render unto the Lord for someone else's benefits or how have their benefits benefited me?' In Psalm 16 we are reminded that we are God's inheritance, meaning that we have a portion with everything that God has provided for His people. As God's children we are, along with our Lord and Master, Jesus, the inheritors of all God's wonderful blessings. We read of this in Romans 8:16,17, "the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are

the children of God', and, if children, then heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ".

What then shall you and I render? What shall we give back, for all of God's benefits? In Psalm 103:2, we read: "Forget not all of God's benefits". Now if all of us would write down all of the benefits of just one day we wouldn't even begin to scratch the surface of all that Almighty God has done for us. Yet before we close our eyes and go to sleep at night, we should remember God's benefits and how He has overruled in our daily affairs. Going on in Psalm 103, we read of just some of God's benefits. God, first of all, **forgiveth all our iniquities..** How we fall on our knees and thank our Heavenly Father for this and for our Lord Jesus and the covering robe of His righteousness. If God did not forgive our mistakes, surely all would be lost. "For thou, O Lord, art good and ready at all times to forgive, abundant in loving kindness unto all those that call upon Thee." (Psa 86:5).

Secondly **He healeth all our diseases**. Now this Scripture does not mean that God will heal all our physical problems but that God watches over us in our spiritual walk. When we make mistakes sometimes He sees it necessary to chastise us but He does it gently, and He does it to bring us back into a position that He can be proud of. Through the aid of the Holy Spirit, we are brought through these experiences and we are healed, that is, we are made whole. Thirdly, **God has provided a Ransom for us.** How wonderful that ransom and all that it entails is! Fourthly, **He crowneth**

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us with loving kindness and tender mercies. We receive God's favour, we receive His kindness, every day and over and over again.

Fifthly **He satisfies our every desire.** No, He doesn't give us everything we want of an earthly nature or sense but He gives us everything good for our spiritual walk. As we consider our Almighty God and His compassion for us, how well have we done in developing compassion for others? This word brings in a God of mercy. How merciful, how considerate have we been this past year~ God, we know, is a God of mercy. In Matthew 5:7, we read: 'Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy.' If we are not merciful, we shall not obtain mercy from God. Matthew 6:14,15 tell us more on this point. How patient have we been in our dealings with our brethren? How patient have we been with those that we come in contact with in the world? The American Standard Version of I Thess 5:14 says: "Be long suffering towards all."

One of the most beautiful Psalms is Psalm 37. In it, we can see how we can make vows for the New Year, and how we might keep those vows through the year. First, we will vow to **develop more trust** in God regardless of how things may go with us or for us. Psalm 37:3, says 'Trust in God and do good'. That is a vow that all of us can take to heart. To have full and complete trust in Almighty God will relieve us from any fear of what may come. World events can be very distressing and disturbing, but the Lord's people need not fear what man shall do to them. They trust in Almighty God, and seek to do good to all (as Galatians 6:10 tells us) but especially to the household of faith. Psalm 37:5 says "Commit thy way unto the Lord, 'trust also in Him and He shall bring it to pass'." To trust is to be confident, to trust is to be sure that God will be at our side at all times because He is our security and in Him we can have full assurance.

We must desire to have **more fellowship** with God and with our Lord Jesus and with all of our dear brethren. We can do this through study of His word, and then by applying His word daily in our lives. 2 Timothy 2:15 reads "Give diligence to present yourselves approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, handling aright the word of truth." Our fellowship is mentioned in Heb 10:24,25 "Let us consider one another to incite unto love and to good works, not forsaking our assembling together as the custom of some is." Every meeting of God's people should be an opportunity to incite one another unto love and good works. Sometimes we may fall short, caught up in other outside arrangements. Fellowship is so vital for each one, let us cherish every opportunity!

In this context, we should always make a vow to the

Lord to be **gracious to one another** for Psalm 112:5, says: "Well it is that man deals graciously for he will maintain his cause in judgment." This means that we must stoop down in favour to all of our brethren, always wishing good for them from our Heavenly Father and our Lord Jesus. As we do this we can and should become peacemakers. Matthew 5:9, puts it this way: "Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be the Sons of God." Where we go, wherever we go, peace should follow.

How important to all the Lord's people are the words of Psa 19:12-14, as each makes his or her fresh vow **to be as upright as we can** in every way in all we do in the year ahead! "*Who can discern his errors? Cleanse thou me from hidden faults. Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins, let them not have dominion over me, for then shall I be upright and I shall be clear from transgression. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O God, my Rock and my Redeemer*" May the coming year be the best year of our spiritual lives so far! (CC: adapted)

God is All-Sufficient

Resting on His promises, what have we to fear?

God is all-sufficient for the coming year.
Onward then and fear not, children of the day;
For His word shall never, never pass away.
(FRH)

SEASON'S GREETINGS!

Our thoughts again with Christmas here,
Turn to our loved ones far and near
Turn to God's greatest Gift to man,
The very centre of His plan.

In that provision we rejoice
With thankful heart we lift our voice,
And pray that He will haste that day
His reign on earth shall hold full sway.

Christian Greetings Christmas Cheer,
May God bless you thru the year;
With Best Wishes, more Sincere,
Happy Christmas, Glad New Year.

(Martin C. Mitchell)

“THE LAST DAYS & THE LAST DAY”

The two expressions "the last day" and "the last days" occur a number of times in the New Testament, day and days being translated from the Greek words *hemera* (singular) and *hemerai* (plural). The two expressions sound very similar but speak of totally different time periods and it is important to understand the distinction. By listing the singular and plural forms separately, Young's Concordance highlights the different usages. Both terms imply the completion of something. If we have the last of anything, it means that there is no more of it. In the present case, it does not mean that there will be no more days at all, for God has assured us that the earth abides forever; but it does mean that there will be no more of those particular kinds of days.

This expression "the last days" applies mainly to the end of our (gospel) age, the days in which we are now living and those immediately ahead of us, the last days of this unrighteous order of things, the last days of Satan's empire, the last days of the permission of evil. God has promised that there will be no more of these days. When they are over, He will usher in the long awaited kingdom, the times of Restitution, the start of the "last day" (singular). This last day we understand from the scriptures to be a one thousand year day, the time when Christ and His Church will reign to assist all mankind, all who are willing, up the highway of holiness back to perfection.

To sum up, the "last days" are the last days of mankind's attempt to rule itself without God, whereas the "last day" means the last day in God's program to restore this planet and its people, the seventh thousand year day. The previous six days, i.e. the previous six thousand years, have, in effect, been leading up to this 'last day', the great millennial Day. The start of the eighth day will see all the willing of Adam's family restored, they will be then God's family.

THE LAST DAYS (plural)

Paul speaks of these last days in his letters to Timothy - "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good", 2 Tim 3:1-3.

We already have perilous times in certain parts of the world, with warnings from governments that it is unsafe to travel in many places. The perilous times could especially be perilous to the faith of the Lord's people for at the end of this age there will be very subtle and

convincing deceptions current. Paul further says "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived". 2 Tim 3:13 and again "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;" 1 Tim 4:1-2

Our Lord Himself said of those days - "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect" Matt 24:24 These deceptions will be very cunning, they will not appear evil but have a veneer of something good for as we know, Satan can transform himself into an angel of light. Those who have fully consecrated and committed their lives to the Lord will not be deceived, the words "if it were possible" implying that it will not be possible. But it will be a great time of shaking, a sifting out process. In one sense, however, it is a wonderful time to be living in, because we can see so much of our Lord's Word being fulfilled before our eyes. These evil times that are going to take place in the last days are likened by our Lord to the days of Noah and the days of Lot. The some immoral conduct rampant in Lot's day is rapidly increasing in our day, what was once viewed as depraved is now looked upon as quite acceptable. God's law and His standards are being totally ignored.

But let us now look at the beautiful words of Isa 2:1-4 "The word that Isaiah the son of Amos saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. And 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. And many people shall go and say, 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: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more".

The same message is in Micah 4:1-3; this shows its importance, the fact that God has seen fit to present it twice. The Micah message goes on to say - "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. For all people will

walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever. In that day, saith the Lord, will I assemble her that halteth, and I will gather her that is driven out, and her that I have afflicted; and I will make her that halted a remnant, and her that was cast off a strong nation; and the Lord shall reign over them in Mount Zion from henceforth even for ever." (Micah 4:4-7)

THE DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS

This is the wonderful time that we all long for, the time that will fulfil the desire of all nations. If we, as the Lord's people, prove faithful unto death, we shall be privileged to have a part in the great restitution work foretold in these passages. The symbol of the vine and fig tree could have two applications, firstly as a symbol of peace and contentment, no more agitation and restlessness as pictured by the stilling of the restless sea in Rev 21:1. Perhaps, there will be a getting back to nature, all with their own fruit trees and vegetable gardens producing their own food, as well as flowers and ornamental trees and shrubs, things pleasing to the sight, each like those things our first parents, Adam and Eve, enjoyed in their own garden of Eden.

It has been suggested by others, and, we believe correctly so, that it also symbolises the two phases of the kingdom, the fig tree the visible earthly phase, that is the nation of fleshly Israel under the leadership of the Ancient Worthies, the princes in all the earth of Psalm 45, and the vine the spiritual phase with Christ and the glorified Church. This is in keeping with the words of Isa 2:3 already quoted that the Law shall go forth from Zion, the spiritual phase of the kingdom, where it originates, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem - the earthly phase of the kingdom. It will be relayed out from there, the spiritual phase not communicating directly with mankind, not needing to as it has its fleshly representatives on earth.

Both Isaiah and Micah confirm that the mountain, that is, the kingdom is to be established in "the last days". Perhaps we might have been inclined to think that it would have been in "the last day", the Millennial day but it is evident that the lovely verses in both prophecies are progressive and cover a long period of time. The kingdom will not be reigning in power and glory during the last days, that is the time when the work of establishing or preparing it is in progress. The marginal rendering of Isa 2:2 KJV renders the word as "prepared" (in the last days), the Hebrew word used in both prophecies according to Young's Concordance having the meaning of "be formed, prepared, established" and mostly translated as "established, prepared, ready". How well the thought of being prepared fits in with our understanding that we are now living in the "day of preparation" as mentioned in the book

of Nahum. This understanding was first presented about the end of the 19th century; the signs of preparation being meagre in those days compared to today.

If we are observant, we can see many signs of the "preparation" for the kingdom. Recent literature published by the Maranatha Group pointed out the efforts that are being made behind the scenes to bring about a New World Order, One World Government linked with a One World Church. We would understand this to be Satan's counterfeit of God's eventual One World Government linked to a One World Church. We know that this counterfeit will not and cannot be successful, as it will not bring any true satisfying peace and stability, it will not fulfil the desires of all nations, it will fail just as we are told that iron does not mix with clay. (Dan 2: 43) In His own due time, God will take it over as we read in Rev 11:15 "And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever." (KJV) Note: Other translations than KJV translate this verse as "The kingdom (singular) of this world" suggesting the thought of One World Government to be taken over and placed in the hands of Christ and the Church.

In other areas, environmental awareness education is now starting even at school level, enlightening people also through the media to the preciousness of our earth and the responsibility for rectifying the effects of gross use of chemicals on the land and air and water pollutants. We have followed the cleaning up of dead waterways in Europe that are now swarming again with marine life. Tree logging and land clearing on an indiscriminate level has come to public notice. Government sponsored programs like "Land Care" in this country encourage the planting on a large scale, involving children also to plant and care for trees, also incentives for farmers to revegetate certain areas of their land, creating wild life corridors. These are just a few instances; more could be added to give a full picture.

For a good many years, the richer nations have assisted the poorer nations with financial aid, goods and know-how for the betterment of their citizens; Aid workers are helping and teaching them. In fact, most of the developed countries have an allocation in their budgets each year for helping poorer neighbours. What has been done so far is very inadequate, but it is a start and shows the preparation work in progress. Trade barriers are being brought down and as tariffs are reduced further, it will have the effect of slowly raising the living standard of the poorer nations. We do not expect everything put right before the kingdom comes, but the preparation work has commenced, a work that will continue on into the kingdom.

It would seem from Heb 12:27,28 that the work that will have been done will not be destroyed in the time of trouble - "And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore we receiving a kingdom, which cannot be moved let us, have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear." It is only those things that can be shaken that will be destroyed, that is, those things that are undesirable, that are out of harmony with God's will and are not wanted in the kingdom. We are assured that we have a kingdom that cannot be shaken, indicating that the preparation work for the kingdom also will not be shaken. How strengthening to our faith to see this work in progress and know that it is fulfilling God's word.

One of the great preparation works for the kingdom is the re-establishment of the nation of Israel, The kingdom could not commence to operate before Israel was established, since it will be the seat of the earthly phase of the kingdom, which has to be set up before the Ancient Worthies could be brought back. Israel will no doubt be their headquarters; we could tend to take for granted the various activities in progress throughout the world today and perhaps fail to see the hand of the Lord in them. God uses mankind to accomplish His purposes. Six thousand years have elapsed since the creation of our first parents, yet it is only in the last few years, comparatively, that all these momentous changes have taken place. This shows that they have not happened by mere chance, they show where we are on the stream of time and we can now surely see the day approaching.

THE LAST DAY (singular)

Comparing the "last day" with the "last days", we have seen that the "last days" are the period at the end of the Gospel Age, the time when the world is becoming increasingly evil and immoral. It is also the time of the harvest work, the separation of the wheat from the tares. In contrast to the world's becoming more evil, there is also a good work in progress, a preparation work for the kingdom. On the other hand, the "last day" is the kingdom itself, the one thousand year reign of Christ with the saints, the Judgment Day, the Day when all mankind will be placed on trial for everlasting life. Our Lord's words in John 7:37 were - "in the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. " At that time, the invitation was only to Israel and only to those of a right heart condition, whom the Father was calling to be members of Christ's bride, but the day was to come when His words would have a much more universal fulfilment.

This last great day of the feast could symbolise the last great thousand-year day when the invitation will be offered to all, not just a calling out of certain ones as in the Gospel Age. How well our Lord's words link with those 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". Here we have the time when the work of the Gospel Age is over and the drawing power of God's Holy Spirit is operating for the benefit of all mankind; the Spirit and the Bride (the glorified Church) are extending an invitation to all.

Acts 17:30,31 is also speaking of this last day (NIV) "In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead." In John 12:47-48 we read our Lord's own word "And 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."

They will be judged by the same righteous principles as taught by our Master at His first advent. What the outcome of this judgement will be is given in Isaiah 26:9,10 - "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 he will not learn righteousness; in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord." The Day of Judgment will be successful, the inhabitants of the earth in general will profit from it and become righteous, true children of God and inherit the restored earth, as in 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:" (KJV) There will however still be some that remain wicked when favour is shown to them and these will go into the second death

The 'last day' is also Resurrection Day, as Jesus said (John 6:39,40) "And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one, which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day." Jesus repeated this statement regarding the raising up on the last day in John 6:44 and 6:54. Then we have the words of Martha, speaking of the raising of her brother Lazarus (John 11:24) "Martha

saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." No doubt, others in Israel would have had this understanding regarding the resurrection and the last day

It might be asked whether the resurrection of mankind will commence before the last day begins. Our Lord's words suggest that it will not, but rather it will take place at the last day, or as some translations render it on the last day. This work will probably take place over a lengthy period of time as the multitudes that sleep in the dust of the earth are progressively restored to life in due order as stated in I Cor 15 :22,23 "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming." The first fruits, that is, the Church are raised right at the commencement of this day, followed by, the raising of all mankind. We note that the resurrection is never mentioned in connection with the "last

days" (plural), always with the "last day" (singular).

What a blessed time is coming for all the human family, when by our Heavenly Father's grace in Christ Jesus the work of the "last day" is complete! How beautifully this is pictured in Rev 21 3-6 "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 there be 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. And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely". Amen. (GT abridged)

"THE RICHES OF HIS GRACE"

The words of the topic occur twice in the epistle of Paul to the Ephesians. In the epistle, Paul goes on to elaborate on the tremendous blessings and privileges that have come to the Lord's people out of the riches of God's grace. But how can we put into simple, meaningful words of comfort and of challenge something of the boundless love and mercy of our God, of His mighty power shown in the wonders of creation, and the surpassing wisdom of His eternal purposes in Christ Jesus?

To meditate upon the riches of His grace is really to seek to comprehend the character of God Himself. This is a daunting task but as each one of us recounts something of the warmth that has come into our hearts and lives out of recognition of God's richness towards us personally, then we can all take new comfort and make new resolves to respond worthily to that grace with which we have been blessed.

The scriptures abound in accounts of God's richness towards those that are His – in His grace, His mercy, His love and power and wisdom. Our own experiences as we reflect back along life's way also confirm how bountifully He has favoured us. The Psalmist, who so often speaks for us, knew something of this, as we may read in Psalm 103 – "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy...as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us...The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him and His righteousness unto children's children."

The Riches of His Love

Turning to the New Testament, we find in the 15th chap-

ter of Luke's gospel the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost son, and these tell us much of God's love and His purposes of blessing. The last of these is the most familiar and is often referred to as the parable of the prodigal son. But how beautifully this paints a portrait of a father ever more ready to forgive and to lavish gifts upon his wayward but now contrite son, than the son had originally been to squander his inheritance on worthless pursuits. So we read in verses 20-24 "*And he arose and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off his father saw him and had compassion and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. And the son said, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet. And bring hither the fatted calf and kill it and let us eat and be merry. For this my son was dead and is alive again, he was lost and is found.*"

This portion of the story never fails to touch our hearts as we see the overflowing bounty of the father's love and realise that this is a portrayal of the riches of our Heavenly Father's love towards each one of us. For quite some time the young man in the far country had struggled on in want, until at last he came to his senses and remembered the plenty of his father's house. How often we need to remember that our heavenly Father has no lack and, instead of trying to battle through alone in time of trial or difficulty, we need to draw on His boundless, always available resources. The apostle Paul reminds us (Eph 3:20) that our God is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think. So we can come to Him in faith, believing that He rewards them that diligently seek Him and so partake of

the richness of His grace in every affair of life.

Now it is one thing to have riches – our Heavenly Father certainly does – for all the marvels of creation are His, in wisdom He has made them all, and we may well ponder with the Psalmist what we might offer Him, for as Psalm 50:10 declares, every beast of the forest is His and the cattle upon a thousand hills. But our Father is not only rich in possessions but, more blessed for us, He is rich in His willingness and desire to show the wealth of His mercy and loving-kindness towards all His creation and particularly those who love and are drawn to Him. Truly, He is *“the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.”* (1 Tim 4:10) How then can we best express, explain, the riches of God toward us – what He has already done for us, what He daily provides for us and what He has laid up in Christ for us? Our own experience confirms His past and continuing favour and strengthens faith for the future, but what does His word proclaim?

The Riches of His Mercy

The apostle in Eph 1:8 tells us that God has made us accepted (highly favoured) in the Beloved, even in His dear Son, in whom we have redemption, forgiveness and an inheritance, All this is by virtue of God’s own riches in mercy and in His abundant generosity to us in the gifts of His grace, of wisdom and understanding of His will. But what are the riches of our Heavenly Father, out of which He so freely blesses us? In what do they have their foundations? First and foremost, the richness of His grace must surely spring from His so great love, as expressed in Eph 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, and hath raised us up 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.”*

Truly, what is this love that reaches out to those estranged from Him and dead in sins? This is surely the love of which Paul speaks in Rom 5:8 – *“God commended His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.”* So we begin to see something of the wealth and extent of our Heavenly Father’s love, love which finds expression in His grace and favour poured out on His people. Only from such a heart of love could so great grace be shown. This is the love which is also so strong that no power in earth or heaven can separate the trusting soul from it. *“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 8:38,39)

God’s grace is also seen in “His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering” with mankind. (Rom 2:4) Those who appreciate His grace and are drawn to Him

also find God rich in wisdom which He is ready to give to those who seek. These find also that He is the fountain of that peace which is beyond understanding. As children of God, we are beneficiaries of His unmerited favour, and can testify with the Psalmist that He has lifted us *“out of the miry clay, set our feet upon a rock, established our goings and put a new song in our mouths, even a song of praise to our God.”* (Psa 40:2,3) Not only have we received the gift of His salvation, forgiveness and cleansing through the blood of Christ, but we have been called, invited, to a heavenly calling, ever to behold His face. *“O to grace, how great a debtor, daily I’m constrained to be!”*

Beyond this, not only have we been saved and called by His grace, but day by day our Father cares for us out of His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Though we have trials, which at the time are not causes for pleasure, yet as we look back we can clearly see in these His watch care over us, the lessons learnt and the blessings which have come out of sorrow. And we can realise His Fatherly interest in the resulting fruitage of peace and righteousness, *“Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits, who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases, who redeemeth thy life from destruction, who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies, who satisfieth thy mouth with good things.”* (Psa 103:2-5)

The Riches of His Word

God has further blessed us with the riches, the treasure, of His word, providing comfort to sustain us along the narrow way and a hope to keep our eyes and our endeavours set right on. We may fully come to Him in every time of need with our burdens and our requests, for “His grace and power are such, none may ever ask too much.” And our God still waits to bless His people further. As we consider His past favours, we can well say with the apostle John. *“Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.”* (1 John 3:1) What manner of love, indeed? What measureless riches are already ours? We could hardly complain if the message of the apostle stopped there, but he continues (Verse 2) – *“It doth not yet appear what we shall be but we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is.”*

The riches of God’s grace are then not only grounded in His love but He is able to meet all our needs out of His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. For the willing obedience of our Saviour even unto death has brought life and immortality to light and has opened for us the way of access to God, to whom we may draw near as unto a loving father. Such blessings purchased by our Saviour with His own precious blood, and those blessings in store for all mankind, for the bestowing of which the beneficiaries of His grace at this present time are being prepared, are all even now a glorious part of God’s rich inheritance in the saints. Amen.

