

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

REJOICE EVERMORE *Thess 5:16*

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

(From Sr. Schulz)

“That your Joy Might be Full”

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

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

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

THE SOURCE – ABIDING IN HIM

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

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

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

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

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

THE FOUNDATION – GOD’S WORD

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

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

THE NATURE OF CHRISTIAN JOY

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

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

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

PEACE AND JOY IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

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

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

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

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

JOYFUL IN TRIBULATION

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

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

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

PURPOSE IN CHRISTIAN JOY

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

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

“THAT MY JOY MIGHT REMAIN IN YOU”

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

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

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

Go, labour on; spend and be spent -

Thy joy to do the Father's will;

It is the way the Master went;

Should not the servant tread it still?

JOY IN HIS PRESENCE

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

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

Amen.

My Joy Remain: Your Joy be Full

(John 15:11)

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

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

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

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

The Life of Stephen.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Riches of Glory”

(Continued from last issue)

Ephesians 3:14-21

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"EXCEEDING ABUNDANTLY ABOVE ALL THAT WE ASK OR THINK"

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

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

This is not merely abstract thinking, theoretical reasoning. It is not based upon what God has done in his mighty works in far-off places and far-off times, but upon what God is doing *in us here and now*. Notice the wonderful truth that Paul adds to all the foregoing, telling us that it is all "according to the power *that worketh in us*." The power was laid on at Pentecost and has been available to every member of the Body of Christ since. All we have to do is to switch it on by the exercise of faith. Do we find ourselves always doing so?

How exceeding abundantly above all they could ask or think were God's dealings with Israel. The ten plagues culminating in the death of Egypt's first-born; the deliverance through the Red Sea after the seemingly hopeless position at the water's edge; two millions of men, women, and children in the wilderness for forty years; guided through the trackless desert, supplied with water in the sandy wastes, provided with sustenance in lands where no crops could grow. Surely all this was exceeding abundantly above all they could ask or think.

Yet of Natural Israel it is said, "They limited the Holy One of Israel." Thirty-eight years before they did so, they could have entered the promised land. The forty spies who were sent out brought back a glowing account that it was even as God had promised, a land flowing with milk and honey. In proof they brought back a huge bunch of grapes which it took two men to carry. But along with this glowing account of the land, all but two of the forty spies reported that it was quite impossible for Israel to go in and take possession of it. The cities were impregnable, with walls which reached up to heaven. The men of the cities were giants before whom they seemed as grasshoppers. And so "they could not enter in because of unbelief." – Heb. 3:19.

How is it with us? Do we ever find ourselves wandering in the wilderness when we should be resting in the enjoyment of the promised land? Do we listen to the voices within of unbelief or act on the inspiration of faith? Are we free of all trace of care, worry and anxiety? Knowing that God is so superabundantly able, do we think big things about God and ask big things from God? Is my faith such that I rest in complete assurance that above all I ask or think; nay, abundantly above all I ask or think; or does even that, not sufficiently express the fullness of my faith so that I say, "Exceeding abundantly above all that I ask or think God is able" to meet every contingency? A contemplation of this wonderful prayer should verily make us realize that God gives to His children "according to the riches of His glory."

"UNTO HIM BE GLORY IN THE CHURCH BY CHRIST JESUS"

This last portion of Paul's prayer underlines what God expects of us in view of all the provisions He has made for us from His riches in glory. In rendering His report to the Father in John 17, our Lord said, "I have glorified thee on earth; I have finished the work thou gavest me to do." His mission on earth, to glorify God, was passed on to his church, collectively and individually. "Unto him be glory in the Church," through the person and power of Christ Jesus our Head and Pattern. The ultimate question which each of us must put to ourselves is, therefore, Is God being glorified in me? Our constant aim should be to make this true day by day,

so that like our Lord we might be able to make report with joy at the end of the way.

God's purpose is that there shall be unto Him glory in the Church by Christ Jesus, and this not only throughout the Gospel Age, but "throughout all ages, world without end, Amen." What wonderfully long views the Bible gives us! The outlook on the future from the standpoint of the world and the standpoint of the Christian is like the contrast between an outlook over the slums and that over the wide open spaces of some beautiful stretches of God's country. Think of the glorious panorama of sea, mountain, and sky that you may have witnessed in the highlands. There as we have looked upon range on range of mountains seemingly endless in the blue distance, we may have thought how very suggestive of the expression we have here, "throughout all ages, world without end."

In the foreground of the picture we think of that noble Millennial mountain of the Lord concerning which the Bible has so fully informed us. But what of all these other peaks fading away into the blue distance of the ages to come? What is the content of Ephesians 2:4-7: "But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved), and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus"? What do these ages to come have in store for us from the "riches of his glory"? Our reply must be, "Now we see as through a glass darkly, but then face to face; now we know in part, but then shall we know even also as we are known" (The Herald)

MY PRAYER

Grant me, O Father, according to the riches of thy glory, to be strengthened with might by thy spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in my heart by faith; and that I might be rooted and grounded in love, and thus be able to comprehend with all saints the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of the mystery of thy will in Christ; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, and so to be filled with all the fullness of God. Thou art able to do for me exceeding abundantly above all I can ask or think, according to the power of thy spirit working in me; enable me therefore to live to thy glory as a member of thy Church here and now, and throughout all ages, world without end, through Jesus Christ, my Lord. Amen. (A.D. Kirkwood)

"Strengthen thy Brethren"

"And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."
Luke 22:31,32.

Jesus told Peter that when he was "converted" he was to strengthen the brethren, and in his first epistle we find him so doing. He begins by pointing out the fact that the sufferings of Christ had been foretold by the prophets through the power of the Holy Spirit. Peter says that the Holy Spirit "testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." – 1 Peter 1:11

Later in the epistle Peter explains that the footstep followers of Jesus share in these foretold sufferings. He writes, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." – 1 Peter 4:12, 13) When one suffers it is a great source of strength to know the reason for it, and here Peter is reminding us that there is the best possible reason for our suffering as Christians; that reason being that it is the divine will, having been foretold by God's holy prophets.