“THE SONG”

Song is an expression of joy in the heart. Whenever people have occasion to express great joy, they do so in song. We just love to listen to choirs amongst our brethren singing praises to our Heavenly Father and our Lord Jesus. It really is music to the ears. The Jewish people at one time however spent seventy years in captivity at Babylon. They certainly had no song in their hearts then. The Psalmist wrote of that time in *Psa 137:1-4* - "*By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down; yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?*" -

However when God permitted them to return to their own land, to build again the wall of Jerusalem, under Nehemiah the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, they dedicated the wall ".....with gladness, both with thanksgivings and with singing, with cymbals, psalteries, and with harps," (*Neh 12:27*)

In prophecy the absence of joy is expressed by the absence of singing (*Isa 16:10*). Speaking of the time when God's favour shall have been restored to His people and all Israel shall be saved, the Prophet Isaiah says: "*Sing, ye heavens: for the Lord hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth, break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified Himself in Israel*" (*Isa 44:23*). The same prophet describes the time when God's spirit shall be poured out upon all flesh, he says (*Isa 35:2*) that the desert "*shall blossom abundantly and rejoice even with joy and singing*"; and in *Isa. 51:11*: "*Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return [i.e. from the grave], and come with singing unto Zion [Christ ruling with His Church in the Kingdom of God]; and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads, they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away.*"

How the angels must have sung when our Lord Jesus was born, celebrating the good tidings of great joy which shall be unto all people, which joy is to come through Him who was - "*anointed with the oil of gladness above thy fellows*"! - *Heb. 1:9; Psa. 45:7*. Jesus said to His disciples: (*John 15:11*) "*These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.*" No other people on the face of the earth have so much to rejoice and sing about as do Christians who have an understanding of the love of God. Nothing else in this life could mean as much as the knowledge that we have the favour of our Heavenly Father, and the Lord's assurance (*John*

10:28) that "*neither shall any man pluck them out of my Father's hand.*" It surely follows that it is most natural for a Christian to rejoice and to sing.

The Apostle Paul, in *Col 3:16* says "*Let the word of Christ 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.*" - In *Eph. 5:18-20*, he says: "*And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" Also in *Phil 4:4* he says - "*Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say rejoice!*" If we are following the example of our Lord Jesus we will be constantly rejoicing and a song of praise to God will be continually dwelling in our hearts.

Israel's Lost Song

Looking back into the Old Testament, we note that something rather unusual happened then as recorded in *2 Chronicles 29*. For sixteen years there had been no song in the temple of the Lord in Israel. Then one day a wonderful change took place. We read in verse 20 - "*Then Hezekiah rose early and gathered the rulers of the city and went to the house of the Lord*" Then we read in verse 27 - "*And Hezekiah commanded to offer the burnt offering upon the altar, and when the offering began, the song of the Lord began also with the trumpets, and with the instruments ordained by David king of Israel.*" When the burnt offerings began, the song of the Lord began also! So the trumpets blew, and the harpers began to play with mighty volume on their strings, and then, like the sound of many waters came the voices of the temple singers, and the house of the Lord was filled with songs of praise to God. Verse 28 goes on - "*and all the congregation worshipped and the singers sang, and the trumpets, and all this continued until the burnt offering was finished.*"

Why then did Israel lose her song? In chapter 28 we find that Ahaz, the king, had no use for the worship of God, so he drove out of the temple the singers and the priests. King Ahaz was one of the most repressive kings that ever occupied the throne. The kingdom under him sank to the lowest conditions in every possible way. He cut in pieces the gold and silver vessels. He hewed down the altars, and put out the lights, and locked the doors. The temple was filled with dust and dirt, and became the abode of the birds of the air that built their nests in its neglected courts and filled it with their uncleanness. He built altars in every corner of Jerusalem and sacrificed to the gods of the heathen na-

tions and caused the people of Israel to transgress. (Verses 24,25) For sixteen years this lasted. Then the judgment of God fell upon the nation, and many of them were taken captives or slain by the surrounding nations.

It was closing the doors of the house of the Lord and forgetting about God that robbed Israel of her song. We must be so watchful at all times that the song does not go out of our life. We would never directly shut our Lord out. But we must be so ever careful and always on guard so that we do not to allow the door to slowly close and begin to keep our Lord out. . Some of these gradual door closing experiences can be as follows -

- Neglecting to read one's Bible.
- Decrease in time spent meditating on the word of God.
- Earnest prayer becoming too much of a task.
- Worship of God beginning to lose out to other distractions.
- Attendance to meetings becoming "all too difficult."

These are some of the ways that can make the song slowly go out of our lives. If such a situation were to occur how then can we get the song back? How can we gain that Christian experience which is so joyful and victorious? Let us go back to 2 Chronicles 29:27. It says, "*And when the burnt offering began, the song of the Lord began also.*"

Return of the Song

We recall that God ordained various sacrifices for Israel. For example, there were the trespass offering, the peace offering, the meat offering and the whole burnt offering. Each of these is symbolic, and teaches a lesson concerning the Christian experience. But the highest type of all these offerings was the whole burnt offering. In the other offerings either the whole or a portion of that offered became the property of the officiating priest. In some a portion was returned to the offerer but in the case of the whole burnt offering the entire sacrifice was devoted to the Lord, and was consumed by the fire upon the altar. It was typical of the kind of sacrifice God invites us to make of our wills and to give our all to Him. It is not completed by merely giving ourselves to Him at consecration - consecration is but the placing of the sacrifice upon the altar - it is the beginning. To offer the whole burnt offering is a life long work a life time commitment, keeping the offering upon the altar while Jesus, our High Priest, sees that it is all consumed.

When we first gave ourselves to God in consecration, what joy filled our hearts! What songs of joy rose to our lips as we sought to praise Him for the blessed privilege of being counted dead with Christ, yet rising to walk with Him in newness of life! But after a while,

little by little, perhaps we failed to keep our sacrifice fully upon the altar as we had initially promised. Maybe a little self-will began to find a place in our life, and correspondingly some of the joy began to go out of our life, until one day we awoke to the fact that we no longer possessed that great joy in the Lord we had once known. The way back is indicated by the 2 Chronicles text. "*When the burnt offering began, the song of the Lord began also.*" When we begin again to place our offering on the altar, we resolve to see to it that all we have consecrated to the Lord is fully devoted to Him, so that there is no holding back of anything,

When the fire begins to consume the sacrifice, we recall the words of Peter - "Beloved think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you," for this is what we are to expect; "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 Pet. 4:12, 13.) For the self in us must be fully consumed before our whole burnt offering will be fully completed. And as the fire of those testing trials begins to come upon us and consume self, then the song of the Lord will begin again in our heart. We shall, as the Apostle Peter says in 1 Peter 4:13, "*rejoice inasmuch as ye are made partakers of Christ's sufferings*", and to rejoice with the Apostle Paul, "*Nay in all things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.*" - Rom. 8:37.

A Mother's Influence

Going back to 2 Chronicles, we find that finally the time came when King Ahaz had to die. He had been such a vicious and wicked king that the people loathed him. They even refused him a sepulchre among the kings of Israel, so he was laid to sleep in a dishonoured grave (2 Chronicles 28:27.) and his son, Hezekiah, became king. His name means "Strength of Jehovah" In contrast to his father he was one of the most acceptable kings who ever sat on the throne of Judah - David and Joshua were the other two rulers. (2 Kings 18:5.) At 25 years of age Hezekiah's entire reign was one of reformation. He bore no resemblance of his father. The secret of the difference between father and son was a godly woman. His mother, Abijah; the daughter of the Prophet Zechariah, was a good woman. Abijah means my Father is Jehovah. No doubt in the midst of the idolatry of her wicked husband's reign she took the lad under her own control, and inspired him for the noble part he was to play. One of the best gifts God can give in this world is a Christian mother. Abijah evidently moulded and controlled the character of her son. The influence of such a wife and mother is of incalculable value still today.

Song of Hezekiah

The first thing Hezekiah did when he came to the

throne was to open the doors of the house of the Lord and repair them. He brought the priests and the Levites together and told them first to sanctify themselves, for they had been chosen to stand before the Lord and to minister to the people. Then he told them to cleanse the temple, to carry the filthiness out of the holy place, and to restore the vessels of the Lord. For sixteen days they cleansed the temple, one day for every year of abuse and neglect by Ahaz. They carried the uncleanness of heathen rites into the brook Kidron. (verse 16) the usual place for useless trash.

(Verse 21) A special sin offering was offered for the sins of the people. *"And they brought 7 Bullocks, 7 rams and 7 he goats for a sin offering for the kingdom and the sanctuary and for Judah."* An offering of so many instead of one would mean that it was to intensify the matter. Also, seven is a symbol of perfection or completeness. It was not an atonement day sacrifice as it was in April in lieu of September. No atonement had been offered in the temple for many years. This was a special atonement for the nation. When this was done, he commanded that the sin offerings and the burnt offerings be made upon the altar. (Verse 28) *"And all the congregation worshipped, and all the singers sang, and the trumpets sounded and all continued until the burnt offering was finished."* (Verse 30) *"and so they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshipped."*

Hezekiah told the priests to restore the vessels of the temple, which the wicked King Ahaz had carried away. There are some things that might well be restored in so many places of worship today. It is not necessary for us to offer physical bullocks, rams and goats for divine forgiveness, but the Lord's temple should always retain a respect and decorum. Appropriate demeanour and behaviour should always apply – for we are in the house of God. How would we stand before the presence of our Lord Jesus in our midst today? A clear message needs restoring in some places, namely, that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit, that He was indeed the Son of God, that on the cross He bore the penalty of our sins to remove us from the sentence of death, that He was raised from the dead, assuring a resurrection for all mankind, that He was and is the Seed through whom blessings shall ultimately come to all the families of earth, and that the ransom sacrifice of Jesus Christ is the great central doctrine about which the whole plan of salvation revolves.

The Divine Remedy

So full of the song of the Lord, of praise to Jehovah God, were the hearts of Hezekiah's people, that when he told them of their privilege of bringing their sacrifices and thank offerings unto the Lord, he really managed to energise them for the number of the burnt offerings brought was overwhelming. Seventy bullocks,

a hundred rams, and two hundred lambs; and of the consecrated things, six hundred oxen, and three thousand sheep. But before the burnt offerings could be offered they had to be flayed -- skinned -- the covering with which nature provided the animal had to be removed. This pictures that in offering ourselves to God as burnt offerings, all that in man's sight might constitute a covering or excuse for our fallen natures must be taken away. For there is no 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.* - Heb. 4:13.

This work of thus helping to prepare the burnt offerings was a part of the duty of the priests. However, in verse 34 (Chap 29) we are told: *"But the priests were too few, so, that they could not flay all the burnt offerings: wherefore their brethren the Levites did help them till the work was ended, and until the other priests had sanctified themselves: for the Levites were more upright in heart to sanctify themselves than the priests."* We too have to be on guard that we are upright in heart at all times.

Practical Lessons

1 The temple was opened. The Scripture teaches that every child of God is a temple of the Holy Spirit: **1 Cor. 3:16, 17** *"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."* Eph 2:20,21 Further each is built *"upon the foundation of the apostles, Jesus Christ being the chief corner stone in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the lord."*

If the song of the Lord has in any measure gone out of our life, are we willing to open the temple of our life to the will of God again, to get it back? Jesus is still saying today: (Rev. 3:20.) *"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me."* Let us open the door of our heart fully to Him now if we have not already done so, and the song, the joy of the Lord, will fill the heart. It is worthwhile to remember that the door will not be open forever to the high and holy calling. There will come a time when the Lord will have his 144,000 and the calling will come to an end.

2. They cleansed the temple. We would not worship in a temple like the one that Hezekiah found, mouldy and, dirty, and covered with cobwebs. The Holy Spirit must have a clean temple in which to dwell. (Isa. 52:11.) *"...be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord."* It may be in just one thing, and what seems a very small thing, in which we are failing to conform our life to the divine standard.

But however small it may seem, if it is sin, it is taking away the song, the joy of the Lord, measurably out of life, and causing lack of the power whereby we might be enabled always to have the victory through Christ Jesus. Not until every nook and cranny, every secret sin has been cleansed, everything that in any manner violates the well-trained Christian conscience will there come complete peace, and power. Then the song of the Lord in all its beauty will rule in fullest joy.

3. They restored the holy vessels that had been taken away. There are things that need to be restored in one's life if the song of the Lord is to begin there. How often do we read the Bible? How often do we meditate on the wonderful words of life? The Prophet says: (*Jer. 15:16.*) "*Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy Word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart.*" Is the new creature within us being starved for lack of this essential spiritual food? Is this one of the vessels that needs to be restored?

4. Prayer Perhaps this is another vessel that needs to be restored. For any neglect of this wonderful privilege of communion with the Heavenly Father we are bound to pay the price by a decrease in our spiritual joys. We need so much to be in contact with our headquarters at all times and a good soldier does so in good times as well as bad. The adversary is so happy when there is the slightest decrease in communication between us and our Heavenly Father.

5. Christian Fellowship Possibly another vessel that needs to be restored is attendance at meetings for divine worship. The Psalmist expresses the spirit of every one who is living up to his or her privileges of joy in the Lord when he says (*Psa. 122:1.*) "*I was glad when they said unto me, Let, us go into the house of the Lord.*"

The Apostle advises in *Hebrews 10:25*, "*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.*". This is more fully relevant today than at any prior time in the history of the Church, now that the day of the Lord is so near at hand. How important it is for us to meet with those of like faith to discuss, to seek, to energise each other over the deep things of God. Certainly all of these things must be restored if we wish the song of the Lord to begin.

6. The rendering of the offerings One last thing was then done, in the rendering of the offerings, first the sin offering, and then the burnt offering. For the sin offering, all you have to do is to exercise faith in the sacrifice of Him who became a sin offering for us. *John 1:17.* "*Behold, The Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world*" No amount of work which we could perform in the service of God can entitle us to

any standing with Him. It is the covering robe of Christ's righteousness that makes us acceptable and gives us standing before God. (*Is 61:10*)...

*So the first requirement is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ as the One who has made atonement for us, not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, 'but with His own precious blood.

*Then, in grateful appreciation, we would stretch ourselves upon the altar for the burnt offering and ask God to send the fire that shall utterly consume our sacrifice, utterly consume the self-will within us, while the song, the joy of the Lord fills our hearts.

*Let us lay aside every weight and close-girding sin; to be indeed dead with Christ, putting to death self-will, (*2 Cor. 4:10.*) ... "*that the life of Jesus might be manifest in our body.*" The world can never give the song of the Lord in the heart; it is the life that is "*filled with all the fullness of God,*" the life of the burnt offering, the life of full surrender to the will of God, that gives us that song.

A New Song

This so beautiful "new song" is recorded in Revelation 14. Looking into the future, John saw one hundred and forty-four thousand standing on Mount Zion with the Lamb, and heard as the voice of many waters, and as the sound of harpers playing on their harps, and they sang as it were a new song before the throne; and no man could learn that song but the one hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth.

"And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder; and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps. And they sang as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders, and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the lamb whithersoever he goeth. They were redeemed from among men, the first fruits unto God and to the Lamb.

May the Lord add His blessing. By His grace, may we prove faithful and be numbered among the faithful ones on Mt Zion to sing that grand new song. (AK)

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THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT-LONGSUFFERING

In the King James Version translation of Galatians 5:22 the Apostle Paul lists *longsuffering* as one of the fruits of the Spirit. Some of the more recent translations give this fruit a different name; in the Emphatic Diaglott it is called *forbearance* while the New International Version uses the term *patience*.

All three names were appropriate when the translations were made.

Colossians 1:10-11 shows us that when the King James Version was made, *longsuffering* was a different fruit from *patience*: “*That ye 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*”. Both *patience* and *longsuffering* were necessary to articulate the Colossians “*fruitfulness in every good work*”, and hence we can conclude that the two terms referred to different fruits.

Vines Expository Dictionary distinguishes *longsuffering* and *patience* thus (quoting in part from the *Note* at the bottom of Vol. III page 12):

- “*Patience* is the quality that does not surrender to circumstances or succumb under trial. It is the opposite of despondency”
- “*Long suffering* is that quality of self restraint in the face of provocation which does not hastily retaliate or promptly punish. It is the opposite of anger.”

Vine’s explanation distinguishes *patience* from *longsuffering* on the basis of the provocation received, and the response. *Longsuffering* is bearing up under provocation, and requires restraint when the natural tendency is to anger. Hence *longsuffering* may be regarded as a higher level fruit than *patience*, the exercise of which does not involve overcoming provocation nor anger.

1 Peter 2:19 – 20 shows the difference between suffering for our faults and suffering wrongfully, that is, the difference between exercising *patience* and exercising *longsuffering*. “*For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For 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.*” The temptation to be angry is greatest when one suffers for “*doing well*”, and hence the Apostle Peter is pointing out, albeit using different terms, the difference between the fruit of *patience* and the fruit of *longsuffering*. While *patience* is “*thankworthy*”, *longsuffering* is particularly “*acceptable with God*”.

As always, Jesus is our perfect example, and in verses 21 to 23 Peter goes on to say that Jesus displayed *longsuffering*: “*because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye 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”. Jesus had no sin, and so all the suffering He endured was suffered wrongfully. Yet when He was reviled He reviled not again; when He suffered He threatened not – He did not retaliate. Jesus has left us the perfect example of the fruit of *longsuffering*.

Peter tells us that Jesus’ antidote for suffering wrongfully was to “*commit Himself to Him that judgeth righteously*”. In order to suffer wrongfully without succumbing to the temptation of anger we must also commit ourselves to Him that judgeth righteously. In other words, we must always be convinced that “*all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose*” (Rom. 8:28), whether that be when we are receiving support or withstanding provocation.

Keeping our eyes fixed on our goal is another defence which helps develop the fruit of *longsuffering* and negate the tendency to anger. “*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) “*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*”, (1 John 3:2) “*In due season we shall reap, if we faint not.*” (Galatians. 6:9)

Yet another aid to the development of the fruit of *longsuffering* is to remember that, just as it was with Jesus, our accusers “*could have no power against us, except it were given them from above.*” (John 19:11)

The provocations to be overcome by the fruit of *longsuffering* come not only from the world, but sometimes also from our brethren. In his letter “*to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus*”, the Apostle Paul wrote “*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 longsuffering**, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace*”. (Ephesians 4:1-3) To walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called requires lowliness (i.e. humility), meekness and long-suffering towards one another. Our brethren provoke us from time to time with little things they say or do, or do not say or do. We need the fruit of *longsuffering* to help us keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. “*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity*” (Psa. 133:1).

Each one of us needs a plentiful supply of the fruit of *longsuffering* if we are to overcome the provocations of the world and dwell together with our brethren in unity of spirit.

“The Resurrection”

The resurrection is a beautiful topic. As Bible students we believe and understand that for the resurrection process to start required the redemptive sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ. The most important subject of the Bible is the Ransom and the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is the next and most beautiful topic. It is the sweetest message from Almighty God. In all the world’s libraries we will not find information relating to the subject of the resurrection. In universities and private and public libraries throughout the world there is not one book teaching about the resurrection. Why? Because this can only be achieved through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The main verse for our topic is John 11:25 where we read: ‘Jesus said unto her “I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in Me, though he be dead, yet shall he live.” Only a few words but how important that we have them. In this verse we have two important statements - first, that He is the resurrection and the life, and second, that He is the life-giver. He is the life-giver, by His ransom God will give life and that life will be everlasting - not a thousand years, not one million years or even a billion years, but everlasting. We sometimes need to sit quietly alone and meditate very deeply to appreciate that God will give everlasting life for all mankind. There will be no more death.

All the gospels declare that Jesus Christ rose from the dead. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were witnesses and they say that our Lord Jesus Christ rose from the grave by the power of His Almighty Father. In Acts 1:1-3 we read: ‘The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach. Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Spirit had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen: To whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty

days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God: - not only for one day but for forty days. Here we have a clear statement of the resurrection of our dear Lord Jesus from the grave.

Chapter 15 of Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians clearly explains the resurrection topic for us. When we examine this subject we learn that the very first being to be resurrected on our globe was our Lord Jesus Christ. We are told in Holy Scripture that God raised



The Empty Tomb

Jesus on the third day. Christendom believes that Jesus rose by Himself but that is clearly not what the Scriptures say and it is not true. What the Scriptures say is that God raised Jesus; that He was not alive for three days. He said it was all fulfilled to completion when He died. The lesson of the resurrection of our Lord has a strong foundation. As has been mentioned, Acts 2:32 declares that the apostles were witnesses of this: ‘This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.’