Again Peter writes, "What glory, is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps." (1 Peter 2:20, 21) Peter was grieved when he saw Jesus suffer for well-doing, but through his conversion he came to understand that this was the divine will for his Master, and that it is now God's will for Jesus' disciples.

Peter says further on the subject of Christian suffering: "Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye; and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled." (1 Peter 3:13,14) We have a good example in Jesus of the principle involved in this exhortation – "Who... will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" True, they brought cruel suffering upon Jesus. They placed a crown of thorns on His head, and they 'hung Him on a cross until He died, but they did not eternally harm Him! They only completed the sacrifice which He had covenanted with His Father to make.

As a new creature Jesus was not harmed. All that happened was that through death and resurrection He exchanged His cross for a crown. And it will be the same with us if we continue faithfully to lay down our lives,

following in the Master's footsteps. This is what is involved in what Jesus said to Peter prior to His crucifixion; that one saves his or her life by voluntarily losing it through sacrifice.

GOD'S CARE

How welcome should be Peter's admonition, "Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you." (1 Peter 5:7) God's care of His people is exercised in many ways – through the Holy Spirit; by the guardian angels; through His Word of truth; and by our association with the brethren. We need all these helps, especially when we are suffering with Christ. While everything is going well, we might be inclined to overlook the need of God's care. But we need Him *all* the time, in fair weather and in storms; may we never fail to seek the throne of heavenly grace in our *every* time of need.

Peter adds that we are to "be sober", and to "be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world." (1 Peter 5:8,9) Satan attacks the Lord's people along many lines, but here the apostle seems to be reminding us that his attacks will come through efforts to discourage us because of our afflictions; and indeed this is one of Satan's methods of attack.

We are to resist these attacks through steadfastness in the faith – our "most holy faith" (Jude 20) It is through this most holy faith that we understand the reason for Christian suffering. If we do not know why we are suffering, we are vulnerable indeed to Satan's endeavours to discourage us. But how different it is when we know that we have been called to suffer with Christ – to enter into a covenant with the Lord by sacrifice; to take up our cross and follow Him.

THE JOY OF FAITH

Enlightened Christians who are faithfully laying down their lives will not ask why they are suffering, but will rejoice in the fact that they are partakers of the sufferings of Christ, and will in due time partake of His glory. Rejoicing in the most holy faith, these will realise that Christ suffered and died as mankind's Redeemer, and that they have been invited to die with Him, to be planted in the likeness of His death so that they might also be the likeness of His resurrection. (Romans 6:5)

They will know that it will be in the "first resurrection" that they will enter into His heavenly inheritance, and have the privilege and honour to be associated with Jesus in the promised blessing of all the families of the earth. They know that eventually all suffering and death will be destroyed, and the whole earth will be filled with the Lord's glory. For these reasons, they will not allow Satan's roars to frighten them, and will continue to cast all their cares upon the Lord. ("Dawn")

"But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit,"

The Intents of the Heart.

(Psalm 139:23,24)

The Scriptures make it very clear that God, our Heavenly Father is able to know our every thought and motive, and that there is nothing we can hide from Him. This understanding should have a very sobering effect on us. We accept the Bible record and the fact that God is the Creator of man, and seeing He created the marvellous mechanism of the brain, He can also read the thoughts it records. We are unable to do this. We can only know what is in the mind of another as it is revealed by word or deed, and so can gain only a superficial understanding of others as we know what they say or do.

It is interesting to read the selection of David as king of Israel, as recorded in 1 Sam. 16: 7 – "But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." The dictionary has a good description of what the heart represents. It reads, – "The heart is the chief organ of the physical life and occupies a most important part of the human system. The word came to stand for man's mental and moral activity. The heart is used figuratively for the hidden springs of the personal life. The heart being deep within, it represents the hidden man. It represents the true man, which is concealed."

DAVID CHOSEN

Samuel was sent by the Lord to select and anoint the king for Israel, to be chosen from the sons of Jesse. The seven older sons were passed over, though by appearance they would have been acceptable. David, though smaller and not so attractive, was selected. "The Lord looketh upon the heart." It was David's sincere heart loyalty that later on allowed him to be forgiven when he committed sins. All our thoughts and motives are naked before the Lord. There is nothing we can do to hide them from Him. If we recognise this, it should help us to watch our -thoughts and motives very carefully. It could be an encouragement to us as we realise

our mistakes and failures are not of the heart, and God deals with us according to our heart intentions.

This seems to be the thought the Apostle has in mind in Heb. 4: 14-16, when he says, "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." We can come boldly, or with confidence, to the throne of grace, because we know that through faith in the sacrifice of Jesus we can seek forgiveness for our unintentional sins, if our hearts are right in the sight of God.

When Jesus was on earth, He was able to read the thoughts and intents of the hearts of others. This was through the power of the Holy Spirit. We remember the time when Philip introduced Nathanael to Him, and He said, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile." This surely indicated that He knew the heart of Nathanael, even before he was introduced to Him.

"LOVEST THOU ME?"

This is clearly shown also in the life of Peter. Just before He was crucified, He told Peter he would deny Him three times. Peter did not think this was possible, and said to Jesus that he would die for Him before denying Him. No doubt Peter sincerely meant this, but Jesus knew when the test came Peter would deny Him. Peter learnt the lesson. That Jesus knew this in advance and foretold it made a very marked impression on Peter's mind. Later on, after Jesus' resurrection, Jesus was to remind Peter that He knew the thoughts and intents of his heart.

The incident is recorded in John 21. It was here that the disciples decided to return to their fishing business. They laboured all night without catching a fish. In the morning they saw a stranger on shore. He questioned as to whether they had any fish, and the answer being "No", the stranger advised them to cast the net on the other side of the boat, and to their surprise the net was filled. A similar miracle had occurred when Jesus first called them to follow Him, so they knew this was Jesus. Peter swam ashore to greet Jesus, and they made a fire and pre-pared a meal and ate together.

It was after eating together, and still on the shore of the lake, that Jesus questioned Peter. He said, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He said unto him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee, Jesus saith Unto him, Feed my sheep."

That Jesus asked Peter three times, "Lovest thou me?" must have taken Peter's mind back to the time when, before the crucifixion, he denied Him three times. This must have been a reminder to Peter that Jesus still knew every thought and intent of his heart. By now Peter realised he could hide nothing from his Master. That is why he said, "Lord thou knowest all things: thou knowest that I love thee."

Yes, Jesus did know what was in Peter's heart, and He knows what is in our hearts. In the resurrection Jesus was exalted to the Divine nature, and it is true of Him, as it is of our Heavenly Father, that all the thoughts and intents of our hearts are open and naked before Him; He knows us better than we know and understand ourselves. This would be a terrifying thought if we did not know that. He is our sympathetic Advocate before the Heavenly Father, and that God does not look upon us according to our imperfect, fallen flesh, but according to the intentions of the heart.

THE FIRST LOVE

We get a similar lesson from the message to the church at Ephesus. Though the messages to the seven churches cover the period of the church's history, it is true of a group of Christians or an individual Christian at any time. This message says, "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars; and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted." These are wonderful commendations indeed. But the Lord said, "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love."

This could be true of us. It seems important that when we realise our hearts are open and naked before God, we should search our own hearts, and this should be a lesson from the message we have just read. When we look back over our past, especially to the early years of our consecrated life, have we the same love for the Lord now as we had then? Our love for the Lord will be shown by our love for the brethren. If Jesus said to us today, "Lovest thou me?" could we answer as Peter did, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee?" If because of weakness of the flesh our good intentions fail, we have an assurance from the

Apostle Paul, "Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, and find mercy and grace to help in time of need."

We saw earlier that David was selected as king of Israel because God knew his heart. Later on he did commit some sins which were not good in the sight of God. David sought forgiveness, and was later restored to favour with God. He said, "Search me, O Lord, and know my heart." We also should be pleased, as were David and Peter, that God knows our heart. David seems very much impressed with this thought, for in the Psalms so many times he mentions how the heart should be kept. Psa. 51: 10, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." He also said in Psa. 19: 14, "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my Redeemer." JBH: 66

"Consecrated, Lord to Thee"

(The following tribute to the life and work of Frances Ridley Havergal was published in the December 1936 issue of "Peoples Paper" to mark the 100th anniversary of her birth. The author's name is unknown).

Frances Ridley Havergal was born on the 14th December, 1836, and, in due course, every talent she possessed was consecrated to the Lord. She recognised early that, 'in God's great field of labour, all work, is not the same; He hath a service for each one who loves His Holy Name', and, as we sing the praises so ably written and expressed by this servant, our thanks ascend to the 'Giver of every good and perfect gift', for the faithfulness displayed in the use of these gifts. Her pen ceased not to declare in a most pleasing ministry the praises of Him who knew no sin.

*Father; we bless Thee with heart and voice
For the wondrous grace of Thy sovereign choice,
That patiently, gently sought us out
In the far off land of death and doubt;
That drew us to Christ by the Spirit's might,
That opened our eyes to see the Light,
That arose in strange reality
From the darkness that fell on Calvary.*

(Isa 62:12, Eph 2:13)

There was also in her music constantly a sense of insufficiency in self, and a desire to 'Let every thought be captive brought, Lord Jesus to Thine own sweet obedience – That I may know in ebb-less flow, the perfect peace of full and pure allegiance.' (2 Cor 10:5)

While we would draw attention to her many delightful works, we would also call to remembrance that in her ministry much pain was endured, inasmuch that, in the employment of her talents for the Lord, many were drawn to herself. These she had to re-direct, and while she cherished dearly the love and affection of many, she desired it only for Jesus. "I want you" was said to many, "but I want you for Jesus."

*Singing for Jesus, our Master and Friend,
Telling His love and His marvellous grace, Love for eternity, love without end;
Love for the loveless, the sinful and base, Singing for Jesus and trying to win
Many to love Him and join in our song...*

God has surely supplied all our need. Some may appreciate a particular ministry more than another, and yet, as one string reverberates faithfully the music it is intended to sound, its companion strings will, if in tune, reciprocate and accord sympathetically. One hundred years (has not dimmed) the music of love that rings out from the heart of Frances Ridley Havergal.

"VESSELS OF MERCY, PREPARED UNTO GLORY"

(by Francis Ridley Havergal)

Vessels of mercy, prepared unto glory!

This is your calling and this is your joy!

This, for the new year unfolding before thee,

Tells out the terms of your blessed employ.

(Rom 9:23)

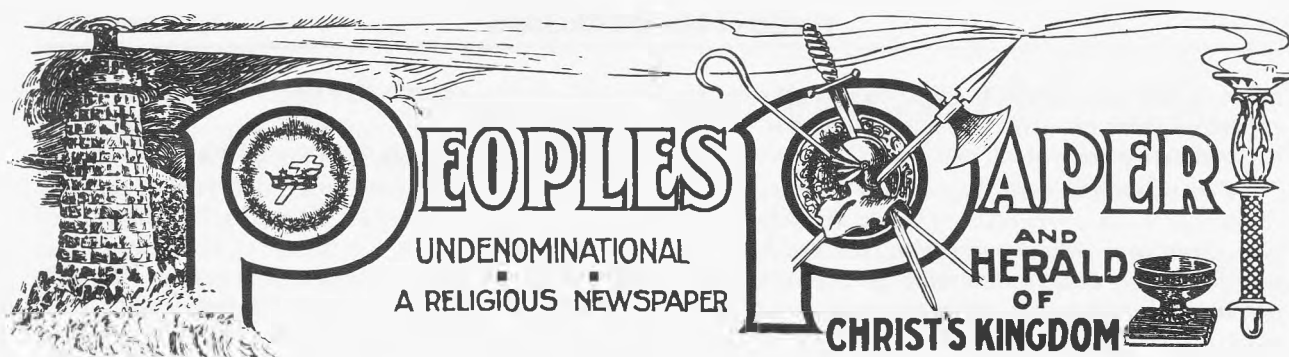
Vessels to honour; made sacred and holy.