Our Lord Jesus Christ is a biblical and historical figure. In the Jewish Torah it states that Jesus was a prophet. The Jewish historian, Josephus, writes about Jesus who was born in Bethlehem, but as a Jew he does not state that Jesus was the Saviour. He couldn’t because he had a veil over his eyes, but he tells us that historically Jesus existed at that time. The Roman historian, Seneca, writes about Jesus of Naz-

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areth whom Pilate condemned to death. He also says that Jesus had many followers. There is a similar thought in Matthew 27:54 where it is stated that a Roman centurion gave witness, saying: 'Truly this was the Son of God.' There was darkness for a few hours and there was also an earthquake and the veil of the Temple was torn from top to bottom. This veil was 10cm thick and it was torn by God's power, not by man, for man could not do this. We recall that the centurion stated that 'This truly was the Son of God'. The priestly class and Pharisees did not offer such words. They gave a very different title to our Lord, a title which is nearly impossible to believe but which is recorded in Matthew 27:63,64. They said Jesus was a deceiver of the people. From the High Priest and leaders of the Jewish nation, our Lord received the title of Deceiver but from the Roman pagan He was given the title of Son of God. What a paradox!

Our Lord's resurrection was so important for us and the entire mankind. The apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:13-17 says: 'But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen.' What logic! No-one can dispute that. 'And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And 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.' If Christ is not risen we have no faith, no hope, finished! A dark future for all mankind! Then the Apostle claims that if Jesus Christ had not been raised 'If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.' Did Apostle Paul speak the truth? While others enjoy the pleasures of the earthly life, our pleasure is to be with the Lord and the brethren. If Christ was not resurrected there is no hope for us and we would be the most miserable people on earth. We recall our Lord's words as to how seriously He looked upon the resurrection and His Ransom price. His words were 'Now is the judgment of this world.' (John 12:31)

In the Russian Orthodox church during Easter celebrations they greet each other with the words: 'Christ is risen' and the response from the receiver of this greeting is: 'Yes, truly He was resurrected!' In the Christian churches at this time the bells ring, but it is far more important that the hearts ring out with thankfulness and love for the Lord and our Heavenly Father. That is good! God says through the prophet, 'Give me thine heart'. God does not look at what man looks at, but at the heart. Sometimes we hear in conversation with other people, 'I believe in God, I believe in Christ, but I do not believe in the resurrection.' Maybe

you have found this when you speak to others. They cannot see the anointing and do not appreciate the Ransom. They are in darkness, and we don't blame them for that, but there will come a time when they see Christ and will believe in the resurrection.

Let us have a look at how strong is God's might and power. We believe that according to the Bible all of the human race will be resurrected in the future. That will be a miracle! But we have to think further to have a real foundation, so let us look at the strength of God's power. Our Earth is a sphere with a circumference of 40,000km at the Equator. It is suspended in Space. The gravitational forces work in an unexplainable way to keep it there. That is what the scientists say but the real question is, Who gave the gravitational forces that operate? Also, we are hanging in the air – not too close to the Sun and not too far. Someone gave this rule, this order, not the blindness of nature. The Sun is 1,300,000 times larger than the Earth. It heats us and gives us light every day without fail. It has shone for so many thousands of years and helps to keep life on our globe. Are not these things a miracle? With these facts in mind, we believe resurrection of 20-30 billion people by God will not be difficult for Him. What do the astronomers say? In a book written for the layman they say our galaxy has 20 billion stars. They do not say how they counted them, but this is what they report using the latest light telescopes. Light travels at 300,000 km per second and the light from our galaxy to the next takes 700 years. They also say that they have counted 20 billion galaxies in the Universe. So for God it would be no problem to recreate 20-30 billion human beings if we look at what He has done in the Cosmos.

In 1 John 1:1 we read: 'That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life.' This is not some silly theory; this is a fact from the apostle telling us about Jesus Christ, the Logos. When it was necessary to fulfil the redemption of Adam and all of mankind, the Logos would have discussed the subject with God. The Logos agreed to be sent from heaven to Earth. 'Whom will I send?' 'Send me' are the verses in prophecy because we believe and understand that the Lord did not come to Earth without His consent. God made the proposition 'This is my plan' and the Logos would have said 'Tell me please.' 2Cor.8:9 proves this: '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.' This is a clear statement. He was very rich in heaven, He created everything, and He became very poor. He was born in a stable, He sat on a donkey that didn't even belong to Him, and He was laid in a new

grave, not having the money to own His own grave. And through Him, we became very rich.

After His resurrection He spoke some very important words, not before His resurrection but after, recorded in Matthew 28:18 - 'All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.' We have assurance from our Lord that God gave Him power in heaven and earth, not limited power but **all** power. Originally He was the Logos with power from Almighty God. He had a spiritual body. When necessary, God transferred His life to Mary as told in Matthew. And when he had completed the work assigned to Him, God took Him again to heaven. The journey of our Lord was from heaven to Earth and then from Earth to heaven. It is easy for us as human beings to believe that if the Lord God Almighty will accept us, we will receive a spiritual body. Our Lord is our example. He was a spiritual person, after He was born as a human being in Bethlehem as the second Adam, and after that He was again taken to the heaven and into His Father's house.

If Jesus Christ were not raised by the power of the Almighty Jehovah God, what would happen? **Firstly**, the prophecies in Genesis 3:15 and Galatians 3:16 would not be fulfilled. The first text says that the seed of the woman will bruise the head of Satan and the second proves that this seed is Jesus Christ. If Jesus Christ were not resurrected, this prophecy from God could not be fulfilled. **Secondly**, the promise given to Abraham in Genesis 22:17,18 for his unfailing faithfulness in offering his own son, Isaac, would not be fulfilled - 'in thy seed all the nations of the earth will be blessed.' **Thirdly**, if Jesus Christ could not be raised the figures in the Tabernacle shadows, the types and prophecies pertaining to the future kingdom of God would hold no power. **Fourthly**, the Holy Spirit could not be sent upon the apostles, therefore all would be back to their previous occupations, like fishing, if the Lord could not be raised. **Fifthly**, by logical deduction, there would be no apostles. There would be no Apostle Paul and therefore no apostle for the Gentiles.

We would not have the four gospels or the Acts of the Apostles, and no letters from the Apostles. There would be no Book of Revelation from Jesus Christ, and consequently no New Testament if the Lord did not rise. There would be no high calling, no Christianity, neither Roman Catholic, Greek or Protestant, Reformers, Baptists, Adventist churches. There would be no good and faithful servant or Bible Students. We would not know the Lord and God's Plan if Jesus were not resurrected. We would be like dry trees, and what value is that? Without His resurrection we would be without faith and without hope. Our Lord's prayer, 'Our Father who art in heaven' would not be known.

But our gracious loving Heavenly Father raised His

Son on the third day and so assured the resurrection for all mankind who believe in the Lord Jesus and acknowledge and accept Him as their Saviour. That is the condition now and it will be the condition in the future. Whoever wishes to receive everlasting life must accept the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour. Many educated people who believe in God say they believe John 3:16 - '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.' In the words of Apostle Paul in Acts 24:15, 'And have hope to our God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.' We are thankful to our heavenly Father, that from the Holy Scriptures we receive such a beautiful truth as the resurrection. This truth is not like the air but has a sure foundation of power and authority. Though there will be a difference between the resurrection of the church, the great company, and the whole world, the basic assurance from Scripture is - "Marvel not at this, for the hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice and shall come forth."

.What a sweet moment it will be for each one if the Lord accept us and we receive spiritual life in that "first resurrection" (Rev 20:6) that we may see the glory of our Heavenly Father! (LK.03)

The Garden Tomb

In my dreams I wandered back to Calvary,
To the place where Jesus bled and died.
In His hands my eyes beheld the nail scars;
And I saw the spear wound in His side.

Chorus

"Once for all I gave my life on Calvary;
I am now alive forever more,
An empty tomb will always be a witness;
I'm not coming this way anymore."

As my thoughts then wandered to the garden,
To the tomb wherein my Saviour lay.
There the angel came and rolled the stone
away;
He was gone — He is alive today!

As I stooped and looked into the tomb there,
With the grave clothes lying separately,
As today I ponder all the reasons,
Seems I hear my Saviour say to me:

Joel A. Holloway

“ECOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE KINGDOM”

The Lord's people have a very special privilege knowing about the work of the Kingdom that places us in a position that the world does not have. We understand that the physical earth is promised to “abide forever” (Ecclesiastes 1:4) and that the earth in its entire potential splendour will some day be the glorious footstool of Jehovah. We can see this in two of the promises recorded in Isaiah: 66:1 - “Thus saith the LORD, ‘The heaven is my throne, and *the earth is my footstool*: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?’ ” Isa 60:13 - “...and I will make the place *of my feet* glorious.”

Throughout the world there is a growing respect and concern for the environment and what's happening to the planet, in fact there is recognition that through mankind's unwise management “the earth mourneth and languisheth; Lebanon is ashamed and hewn down, Sharon is like a wilderness.” Isaiah 33:9

Within my own country, if one visits the magnificent forests of Northern California it is possible to get a sense of the glory that Lebanon once had – now reduced to sad languishing. The health of the global environment is in fact, what brings me to Australia, on my third trip since 2000. Currently, there is a 500-page document being prepared under the auspices of the United Nations World Meteorological Organisation that hopes to address the question of what should be done about the buildup of atmospheric carbon dioxide. This is one of those situations where there is perplexity among men. There is even perplexity amongst some who say, “Is it an issue and should we even care?”

Since portions of the Christian community have been especially dismissive of this, let me begin by asserting that of course it is an issue, and one for which there is long-standing concern. Anthropogenic climate change was speculated on by historian Edward Gibbon in the 1790's in “The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.” French engineer and mathematician Joseph Fourier recognized that the earth's atmosphere served as “greenhouse” and brought this term “greenhouse effect” in use in 1820's. American atmospheric scientist Samuel Langley made the first systematic attempt to measure this greenhouse effect in the 1890's, supplying data that at the close of the 19th century, Swedish chemist Svante Arrhenius used to first calculate the impact of man's coal use on the earth's temperature. What I am trying to illustrate is that we are participating in an investigation that has been of concern to some of our pre-eminent minds for over two centuries. As we move into the 21st century, the societal, political, and economic impacts are a concern for every

world government. Amongst the poorest, Bangladesh with an average elevation of 1.5 metres above sea-level sees its unrelenting misery increase if even the most conservative estimate of a 1-metre sea-level rise during this century come to pass. The third world and developing economies such as China that are not under the threat that hangs over Bangladesh see both immediate threats to shifting watersheds, challenges to an already stressed and marginal agriculture, and a roadblock to their economic path forward. This is perceived as but one more ill the developed world is visiting upon the third world, increasing further the polarisation that characterises our day.

Australia is not indifferent to these developments, and as the new millennium began in February 2000, one can find record of “a public inquiry into the implementation of ecologically sustainable development by Commonwealth departments and agencies.” At the same time, Australia and the domineering “G8” economic “club” (America, Japan, Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Canada and Russia) recognise that the climate issue fundamentally challenges their very way of life. By any metric, this is a way of life that is deeply enmeshed with the release of carbon dioxide. Already, all these problems are feeding into the perplexity of nations that characterises this great Time of Trouble.

As the Lord's people, we have a privileged vantage that permits us to see the Lord's wisdom in what's happening. By faith, we are among that company upon the “sea of glass mingled with fire” (Revelation 15:2). In seeming defiance of the Creator's own laws; our feet stand supported by the very waters of the stormy seas, as did our Master's (John 6:19-20). Like him, our message to the humble of heart must be “Be not afraid.” While not in any way advocating staying the course with a “Business-as-usual” approach to “sustainable development,” let us recognise that some of the problems that are, or will, come as a consequence of the environmental response to the buildup of greenhouse gases and climate change, will actually be a blessing in terms of how the Kingdom is going to be ministered.

What does this mean?

What if the resurrection took place this afternoon, in other words, with world conditions just as they are right now? Naturally, there would be an incomparably better administration. We might be tempted to think, “So that takes care of all these problems for the billions that are coming back from the grave,” and of course that is true. It is going to be a perfect administration, the best that the Universe has ever seen. Surely, that's

why it has taken so long to find the 'jewels' here on the earth, and for our Heavenly Father to oversee their much needed polishing.

But let us take our considerations one step further. What if the resurrection took place right now and people came back from the grave with the skills with which they went into the grave? Let us recall that in all things relating to the resurrection, "Where the tree falleth, there shall it lie." (Ecclesiastes 11:3) What are the skills the majority of mankind's generations know?

Consider this, on the eve of the industrial revolution in the 1820's, as the old economic order was coming to a close, agrarian China accounted for nearly one-third of the world's economic productivity [David Hale, "China Takes Off," *Foreign Affairs*, November 2003, p.37] Economic historian Fernand Braudel chronicles how England as the world leader in the industrial revolution, found industry overtaking agriculture by 1820. Shortly thereafter town-dwellers outnumbered the farmers. For the U.S. and Germany, economic domination of industrialisation at the expense of agriculture occurred in the late 1860's, while France followed nearly twenty years later in the mid-1880's [Braudel, F., Civilization & Capitalism, Vol. 3, Harper Rowe (1984) p.306].

Currently, less than 3% of the developed world's population engages in an agriculture production that supplies not only the recommended dietary needs, but a nearly 50% surfeit some of which goes into export and some into well-padded waistlines [Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, The Future of Food, Paris (1998) p.27]. Looking at the millennium from David to Christ (Matthew 1:17-18) we find support for a reasonable approximation of 3 generations per century. Hence, for England we are looking at only five generations in which farming skills have not played the dominant role in society.

The statistics cited illustrate that in the resurrection those having skills in farming will dominate the generations returning from the grave. Under the present circumstances, as one resurrected you would be coming back to society that has virtually no specific use for farming skills. How would you feel coming back under those circumstances? Since you are far less than perfect, you would likely feel as if you were a second-class citizen with marginal skills, and no skills whatever with respect to present-day technology. Until the gradual process of education would teach a new set of skills, you would feel lost and it would be discouraging.

But what if you came back at a time where your skills as a farmer were exactly what the world needs?

Let us consider what might be learned from some recent events right here in Australia. The long-term orbital cycles of the earth oscillate Australia between being a rain-forest dominated continent and its current desert environment with the rain forests in their refuge zones in Queensland. I would like to think that kingdom conditions will move Australia back towards being rain forest. However, the trend towards desert conditions is being exacerbated by current conditions. The massive forest fires two years ago in the Blue Mountains outside of Sydney; and the threat to Canberra from the forest fires last year may well be a response to climate stress. These all follow a well-predicted chain of events; that may be over-simplified to saying climate stress leads to a weakened forest that sets up conditions for forest fires.

This last summer in the United States this same pattern operated with devastating effect around San Diego, one of the premier cities in the U.S. The further along we go with "Business-as-usual" the worse things become. It is already recognised that higher carbon dioxide levels will promote woody tissue growth, but since the cycling of other critical nutrients, phosphorus, nitrogen, and sulfur will not increase, decay will slow down setting up conditions for more fires. Recognising this, there are even suggestions from a leading researcher that these new dynamics, "may even diminish long-term carbon storage" thus amplifying the problem [Korner, C., *Science*, 23 May 2003, p.1242].

Did the Lord forewarn us of this?

In type, "trees" often picture the established world leaders of high ethical principle and purpose. Nebuchadnezzar was one such "tree" (Daniel 4:10) Perhaps we may do well to take the following texts previously considered as symbolic; and consider them as having both a symbolic and literal application. Perhaps, "trees" should also picture – trees: "The rest of the trees of his forest shall be few, that a child may write them." Isaiah 10:19 "The earth mourneth and languisheth; Lebanon is ashamed and hewn down, Sharon is like a wilderness." Isaiah 33:9

There is of course a promise of restoration:

"Until the spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be counted for a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest." Isaiah 32:15
"Is it not a very little while and Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field and the fruitful field esteemed as a forest?" Isaiah 29:17
Well, it is clear that we have brought some of the ecological troubles that will close out this age upon ourselves. Man's original job description called for him to "keep" the garden (Genesis 2:15). Now it appears as if his job will be to straighten up the mess he has made. If children mess up their bedroom, a good parent doesn't go and straighten it all up for them while they are

out to school. A good parent makes them go in and take care of it themselves.

We as the Lord's people have a special privilege because we understand the Scriptural basis for the times of restitution and ecology. As the resurrection takes place people coming up from the grave will have the job skills and life experience that are just what the earth will need. Isn't that just like the Lord?

There should be more than enough replanting to keep everyone productively employed as they make progress up the highway of holiness, and this is certainly going to be the most massive public education and public works program ever! In the end, when all is reconciled in Christ, we will find Jehovah's footstool both glorious for its moral perfection *and* of surpassing beauty.

(From a discourse given by Bro Richard Doctor in Melbourne, Australia.)

“GOD’S PEACE ”

How can any individual or group find true, inner peace. How can any nation find lasting peace with its neighbour in our world today? In the political sphere, President George Bush speaks at times of his “Road Map for Peace” in the Middle East, but though we can admire those who seek to bring peace about, we are only too aware that there can be no lasting peace on earth while mankind remains estranged from its Creator. For when disobedience and sin entered, the accord was broken and without some form of reconciliation it must and will remain so, leaving no prospect for any real peace.

We are blessed indeed that as Christians we do have a Road Map for Peace, a plan of ages, in our Bible, a program that stretches out over a long period, by our human calculations. Ours is assured of success, because it is backed by the sure word of God and by the sacrifice of our dear Saviour and Lord, Jesus Christ. Meantime, there have been some in every age who have come to know something of real inner peace. In the Old Testament, the psalmist and the prophet tell us – Psalm 119:165 “Great peace have they who love Thy law and nothing shall offend them” Isaiah 26:3 “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee”

The Lord's people of this gospel age rightly claim these assurances, but the writers were no doubt speaking from personal experience and in each case we can see the heart and mind turned toward Jehovah, whose will and law was their delight. Israel as a nation enjoyed periods of national peace while they sought to keep His law, but all too often they lapsed back into sin and at times idolatry. But to those whose hearts were turned to Him, God could grant His peace. Since faith and obedience are so closely linked with peace, no doubt the faithful ones of Hebrews 11 would have come to know something of this peace, even in the severe trials they endured.

Peace With God

Their experiences were perhaps a foretaste of the full provision which our loving Heavenly Father had in mind for the ultimate establishment of peace for all

mankind. We read about this in 2 Corinthians 5 and we note again that it was and is to be a stage by stage process. We love to hear of the beautiful and most important doctrines of Ransom, Resurrection and Restitution, to which we should probably add another ‘R’ – Reconciliation. In the chapter quoted, Paul is speaking of his own ministry and that of his fellow workers; by implication this includes all the Lord's people down the gospel age, to whom has been given the ‘word of reconciliation’.

Paul speaks of his commission as a “ministry of reconciliation”, of calling his hearers back to be reconciled, to be at peace with God and outlines how this is now possible – “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 to us the ministry of reconciliation, to wit, that God was in Christ, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.” (2 Cor 5:17-20)

This is surely one of the most profound and also reassuring passages of scripture in our Bible. First, we note that reconciliation was and is God's initiative, in love He planned it all, as John tells us in other words. Second we see that Jesus Christ is the basis of reconciliation through His blood shed as a Ransom for all. (Col 1:20, 1 Tim 2:6,7). Third it is IN HIM, and only in Him, that the individual believer can come to know His peace. Our Lord's own words speak to us here – “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) Only in Him is there real peace; in Eph 2:14, Paul says that “He (that is, Christ) IS our peace.”

Reconciliation is then by faith in the shed blood of Jesus Christ. “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.” (Rom 5:1) For the Christian, the estrangement is done away with and a new life pleasing to God can begin. Paul goes on to list the experiences and the development which should follow in his or her new life - (1) Peace with God and (2) Access by faith into His presence by “a new and living way which He (Jesus) hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, His flesh.” (Heb 10:20)

The next step is that of consecration to the will and service of God and the sealing of the Holy Spirit in the heart and life of each believer. “After that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of Promise, which is the earnest (pledge or guarantee) of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession.” (Eph 1:13-14) Here we see that God not only marks us out as His own but underwrites the promise He has given us in Christ. Part of this promise is that of His peace and Paul several times refers to our Heavenly Father as the God of peace, but perhaps the best known and most precious is the promise of Phil 4:6,7 – “Be careful for nothing, but in everything 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.”

Inner Peace

What a perfect recipe is here for inner peace, if only we can take it to our own hearts. We live in a stressful world, as Christians we are not immune from the difficulties and trials which others experience, but we have a sure basis for faith and reliance in Him “who hath saved us and called us with a holy calling” through His dear Son, our Saviour, and has given us assurance that He will never leave us or forsake us. As with the Old Testament ones earlier considered, communication and heart harmony are involved. Do we always take advantage of the rich privilege we have of access by our Saviour into the presence of our Father in heaven? Do we daily seek to be more and more “transformed by the renewing of (our) mind that (we) may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” (Rom 12:2) In our Saviour, we have a faithful and sympathetic High Priest who has passed into the heavens, so “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)

Our Saviour Himself promised His peace, as we read in John 14:27. His own life and ministry were indeed an illustration of perfect trust and rest in His Father. We read in Mark 4 how that in the midst of the storm our Saviour slept. The concerned disciples roused Him saying “Carest Thou not that we perish? “And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea,

Peace be still. And the wind ceased and there was a great calm.” (Mk 4:39) Here we see not only His own complete trust but His power to bring peace. In our life’s trials He still can whisper ‘Peace be still’ to the storm tossed heart, as He promised. “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.” Nor was this to be any transitory thing, but rather His assurance was “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world (or rather ‘age’).”