Meet for the use of the Master we love,
Ready for service all simple and lowly,
Ready, one day, for the temple above.
(2 Tim 2:21)

Yes, though the vessels be fragile and earthen,
God hath commanded His glory to shine;
Treasure resplendent henceforth is our burthen,
Excellent power; not ours but Divine
(2 Cor 4:5.6)

Chosen in Christ ere the dawn of Creation,
Chosen for him to be filled with his grace,
Chosen to carry the streams of salvation
Into each thirsty and desolate place.
(Acts 9:15)

Take all Thy vessels, O glorious Refiner;
Purge all the dross, that each chalice may be
Pure in Thy pattern, completer, diviner,
Filled with Thy glory and shining for thee.
(Prov 25:4)



Volume 83 No. 2

MELBOURNE, APRIL-JUNE 2000

“THIS DO IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME”

As each year comes around, the Lord's people have the privilege of gathering together to celebrate the memorial of the death of Jesus, their Saviour. It is profitable at such times to recall the solemn occasion when our Lord Himself instituted the simple way in which all who trust implicitly in His sacrifice for their salvation from sin may remember that sacrifice, given on their behalf but in God's due time to benefit all mankind.

This is evidently the reason why it is God's will for His people to commemorate the death of Jesus, for it is essential that we always keep before our minds the necessity for Jesus' death and the fact that, only because of His death, we are now privileged to enjoy the hope of life through Him. Let us go briefly back to the typical arrangement that the Israelites were instructed to carry out in relation to the Passover; these instructions are recorded in Exodus 12.

The record tells us how the nation of Israel was delivered from the bondage of Egypt and particularly about the passing over of the firstborns of Israel during the plague of death which came upon Egypt, and which, as the last of the plagues, finally compelled Pharaoh to release the Israelites from compulsory servitude. For the Israelites to be spared from this plague of death, they were instructed to take a lamb for a sacrifice and sprinkle the blood upon the doorposts and lintels of their houses, so that their houses would be “passed over” on that night.

“Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year; you shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats; and you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month; and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening, and they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it.” (Exodus 12:5-7)

“For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of

Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgement: I am the LORD. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where you are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt. And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and you shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; you shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever.” (Exodus 12:12-14)

The two points that attract our attention here are first, the “lamb”, and second, the “firstborns”. The lamb was to be a male of the first year, without blemish, and it was to be killed on the 14th of Nisan. The Israelites were commanded to celebrate this memorial of the passover each year and it was for this purpose that the Lord and His disciples assembled in the upper room on that day, as recorded in the New Testament gospel accounts.

It was on this day (14th Nisan) that Jesus was crucified, thus identifying Him as the antitype of the lamb, without blemish, that was slain. John the Baptist who heralded the presence of our Lord at His first advent said of Jesus, “Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.” John 1:29 The apostle Paul also speaks of Jesus as the Lamb of God in 1 Cor. 5:7,8 - “For even Christ our passover (our passover lamb) is sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”

We note from Exodus 12:12 that only the firstborns were in danger of death, but the deliverance of all the Israelites was dependent upon their salvation. This was also typical of the “church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven” of whom we read in Hebrews 12:23. It is the church of the firstborn alone that is being spared (passed over) during this gospel age. These have the blood of the Lamb - Jesus sprinkled not on the doorposts of their houses but upon their hearts, as we read in Hebrews 10:22 - “Let us draw near with a true

heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water."

"Forasmuch as you know that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot." 1 Peter 1:18,19. So, indeed, as we come together on these memorial occasions, we look unto Jesus as the "Lamb of God". In Exodus 12, we noted that the lamb must be totally without blemish; so Jesus was the perfect One, "holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners."

Jesus further declared that no man took His life from Him, but He laid it down Himself, that is, He voluntarily gave his life in accordance with the Father's will. "No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received from my Father." John 10:18. Again the Psalmist speaking prophetically of our Lord declares – "Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea thy law is within my heart." Psalm 40:7,8.

With this in mind, we rejoice to think of the great love of our Lord in giving His life so that we can, during this present age, have life through His sacrifice. We rejoice also in the so great love of the Father who gave His only-begotten Son to be our Redeemer, and we know in God's due time this love will reach out to all mankind. "There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." 1 Timothy 2:5,6.

An account of the institution by Jesus of the memorial of His death is given in Matthew 26; in verse 26 we read – "As they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it and broke it, and gave it to His disciples, and said, Take, eat, this is my body." Evidently, when the passover supper was over, Jesus took some of the unleavened bread that was left and instituted a new memorial, a memorial that was to be kept in remembrance of Him. He was the antitypical Lamb that had been chosen three and a half years earlier to fulfil the picture seen in Exodus 12.

So when Jesus took bread and said, "Take, eat, this is my body" He meant that it represented His body. This pure and unfermented bread represented our Lord's sinless flesh; leaven being a type or picture of sin was expressly forbidden to be used at the Passover season. Here it is good to read from John 6 –

"The bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. Then said they unto Him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that

believeth on me shall never thirst." Verses 33-35.

The Matthew account of the institution of the memorial of His death continues – "And He (Jesus) took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it." Matt. 26:27. The fruit of the vine, of which we partake, represents our Saviour's life given for us, His human life, His soul poured out unto death on our behalf and of our recognition of His great sacrifice for us. By faith in that sacrifice, we are justified in the sight of our Father in heaven.

In 1 Cor. 10:16,17 the apostle Paul presents an additional significance to the taking of the emblems of bread and wine. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread." The Diaglott translation renders it – "Is it not a participation of the blood of the Anointed One... is it not a participation of the body of the Anointed One?"