One of the fruits of the Holy Spirit is peace and the peace which comes with increasing faith and trust should be evident in our lives. It is indeed to be a controlling factor in our lives, as we read in Paul’s instructions to the brethren in Colosse – “Above all these things (mercy, kindness, forgiving, etc) put on love, which is the bond of perfectness, and let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which you are called in one body; and be ye thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom.” (Col 3:14-16) Surely, the more we come to know and love that “word of Christ”, the more the peace of God given to us in Christ will be manifest in our lives and in all our relationships with others.

The Practice of Peace

The peace of God is not just for our own blessing or private gain, but is to be the basis of all our dealings with others, especially the Lord’s people. Within the Church, we are to “endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace” (Eph 4:3), while to those around us in the world we are to “follow peace with all, and holiness”. (Heb 12:14) Furthermore, we are instructed to seek peace and pursue it.” (1 Pet 3:11) The pursuit of peace may often not be easy but it is to be striven for. Paul echoes Peter’s sentiments in Rom 14:19 – “Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith we may edify another.” Our Lord’s own words need also to be remembered – “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God. “ (Matt 5:9) In His words, there is not only a challenge but a rich promise.

This practice of peace will require first of all that our daily lives be such as radiate peace to those we meet, for we are followers of the Prince of Peace. Further it will require the elimination of self-will, personal ambition apart from the service of Christ and it may require personal sacrifice. At times, it may call for silence, and we all need the divine wisdom that comes from above in such circumstances. One particular hazard is the tongue, about which James warns us. At times, how our prayer might be as one of the hymns says – “Set Thou a seal upon my lips, just for today.” (and every day!) What joy it is to meet those dear saints of God whom we have known and still do whose presence ra-

diates peace. May we all grow more like them year by year.

How few of all earth's peoples as yet however have any experience or practice of this peace of God that passes all understanding? Some find a measure of peace in earthly activities or philosophies but for real peace there is need not only for a present but a future fulfilment. As Paul tells us - "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come." (1 Tim 4:8) The Christmas season reminds us again each year us of the coming into our world of Him who is named the Prince of Peace, of whose government there is to be no end. As yet we do not see that new order established, though events around us suggest that it is near. So we continue to pray Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven. This alone can bring lasting peace.

Psalm 72 is a prayer of David for his son, Solomon, but it is clearly prophetic of our Lord, the "greater than Solomon". While Solomon enjoyed local glory in his day, the influence of the greater one than he is to be universal and eternal. Verse 7 reads - "In his days shall the righteous flourish and abundance of peace as long as the moon endureth." Only then will come to pass that "desire of all nations" spoken of by the prophet Haggai - "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." (Ch 2:6,7) Abundance of peace - what a prospect!

So as Israel were told to pray for the peace of Jerusalem, so the Lord's people continue to pray for the coming of that kingdom which shall establish lasting peace for all mankind, for that time when God's will shall be done not only, as now, in heaven and in the hearts of His people, but in earth in every land and people and when all will come to know God from the least to the greatest. Meantime, we are privileged to know something here and now of the breadth and length and depth and height of God's love as exhibited in the gift of His dear Son and of His peace which passes all understanding to guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Let us each daily resolve to diligently and in full faith follow our Road Map for Inner Peace as set out by the apostle, and already quoted but worth repeating - "Be careful for nothing, but in everything 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."

"BE NOT AFRAID FOR I AM WITH YOU"

The quotation 'Be not afraid for I am with you' comes from Genesis 26:24. The setting is in the land of the Philistines. Isaac had been instructed by God to move there as the land in which he lived was in famine. While there, he had experienced fear for his life as we are told in Genesis 26:7. When the men of the place asked about his wife, he said, "She is my sister" for he was afraid to say "my wife" thinking that the men of the place might kill him on account of Rebekah because she was beautiful. Isaac prospered in the land and became the envy of the Philistines to the point where they filled in his father's well and eventually their king asked him to leave. We turn to Genesis 26:14-16: ¹⁴For he had possessions of flocks and herds and a great household so the Philistines envied him. ¹⁵Now all the wells which his father's servants had dug in the days of Abraham, his father, the Philistines stopped up by filling them with earth. ¹⁶Then Abimelech said to Isaac, Go away from us, for you are too powerful for us.'

Isaac also encountered conflict with Gerar herdsmen as he dug wells in the valley, with the herdsmen claiming the water as theirs. It was not until he moved from their area that he found water that was not dis-

puted. Isaac must have been wondering about the promise from God, which we read in Genesis 26:3,4: ³Sojourn in this land and I will be with you and bless you, for to you and your descendants I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath which I swore to your father, Abraham, ⁴And I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven and give your descendants all these lands, and by your descendants all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.' However, Isaac was reassured by God as we read in Genesis 26:24: 'And the Lord appeared to him the same night and said, I am the God of your father, Abraham; do not fear, for I am with you. I will bless you and multiply your descendants for the sake of my servant, Abraham.'

As followers of Christ we, too, sometimes feel afraid or unsure of ourselves in our daily walk. Our Lord tells us in Luke 12:32: 'Do not be afraid, little flock, for your father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom.' Sometimes we feel that we have been deserted and that our Heavenly Father is not answering our prayers. Our Lord gives us the following assurance in Matthew 10:29-31: ²⁹Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? and yet not one of them will fall to the ground

apart from your father. ³⁰But the very hairs of your head are numbered. ³¹Therefore do not fear, you are of more value than many sparrows.'

Elijah Provided For By God

Let us return to the Old Testament and to the story of Elijah, which we find in the book of Kings. This gives us an insight into the attitude we have to have if we are to hear the answer that our Heavenly Father has for us. Elijah was a faithful servant of God in the days of the kings of Israel and Judah. Many of the kings did evil in the sight of the Lord, instituting the worship of Baal and causing the people to sin grievously. At the Lord's direction, Elijah informed the king, Ahab, that there was to be a drought in the land because of their attitude to God. Elijah was instructed to hide by the brook of Cherith and the Lord looked after him by having the ravens to feed him there. We find the story in 1 Kings 17:2-6: ²And the word of the Lord came to him saying, ³Go away from here and turn eastwards and hide yourself by the brook Cherith which is east of the Jordan, ⁴And it shall be that ye shall drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to provide for you there. ⁵So he went and did according to the Lord, for he went and lived by the brook Cherith which is east of Jordan ⁶And the ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening; and he would drink from the brook..' As the famine took hold, the situation worsened and the brook that Elijah relied on for his water eventually dried up.

The Lord instructed Elijah to contact a certain widow and the prophet and the family were miraculously kept alive by the barrel of meal and cruse of oil which did not need replenishing by human hand. Reading from 1 Kings 17:10-14, ¹⁰So he arose and went to Serapath, and when he came to the gate of the city, behold, a widow was there gathering sticks, and he called to her and said, Please give me a little water and a jar that I may drink. ¹¹As she was going to get it, he called to her and said, Please bring me a piece of bread in your hand. ¹²But she said, As the Lord your God liveth, I have no bread, only a handful of flour in a bowl and a little oil in the jar, and, behold, I am gathering a few sticks that I may go in and prepare for me and my son that we may eat it and die. ¹³Then Elijah said to her, Do not fear. Go, do as you have said, but make me a little breadcake from it first and bring it to me, and afterwards you may make one for yourself and for your son. ¹⁴For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, the bowl of flour shall not be exhausted, nor shall the jar of oil be empty, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain on the face of the earth.'

During this period the son of the widow died and

Elijah, with God's power, was able to raise him from the dead. We read in 1 Kings 17:17-24: ¹⁷Now it came about after these things that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, became sick and his sickness was so severe that there was no breath left in him. ¹⁸So she said to Elijah, What do I have to do with you, O man of God? You've come to me to bring my iniquity to remembrance and to put my son to death. ¹⁹And he said to her, Give me your son. Then he took him from her bosom and carried him into the upper room where he was living and laid him on his own bed. ²⁰He called to the Lord, saying, O Lord my God, hast thou also brought calamity to the widow with whom I am staying by causing her son to die? ²¹Then he stretched himself upon the child three times and called to the Lord and said, O Lord my God, I pray thee, let this child's life return to him. ²²The Lord heard the voice of Elijah and the life of the child returned to him and he revived. ²³And Elijah took the child and brought him down from the upper room into the house and gave him to his mother and said, See, your son is alive. ²⁴Then the woman said to Elijah, Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the Lord in your mouth is true.'

Three years passed without rain and the whole country was in sore straits. Elijah made a sign to make the people realise who was the true god, worthy of their admiration and service. He called the prophets of Baal to arrange a sacrifice to their god but not kindle the fire. He himself prepared a sacrifice to Jehovah. Prophets of Baal called on their god all day to send fire to consume the sacrifice, but received no answer. Eventually Elijah, at the time when the evening sacrifice should have been presented, besought the Lord to vindicate His name. We read in 1 Kings 18:37-39: ³⁷Answer me, O Lord, answer me, that this people might know that thou art Lord God, and that thou hast turned their hearts back again. ³⁸Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burning offering, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. ³⁹And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and said, The Lord, He is God; the Lord, He is God.'

Elijah Encouraged By God

Surely, these events should have shown Elijah the love, power and mercy of his God, and he should have been greatly strengthened by all these experiences. Elijah's need for food and water had been miraculously provided by a loving God. He had seen the mercy of God in the raising of the widow's son, and he had seen the awesome power of God demonstrated by the fire. However, when the wicked Queen Jezebel threatened his life, he fled. Although Elijah fled, God still continued to provide for his temporal needs and

eventually he lodged in a cave on Horeb, the Mount of God (Exodus 3:3). Let us turn to 1 Kings 19:9-13: ⁹And he came there to a cave and lodged there, and behold the word of God came unto him, and He said to him, What are you doing here, Elijah? ¹⁰And he said, I have been very zealous for the Lord God of hosts, for the sons of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, torn down thy altars and killed the prophets with the sword, and I alone am left; and they seek my life to take it away. ¹¹So He said, Go forth and stand on the mount before the Lord and, behold, the Lord was passing by. A great and strong wind was rending the mountain and breaking into pieces rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. ¹²And after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a sound of a gentle blowing' (or a still small voice, as the KJV puts it) ¹³And it came about when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave, and, behold, a voice came to him and said, What are you doing here, Elijah?'

Elijah wanted big things to happen and for God's words to thunder out to him. It was only when he realised that God worked in quiet ways as well that he hid his face in his mantle. He realised that he had no righteousness of his own to give him a standing before the Lord. The Lord chose this way to rebuke Elijah for his lack of faith, even though he had previously stood valiantly on the Lord's side. Then He gave Elijah further encouragement by revealing that, unknown to Elijah, there were 7,000 in Israel who had not bowed their knee to Baal and He gave Elijah a further commission. Moffat translates the still small voice as the breath of a light whisper. This reminds us of the creation of Adam and the fact that the Lord breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and he became a living soul.

"The Breath of a Light Whisper"

The breath of a light whisper also reminds us of our own begetting to a new nature and the working of God's Holy Spirit in each Christian. 'The anointing which you have received of Him abideth in you.' It is not easy for us to accept this promise in its entirety with the many problems that we come across, but Hebrews 10:23 reads: 'Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering (for He is faithful who has promised).' He will guide us into all truth. And we read in Titus 3:5: 'Not by works of righteousness which we have done but according to His mercy He has saved us by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit.' In this breath of a light whisper Elijah at once recognised the presence of the Lord, and in deep humility he wrapped his face in his mantle before putting himself into a position to hear what the Lord had to say to him at that time. He

learned from this example that his faith need not have wavered and that although the forces of evil were seemingly very great, the Lord was in complete control of the situation. Elijah immediately set out to fulfil the further commission which the Lord gave to him, assured that the presence of God would continually be with him. The mantle in which he wrapped his face became an instrument of power, and after his work was done he used it under the Lord's hand to smite the rivers of Jordan that he and Elisha might pass over dry shod.

We read in Isaiah 61:10: 'I will rejoice greatly in the Lord. My soul will exult in my God, for He hath clothed me with garments of salvation; He has wrapped me in a robe of righteousness as a bridegroom decks himself with garlands and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.' We, as Christians, have a mantle, a robe of righteousness. This is provided through Christ's righteousness, covering our imperfections and allowing us to be dealt with by our Heavenly Father. We also do well to wrap our face in our mantle, to listen to the Lord in deep humility, so that we may know of His plans for us. At times, like Elijah, we become disheartened, disappointed and dejected, imagining that we are forsaken, that we alone have tried to uphold the ways of righteousness, the forces of evil have been too much for us and we feel the pangs of defeat. Like the Psalmist in Psalm 42:11, we ask, Why are we in despair, O my soul, why have you become disturbed within me. We should also be able to answer, Hope in God for I shall yet praise Him, the help of my countenance and my God. Maybe the Lord will kindly rebuke us for our lack of faith, but we may be sure that this will always be done in love. And we may say with the psalmist, 'My soul thirsts for God, for the living God, when shall I come and appear before God?' (Psalm 42:2) We find the answer in verse 8 of this same Psalm – 'The Lord will command His kindness in the daytime and His song will be with me in the night, a prayer to the God of my life.'

We sometimes feel dismayed at our small numbers and feel so weak in ourselves that there is nothing we can achieve, but only the Lord knows the actual number of His people at any given time. He is well able to give us the encouragement we need to perform whatever service He requires of us. Our difficulties often stem from a lack of understanding of the way the Lord operates. He does not send storms, earthquakes or fire to persuade us of His power, but the breath of a light whisper to assure us of His tender love for us. 'Hereby do we know we are in Him and He is in us because He hath given us of His spirit '(1 John 4:13). What a wonderful gift this is, His free gift, bringing with it all that we need for our enlightenment, for our spiritual progress, help and support, strength in times of weakness, upholding power when we would fall, protection from

clamouring voices which would distract us from our chosen pathway. His spirit gives encouragement when we feel so alone, comfort and cheer when we are cast down by our faults and failures. Like Elijah when he cast himself down under the juniper tree, we feel inclined to say, Lord, it is enough, I can go no further. I have failed utterly, I cannot go on. It is then that we may hear the breath of a light whisper, the voice of the Holy Spirit bringing us refreshment and strength, and food for the journey until, as Elijah did, we go on in strength from that food to the mountain of God.

Our Lord, while in the Garden of Gethsemane just before His trial and crucifixion, felt that the cross was becoming too much to bear. In Mark 14:35 we read: 'And He went forward a little and fell on the ground, and prayed that if it be possible the hour might pass from Him', yet His faith in His Heavenly Father was strong. From verse 36 we read: 'He said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee. Take away this cup from Me, nevertheless, not what I will but what Thou will.' God had not forsaken Him, as we read in Luke 22:43: 'And there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him.' All this and much more is ours in the gift of the Holy Spirit until we are able to rejoice continually in the unspeakable blessings we receive, saying morning, noon and night, Praise be to Thee for Thine unspeakable gift.

Lessons from Elijah's Life

Elijah was one of the ancient worthies, one with whom the God of Israel dwelt in a very special manner. He lived in a time of apostasy when the nation as a whole had departed from the worship of the true God and followed after those who worshipped idols. Elijah showed before the people and kings the degree of holiness which the Lord required from those who were to serve Him acceptably. It was this very special way in which the Lord used him and taught him. He will be a wonderful and shining example of the gracious power of God in the age to come. Centuries later when the Messiah came, Elijah was one of the two who were seen to commune with Jesus at the Mount of Transfiguration. The disciples were in no doubt as to who appeared before them, and Peter in wonderment and adoration said, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, one for Moses and one for Elias.' (Matt.17:4) Years later Peter wrote: '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.' (2 Peter 1:16-18)

Let us not rest in that which we have already accomplished, nor look for things of great importance to do for the Lord. Be careful that ambition does not overtake us. All through our Christian walk we must be little in our own eyes, giving glory to God for every onward step. Maybe we will be overtaken in a fault and feel obliged to flee the wrath of those who know not the way of the Lord. Perhaps we have some pet theory of our own which prevents us from properly serving amongst the brethren. Perhaps for a time we lose faith, become afraid of the powers of evil. Satan marks our weak spots and does his best to discourage and hinder us. Maybe the Lord will give us a special commission, some service for the glory of His name after a period of disappointment and despair but, as in Elijah's case, the Lord gives such a commission only when our face is wrapped in our mantle, only when we realise that of ourselves we are nothing, that all that we have and all that we are able to do is only by His grace, with the robe of Christ's righteousness so graciously provided for us. Whenever we trust in our own strength we are useless to the Lord, but when we are in an attitude of deep humility, as was Elijah, the Lord may well use us to perform some service for Him or His people. It behoves us to keep our heart with all diligence, remembering that we have nothing which we did not receive from the Lord, and that every moment of every day we are dependent on Him for His covering robe.

The story of Elijah was written for our admonition and we may draw many lessons from his life, but let us take this one to heart. Maybe in our own experiences we will recognise the breath of a light whisper, the quiet presence of the Lord. Maybe we will hear His kindly rebuke, the words of His encouragement, the words of His commission, as did Elijah. Happy are we if we do as Elijah did – **wrap thy face in thy mantle**. We must also remember that the promise made to Isaac also applies to us, the promise from our Heavenly Father, **Do not be afraid, for I am with you.** (RC:03)

**“My presence shall go with thee
and I will give thee rest”**

Ex. 33:14

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THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT-GENTLENESS

It is of vital importance that the true Christian, having crucified the flesh and its deeds, develop the fruits of the Spirit (Gal.5:22). Every one who is seeking to be “*holy and without blame before Him*” (Eph. 1:4) must bear the fruits of the Spirit, the fruitage being a manifestation of God’s power working inwardly in them. So it was that the Apostle Paul was encouraging the church in Galatia many centuries ago, and his message is just as pertinent to us in these end times.

This article is devoted to the fruit of gentleness.

In secular circles *gentleness* is often regarded merely as an absence of force, and as “love in society”. Both of these attributes are incumbent on the Christian. Our Lord’s ministry at His first advent was characterised by gentleness towards the common people, and His gentle and kind spirit should be evident today in His footstep followers: “*Let your gentleness (KJV “moderation”) be evident to all*”. (Phil. 4:5 NIV). How true it is that “*a gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger*” (Proverbs 15:1 NIV). Consequently it is a challenge for us to show consideration, mercy and moderation to the extent that our gentleness is evident to all, remembering that it will not be until the “*day of visitation*” that all who “*behold our good works will glorify God*”. (1 Peter 2:12)

The definition of *gentleness* given in Strong’s Concordance (#5544 – *chrestotes* - “*usefulness i.e. moral excellence (in character or demeanour)*”) indicates that there are several aspects of gentleness, and that gentleness does not mean just the absence of force or will.

For something to be *useful* it must contribute to the desired outcome; that is, it must be constructive and not destructive. This objective must always be in the Christian’s mind and must dictate our every action, including our ministry to, and teaching of, others.

Jesus’ teaching was always gentle; to His disciples He said that He had many things to say unto them, but they could not bear them yet. (John 16:12) His disciples were not yet ready to cope with some of the deeper aspects of God’s plan, and to burden them with those truths at that stage of their development would have done more harm than good. Jesus restricted His teaching to those truths that were useful (constructive) to them at that time; His teaching was gentle.

Likewise the Apostle Paul urged those “*that were strong to bear the infirmities of the weak*”, to the extent that they were not to “*destroy them with their*

meat” (Romans 15:1; 14:15, 19–20). To the Thessalonians Paul wrote that the apostles had been “*gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children*” (1 Thess. 2:7), and he instructed Timothy that “*the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all, apt to teach, patient*” (2 Tim. 2:24).

These exhortations and admonitions apply to us today also. We are to be gentle with each other, even to the extent of refraining at times from a long and deep exposition of some truths if such an exposition would not be in the best interests of those present. While the truths might be very precious to us, we are to consider the welfare of others, and to ask ourselves whether what we are about to say will be useful (i.e. gentle) to those present. As “*God’s chosen people*” we are to “*clothe ourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience*”. (Colossians 3:12 NIV)

The usefulness aspect of the fruit of *gentleness* is employed widely in the Scriptures, also being translated as *goodness* and *kindness*. In Romans 2:4 the Apostle Paul says that it was the *goodness* of God that led us to repentance, and in Romans 11:22 the very calling of the Gentiles is ascribed to God’s gentleness (or goodness): “*Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God; on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness....*”

In Titus 3:3-5 God’s gentleness is translated *kindness*: “*For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish ... but after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared ...according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration ...*” Since our calling and salvation are due to God’s gentleness (goodness, kindness), our gentleness to the world and to our brethren should know no bounds.