This illustrates the great grace of God, that He is willing to receive us and make us joint-heirs with our Lord and Saviour if we have His spirit. That spirit which actuated Jesus was one of entire devotion to His Father's will, even unto death, as we read in Hebrews 10:7 – "Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me, to do thy will, O God." The same spirit must be in all those whom the Father accepts as members of the Body of Christ.

As the apostle indicates, when we break this bread together as a memorial, not only do we symbolise our Lord's broken body but in a wider sense the breaking or the laying down of the lives of the members of the Church. The cup of the fruit of the vine symbolises the sacrificial life of Jesus, but it also teaches us that in becoming His disciples we accept His invitation to share His cup. Paul in Romans 12:1 again presents the thought in different words – "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, your reasonable service."

As we read again the account of the last hours of our Lord's life, it makes us sad to think of the ignominy and shame to which He was subjected but let us also remember that it was for the joy set before Him that our Lord endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now set down on the right hand of God. This joy is foretold in Jesus' words in Matt. 26:29, where we read – I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." Let us thank the Lord for this great hope; may it be an inspiration to each of us to serve the Lord acceptably and partake of the cup of joy with Him in the kingdom. Amen. (JBH)

“What shall I Render unto the Lord?”

“What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord. Now in the presence of all His people.” (Psalm 116:12-14)

David wondered how to express his gratitude for all that God had given to him: “What shall I render unto the Lord?” – not as if he thought he could render (i.e. repay) anything proportional or as a valuable consideration for what he had received, but he desired to render something acceptable, something that God would be pleased with as the acknowledgment of a grateful servant of God. He asks God: “What shall I render?”

We also, having received many benefits from God, should be concerned to enquire, “What shall we render”? We like David can no more pretend to give recompense to God than we can to merit any favour from him. David continues in verse 17 to say. “I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people.” His prayer asks for the Lord's deliverance, acknowledges his love and duty towards his Creator. How little did the Psalmist realise, in writing these words, that hundreds of years later they would find an even greater fulfilment in the life of our Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Today they have a very important message for all the members of the church as they seek to follow in the footsteps of Jesus.

“What shall I render unto the Lord?” Let us look to the Bible to see what others have rendered to God. First of all let us look to Christ and the example that He set. In rendering unto the Lord, Jesus gave up a position far greater than any other could occupy. We read in Phil. 2:5 and then from 7-8, “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who... made himself of no reputation and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” Jesus entered this world in the humblest of circumstances as Luke tells us in Luke 2: 7 “And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn”. In John's gospel 1:14 we are told “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

During his ministry He compared His situation to that of the animals, saying, “The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head.” We are told in Heb. 12:2 that Jesus, “for the joy that

was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” Jesus was completely dedicated to doing God's will regardless of the cost to Himself. Paul in his letter to the Hebrews gives us a snapshot of our Lord's life – “God hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.” (Heb 1:2,3) So in rendering unto the Lord, Jesus laid aside His former glory and honour, and became a perfect human being, that He might redeem us all. He gave all He had in willing service to the Heavenly Father, who, after His resurrection, rewarded Him with glory that far excelled that which He formerly possessed.

Another example is Paul the Apostle, who gave up much from this world's standpoint to follow Christ; as he tells us in Phil. 3:5-8 “Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the Excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ.” Paul is an interesting example, since before his conversion, he felt that he was doing the will of God in persecuting the Christians, whom he felt were going against God, and it was not until Jesus revealed Himself to Paul that he realised the error of his ways. We too must be sure that we are listening and watching so that we really follow what God wants from us.

Paul suffered many persecutions, afflictions and imprisonments which he endured throughout his Christian walk, as he recounts in 2 Cor 11:25-27 “Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger

and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness". However after all these sufferings he was so sure of his Heavenly Father that he could say at last in 2 Tim 4:7 and 8, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day."

Let us ask ourselves the question, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?" The answer is given in the New Testament in Rom. 12:1-2 "I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." Before we look to what we can render unto the Lord, we should stop and ask ourselves, what do we have that we can render unto God? King David speaking before all the congregation of Israel put it beautifully saying "Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all. Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name. But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? For all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee" (1 Chr 29:11-14) We only have what the Lord has given us in the first place to gratefully offer to Him. How humbling a thought that is to the Children of God.

"For all his benefits toward me" – the Psalmist lists these benefits in the beginning of Psalm 116: "I love the LORD, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications. Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live. The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell took hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the LORD; O LORD, I beseech thee deliver my soul." (V1-4) The Psalmist at the time of writing would not have realised that Christ had to come into the world first before this could come about, as we are told in Heb 2:9 "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour, that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man".

But this is only part of what God has in store for us following on redemption; the benefits bestowed on us are manifold, reaching a pinnacle in the

expression of 1 John 3:1-2 "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as he is." But our own responsibility in the matter is shown in the following verse. "Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure".

Verse 13 of The Psalm continues "I will take the cup of salvation". What does this mean to us? "Mine eyes have seen thy salvation", said faithful Simeon as he held the infant Jesus in his arms. Jesus became the Captain of our salvation only through suffering and death. He became the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2). Peter says, "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold", I Peter 1: 18,19 "but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot." But in order for us to be able to take the cup of salvation provided, the eyes of our understanding must be enlightened; we must come to know what is the hope of our calling, and what the riches of the glory of the inheritance in the saints, as suggested in Eph. 1:18 We must go on to believe the exceeding greatness of His power, remembering that the greatest of all miracles was the raising of Christ from the dead, and His being set down at the right hand of God. We are promised that, if faithful, we are to share in the First Resurrection.

In taking the cup of salvation, we have the honour to call upon the name of the Lord. "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 5:1-2). Thereafter we have the Lord on our side. He will never leave us nor forsake us; we are engraved upon the palms of His hands. He gives His angels charge over us, to keep us in all our ways. What a beautiful picture of our Heavenly Father's watch care over us.

Just as Jesus rendered to the Lord all He had, so must we. The early disciples understood Him when He said, "Take up thy cross and follow Me." We have so little, anyway, to give up; nothing at all of value to God, Who owns the cattle on a thousand hills, and the entire sum of the gold and silver and precious stones this earth produces. We have nothing to give which could enhance His magnificence; and yet, if we give our wills to Him, the end result will be to His honour and praise and glory. He has given us the means of praising Him, simply by giving up, letting go, laying down, the negative things.