THE EVERLASTING ARMS

I’ve a safe and sacred refuge
In the midst of all life’s care,
I’ve a helper, tried and precious
Who will all my sorrow share.
I’ve a comforter who dries my tears
And soothes my deepest grief;
Who stills my fears and gives to me
A blessed, sweet relief.
I know no fear or trouble
In the whirl of life’s alarms,
No storm can shake my refuge
In the Everlasting Arms

(LKP)



“TYPES AND ANTITYPES” (Shadow and Substance)

The words ‘types’ and ‘anti-types’ are quite often used in Bible Students’ discussions but these words are not found in the Concordance or Vine. The Word Book Dictionary, however, has this to say about these words among other descriptions: ‘A type is something having symbolic significance; a setting; an emblem; something that foreshadows something to come...a prefigurement; a person, object or event in the Old Testament regarded as foreshadowing a corresponding reality in the new dispensation.’ The Word Book Dictionary also says of the word ‘anti-type’: ‘A person, thing or idea represented by an earlier type or symbol such as a New Testament event prefigured in the Old Testament.’

The Apostle Paul in his writings in 1 Cor. 10 says: ‘¹Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant how that all our fathers were under the cloud and all passed through the sea: ²And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea.’ Then he goes on: ‘⁴And all had the same spiritual nourishment ⁵but God was not pleased with many of them and they were overthrown in the wilderness.⁶And these things were our examples...¹¹Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.’ This word ‘ensamples’ is interesting because in the margin of the KJV it has ‘types’ so they are types for our learning, the anti-type. Ferrar Fenton’s translation of 1Cor.10:11,12 reads: ‘And all these came upon them typically but were written for our instruction upon whom the perfection of the ages has come, so that whoever imagines he stands should take care not to fall.’ We note that this translation uses the words “upon whom the perfection of the ages has come”. Just think of the greatness of that! There is a similar thought in Ephesians 2:7: ‘That in the ages to come he may show the exceeding riches of his grace (which is His undeserved favour) in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.’ It is the gift of God. The Manual lists 104 pictures of Christ and the church, but only three pictures (types and anti-types)

will be considered now. These not only include Christ and the church but also the good things to come, the blessings also for all mankind. They are the promise to Abraham, the Passover and the Law, and their relation to the New Covenant. Hebrews Chapter 8 speaks of our High Priest. Every high priest is to offer gifts and sacrifices, and in verse 5: ‘Who serve unto the example, a shadow of heavenly things.’ Now, as Jesus made an acceptable sacrifice, He sits on the right hand of the Majesty of the heavens. Hebrews 10:1 reads: ‘For the law having a shadow of the good things to come and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered...make the comers thereunto perfect.’ Paul, in writing to the Colossians in Chapter 2 warns those in Christ: ‘⁸Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ...¹⁶Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: ¹⁷which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.’ Verse 17 in the R.S.V. reads: ‘These are only a shadow of what is to come but the substance belongs to Christ.’ Ferrar Fenton has: ‘Which are a forecast of the future, but the substance belongs to Christ.’ So Christ is the substance or the reality. He has the honour and the power to accomplish all the good things promised in the past in types or shadow.

The Promise to Abraham

In Genesis 12 God said to Abram: ‘¹Get thee out of thy country and from thy kindred and from thy fa-

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ther's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: ²And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing.³And I will bless them that bless thee and curse him that curseth thee; and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.' St. Paul quotes this in Galatians 3 and shows how it was of faith and how important faith is. In Genesis 13, after Abram and Lot parted, God said to Abram: ¹⁴Lift up now thine eyes and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: ¹⁵For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. ¹⁶And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered.' In Chapter 17, verse 1, the Lord appeared to Abram and said: I am the Almighty God; walk before me and be thou perfect' In the margin it has for 'perfect' 'upright or sincere', and how important these traits of character are.

Abram's name is then changed to Abraham and in verse 7 God establishes His covenant with Abraham and his seed for an everlasting covenant, and circumcision is instituted as a sign or a seal. Also in Genesis 17, Abraham's wife's name is changed from Sarai to Sarah, and she was promised she would bear a son, whose name was to be Isaac and through whom the promise was to come. St Paul deals with much of this in Galatians 3:8: 'God preached before the gospel (the good news) unto Abraham saying In thee shall all nations be blessed' and in verse 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.' So Christ, anointed, is the seed. Isaac was only a type or picture of Christ, who was the substance. Continuing on from verse 26 Paul speaks to the followers of Christ by faith, saying: 'Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.'²⁷For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸Whether Jew or Greek, bond or free, male or female: ye are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise.' This shows the oneness and unity of the body members with the head, Christ. See also Romans 8: ¹⁷And 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.' St Paul carries on: ¹⁹The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.²⁰For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, ²¹because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God....²⁴For we are saved by hope; but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope?²⁵ But if we hope for

that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.'

The Passover

When the children of Jacob went into Egypt there were 70, and in Exodus 1:7 it reads: 'The children of Israel were fruitful and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them.' When a new king arose that knew not Joseph, he put hard taskmasters over them and made them slaves. In time, Moses was born and raised up in special circumstances under God's providence. The first few chapters of Exodus make interesting reading of the experiences of Moses up to the first plague in Chapter 8:21. There were eight more plagues and the tenth plague was the death of the firstborn. In Exodus 11:4&5 Moses said: 'Thus saith the Lord, About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt: And all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sitteth upon his throne, even unto the firstborn of the maidservant that is behind the mill; and the firstborn of all the beasts.'

In Chapter 12 we are told how all the firstborn of the Israelites were to be passed over. They were to take a lamb without blemish on the tenth day of the first month for each household or with a neighbour, keep it until the 14th, kill it in the evening and put the blood above the door and on the two sideposts of the door. They were to eat it that night roasted with fire and with unleavened bread and bitter herbs; nothing was to remain until morning, any remnant being burnt. ¹¹Ye shall eat it with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the Lord's passover.' They were also to keep the Passover in the future generations as a memorial as a seven-day feast with unleavened bread. On the night of the first Passover when death passed through the land, all the firstborn of Egypt were slain, from the king's house down, but not those in the houses with the blood on the doorposts. There was a great cry throughout Egypt that night, and Pharaoh called Moses and Aaron. Aaron was Moses' brother and his spokesman, and later he became the high priest. Pharaoh told them to leave it in all haste with their people and flocks and herds. So Israel left Egypt after 430 years.

There are many types in these experiences which have their anti-types in the Israel of God in this age and the age to come. The Lord Jesus on the last night of His life on earth kept the Passover with His disciples and instituted the Memorial of His death with the bread and the vine in the cup. St Paul refers to this in 1Cor.5: ⁷Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is slain for us: ⁸Therefore let us keep the

feast, not with old leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.' Leaven represents sin or wrongdoing, as it says – malice and wickedness. The Israelites were to eat unleavened bread for the seven days of their feast and from the first day to take leaven out of their houses. We remember how God said to Abraham to be perfect, that is, upright and sincere.

In our scripture we have unleavened bread, sincerity and truth. Christ is referred to as our Passover and sacrifice for us. In Hebrews 12:23 His followers are called the church of the firstborn. Colossians 1:18 reads: 'He, Christ, is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead: that in all things he might have the pre-eminence.' He is also said to be the firstborn among many brethren. 1Cor.15 verses 20 & 23 read: 'But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept... But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his appearing.' (Diaglott). James 1:18 reads in part: 'That we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.' The firstborn under the blood in Egypt was spared, and all the people left Egypt from their taskmasters, a very complete deliverance. The promise to Abraham to have a special son by Sarah through whom all the families of the earth were to be blessed, Galatians shows is fulfilled in Christ.

The Law and the New Covenant

As the promise to Abraham was so comprehensive, with a blessing for everyone, why was the Law given to Israel and the prophecy of a new covenant given later? In Galatians 3:19 Paul poses the question: 'Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions till the seed should come to whom the promise was made.' The people in general did not have the faith of Abraham, so transgressions abounded. The Law acted as a schoolmaster to show them the right way, but none could keep it by works to gain life. When Christ came, those who had the right faith were those taken out of the Gentiles and immersed into Christ who became Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise. (Gal.3:22-29).

The firstborns spared on the first Passover night were exchanged for the tribe of Levi (Num.3:12) who were to carry out the Tabernacle services with Aaron as high priest. Every high priest was ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices. In Abraham's example we have no sacrificing priest, but he was asked to offer his son of promise, Isaac. This he did, full of faith, believing God could raise him up even from the dead. But he did meet Melchisedec of Salem, priest of the Most High God, King of Righteousness, after that King of Salem, which is king of peace; without father, without mother, without descent. In the margin it has 'without

pedigree' for 'without descent' so there is no record of where he came from as we have pedigrees of animals these days. Hebrews 7:13,14 speaks of the evidence that our Lord sprang out of Judah, which was another tribe of which no man gave attendance at the altar or of which Moses spoke nothing concerning the priesthood.

In Hebrews 5 St Paul speaks of Jesus being made perfect in the days of His flesh, and 'called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec' as prophesied in Psalm 110:4, and also stated in Hebrews 6:20 where Jesus is presented for us, the heirs of promise, which God confirmed by an oath, that we may lay hold upon the hope set before us (from verse 18, in part). Hebrews 9:24 reads: 'For Christ is not entered into the holy place made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.' In 1Peter 2:9 we are told: 'Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar (or purchased) people; that ye should shew forth the virtues of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.' And in verse 5: 'Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.' 'Spiritual' here in respect of sacrifices is not in the oldest manuscripts. It is human rights, privileges, etc. that are offered in the interest of spiritual attainment and for those who are like-minded. Hebrews 7:12 reads: 'For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.' There are different laws for different occasions, just as laws to drive on the road are different from those for building a house. Jesus said that if any one would follow Him, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Him, and those that lose their life for His sake shall find it.

On the very last night of Jesus' earthly life He said, in John 13:34 & 35: 'A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.' What an example Jesus gave, instructing them all along the way, and now He was to lay down His life for them and also for all mankind. In Psalm 40:7 it is written of Jesus: 'Then said I, lo, I come, in the volume of the book it is written, I delight to do thy will, O My God. Thy law is within my heart.' For those who follow in His footsteps, in 2Cor.1:21 & 22 it says, 'Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, in God; Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.' In 2Cor.5:18 & 20 Paul speaks of God having 'reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation....we are ambassadors for Christ.' An ambassador represents the

kingdom of one nation in another nation, even a hostile one. In Ephesians 6:20 Paul says he is an ambassador in bonds, yet in 2Cor.3:5 & 6 he says: 'We are not sufficient of ourselves... our sufficiency is of God, who also has made us able ministers of the new testament (meaning covenant), not of the letter but of the spirit: for the letter killeth but the spirit giveth life.' The word 'minister' is the Greek word 'diakonis', translated deacon, minister, servant, labourer.

As the New Covenant is made with the house of Israel and the house of Judah (Jer.31:31), how are we servants of it? Perhaps a good illustration would be when before the GST was to be brought into this country some time ago, meetings were held to explain the new tax, with special meetings to instruct accountants, employers, trades people, etc. who had need of special information on how it would work before it actually started. Perhaps you have seen the New Covenant written as New Law Covenant and wondered whether it was correct to insert 'Law' there, but in Jeremiah 31:33 where God speaks of making the covenant with Israel, He says: 'I will put my law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts.' So that might be the answer. These ambassadors or servants labour not with the letter of the law but with its spirit. St Paul speaks about the law to those who know the law in Romans 7:1, and in verse 12 says: 'The law is holy and the commandment holy, just and good' and in verse 4: 'Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ' and also part of verse 6: 'that we should serve in newness of spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.' He could not do the

things he wanted to do but he delighted in the law of God after the inward man (v.22). In 2Cor.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.' Each one is being transformed as the Spirit guides in life but will not be perfect until the resurrection change, as Paul says in 1Cor.13:12: 'Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I shall know even as I also am known.'

Conclusion

In the beginning we saw how many things which happened to Israel of old were types for Jesus and His followers of this age. Even God's dealings with Abraham and his family were examples of things to come. Then there was the Passover experience and Israel's exodus from Egypt after the saving of their firstborn from the death angel, who were then exchanged for the Levites who made up the Tabernacle servants with Moses' brother as the head of the priestly class to deal with the Law Covenant which Israel was given. In Hebrews 8, it says this priesthood was an example or shadow of heavenly things and all things had to be made by Moses according to the pattern. In Hebrews 10:1 we read: 'For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things' and 'The substance (the reality) belongs to Christ.' Through Christ's perfection He was raised after the order of Melchisedec and with all His body members will be able to administer the reality of all the types and shadows with eternal blessing for all the obedient of mankind to God's glory. (HG:03/04)

"THE WILL TO DO RIGHT"

"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)

Spirit begetting occurs once we have made the decision to consecrate our lives, following fully the will of God. The new creature, thus spiritually begotten, thereafter develops during this lifetime so that eventually in the first resurrection the begotten new creature is actually born on the spiritual plane of existence. The church aspires to this special resurrection, the exanastasis, the first resurrection. The developing embryonic new creature has certain qualities such as an intellect and emotional mind and, of course, a will. This talk focuses on the will of the new creature and the key verse is Romans 7:18, which reads: 'For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to per-

form that which is good I find not.' It arose out of a desire to clarify and harmonize certain scriptures relating to our development as Christians that appear to be somewhat contradictory. Looking at the scriptures, we will look at the various characteristics of the will, hopefully answer why it is so important, and also clarify how it is related to our position of grace.

Firstly, we need to clarify somewhat some of the terms to be used. In our key verse 'to will' is a translation of the Greek verb *thelo*, which is used to convey a number of meanings ranging from 'a determined intention' to a mere 'wish or desire', at the same time suggesting a positive emotional component such as 'to have pleasure and take delight in'. The context of Romans 7:18 shows that *thelo* here means 'to determinedly intend' since it relates to Paul's determined struggle to carry out the good that he wills. The associated noun, there-

fore, refers to the mental powers associated with determined intentions, and it is this definition that will be used.

Next, we need to clarify what is meant by 'new creature'. In 2 Cor.5:17-19 we read: 'Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature' (which can also be translated 'a new creation') 'old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.'¹⁷ And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹To 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.' This new creature is begotten by God when we voluntarily subject our will, called figuratively 'beheading', completely to the will of God. We externally show that this process has occurred to one another by physical water baptism. This act of physical baptism also symbolises the death of the will of the old self and the begetting and newness of life of the will of the new creature. This transformation occurs by a renewal of our mind. Since two minds cannot co-exist, the old worldly mind conformed to the way of the present evil order has to die. This allows a new mind with all its characteristics to be moulded by God according to His will. This we call the new creation or new creature.

Addressing the main points, there is a large body of scripture that shows the inability of man to be perfect. We all sin. We are all familiar with such verses as Romans 3:10-12 'As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one.'¹⁰ There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. ¹²They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.' Also Psalm 51:5 - 'Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.' And also Romans 5:12 - '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.' And finally 1 Cor.15:22, a very familiar verse - 'For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.' These verses have also been used to prove there is no true free will since we cannot actually do good and be perfect. We also note that the covenant God made with Israel through Moses promised to give life if it could be kept fully, the Law was a measure of a man's perfect ability. The fact that no fallen descendant of Adam gained eternal life under the Law Covenant shows that none were able to keep it actually perfectly. This fact was a primary and inescapable lesson of the Law Covenant. To those who learned the lesson, which was only a remnant of Israel, the Law Covenant became a school master leading them to Christ. It is clear that no descendant of Adam can be perfect.

And yet there is another body of scripture which appears to say the opposite. We read in Matthew 5:48: 'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.' And also 1 John 3:6: 'Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not; whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.' And also in 1 John 3:8: 'He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil.' And there are many other such verses, so how does one harmonize these two bodies of scripture?

It has been suggested that once one has become begotten of the Holy Spirit, as a new creature, then anything is possible with God, including being actually perfect. 1 John 3:9 seems to support this suggestion: 'Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin because he is born of God.' In this verse, of course, we understand that 'born', the Greek word *geneo*, should be translated 'begotten' since the context does not refer to the actual birth of the spiritual creature, which occurs at the first resurrection. The above verse suggests that we no longer commit sin once we are begotten as new creatures. The problem with the suggestion is that other scriptures show that even once we are begotten as new creatures, we do commit sin. Romans 7:18,19 reads: 'For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.' For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.'

Paul was, of course, begotten of the Holy Spirit at this stage, he was a new creature at that time. This point is emphasized in 1 John 1:8: 'If we say we that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.' Here we are told clearly that if we have the truth then we recognise our own sin, and in the presence of sin perfection is impossible even after spirit begetting and enlightenment with the truth. Paul again points out this fact that we cannot do the things we would because the new creature resides in the body of sin which we have at present. We read in Galatians 5:17: 'For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.' So the suggestion that once we are begotten as new creatures actual perfection becomes possible is not consistent with the testimony of the scriptures and does not harmonize our two seemingly contradictory bodies of scripture.

The answer, of course, lies in the distinction made between the body of sinful flesh and the renewed or regenerated mind of the new creature. This distinction

leads to the desired harmony. Paul outlines this distinction clearly in Romans 7:21-23: ²¹I find then a law that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. ²²For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: ²³But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.' Paul's new mind dwelling in the inner man delights in the law of God, but at the same time the flesh continues to be subject to the necessity of sin inherited from Father Adam. Therefore the body of scripture which refers to the inability of sinful man to be perfect refers to the body of sinful flesh that the new creature continues to inhabit during this lifetime until it decays and finally dies. This, of course, does not mean that the new creature is able to survive independently of the body for the new creature will only exist again in its new spiritual body at the first resurrection. The body of scripture that refers to being perfect and sinning not refers to the inner man, the new mind, and specifically to the will of the new creature.

We note in our key verse that Paul tells us that to will the good is present with us and this is always possible. In other words, perfection of intent is always possible and, in fact, required. In Romans 7:18,19, as we have read, 'to will is present with me', the Greek word translated here 'present' means 'to be alongside of', that is, it is right next to each and every one of us and can be grasped and followed with every intention of the will. The New Revised Version is particularly good here. It says: 'I can will what is right.' In reality we are still actually imperfect, for in this life we still have a body of sin, and yet God only looks at and deals with the new creature. This state of affairs is, of course, the case because our imperfect flesh has been covered over by the imputed righteousness of Jesus' meritorious sacrifice. Therefore, our standing in the sight of God occurs only because of imputed righteousness and not actual righteousness. Therefore, perfection of the flesh is impossible but perfection of the will of the new creature is possible and, in fact, necessary and required. We also note the fundamental teaching that this relies on is imputed righteousness by faith. This harmonizes our seemingly contradictory bodies of scripture.

There are a number of important points that follow from the above harmonization. Firstly, it explains freedom of will and how it is possible and just for the church to be on trial for eternal life now. We have already noted the above verses which show that any descendant of Adam cannot be actually perfect. Because of this fact, it has been suggested by some that true free will does not exist, for what use is free will if it cannot lead to perfection since this is impossible in our sinful flesh. If the church was judged on the basis of a requirement of righteous acts or works, then there would be none who would pass, of course. However, we are

not judged on that basis. Our flesh and sins are covered over as if they did not exist. This is the essence of imputed righteousness. Therefore, what God looks at and deals with is the inner man and in particular its will. Our key verse shows that to will good is possible, and this is why the new creature is on trial now, and this is why we are told to be perfect. But as already mentioned, perfection is of the new creature and in particular its will. If it wasn't possible, it would of course be meaningless. Our will has to be perfect and our intentions are always to be in line with the royal Divine Law. This shows how important it is for the will to be able to will the good. Our ultimate destiny relies on this.

Realising this important fact makes us keenly aware of our responsibility in keeping our will perfect, hence we are told to be perfect. In Philippians 2:12 we read: '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.' We are told to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. Why? Because we are on trial for eternal life now. If we take care and quench not the Holy Spirit, God will work in us to will and to do His pleasure and shall keep our hearts and minds. An adverse judgment can only occur if we sin wilfully because this is what is being judged. In Hebrews 10:26 we are told: 'For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin.' Intentional, wilful sin leaves us exposed and in peril since this is not covered by our imputed righteousness. Note the importance of the phrase 'sin wilfully'. It is clear that the new creature, and especially its will, is highlighted here. Why? Because it is free, under our control, and it is what God deals with and judges justly. If we are aware and continue growing in grace and knowledge, we will not fall from our steadfastness and thereby not neglect so great a salvation. Therefore, seeing that our will is free and that it needs to be kept perfect in order to attain salvation, we appreciate its importance. We need to be meticulous that every thought pleases to our Heavenly Father. This is a much stricter requirement than an action.

Looking at some of the consequences of the fact that God deals with the new mind and particularly the will of the new creature, it is worth examining what this means in relation to our relationship with God, which necessarily is based purely on grace. In Romans 4:5-8, we read: ⁵But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. ⁶Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, ⁷Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven and whose sins are covered. ⁸Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.' It has already been outlined that for God

to relate to the new creature, the sinful flesh that we carry around has to be covered or hidden. This occurs as a result of our faith in Jesus, leading to the blessed state of imputed righteousness. David foresaw this and dreamed of it. We understand that since we are progeny of Adam, we are all tainted by sin. This means that we cannot make ourselves clean without help, for as Job says, 'Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean thing?' It also follows that no other fallen descendant of Adam could redeem or pay the ransom because all are unclean and undeserving. It therefore required an unmerited gift on behalf of God to give each one of us an opportunity for eternal life.