Of ourselves we have nothing to offer, but because of His redemptive work on our behalf, our Father accepts our heart intentions as if they were perfect. "We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out", we read in 1 Tim 6:7 No earthly possessions will enhance our position in the world to come. No worldly honours will carry over into the next age. Paul gave good advice to Timothy in 1 Tim. 6: 17-19 "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."

Those who are young in years should not imagine that on this account they have nothing to render unto the Lord. Remember that Jesus was only twelve years of age when He said, "I must be about my Father's business." There are many examples in both the Old and New Testaments of individuals being called to God's service in their youth. We might think of Samuel, who served the Lord in a special sense from his early childhood; of David, anointed to be King while quite young. Jeremiah was commissioned to deliver the Lord's messages while a young man, and Daniel, who became a great statesman as well as a prophet beloved of the Lord, had the honour of delivering the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream while in his very early twenties. Some years before that he had made a decided stand in refusing to eat meat from the king's table. Timothy was taking an active part in establishing the early church in his young manhood, so that Paul said to him, "Let no man despise thy youth."

So for all, either young or older, who have a mind to serve the Lord, let them "take the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord." He will surely hear their prayers for His help and guidance. We are living today in "a grand and awful time", when the powers of darkness are shortly to be destroyed forever. The Lord has great things indeed in store for all, young and old, who desire to serve Him. (RC:00)

MEMORIAL DATE – According to our usual reckoning, the time for the observance of the Memorial of our Lord's death will this year be the evening of Tuesday 18 April 2000.

"WHAT SHALL I RENDER UNTO THE LORD?"

(Psa 116:12-14)

What shall I render Lord to thee
For all thy benefits toward me?
For life and earthly good
For raiment, shelter, daily food;
For light and truth, peace and love,
For heavenly wisdom from above?
How great thy bounties unto me!
What have I, that is not from thee?

For all these benefits towards me,
What shall I render, Lord to thee?
The cup thy hand of love hath poured,
I'll humbly take, most gracious Lord,
And call upon Thy holy name
To help me thy great plan proclaim;
I'll spend my days in ceaseless praise,
And tell abroad thy wondrous ways!

"Salvation's Cup" – of suffering, too –
Of suffering with God's chosen few,
Dear Lord, I'll drink of this Thy cup,
And smiling through my tears look up –
A mingled cup of grief and joy,
Of blessedness without alloy,
Of love and friendship divine,
A foretaste of Kingdom wine.

That all dear Lord, may know and see
Thy countless benefits toward me,
Before thy congregation now
I'll pay my consecrated vow;
And in Thy strength, supplied each day,
I'll strive to walk the narrow way
That leads to rest and God and Thee
And blissful immortality.

(Gertrude W. Seibert)

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The Mighty Hand of God

*"Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God,
that he may exalt you in due time", 1 Pet. 5:6*

The hand is one of the most remarkable members of our body. Its capacity ranges from actions requiring the most highly trained skill imaginable, down to the most menial of tasks, from the carrying through of delicate operations upon the human body, and the performance of scientific experiments, to the playing of musical instruments in a way that exhibits brilliance in the use of both fingers and hands.

Hence the hand is often used as a symbol of power or ability to perform. To show one's hand has therefore come to mean the manifestation of a person's skill or power in a certain way. The hand is also used in the Scriptures as a symbol of power to perform in many directions.

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

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

Well has the Psalmist said in considering the immensity of God's hand over all His works, — "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, it is high, I cannot attain unto it", Ps. 139:6. In view of this, we have read of the Lord's powerful hand-working for His typical people Israel and His gracious providences on their behalf. These things, Paul tells us, have been recorded for our admonition on whom the ends of the ages have come, 1 Cor.10:11. And if God's hand did so much for them, His typical people, how much more will His hand be manifested to assist those who have entered into a covenant of sacrifice to follow in the steps of Jesus, in the hope of sharing with Him and assisting in the great work of His coming king-

dom? Hence, we as spiritual Israel can especially apply to ourselves the words of the Psalmist, — "Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation, and thy right hand hath holden me up, and thy gentleness hath made me great." (Psalm 18:35)

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

All of God's consecrated people who possess and properly exercise true humbleness, are used by Him as channels of grace and peace to others. Imbued with His love and peace they are shining lights wherever they go in this dark world of sin. Where there is wrong, these will reflect and demonstrate the spirit of forgiveness and tolerance. Where there is error, they endeavour to present truth with grace and humbleness. Where there is despair, they will reflect confidence and hope. In humbling ourselves we would seek to comfort rather than be comforted. These will try to understand others rather than be understood by them; they will forget self, that they may be remembered and found in Christ. They will delight in forgiving, knowing the joy of being forgiven by their Heavenly Father.

Thus in the doing of these things, we find we are doing our Father's will, and keeping our Master's words when He said, "This is my commandment that ye love one another as I have loved you", John 15:12. God has also promised to dwell with those whose hearts are in this humble condition. He says in Isa.57:15, — "Thus saith the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy, I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite one." This, then, tells us that God also has a humble spirit to condescend to dwell with those

whose hearts have been so prepared to receive Him, whose chief desire is to know and to do His will. He dwells with us through His spirit, His Word helping to revive us when we become faint and weary by the way, for guiding us and lifting us up are His powerful everlasting hands.

The Psalmist tells us to “commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in him and he shall bring it to pass. Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for him”, Psa. 37:5-7. We must not be cast down nor allow our faith to falter when the test of patient endurance is applied, while the outward peace and quietness which we crave tarry long. Outward peace and calm are not always the conditions best suited to our needs as new creatures, and we would not desire conditions in which the precious fruits of the spirit would not grow and develop in us. “Therefore, beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you, but rather rejoice”, 1 Pet.4:12. Because whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth, Heb.12:6. Thus the Lord is chipping away the dross and the things not in accord with His purpose for us, and with His skilful hands will make us unto the delineations of our Head and Master, the perfect top stone in the temple of our God. Our Heavenly Father then will with every testing, if it becomes too great for us, provide a way of escape. So that when we find ourselves in difficulty we are to say, “The Heavenly Father is permitting this trial and the Lord Jesus will help me”, so we can rejoice that we will not be allowed to be overthrown, for He has promised

that all things shall work out for our good because we seek to know Him more and to do His will. Therefore, however dark the way may become, however severe the storm my rage about us, our Father’s hands are always there to console and to lift us up again, so that we are never in despair, though cast down for a while. As He assures us through Psa.91:11, – “For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.”

Precious indeed are the Lord’s promises to us that He will accomplish all that He has said in His Word, but it is necessary to have faith along every line. Without faith, we would not have the courage to go on, and if we did not have faith in His ability to help us in all our hours of need, where would be the source of our help? As Paul says in 1 Thes.5: 24, – “Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.” A son humbles himself under his father’s hand when he renders obedience to his father’s wishes, even when he might feel at times this curtailed his liberties in certain directions, and limited him in many of his natural desires. Let our attitude be the same toward our Heavenly Father, whatever the cost, whatever the sacrifice, for in doing this we shall be following our Redeemer, who continually humbled Himself under His Father’s hand, becoming obedient even unto the death of the cross. “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name.” In thus following Jesus, we shall find that our Heavenly Father’s mighty hand continually upholds and sustains us, doing for us exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. – Eph.3:20. (JBH)

“Let Patience have her Perfect Work”

“Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.”—Jas. 1:4.

The term “patience” carries with it the thought of meek, uncomplaining endurance of suffering with humble resignation and perseverance. It is a trait which indicates strength and self-discipline. It cannot be predicated of inexperienced persons, but only of characters which have been subjected to trials of affliction, pain or loss; and it always shines brightest when manifested under the glowing heat of severe affliction. This trait takes a very prominent place in the galaxy of Christian virtues; for without it the heart would grow faint, the head weary; and the steps would soon falter along the narrow way in which the church is called to walk. “In your patience possess ye your souls,” said the Master, implying the danger of losing our souls, our existence, if we fail to cultivate this grace which is so very necessary to our continuance in well doing.

The Apostle James does not overstate the matter

when he intimates that the perfect work of patience will make its subjects perfect and entire, wanting nothing; for the Apostle Paul assures us that God, who has begun the good work of developing character in us, will continue to perform it until the crowning day – the day of Jesus Christ. (Phil. 1:6). All His children will be subjected to just such discipline as they need for the correction of faults, the implanting and developing of virtues, and for their training and establishment in righteousness, so that they cannot be moved. “If ye be without chastisement [discipline and correction], whereof all [true sons of God] are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons; for whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. If ye [patiently] endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?”—Heb. 12:7.

But how can we let patience have her perfect work? Just by meekly doing the best we can each day, and doing it cheerfully and well; making the best of every thing and going forward daily with true Christian fortitude to act the noble part in every emergency of affliction, pain or loss. Today's trial may be a light one, perhaps almost imperceptible; or today may be one of the sunny days in which God bids our hearts rejoice in his overflowing bounty. Tomorrow may bring its cares and its petty vexations that irritate and annoy. Another tomorrow may witness the clouds gather above our heads, and as the days follow each other the clouds may grow darker and darker until we are forcibly reminded of that strong figure of the Psalmist—*"I walk through the valley of the shadow of death."* Yet never will the valley grow so dark that the patient, trusting one cannot triumphantly exclaim, *"Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou [my Lord] art with me: thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me."* Yes, there is comfort in the "rod" (of chastisement), as well as in the "staff" (of providential care); for both are designed for our ultimate profiting.

The Apostle Paul tells us plainly that tribulation is necessary for the development of patience—"Tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope." (Rom. 5:3, 4) Consider how your own experience has verified this, you who have been for some time under the Lord's special care and leading. How much richer you are for all the lessons of experience, and for the patience that experience has developed in you! Although, like the Apostle, you can say that "no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward, it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." (Heb. 12:11) In the exercise of patience the lessons of experience have made you stronger. They have increased your faith and drawn you into closer communion and fellowship with the Lord. They have made you feel better acquainted with and to realize more and more His personal interest in you and His care and love for you. And this in turn has awakened a deeper sense of gratitude and an increasing zeal to manifest that gratitude to Him. This also deepens the sense of fellowship with God, and gives confidence to the hope of final and full acceptance with Him as a son and heir, worthy through Christ.

The Apostle James urges that we take the prophets who have spoken in the name of the Lord for an example of suffering affliction and of patience. Then he cites the example of Job and the manifest end or purpose of the Lord in permitting him to be so sorely tried: how the Lord was really very pitiful and of tender mercy, although the pity and mercy were not manifest except to the confident faith that said, "Though He slay me, yet will I

trust in Him" — until the long and painful discipline had yielded the peaceable fruits and the subsequent rewards of righteousness.

There is little virtue in the patience that endures merely from motives of worldly policy, though even that often has much advantage in it. Men in business dealings with fellowmen well know that an impetuous, turbulent disposition is greatly to their disadvantage, while patient consideration, temperance in judgment, and good self-control are of immense value, even from a worldly, business standpoint. But the patience that is begotten of deep-rooted christian principle is the kind that will endure all trials and shine the brighter for every affliction through which it may pass.

Job, the servant of God, was accused of selfish policy-motives for his remarkable patience and faithfulness; and it was boldly affirmed that if he were tried by adversity his mean motives would be manifest—that he would curse God to his face. But God knew better; and it was in Job's defence that He permitted him to be tried to the utmost that the loyalty of his heart might be manifest. Some of his poor comforters viewed Job's afflictions only in the light of chastisements, failing utterly to comprehend the divine purpose, and this only added stings to his afflictions; but through them all the Lord brought His servant and most fully vindicated Him in the eyes of all the people.