The fact that all members of Adam's race could do nothing to extricate themselves from sin and its consequence, death, necessitating a gift from God, is worth emphasizing. It is worth emphasizing because it explains why we are under a covenant of grace rather than works. We read in Romans 3:24: 'Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.' 'Grace' here means 'unmerited favour'. It is free because we have paid nothing for it, and in fact could never pay for it. It is unmerited because we have done nothing to deserve it, and it is a favour because it allows us to come into communion with God by hiding our sins. Someone may say, however, that we earn this righteousness by faith. This is not actually accurate since even though faith is desired by our Heavenly Father, it has no intrinsic righteousness value. Faith is not a work producing righteousness in and of itself. Faith is required to receive unmerited and imputed righteousness, but does not earn it. The grace of God, therefore, is truly free, unmerited favour, and necessary if we are to have any relationship with our Heavenly Father at present. This thought of grace being free is also important. As already outlined, it is free because it is independent of anything that sinful man could do and therefore pay for. Because it only depends on God, it is sure.

This unilateral, dependable grace is to be contrasted with the slavery of the covenant by law, which could produce no righteousness because of sinful flesh, and therefore no true life. It also contrasts strongly with the new covenant since this also is a covenant based on works rather than purely on grace. Jeremiah tells us that even though all the imperfections of Adamic condemnation will be removed, as we read in Jeremiah 31:29: 'In those days they shall say no more the fathers have eaten the sour grape and the children's teeth are set on edge', it will be a covenant based on works. We note in verse 30: 'But everyone shall die for his own iniquity. Every man that eateth that sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge.' This means that each individual will have to achieve actual perfection. This is quite different to our position of grace where sins are covered over due to imputed righteousness. We read in

Galatians 4:27: 'For it is written, Rejoice thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband.' Like Sarah, Abraham's first wife, the promise that she would produce a seed came many years before Hagar produced children, so the Abrahamic promise and covenant was in place before the Law Covenant became active in producing slave children, figuratively. Also in Galatians 3:19,20 we read: ¹⁹'Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. ²⁰Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one.'

We notice the parallelism that exists between our position of grace and God's unilateral promise that there would be a seed of blessing for all nations. A unilateral promise does not require a mediator since there is only one party, that is, God. This is why the Abrahamic covenant or promise is sometimes called the grace covenant. It depends in essence on no-one but God. In Hebrews 6:18 we read: '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.' Because this covenant depends on God, who cannot lie, and because God again confirmed it by an oath, it is as sure as anything can be and a true reason for glad tidings and therefore the apt qualification as **the** gospel. In Galatians 3:8 we read: 'And 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.' And this gospel was, of course, preached unto Abraham. So we see then that the corollary of God dealing with us according to our perfect will is that the sins of the flesh are covered, which in turn requires imputation of righteousness by faith, which is of an act of grace by God expressed in full by God's promise to Abraham that there would be a seed of blessing that would bless all the nations of the earth.

Conclusion: It seems that the two bodies of scripture in relation to the flesh and the possible and necessary perfection of the will of the new creature can be harmonized. Also, by focusing on the will of the new creature, we see that it must be free in a deep and true sense. Lastly, it seems that for God to relate to us on the basis of this new mind, including the will, we need to be in a position of grace which provides for the covering of our fleshly sins. This suggests that we, that is, the seed of blessing, are being developed under an arrangement or covenant according to grace, accessed by our faith rather than works. (ES:03/04)

"Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ". 1 Thes 5:23

“The Hope Within”

We are all familiar with the concept of cause and effect. In fact, we are so familiar with it that in the majority of cases we don't even stop to think about it as cause and effect. For example, if we want a drink, we turn on the tap. If it's getting dark and we want more light, we flick the switch. When we're driving the car and want to go left, we turn the wheel. If we wish to go faster, we push down the accelerator. If we wish to stop, we put on the brake. When we think about it, all of those instances and many more are really examples of cause and effect. In each of those examples we wanted some outcome, and so we took some action which we believed would bring about the effect we wanted. We call that 'pro-active' cause and effect relationship. There are other instances in our daily lives where we are subject to the effect without us taking any action. For example, this evening it will get dark. Why? Because (be-cause, there's the cause) the sun goes down, and there is an example of cause and effect where we are inactive, or passive, and are nevertheless subject to the effect.

All of those examples, both active and passive, of course relate to the physical world, but this relationship of cause and effect also applies in the spiritual world. In John 2:23 we read: 'Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover in the feast, many believed in his name when they saw the miracles which he did.' There is a cause and effect relationship. They believed in Him when they saw the miracles. The cause was the miracles and their observation of those miracles. The effect was their belief. Likewise in Act 11 we read where some believed when they heard the Apostles preaching - another example of cause and effect, the cause being the preaching of the Apostles, the effect being their belief. Now, of course, we don't have the privilege of seeing Jesus perform physical miracles in our day, we don't have the privilege of listening to the Apostles preaching today, but nevertheless this relationship of cause and effect still applies to our lives. We can see this in the First Epistle of John, 1John 3:1 where we read: '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.' There is a cause and effect relationship. What a privilege it is to be called a son of God, but because we are sons of God the world knows us not, just as it knew Him not. It is a passive cause and effect relationship as far as we are concerned. We don't take any particular actions that would make the world not want to know us but purely as a consequence of us being the sons of God the world knows us not.

If we consider the admonitions of Scripture, it really is quite surprising that the world does not want to know

us. Let's just take a few moments to consider the writings of the Apostle Paul in Romans 12 where he says: '17Recompense to no man evil for evil.' That is a very demanding requirement, recompense to no man evil for evil. In other words, no tit-for-tat. 'Provide things honest in the sight of all men.' What a challenge! 18'If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. 19Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves but rather give place unto wrath for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. 20Therefore, 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. 21Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.' When we take those admonitions to heart, it is really difficult from the natural perspective to understand why the world does not wish to know us, but because we are the sons of God the natural consequences, the natural effect, is that the world will know us not.

In 1John 3 there is a second example of cause and effect, beginning at verse 2: '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. 3And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.' And there is a cause and effect relationship. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, even as He is pure - the cause, having this hope in ourselves; the effect, to purify ourselves just as He is pure. We should spend a few moments reflecting upon this cause and effect relationship, stirring up our minds to remember those things we already know.

The Cause

Let us consider, first of all, the cause. 'Everyone who has this hope in Him' has two components. First of all we need the hope, and secondly it must be in Him. Thinking of these two aspects - 'everyone who has this hope in Him'. What a tremendous privilege it is to have that hope. As the verse itself says, we don't yet know what we shall be but we know that we shall be like Him because we shall see Him as He is. I don't believe any of us can fully appreciate that privilege and that promise. Revelation 3:21 with the rewards to the Laodicean church reads: 'To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father in his throne.' You and I - weak, frail, fleshly mortals - have this promise, if we are able to overcome, to sit down with our Master in His throne. That is the hope that is held out before us. Of course, it is only a hope at this stage, but hope at this stage of our Christian life is absolutely essential. We read in Romans 8:24 that we are saved by hope. We are saved by hope! That is a very chal-

lenging statement.

If we were asked to list the factors by which we are saved, one of the first things that would come to mind would be ‘we were not redeemed by corruptible things but by the precious blood of Christ’. The ransom sacrifice is the primary means of our salvation. But this verse here in Romans 8:24 says we are saved by hope. The secret of this verse is, of course, to realise that ‘saving’ here in Romans 8:24 does not mean ‘ransom’. It doesn’t mean redeemed, it means we are kept safe. We are kept safe by our hope. We understand the ransom, we understand restitution, we understand resurrection, but the Devil is walking around seeking to defile and destroy. What will keep us safe is our hope, this glorious hope that we will be like Him and we will see Him as He is. Some might say that surely faith is a critical part of being kept safe, and, yes, it is. We read in 1 John 5:4 that ‘This is the victory which overcomes the world, even our faith.’ This is the victory that overcomes the world, and to him who overcomes will I grant to sit on my throne. So why isn’t faith the critical issue? Well, there is a very simple relationship between faith and hope. We are given the relationship in Hebrews 11:1 – ‘Now faith is the substance of things hoped for.’ The Authorised Version says ‘The evidence of things not seen’. What does evidence do? Evidence will either convict or dismiss.

From Strong’s Concordance, we learn that the real meaning of ‘evidence’ in ‘the evidence of things not seen’ is the conviction of things not seen, so faith is the substance of things hoped for, faith is the conviction of things not seen. We therefore cannot have a faith without having a hope. It’s like driving along in a car and we wish to pull up, what we are really doing is not just hoping that the brakes will work but convinced that they will work. So faith and hope have innumerable applications in our everyday life. There is a very real relationship between faith and hope. Hope keeps us safe and faith will give us the victory, which is what Paul says in Romans 8: ‘²⁴For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? ²⁵But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.’ And that’s where we are today. We have this hope. We don’t see it yet, but we have this promise that we will see Him as He is, that we will sit down in His throne just as He sits down on His Father’s throne if we are overcomers. That is the prospect, the hope, and if we keep that hope before our minds at all times it will keep us safe.

Let us look at one more text about this essential nature of keeping this hope clearly before us. In Hebrews 3 we read: ‘⁵And Moses was verily faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; ⁶But 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.’ The same concept as faith, although we don’t find the word ‘faith’ in this verse, but the concept is the same – ‘whose house are we if we hold fast the confidence of the hope’ – if we are convinced or convicted and it is held firm unto the end, then we are indeed of Christ’s house.

The second part of this causative element is not just to have the hope but ‘he who has this hope in himself’. Some years ago at an evangelical meeting the speaker enunciated or expressed a thought which has remained with me since. He said anybody can preach the gospel, anybody can hear the gospel, but nobody else can believe for you. Nobody else can believe for you! And so the second part of this causative factor is that if we have this hope in ourselves we should not just think of it as ‘what the Bible Students think’ or indeed what ‘we’ think, whoever ‘we’ might be. The critical essence is what do I think, what do you think is the hope within me and the hope within you. In Hebrews 3:12 the Apostle goes on to say: ‘¹²Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief.’ We can go to all the meetings, all the Bible studies, all the conventions, but take heed unless there should be in any of us an evil heart of unbelief ‘in departing from the living God’, examining ourselves that we are indeed of the faith. ‘¹³Exhort one another daily while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.’ And probably we, today, are experiencing the deceitful experiences and deceitful influences like there has never been in the world before. We are continually and continuously confronted with deceitful influences. ‘¹⁴For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end;’ If the hope in Him is in us, if we are convicted of the things we hope for, that will keep us safe and these elements of deceit will not impact upon us.

We have those beautiful words of the Apostle Paul in Hebrews 4: ‘¹²For 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 discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.’ Piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit! If we had time to analyse what the Apostle was saying there. And is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart! ‘¹³Neither 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.’ And so we see the exhortation of taking this hope unto ourselves, making sure that the hope is in front of us and that we are convicted of the truth of this great hope. Again we read in Hebrew 6: ‘¹⁸That 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: ¹⁹which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil: ²⁰Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.’ Yes, our forerunner has entered, He has been resurrected, our hope is not vain. Let us hold onto that hope we have of being like Him, of seeing Him as He is and sitting with Him in His throne.

The Effect

There is the causative factor. What is the effect? 1John 3 tells us the effect is that those who have this hope purify themselves, and as we all know, that is not an instantaneous task, it doesn’t happen overnight. It takes a lifetime to work out. But let’s take just a few moments to reflect on the words of the Apostle Paul about what purifying ourselves really means. This effect is an active one. It is also a passive effect, but we will just concentrate today on the active one. Where we have this hope, we want to be overcomers, we want to see Him as He is, we want to sit with Him in His throne – that’s the effect that we desire, so we have this great causative factor of hope. How do we get from the hope to the realisation? We have to purify ourselves. Reading from Ephesians 4: ¹⁷‘This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk’ That is an active factor. We have to consciously not walk as other Gentiles walk, and then Paul goes on to describe how the other Gentiles walk. We aren’t left to guesswork, the Apostle Paul tells us ‘in the vanity of their mind’, puffed up when they are nothing, independent, demanding their rights, asserting themselves but worthless. Don’t do that. ¹⁸‘Having the understanding darkened’ Our call is to enlightenment, our call is to study the word, to take on all the wonderful words of life. ‘being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.’ We, brethren, are not of the night but of the day. ¹⁹‘Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness’.

The more I get, the more I want is the way of the world. Don’t we see it everywhere? But it’s not for us. ²⁰But ye have not so learned Christ: ²¹If so be that ye have learned him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus. ²²That ye put off concerning the former conversation (or conduct) the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; (we learned before about the elements of deceit) ²³and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; ²⁴And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.’ Not as the scribes and Pharisees sitting on the sides of the Temple. ²⁵Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another. ²⁶Be ye angry (and the

Greek here is ‘forthright’, not compromising your stand) and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: ²⁷Neither give place to the devil. ²⁸Let him that stole steal no more, but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. ²⁹Let 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. Not abuse, not denigration, not ridicule, but that it may minister grace unto the hearers. ³⁰And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. ³¹Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice. ³²And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.’ What a demanding charter! But that’s what we have to do in order to do our part to purify ourselves.

In his letter to the Philippians, the Apostle Paul put it rather more simply or rather more concisely, a verse we know so well, Philippians 4:8 – ‘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.’ A positive statement. Yes, whatsoever things are true. Don’t get waylaid by things that are deceitful and untrue. Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are lovely and of good report. If there be any virtue or any praise, think on these things because they will edify us to the saving of the soul.

Brethren, my prayer is that each one of us will take this great hope to ourselves, that the hope will indeed be within us, and that hope will keep us safe so that we will, in fact, see Him as He is, and sit with Him in His throne, and we will be able to answer this challenge just as the Apostle Paul was able to answer the challenge in Romans 8:35 – ‘Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?’ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Will any of those things? See how confident the Apostle Paul was, ³⁸‘For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, ³⁹Nor 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.’ My prayer is that we shall be able to answer that challenge with the same confidence. (GS:03)

“Christ in you the hope of glory”
Colossians 1:27

“THE CHRISTIAN LIFE”

The Christian life is a life of getting to know more and more each day of the love of God expressed in His grace and mercy and goodness toward us. In all our studies, private or among the brethren, in our daily dealings with our Lord and His people, this is what we should be seeking at all times. For truly, -- “This is life eternal, to know Thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.” (John 17:3) This is not just the knowledge of a passing acquaintance but the widening and deepening experience and appreciation of God’s character in all its grandeur and wealth. “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)

Unless our study of God’s word teaches us an ever-growing **appreciation** of His graciousness to us, it will be of little profit. But if as we meet, we can by the aid of His Holy Spirit help one another to grasp something more of the magnanimity and lavishness of God, how rich will be the blessing, how fully we shall be lost in wonder, love and praise! How much better shall we all be able to pass on by word and by example something of the love and mercy we ourselves have received and enjoyed.

And what of our **response** to the richness of His grace and favour toward us? Thankfulness is always appropriate for every gift, however small, and we recall the account of the ten lepers healed by Jesus, only one of whom was evidently touched enough to come back to thank the Lord. We recall too the parable of the two servant-debtors. Their master had freely forgiven one a very large sum but despite this he nevertheless proceeded to harass his fellow-servant who owed him a trifling amount.

Surely there are two basic responses we should make to the grace we have received – the response of genuine **gratitude** and the response of **communicating** the same gift and the same spirit to others. “Freely ye have received, freely give” should be the principle for each believer. It is not hard to say “thank you” but this alone is not really what gratitude to God (or to man) consists of. It is the attitude of heart that wants to love God in return, that out of experience of His grace, desires to serve and obey Him, that out of appreciation of His gifts, wants to pass them on to others.

If we have really valued and imbibed the richness of God’s grace to us, the depth of His love and mercy and goodness, we should not want to treat others in any other way. Yet we are apt to do so and we need the reminder in our Lord’s prayer that **forgiveness** is a two-way matter – the forgiveness we seek must be

matched by a willingness to forgive, recalling that God in His mercy has “called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to His purpose and grace, which was given us in Jesus Christ before the world began.” (2 Tim 1:9)

So we too, need to look beyond the frailties of the flesh and to extend the same spirit of forbearance we have received to others, particularly to the Lord’s people. “Let us not judge one another any more (in the sense of passing judgments when we cannot know all the facts) but judge this rather that no man put a stumbling-block or an occasion to fall in his brother’s way.” (Rom 14:13) Let us see always the better possibility, let us judge kindly, avoiding harsh thoughts or stands which invariably aggravate rather than ease problems.

“Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice. Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.” (Eph 4:31,32) By such means we shall help to preserve that **unity** of the spirit within the Church of God which the apostle commends. By such means also, we shall present a witness that may bless those around us, if not now, in the due time of their visitation in the coming age.

This then is the sort of response we may make to the riches of His grace which we have found and which we daily experience, and in which we trust for the ages to come. Such richness we must never take for granted, rather as we comprehend more and more of the love and mercy of God, our thankful hearts should respond in increased love, service and obedience to God and in richer love and gentleness towards others.

"And they shall not teach everyone his fellow citizen, and everyone his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest of them. "For I will be merciful to their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more." Heb 8:11-12

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THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT-GOODNESS

In Galatians 5:22-23 the Apostle Paul lists nine fruits of the Spirit. A superficial reading of the verses might lead one to think that there is some repetition of the characteristics of the fruits, and particularly if the fruits are paired - peace and longsuffering, gentleness and goodness, meekness and temperance. While the fruits listed in each pair are similar in nature, each fruit is different from the other and there is great benefit in identifying precisely the characteristics of each fruit.

The Fruit of Goodness

The definition of *goodness* given in Strong's Concordance is (#19) "*goodness, i.e. virtue or beneficence*".

The Oxford Dictionary defines "*virtue*" as "*moral excellence, uprightness, goodness*". The Christian must be morally excellent and upright as stated in 1 Peter 4:15-16: "*But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil-doer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.*" Christians are to be good in the sense of being upright in character, virtuous, such that they will not suffer because of any misdemeanor on their part.

The second aspect of goodness is *beneficence*. The Oxford Dictionary defines "*beneficence*" as "*doing good, (showing) active kindness*". In present day terms this quality of goodness might be called "**proactive**" in doing good. Being proactive means using one's initiative to help someone, rather than waiting until one is asked or directed. Galatians 6:9-10 gives clear instruction regarding active kindness: "*And 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 men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.*" The instruction is to do good unto all men as we have opportunity. Opportunity is to be our cue for action; we are not to wait until we see another in desperate plight, or until we are asked, but rather we are to assist another whenever we perceive that we can be of assistance. We are to do good deeds voluntarily, willingly. We are to use our initiative; as we have opportunity.

Galatians 6:10 also tells us that there is an order of priority in our doing good. The first priority is to do good to the household of faith. The second priority is to do good to all men.

Doing good unto the household of faith includes doing good in things that might not be 'pleasant'. It requires us to be involved in some tasks that we might prefer to avoid. One such responsibility is expressed in Galatians 6:1 "*Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault,*

ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself lest thou also be tempted." The obligation of restoring such a one involves recognising and acknowledging the 'fault' [Strong #3900 – *paraptoma* – a side-slip (lapse or deviation), i.e. (unintentional) error or (wilful) transgression] and then taking action. Further, this responsibility is not reserved for the elders but is incumbent upon all brethren, the only qualification required is that the restorer be "spiritual".

While the *responsibility* of restoring each other is incumbent on all brethren, Romans 15:14 links the *ability* to do so (specified as "spiritual" in Gal. 6:1) to goodness and spiritual knowledge: "*I myself am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another*". It is unclear from this verse alone whether being filled with all knowledge is a prerequisite of goodness or whether the two qualities are simply complementary. Either way, the qualities constitute a consistent whole, and the admonition (instruction or correction) of another is not to be done without spiritual knowledge. So important is this facet of Christian discipleship that the Apostle Paul reminded the Colossians of the requirement: "*Let the word of Christ 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*" (Colossians 3:16).

The fruit of goodness is a manifestation of spiritual maturity – virtue within and beneficence without, to all with whom we fellowship and have to do.

OUR PRAYER

Dear Father we would lift our hearts in prayer to thee
With thankful lips proclaim thine ever endless love.
O may our lives each day more perfect be—
Reflect the image of our Lord above.
We would proclaim thy truth to every man,
Reveal the glories of thy wondrous plan

Forgive, we pray each wrong or idle word.
Help us to purify our inmost heart.
May we resist all evil powers,
O Lord, With words of truth repel each fiery dart.
Not in our own frail strength alone we go,
But by thy grace Lord, we can all things do.

We would encourage all thy saints today.
Help lift the burden that they have to bear.
We pass but once along this narrow way,
Thus help us all thy fruits and graces wear.
We thank thee Lord that we are sons of thine,
Called in one hope to gain that prize divine!

Alice M. Ripper



“GIVE THE KING THY JUDGMENTS”

The Psalms are a rich source of our Heavenly Father’s Word, historical, devotional and prophetic; they confirm the precious truths of our Great Creator’s Divine Plan, truths that are scattered liberally throughout both Old and New Testaments, truths that we have learned to appreciate and love over the years; these are all found in the Psalms. The glory of our Heavenly Father’s Jewels that He has been assembling throughout the Gospel Age, the beauty of the New Day which is shortly to dawn for all mankind, yes, these are all to be found in the Psalms. Psalm 72 is one such particularly rich source. Scholars are divided as to who actually penned the words but the context suggests the author was most likely David, writing for his son, Solomon.

Verse 1: Give the King thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the King’s son.”

The Psalm would have had a literal meaning at the time as did much of the Old Testament, but our interest is mainly centred in the prophetic fulfillment. Looking at the Psalm prophetically we can see that it is a Psalm of the New Age when Jesus and the glorified Church are reigning over the Earth. The king is King Jesus and could include also the Church. The term “king’s son” would seem to suggest another person, but most likely it still applies to Jesus. The NIV Interlinear Hebrew-English Old Testament renders verse 1: “Endow the king with your justice O God, the royal son with your righteousness”. The literal fulfillment would have applied to David and to his son Solomon. Both are pictures of Christ, so in the reality we would apply both expressions to Christ, He is of royal stock, a King’s Son, a Son of the One and only Supreme King, the Almighty God.

Passages which give us some more details on the judging work as mentioned in the first verse of the Psalm, include John 5:22 - *“For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son”* and John 5:26,27 - *“For as the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself; and hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man.”* Our Heavenly Father is the supreme Judge but He has delegated the work of

judging to His Son, Jesus said, this is because He is the Son of man, because He became one of us and experienced the sufferings and trials of mankind, plus of course the additional trials, which were exclusively His. This made Him the most suitable Judge for the world of mankind, He will have sympathy and compassion with their weaknesses. Romans 2:16 says that He judges by Jesus Christ, that is, God judges by Jesus Christ.

There are many Old Testament passages on judging; firstly, Isa 26:9-10 - *“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.”* Then Psa 105:7-9 - *“He is the LORD our God: his judgments are in all the earth. He hath remembered his covenant for ever, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations, which covenant he made with Abraham, and his oath unto Isaac. Now Psa 119:62 - “At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee because of thy righteous judgments.”*

We have some nice thoughts by Albert Barnes on the expression; “give the king thy judgments”; he says, it means: “ Knowledge; authority; ability to execute thy judgments, or thy laws. That is, he speaks of the king as appointed to administer justice; to maintain the laws of God, and to exercise judicial power. It is one of the primary ideas in the character of a king that he is the fountain of justice; the maker of the laws; the dispenser of

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right to all his subjects. The officers of the law administer justice under him; the last appeal is to him.” This is far from the way many earthly kings and rulers act, but it gives a very exact description of the way that King Jesus will administer the affairs of the Heavenly Kingdom, reigning over the earth in the next age.

Verse 2: “He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment”.

The NIV renders this verse: “He will judge your people in righteousness, your afflicted ones with justice”. This seems to convey more the true sense of the verse, the word judgment in the Scriptures often seems to convey the thought of justice. This verse links with **Verse 4: “He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor.”** Verses 12-14 can also be taken with these two verses – “**For He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper. He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy. He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence; and precious shall their blood be in his sight.**”

The hallmark of Christ’s thousand year reign will be justice and righteousness, it will be an equitable reign, completely impartial. That would seem to be the reason that the poor and needy are especially mentioned here, these are the ones that find it hard to obtain justice today if they go to a court of Law. The rich and powerful have the influence and money behind them to engage the best legal counsel with the result that so very often the verdict is not a just one. Our passage is telling us that this will not be the case when Christ and the Church are judging the earth, what we might call the lower strata of society will be treated equally with those who are better educated and more polished. The question could be asked: “will there be any poor in the Millennium?” Most certainly the end result will be no more poor and needy, but we could envisage that it will take quite some time for this to be completely achieved, so at least in the early stages of the Reign we would still have this class, especially would this be true of the spiritual poor and needy which no doubt would be included in these verses.

Verse:3 “The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness.”

These are not the literal mountains and hills, but the governments, the mountains being the larger governments, those influential and powerful today, the hills the smaller ones. These will now be righteous governments, because Christ has taken them over, as we see in Rev 11:15 - “*And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of*

his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.” They will be under the control of Christ’s appointed rulers. The Kingdoms will bring peace, in complete contrast to the way it is today and the way it has been throughout most of the history of this world, the governments have brought more wars than peace. The way it is today is shown in Joel 3:9-10 - “*Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up: Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruninghooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong.*”

The way it is going to be at that day, the time when this prophecy is to be fulfilled is shown in Isa 2:4 - “*And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: 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.*” Verses 2-3 of the same chapter also link in with our verse 3 . Isa 2:2-3, reads - “*And 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. And many people shall go and say, 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: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem*” These words are repeated in Micah 4:1,2, showing their importance in the Lord’s sight.

We note that Christ’s Kingdom is to be established in the top of the mountains. What does this mean? The top of a literal mountain is its highest point, so this means that Christ’s Kingdom is to be established in the highest point of the kingdoms or the nations of this world, the highest point would be the governmental level, and these governments will come under the control of Christ’s Kingdom. None will be allowed to have an administrative part in any of the governments unless approved of by Christ’s Kingdom. We think of the world as being very evil today, and the Scriptures show that it is to become even more so as we near the end of the age; nevertheless there are still many good people in the world who are helpful, ready to assist and would be only too pleased to have a part in the governmental work of the next age. There will be many levels of authority in Christ’s Kingdom. God Himself of course is the highest authority, the next authority is the Lord Jesus whom God has appointed to rule on His behalf, as He says in Psalm 2:6 - “*Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.*”

Then will come Christ’s Body members, followed by the Great Multitude, then the Ancient Worthies, also the sifted and purified nation of fleshly Israel, termed also “the holy remnant” and these are followed by those

of a right heart condition out of the gentiles. We have our Lord's words in Matt. 8:11-12, - *"And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."*

This could have a primary or first fulfillment during the Gospel Age with the selection of the Church out of the gentiles; these will serve together with the Ancient Worthies in that same Kingdom, the Church in the heavenly phase and the Ancient Worthies in the earthly phase, both sitting down together as it were, but it could also have another fulfillment in the Kingdom Age. Some have suggested that sitting down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob means learning from them. Most certainly, the world will have a lot to learn in the coming age, but we would suggest the thought is that of ruling with the Ancient Worthies. We note Jesus' words in Matt. 8:12 that the children of the Kingdom were to be cast out. He is speaking of the great bulk of the nation of Israel. Jesus would not have been saying that these were being cast out so far as their opportunity of being citizens in the Kingdom is concerned, but rather, because of their wrong heart condition they would be denied any position of authority, while many from the gentiles will be granted the privilege of service.

At that Day the governments of all the nations will be righteous, they will be under the control of Christ and His Kingdom. So we can see that they will be instrumental in bringing the blessings of the New Age to their citizens. Several passages convey this thought, one is Isa 55:10-12 - *"For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: 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 thing whereto I sent it. For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands."* Notice especially verse 12, here we have the mountains and hills mentioned again, and they break forth into singing, showing the joy that there is to be among the nations at that time, so different from the way it is today.

We find a beautiful passage in Joel 3:16-19 - *"The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the Lord will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel. So shall ye know that I am the Lord your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more. And it shall*

come to pass in that day, that the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord, and shall water the valley of Shittim." Here in verse 18 we have the same thought, the blessings flowing from the mountains, the new wine would be the best wine that was kept to the last, as pictured at the marriage feast in Cana (John 2:10). The governor of the marriage feast is speaking to the bridegroom: *"(he) saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now."*

We could link this in with Matt 9:17 - *"Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved."* The new wine at that time would have represented the new doctrines brought to light by our Lord, so then the new wine that the kingdoms are to drop down would represent the full revealing of God's Divine Plan in all its full glory and beauty, showing the blessed opportunity for all who have ever lived, a Plan which truly honours our Heavenly Father and shows Him to be indeed a God of Love. This indeed would be new wine, new doctrine to the majority of earth's inhabitants.

Verses 5-7: "They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations. He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth. In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth."

The words as long as the sun and moon endureth would mean forever. The word "fear" is from the Hebrew word "Yare" which means "fear" and also "reverence", all those that are found worthy of everlasting life will reverence God forever. We have no need to fear Him except of course a fear of displeasing Him. But His enemies as mentioned in **Verse 9** certainly have need to fear Him, these will lick the dust, meaning they will go into second death. The word "fear" is mentioned in many places in the Scriptures. It is a warning to those who willingly remain evil doers and refuse to reform when given full opportunity. **Verse 7** says: "the righteous shall flourish", just the opposite of the Gospel Age, where the righteous suffer persecution and evildoers seem to flourish. We would suspect that at heart many evildoers are unhappy people, having very little peace and contentment. A nice passage that harmonizes with our Psalm is Deut 32:1-2 - *"Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass."*

Verse 6: “He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth.”

We have a very poetic and picturesque verse here, we can all envisage rain gently falling on mown grass and the pleasant aroma coming from it. Here we have a beautiful picture of the abundance of blessings that are to flow out to all the humble and submissive of all mankind. We understand the grass to represent the ordinary, everyday people of the earth. We have a very similar worldly expression today when speaking of the common people, who are referred to as ‘grassroots’ in contrast to those in authority, the wealthy and influential. The thought that grass represents people is brought out in the closing words of **Verse 16** of our Psalm. It reads: **“...and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth”**. We note that the showers come down on mown grass, it has been suggested this means ‘shorn of any encumbrances’, perhaps also shorn of the idea of self importance, of pride and arrogance. God rejects, even hates this type of person. This is a human trait which we must all overcome, if we are to receive God’s approval. In the next age all must be shorn in this sense before they can receive the showers of blessing.

Verse 8: “He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.”

This is just a way of saying, the whole earth, all will be under His control. Psalm 2:8 uses similar language - *“Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.”* We get the same thought again in Zech. 9:10, - *“And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth.”*

Verse 9: “They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; his enemies shall lick the dust.”

We have already referred to the latter portion of this verse regarding His enemies. The first part of this verse refers to those that dwell in the wilderness, bowing before Him. This is obviously speaking of a separate class of people, it has been suggested, those outside of the pale of Christendom. That would seem to be the correct thought, they would include atheists, agnostics, the many heathen religions. These are in the condition of spiritual wilderness, as the Hebrew word has the meaning of ‘a dry, waterless place’.

Verses 10,11: “The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him.”

These verses show the completeness of Christ’s authority over the whole earth, all are going to be submissive to Him, the kings and rulers, those in authority, they are even going to bring gifts! We think of Psalm 45:6 which shows who is being spoken of here - *“Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre.”* This verse is speaking of Christ and of the great authority the Heavenly Father has given Him. Hebrews 1:8 identifies Christ as the God in this Psalm, then verse 12 links in beautifully with our study. Psalm 45:12 - *“And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift; even the rich among the people shall intreat thy favour.”*

Verse 14: “He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence: and precious shall their blood be in his sight.”

These are the poor and needy previously referred to, they that have experienced these things in their lives. Their blood would mean their life and would be precious in the sight of Christ.

Verse 15: “And he shall live, and to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba: prayer also shall be made for him continually; and daily shall he be praised.”

Young’s Literal translation renders it more clearly - : *“And he liveth, and giveth to him of the gold of Sheba, And prayeth for him continually, All the day he doth bless him.”* The praise is to Christ for the mighty and wonderful works that He is carrying out during the Millennial Age. The verse commences with the words: “he shall live”. Who are the opening words of this verse referring to? Is it referring to the King that is Jesus, or to the poor and needy? The commentator Albert Barnes believes that it applies to the poor and needy and that the rest of the verse applies to Jesus. This seems correct, so then it is the poor and needy who are giving the gift of gold to Jesus and praying for Him and praising Him. Could the poor and needy make a gift of the gold of Sheba? We must bear in mind that this is symbolic gold, Jesus does not need gifts of literal gold. The gold obviously pictures something else. It has been suggested that it symbolizes obedience. Gold is one of the most costly items on earth, it is a substance most precious in the sight of men. Could it picture a full consecration to God, which most certainly would include obedience?

Under the Jewish Law the Israelites had to bring the very best animals for sacrifice, they had to be perfect without blemish and spot. Gold could picture the giving of our very best in GOD’s service, giving our Heavenly Father and His Son Jesus first place in our life, using our best talent and ability in His service, giving our all, in this way giving of the symbolic gold of

Sheba. This of course is very true of the called out ones of the Gospel Age, but in the next age a full consecration will still be required as pictured by the Israelites selling all that they had, including themselves to Pharaoh in order to obtain the bread to enable them to live (Gen.47:13-25). Pharaoh is picturing God in this illustration.

Verse 16: “There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon: and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth.”

This is a very interesting verse. The Hebrew word translated “handful” has three meanings which the Young’s Concordance gives as: “hand full, expansion, super abundance”. The suggestion has been made that the verse simply means that there will be an abundance of food available to all at that time, none will ever go hungry, none dying of starvation as it is the case in many parts of the globe today. As the setting of the Psalm is the Millennial Age, all this will most certainly be true. This understanding is taking a very literal view of the verse, whereas it seems more likely that it is symbolic. A handful of corn could be the correct meaning here, the clue is, that this corn is on the top of the mountains, not all over the earth as it would be if it simply pictured an abundance of food. It is in the top of the mountains, that is, in the top or the head of the kingdoms. This is the same Hebrew word discussed before regarding Isaiah and Micah. We would think that it has the same meaning here, again picturing Christ’s Kingdom, which as we saw, is established in the top of the mountains.

The word “top” here and in Isaiah and Micah is from the Hebrew word “rosh”, Young’s Concordance gives the meaning as “head” or “top”. It is translated in several different ways, “top” 75 times, but we note that it is translated “head” 349 times. A handful of corn would picture the rulers in the Kingdom, Jesus and the glorified Church. We think of our Master’s words in John 12:23-24 - *“And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit”*. Brother Meggison comments regarding verse 16 of our Psalm: *“there shall be a handful of corn”* (These are) the 144 000 grains from the one grain, Jesus Christ, the first fruits unto God from among men.’

The word corn in Psalm 72 means ‘corn, wheat’ or just ‘grain’. In John 12 Jesus is of course speaking of Himself and His coming death, followed by His glorification, He is saying that a literal grain of wheat must die when dropped into the soil, that is, decay away after it has nourished the new growth. It then brings forth much fruit; many, many grains of wheat. While Jesus

applies this illustration to Himself, the same principle applies to His Body Members, they are exhorted in many places to bring forth fruit now, in this life. But like their Master, it will be when they get to the other side of the veil that most fruit will be produced. Verse 16 of Psalm 72 says the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon, that is, the fruitage of Christ and His Body Members is to shake like Lebanon, that is, like the trees of Lebanon. In biblical times Lebanon was heavily timbered with cedar trees. In our mind’s eye we can picture great forests of trees, all shaking and swaying in a strong breeze.

This pictures the great abundance of fruit that the Kingdom will produce, that is, Christ and His Church. What is the fruit that they are to produce? God said to Abraham: *“in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed”*. Christ and His Body is that Seed, so the fruit is the blessing of all mankind or in other words, completing the great Restitution work of the coming age. This is shown in the last words of our verse, which reads: *“they of the city shall flourish like the grass of the earth”*. They of the city are the redeemed of mankind in the next age, all the willing and obedient. The city is the Kingdom, the New Jerusalem as shown in Rev. 21:25 and 27 - *“And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there.”* --- *“And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life.”*

Verses 18-20: “Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen.

These verses picture the grand work of the Kingdom Age completed and 1 Cor 15:28 finally fulfilled, All in the whole universe are going to acknowledge the authority of our Heavenly Father and His Son Jesus Christ, all will bow the knee to them then and give them the honour and glory due. This is when Romans 14:11 **“As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.”** and Philippians 2:10 **“At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth.”** will have their complete fulfillment.

This is the glorious time we all long for. By the Lord’s strength and with His help and grace may we be accounted worthy to have a small part in the wonderful work of the coming Millennial Age that will bring about those happy conditions.

Amen and amen.
(GT1/04)

“UNANSWERED PRAYER”

What a unique privilege we have of being able to communicate with our Lord God through prayer at any time of day or night and in any and every place. Likewise all humanity, whether Jew or Gentile, has the privilege to pray to our heavenly Father but not all humanity has access to Jehovah's presence. Many very good things have been spoken of and written about prayer. One outstanding fact is clear – prayer is the vital root of our Christian life. Prayer is just as needful for our spiritual existence as the air we breathe for the life of our fleshly bodies. We cannot survive spiritually without praying. To many people, prayer is a way of extreme supplication or vain repetition. It often becomes a necessity when sickness and difficulties prevail. When prayer is composed of empty words, void of sincerity and spoken as an obligation, then it is meaningless. Prayer should not be a formalised outline of words or a selfish demand for material advantage. It has been said that prayer is the heart's sincere desire uttered or unexpressed by words. Prayer is the great honour and privilege of having access to the presence of God and having fellowship and communion with Him. A consecrated Christian's prayer should express his or her gratitude and appreciation to God.

In the first book of Chronicles, Chapter 16, verse 29 we read: 'Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name.... worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.' Many of the Bible's great people have been men and women of prayers, but above them all stands Jesus, who always sought His heavenly Father's presence in prayer. If Jesus in His perfection needed spiritual fellowship and communion with His Father, how much more we need this contact. Every trial of patience is an occasion to pray for the promised help; every failure to gain victory is an occasion for a prayer that we be not high minded. Every service for truth becomes an occasion for prayers of thanks for the privilege of serving. We should pray for one another. Perhaps sometimes prayer may seem to us to be a one-way conversation, so it is very important to us to have answers from Jehovah, but at times it may seem that our prayers are not answered or even considered. Why is this so? What are the reasons for this? Let us look into the Bible for answers.

Watch and Pray

The apostle James writes about this subject in James 4:3: 'You ask and do not receive because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.' Speaking on this subject of prayer, our Lord Jesus gave us some instruction recorded in Matthew 6: '32For your heavenly father knoweth that ye have need of all these

things, 33but seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.' A prayer that will never be answered is a selfish prayer. There is much truth in the saying that if your prayer is faithless, your prayer will be also fruitless. We all remember the well-known passage from the Holy Bible which is found in Matthew 26:41: 'Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.' Watching and praying! What an excellent and beautiful combination! The Manna for 3rd November comments on this subject: 'Some make the mistake of praying without watching; others make the mistake of watching without praying; but the safe and only proper method is that which our Lord directed, to combine the two. We are to watch, and be on our guard against the encroachments of the world, the flesh and the devil. We are to watch for all the encouragements of the Lord's Word, the evidence of their fulfillment, the signs that betoken His presence and the great changes of dispensations just at hand. We are to watch for everything that will strengthen us in faith and hope and loyalty and love and while watching we are to pray without ceasing. We are to pray together as the Lord's people; we are to pray in our homes, as families; we are to pray in secret, in private.'

Having an element of watchfulness in our prayers means to look for answers to all our prayers. The responses to our prayers may come in various providential circumstances. We know that our first parents, Adam and Eve, had very special communication with God in the Garden of Eden. They heard His voice. Faithful men during Old Testament times had communication with God through dreams, visions and talking with angels. Moses was one of the great faithful servants of old. He had a close relationship with God through his prayers. All of his sincere and humble prayers were heard by God. Moses' prayers pleased God, but not all of his prayers were answered in the way Moses would have liked. How could this be, that Moses' most fervent prayers were unanswered? Why did God not fulfil His most humble and obedient servant's sincere desire? What did Moses pray about? Let us read Deuteronomy, Chapter:3 25-27 '25I pray thee, let me go over and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon. 26But the Lord was wroth with me for your sakes, and would not hear me: and the Lord said unto me, Let it suffice thee; speak no more unto me of this matter. 27Get thee up into the top of Pisgah, and lift up thine eyes westward, and northward, and southward, and eastward, and behold it with thine eyes: for thou shalt not go over this Jordan.'

Moses' Prayer

Moses now was 120 years of age. He had spent 40 years of his life as an Egyptian prince in the Court of Egypt where he was trained as a general and a ruler. For the next 40 years of his life, Moses lived as a shepherd in the wilderness. Moses loved the Lord and he faithfully believed in God's promises. He loved the Lord's people, who composed the Israel nation, because he was one of them. For this reason, Moses preferred to live with his own people, God's favored people, rather than to live in prosperity and fame amongst the Egyptian enemies and oppressors. The 40 years of Moses' wilderness experience appear to be invaluable to him, enabling him to transform the knowledge gained from his experiences into strong and deep belief in God and respect for God's promises. And so it is with us. Jehovah sometimes works by natural means to prepare the instruments for His holy service. In the final 40 years of Moses' life, Moses used his knowledge and faith gained from his experiences to serve his people. He shared the position of leader, lawgiver, prophet, prince and king. As the work his Lord intended Moses to do was coming to a close, we read the account of Moses' prayer in which he glorifies God, expressing his gratitude for all the richness of the blessings he has received. Moses asked God to fulfil the greatest of his wishes, his heart's only desire, to see the beauty of the promised land - a wonderland of God's creation, a paradise too good to be true, a country of milk and honey. But this time God refused to answer Moses' prayer.

God's decision did not satisfy Moses' longing to enter the promised land. His heart was overcome with sadness. What had Moses done to deserve such a harsh punishment from God? Indeed, God had His reason. As the Israelites travelled through the wilderness they stationed themselves in Kadesh, a little town. Here in Kadesh there was no water. Exhausted and thirsty, the nation began to grumble and complain against Moses and Aaron. Moses entered the tent of the Tabernacle, knelt down with his face to the ground, and in fervent prayer presented his petition to the Lord God. There was a complaint in the community against Moses for lack of drink of the fruit of the vine, but above all for the lack of water. Even the livestock began to die from dehydration. In Numbers 20:8 we read the words God spoke to Moses: 'Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink.' Being fully aware of God's will, Moses and Aaron gathered all the Israelites to the rock and, holding the rod in his hand, Moses said to the nation, 'Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?'¹⁰ And Moses lifted

up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also.¹² And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.'

The smiting of the rock at Kadesh is actually the second smiting recorded in the Bible. The first smiting had taken place at Rephidim where Moses followed all the Lord's instructions. This is recorded in Exodus 17:1-7. It was the result of the **second** smiting that disqualified Moses from leading the people of Israel into the land of promise. Let us now examine the lesson to be learned in the account of the smiting of the rock. To begin with, Moses represents Jesus Christ, Who is the literal true rock. Just as the rock was smitten, so was our Lord Jesus. He was to be smitten for our sins, but smitten only once. As a result of this smiting at Calvary, the water of life gushed forth for all true Israelites. Moses did not follow God's instruction and did not obey God's will in performing the impossible in unfavourable circumstances. God wanted Moses to provide the Israelites with water. However, before this was to take place, God desired that Moses honour Him, that Moses acknowledge God's name and His greatness, and in so doing show his faith and trust in God's power as well as strengthening his own people's faith and trust in God. Despite Moses' misconduct, God endorsed Moses' authority before all the people of Israel. From the people's point of view, bringing out the water was a blessing, but from God's point of view Moses' behaviour resulted in the unanswered prayer.

Persisting in Prayer

In this account from Moses' life, we have found a beautiful lesson for us, as the Lord's people. Through the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord has drawn us out of the bondage of Egypt, which represents the world, into a state of separateness as typified in the wilderness condition. Being set apart, we are taught how to recognise God's will and how to glorify our Heavenly Father and His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. Similar to Moses' experience, it would seem that sometimes God doesn't answer our prayers. God hears all of them, but He does not answer all of them. If we don't receive immediate answers to our prayers and feel abandoned by God, it is helpful to reflect upon the attitude of the woman of Sidon. Her example encourages us to persist in our prayers. That particular woman asked Jesus to heal her daughter and Jesus, refusing to perform any miracle, answered her, 'O woman, your faith is great; be it as you desire.' And from that very moment her daughter was healed. We can read that in Matthew 15:28. We should always

pray until we truly believe that God's will will be done. We should keep on praying, firmly believing that without a doubt God will provide us with an answer to that which is our heart's desire. The Lord has His own time to answer prayer and He may wish to test our faith.

If we feel that we are losing our faith and losing our hope because of what seems like no answer from our Heavenly Father, our prayers will consequently begin to not be grounded in faith. Jesus' words teach us that if our prayers are not grounded in faith, with full assurance of the result, then we cannot receive that for which we ask. Let us remember that believing is receiving. Have we also smitten the rock of Kadesh without glorifying God, but wanting and doing our own will? Do we expect to be praised before men when presenting God's teachings? Do we sincerely worship God, obeying His instructions? Are we helpful and co-operative to our class elders and deacons? Just like Moses, our teachers of the word of Truth have a great responsibility. They might encounter ex-

periences similar to Moses. Servants of the Lord should be fully aware to ensure that all their words and actions are pure and in agreement with the teachings of Christ and the Apostles.

When Moses' work was accomplished, the Lord led him up Mount Pisgah's summit. From this point Moses saw much with his natural eyes, but he also saw much more with his eyes of faith. He saw God's promises made to Israel through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Moses did according to the word of God; however before his death Moses gathered representatives from the twelve tribes of Israel and addressed them with all warnings and encouragement in the Song of Moses, which is well-known to us and recorded in Deuteronomy 32. Moses' song is a beautiful prayer and a prophecy for the future, even for now, expressing glory and adoration to our Heavenly Father. This prayer of Moses will soon be answered and it will bring earthly and heavenly blessings. May all our prayers be heard and answered by our Heavenly Father; this is my prayer for us all. Amen. (TZ:1/04)

“THE PROPHET MALACHI”

Malachi was a messenger of God. In the Dictionary of the Bible he is called 'the seal of the prophets' and his prophecies constitute the closing of the book of the Canon. We are told that he was a prophet, that is, one through whom the Divine will and purpose are made known and who is a "spokesman" for God, a man of God with an inspired message.

At the time Malachi prophesied, a deplorable situation existed amongst the priests. Contrary to the law, they were accepting lame, blind and sick animals for the sacrifice on Jehovah's altar (Malachi 1:8). They failed to give proper direction and instruction to the people, causing many to stumble (Malachi 2:7,8). When judging matters, they showed partiality (Malachi 2:9). All of this had had a bad effect on the Israelites in general, causing them to view Jehovah's service as being of little value (Malachi 3:14,15). This is apparent from the fact that Israelites did not support the Temple by paying tithes. So far had they fallen from the devotion of Jehovah that apparently they were divorcing their wives to marry women worshiping false gods. Also adultery, lying, fraud and oppression came to exist among them in Israel. For this reason Jehovah gave them advice, warning of His coming to His Temple for judgment (Malachi 3:1-6). At the same time, He urged wrongdoers to repent saying, Return to Me and I will return to you (Malachi 3:7). It is fairly clear that Malachi wrote after 538BC. Malachi, messenger or angel, was the last of the minor prophets, and the writer of the book of his prophecies which comprises four chapters

Let us look at Malachi 3:17 – 'They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels.' The heartening words of this prophecy, addressed to Israel, follow a reproof of their wayward and evil course and a warning of the just retribution that must surely follow if they do not repent and turn to God. Malachi was the last of the Hebrew prophets. His name signifies the messenger of Jehovah. He was the last messenger to Israel previous to John the Baptist, the immediate forerunner of Christ, the Great Messenger of Jehovah's covenant. And well would it have been for Israel had they heeded the warning and prepared their hearts to receive the Lord's Anointed. But to this day, with the exception of a small number, they have failed to do so. The promised Messenger, John the Baptist, came to prepare the way of the Lord, preaching repentance and remission of sin, and announcing the event of the Great Messenger of the covenant made with Abraham that in his seed should all the families of the earth be blessed (Gen.22:18).

But when the Lord suddenly came to His Temple, the Jewish Temple, they were unprepared to receive Him. They were unprepared to recognise the King in His beauty, or to stand the test of character applied to prove their worthiness for the blessings promised in the Abrahamic covenant. Only a few, a small number, were found ready. In meekness and in humility, they inclined their hearts to the testimony of the prophets, of John the Baptist, of the teachings and the works of Jesus of Nazareth, and of the voice from heaven which declared,

‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’ Such become inheritors of the Abrahamic covenant, but the nation as a whole, the natural seed of Abraham, to whom pertained the promises, lost their blessing, and received instead the fiery baptism of trouble (Malachi 4:1) which in AD70 utterly destroyed their national existence, overthrew the holy city, destroyed the Temple and scattered them as fugitives among the nations where they have been hated and persecuted unto this day.

It is clear that the prophecy as addressed to Israel applied to them primarily. It is also manifestly shown by the Lord and the Apostles that it had a much wider application; that in a fuller sense it was addressed to spiritual Israel, of which fleshly Israel was a type, and that it applies to the Second Advent of the Great Messenger of the covenant whose work will fully accomplish all these predictions in the largest and fullest sense. Therefore, we recognise the prophecy by Malachi as addressed to both the houses of Israel – to all Israel after the flesh towards the close of the Jewish dispensation, and also to all spiritual Israel towards the close of the Gospel dispensation. To the latter as well as to the former, therefore, are all the warnings of this prophecy, and well would it be for them if they would heed the warning but, like the prototype, they will not do so, only a small number listen to and heed the word of the Lord. To them, therefore, belong the blessings of His special favour (Malachi 3:16,17).

In Chapter 3:1 the messenger who was to prepare the way of the Lord at the Second Advent, the anti-type of Elias, John the Baptist, was the church militant - the church on earth whose mission has been to preach among all the nations the gospel of the kingdom and the Second Coming of Christ, the King, in power and great glory. But this testimony of the church, like that of John the Baptist, has failed to bring peace and goodwill among men. Consequently, the predicted curse as mentioned in Chapter 4:5,6, the great time of trouble such as was not since there was a nation, is about to follow. This true church in the flesh, in the spirit and power of Elias, has been the forerunner of Christ at His Second Advent, and even now we have the privilege of realising that this glorious Messenger of the covenant in Whom we delight, has come to the Temple, the elect church. By the sure word of prophecy, we recognise His presence, and in Malachi 3:2-5 we read: ‘2But who may abide the day of his coming?’ He is coming in judgment for He is now the judge of all the earth. All judgment is committed unto Him. Blessed, indeed, are all those whose hearts are fully consecrated to God, and faithful, and who are therefore approved of Him. Yet even these shall be tried as gold in the fire until all the dross is eliminated and the Refiner can see reflected in them His own glorious image. Then, indeed, are the sacrifices of such pleasant unto the Lord.

Chapter 3:5 declares, ‘I will come near to you’ – to the great systems which comprise nominal spiritual Israel, Christendom so called, - ‘to judgment’ – and who cannot see in the doctrinal conflicts and in the severe handling of criticism of the creeds of Christendom today that judgment has already begun, ‘and I will be a swift witness against’ those who obey the teachings and doctrines of devils in the name of Christianity and thereby plunge men deeper and deeper into the sin of degradation, ‘and against adulterers’ – those who were claiming to be the virgin bride of Christ are living in unholy alliance with the world, whether they be as individuals or religious systems professedly Christian yet joined to and dependent upon the civil powers, ‘and against false swearers’ – those who have made a covenant with the Lord of their entire consecration to Him and yet have been unfaithful, ‘and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages’ – the judgment will indeed be a close one, for every work is to be brought into judgment with every secret thing. This is the significance even now of the turning and examination of every false dogma, civil and religious, nor will it end until it has exposed in all the detail every evil thing.

The few among the masses of the unfaithful who do reverence the Lord and walk in His way are His jewels, and shall be spared in the evil day that is coming upon the whole world. Not only will they be spared, but they will be the Lord’s peculiar treasure. ‘They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in the day when I make up My jewels’ (Malachi 3:17). To this faithful class, now gathered out of the masses of nominal spiritual Israel, as well as to a similar class gathered out of the nominal fleshly Israel in the harvest of the Jewish Age, belong the glorious promises of this prophecy. The remnant of fleshly Israel, including the Apostles, and all the faithful of the early church, the consecrated and faithful, will together constitute Christ’s body with the Head and will be kings and priests unto God, the seed of Abraham in whom all the families of the earth shall be blessed during the Millennial reign. ‘If ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise’ as it is written in Galatians 3:29.

In Proverbs 3:6 we read: ‘In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths’ and in verse 5: ‘Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not to thine own understanding.’ This is the blessed privilege of all the children of God, and years of experience of many precious saints testify that the Lord is always faithful to those who put their trust in Him. Look for His leading and gratefully acknowledge His faithfulness. Let those who would prove His faithfulness trust Him more and more and cease to lean on their own understanding, and they will be brought to an increasing realisation of the heavenly Father’s love, and care, and providence, and into a closer bond of fellowship with Him. (ZC:1/04)

“THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT”

(Acts 2:16-21, Joel 2:28-32)

From the Scriptures we learn that the Holy Spirit is not a person but the power or influence of God shed forth in the accomplishment of His designs to have His kingdom established both in heaven and earth. This power was employed in the very beginning. In the narrative of the events of creation, it is said in Gen 1:2 – “*and the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the earth.*” The pre-human Jesus, the firstborn of every creature, became the agent of Almighty God in the whole process of creation. God’s almighty power has always operated through His only-begotten Son. The apostle John clearly so understood it when, in commencing his gospel, he says that all things were made through the agency of the Word, God’s beloved Son. The writer to the Hebrews states the same thing in Chap 1:2 – through His Son, God “*made the worlds*”.

In Old Testament times the prophets were guided by the Holy Spirit of God, and many times in the New Testament we read of things that happened as fulfilling the mind of God as foretold in the Old Testament prophecies. In those times God’s almighty power or spirit was exercised to raise up kings and to put them down. In New Testament times, this power of God has been cleverly counterfeited through the agency of Satan, and it requires consecrated effort to discern what is truly put forth by the Holy Spirit of God and what is cunningly devised by the counterfeit of Satan to lead astray.

From the prophecy of Joel we learn that an unusual outpouring of God’s Spirit was to take place and to accomplish certain results. This was not only in Joel but was hinted at in other O.T. prophecies. All God’s true people have noted these prophecies and have wondered how they would be fulfilled, so when at Pentecost unusual happenings occurred, as recorded in Acts 2, the people were amazed as to what it all meant. Their natural minds found it hard for them to understand and since they were acquainted with what drunkenness did amongst men, some saw it as something of that kind.

But now it was time for this prophecy to be made known and Peter was chosen as the mouthpiece. When he had finished speaking, most of the people believed that these events must refer to what Joel in his time had foretold, as we read in Acts 2:37 – “*Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their hearts, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?*”

The account of the events at Pentecost is in Acts 2:1-

12, and reads as follows.- “*And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place; and suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting; and there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling in Jerusalem, Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language, and they were amazed and marveled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these that speak Galileans. And how hear we every man in his own tongue, wherein we were born?....we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this?*”

When we look carefully at what Joel said, we see that the promise was that this powerful Holy Spirit was to be poured out on all flesh. Certainly all true followers of Jesus would freely admit that they share, and have shared, in the blessings of the Holy Spirit sent down at Pentecost. However, because it is so evident that it has not been poured out upon all people, then this prophecy cannot be applied generally to our day and the Gospel Age. There must be a future demonstration that will bless all people. For this reason, some tell us that Pentecost was only for present day believers and that the word of mankind must wait for a further demonstration in days to come.

To my understanding, the complete fulfillment will occur without any remarkable happenings as at Pentecost. In an endeavour to make this point, let us review some of the stately steppings of our God during times past. There was a time when mankind lived apparently as they wanted without any real intervention by the great Creator God; He will deal justly with these in a future day. But eventually through Moses, God instituted a Law to make a change in the way that people lived. However, all did not accept this arrangement and God never compelled everyone to do so.

The world went on and, in due course, Christ came at His first advent. This changed things again, inasmuch that the Law was made redundant for those seeking God and His righteousness. At that time, God did not initially turn to all the world to be profited but only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, the Jewish frater-

nity. The Gentiles were not at that time involved and God gave them no special attention until later.

With every change of dispensation, however, God always has someone ready to herald the change. In the days when there was no compulsion, there were always a few who sought the true God, even though they were not the special ones at that time. It was so in the time of the Law, when Gentiles were not specially regarded, that there were Gentiles doing their best to work out how to know and serve God's righteousness. When God's time clock struck again, they were ready for God to deal with them. Cornelius was one such, and God used him to be one of the first to make the change known.

So with this brief lead up, I suggest that while God's Holy Spirit has not yet profited all mankind, in due course it will. At Pentecost it was poured for all flesh; it was God's intention that all should ultimately share in its beneficence. Rotherham's Emphasised Bible seems to have the right thought when it translates Peter's declaration at Pentecost – "this is the beginning of that which was spoken of by Joel." Since the Spirit was shed forth at Pentecost, it has been the means for taking out a people for God's name as prophesied, and when that work is finished, there will be those ready for the continuation of the work commenced at Pentecost.

This will quite naturally begin to flow into people's lives and hearts without any further great demonstration. The end result of this will be a "new heavens and new earth" – God's glorious purpose as recorded in the closing verses of the Book of Revelation. There will be no more waiting for another dispensational change – "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come, and let him that heareth say, Come, and let him that is thirsty Say, Come, and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely," Blessing to all by God's Holy Spirit will not be universally received but that which was poured out at Pentecost will have truly reached to all people.

Another has suggested, concerning what Peter mentioned further in his reference to the quotation from Joel's prophecy, that when the Holy Spirit's power has been poured out, the youthful will prophesy, as well as the older ones. Prophecy means to expound publicly and scrutiny of the word "young" suggests that it may not refer always to those young in age, but to the less mature. These would be those who previously had not been prominent in such work; these see visions, not necessarily of the future, but of the past also. They begin to understand Old Testament prophecies that before were obscure to them. After Pentecost, did not this happen? How powerfully men began to speak out,

not famous men, but those labeled "ignorant and unlearned". Their preaching was so powerful and convincing that those who became jealous tried to stop them, but in vain.

Looking at Acts 2:20, we see, apart from the signs and wonders referred to in Verse 19, other different happenings to take place after Pentecost. These would deteriorate with time and the initial powerful effect of the gospel through the Holy Spirit would lose its impact. The Sun which represents God's truth would be turned into darkness. According to the Concordance, darkness as used here refers to all kinds of spiritual darkness – physical, intellectual, spiritual and moral. Over the gospel age, these forms of darkness have developed, and it seems to many today that it is rapidly increasing; evil powers seem more and more to be dominating our world.

Concordances suggest that the Moon represents the Law. God's righteous law is turned to blood – without blood there is no life. Vine suggests that Revelation 12:1 can be considered here; in Chapter 12:1, the woman described is understood to represent the true church (as I see it), clothed with the Sun and with the Moon under her feet. She stands on the foundation of God's righteous law and Vine points out the deterioration that has taken place and continues to do so. God's righteousness, as pointed out in His word, is set at nought, no light is discerned there; God's righteousness no longer has power.

Such is the state of affairs prior to the coming of the awesome (AV – notable) day of the Lord. Rotherham is probably nearer the mark, changing the word "awesome" to "the great and manifest day of the Lord". So the account in Acts 2 has been telling us of events that are to occur before the glorious Kingdom of God and His Christ is ushered in.

(W A Smith)

**"Surely I come quickly. Amen, even so come,
Lord Jesus". (Rev 22:20)**

**Let thy Spirit, Lord, go with us,
Be our comfort and our stay;
Grateful praise to thee we render,
For the joy we feel today.**

**May thy Spirit dwell within us,
May our souls thy temples be,
May we tread the path to glory,
Led and guided still by thee.**

Hymns of Dawn 84

THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT-FAITH

In Galatians 5:22-23 the Apostle Paul lists faith as a fruit of the Spirit. Some other Scriptures indicate that faith is a gift of the Spirit rather than a fruit. Gifts and fruits differ in that gifts do not require development whereas fruits take time to develop and mature.

1 Corinthians 12: 8-9 is one Scripture that refers to faith as a gift: “For to one is **given** by the Spirit the word of wisdom; ... to another **faith** by the same Spirit.” Likewise Romans 12: 3: “... according as **God hath dealt** to every man the measure of faith” while Ephesians 2:8 says “For by grace are ye saved through **faith**; and that not of yourselves, it is the **gift** of God.” In what sense then is faith a fruit as well as a gift?

Philippians 1: 27 infers that faith is a fruit that requires our attention and effort to develop: “... that ye stand fast ... striving together for the faith of the gospel.” The concept of “striving” infers that action is required on the believer’s part, and therefore it is appropriate to refer to faith as a fruit.

In 2 Thessalonians 1: 3 the Apostle Paul says “We are bound to thank God always for you ... because that your **faith groweth exceedingly**.” The thought of faith growing is consistent with the concept of faith being a fruit. Consequently the Scriptures refer to faith as both a “gift” and a “fruit”. To fully appreciate the concept of faith being a fruit we need to understand the nature of faith.

The nature of faith

The Greek word translated *faith* in Galatians 5:22 is “*Pistis*” (Strong’s # 4102). In part, Dr. Strong defines “*pistis*” as “*persuasion, i.e. credence, (morally) conviction of religious truth ...*” This definition relates *faith* to a person’s mind; being persuaded (or convicted) that something is truth is a phenomenon of the mind.

In Rom 10:17 the Apostle Paul writes “So then *faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*” God has given us His Word, an inspired collection of historical accounts, prophecies and promises. As our knowledge and understanding of His Word increases so does the depth of our conviction – our faith – and it is in this sense that our faith is a fruit. This understanding does not deny that He has given us His Spirit, and that His Spirit is necessary to understand His Word. (1 Cor. 2:14)

Other scholars translate *pistis* as *faithfulness* instead of *faith*. The 1901 American Standard Version, the New

International Version, and The New Revised Standard Version all translate *pistis* in Galatians 5:22 as *faithfulness*. Faithfulness relates to a person’s actions, and is a higher concept than faith. Faithfulness requires not only being persuaded that something is true, but that the persuasion is held so firmly that it controls or governs the believer’s actions.

The relationship of the inward conviction (faith) to the outward manifestation (faithfulness) is explained in James 2:14-26: “What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works?... If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works ... Faith without works is dead ... Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?... Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only ... For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.”

Faith necessary for the overcomer

Our faith is part of our “*armour*” (Eph. 6), it is “*the victory that overcometh the world*” (1 John 5:4), and is required before we can be at peace with our Creator. (Rom 5:1) Its development is our ongoing task as we seek to “*work out our own salvation...*” (Phil. 2:12) The Scriptures abound with exhortations regarding the exercise of our faith (i.e. our faithfulness, our outward witness), e.g. Rom Chaps 6; 12, 13; 1 Cor 5; 2 Cor. Chaps. 4, 7; Eph. 4; Phil. 2; Col. 3

**O, for a faith that will not shrink,
Though pressed by every foe,
That will not tremble on the brink
Of any earthly woe.**

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