The Apostle Paul (Heb. 11) calls up a long list of patient, faithful ones who endured cruel mockings and scourgings, bonds and imprisonment, who were stoned, sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword, who wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented; of whom the world was not worthy; who wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. All this they endured patiently for righteousness' sake, looking by faith to God for the reward of their patience and faithfulness in His own good time. Then again, says the Apostle (Heb. 12:3), "Consider Him [Christ] that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." Yes, consider Him, "who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously." He left us an example that we should follow his steps.

While we see the great necessity for pruning, cultivating and discipline in the development of character, it is manifest that none will be able to endure it unto the desirable end of final establishment in righteousness who do not from the beginning diligently devote themselves to the exercise of patience. "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." "In your patience possess ye your souls." (R1721)

Speaking the Truth in Love

(Eph 4:14,15)

The epistle to the Ephesians is amongst the most profound of all the writings of the apostle Paul. The first three chapters describe in some detail the privileged present position of the Church, their predestination and redemption, their present inheritance and God's eternal purposes in and through them. The second group of three chapters deal with the appropriate behaviour and witness of each member of the Church both within the congregation and in the world outside. Chapter 4 from which the text is taken likens the individual Christian's experience to a walk and gives instructions as to conduct along the way.

Verses 1 and 2 of the chapter set the keynote: the Christian is to walk in such a way as befits one who has been called to such a high vocation as Paul has described in the previous chapters, while verses 3 to 6 urge upon each one every endeavour to maintain the unity of the spirit, by which each true follower of Christ has been sealed, in the bonds of peace and sets out the unifying factors. Verses 7 to 13 describe the varying ministries of service within the Church, all designed for the building up of the church, and include the assurance that grace for useful service is given to "every one of us".

GROWTH INTO CHRIST

Verses 14 to 16 deal with God's provision for the development of the "whole body" individually and collectively. These verses read – *"That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lay in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him, who is the Head, even Christ, from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, making increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."*

The words "speaking the truth in love" may be considered in two contexts, first the literal speaking of truth in every day life and second in the presentation of the message of truth as we find it in the Word of God. As Christians, we would take the first application for granted but even among Christians it is possible for some laxity to creep in when we are off guard. The second is of greater concern to the Lord's people, but the first lesson is still most important. Lying is nowadays a way of life among many worldly people, often hidden under euphemisms such as salesmanship, public relations, hyperbole, "white lies" and so on.

For the Christian, there can be no compromise; let us not forget who is the father of lies in whatever colour or guise. *"Putting away lying, speak every*

man truth with his neighbour, for we are members one of another." (Eph 4:25) For most, if not all, of us, complete honesty and truth have always been set before us as the only Christian standard, and we have sought to abide by it. So it is to the application of the apostle's instruction to the presentation of God's truth, as it has been revealed to us, that we turn our attention. "Bible Students" are by definition 'lovers of the truth', the commendation given to the Bereans of old setting the standard, whether we use the name Berean or not. Luke in Acts 17:11 tells us that these noble brethren "received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether these things were so."

PROVING THE TRUTH

These earnest ones believed it necessary to check even the words of the apostle Paul to verify that what he was preaching matched up with God's earlier revelations through Moses and the Old Testament prophets and writers as contained in their Hebrew scriptures. How necessary this still is for us, the same apostle in fact directly urges us to do likewise – "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good". (1 Thess 5:21) We are to test all things, to try all things, to establish whether or not they are truth and worthy of our acceptance, whether or not they are in accord with the character of God revealed in His Word and more directly in His dear Son, whether or not they harmonise with His declared plans and purposes.

Immediately before his injunction to speak the truth in love, Paul has pointed out the dangers of failing to make use of all the means which our Heavenly Father has provided for growth in grace and knowledge and thus for establishment firmly in the faith. "Be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried away with every wind of doctrine", he declares. There are plenty of weird and wonderful winds of doctrine blowing about these days. How important, how blessed, it is to know the truth and to nurture those younger in years or in the faith in understanding of the truth. The apostle Peter's desire was that his hearers remember his words to them and be established in the present truth. (2 Peter 1:12)

CHRIST – THE TRUTH

Bible Students often use this latter term and the expression 'the truth' to describe the understanding of the Scriptures which has come down to us in this end of the age, and it is a very understandable usage, conveying a deep appreciation of the light of His Word that we have received. We need at the same time to be careful, however, lest we start to think that we have all the truth or that we alone, as Bible Students, have any truth. Down the age the great truths of God's Word have at times been lost or hidden awaiting the time, as it were for, their re-

discovery. In the earlier Bible Student days, a text often quoted was – *“The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day”*. (Prov 4:18)

As Bible Students, we use the term “the truth” to define our understanding of God’s character and purposes centred in Christ Jesus, but the truth is not a creed or statement of beliefs but an experience, an understanding, a personal encounter with the one who is Himself “the Truth”. After we come to know Him, we need to learn of Him and by the various means of grace available to better understand the Divine ways and will for us. The importance and value of a clear grasp of the essential teachings of God’s word “the doctrine” cannot be overstated, and we all share responsibilities in this area especially towards our younger brothers and sisters.

The reference to Christ Himself as “the Truth” is taken from His own words in John 14:3-7 which read – *“If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. Thomas saith unto Him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life; I no man cometh unto the Father, but by me”*. Thomas is often called the Doubter, but he wanted an explanation that he could understand – how wonderfully Jesus gave him his answer. To Pilate’s question “What is truth?” Jesus answered not a word, but to Thomas, the genuine enquirer, He gave a grand revelation of Himself which comes down to us today to gladden our hearts also. Jesus truly is the living Word, the truth and revelation of God and the only way to God.

John’s beautiful words concerning our Saviour are recorded in John 1:14 – *“The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth”*. This message is also inherent in our Lord’s reply to Philip as recorded in John 14:8,9 – *“Phillip saith unto Him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He who has seen me hath seen the Father, and how sayest thou then, show us the Father?”* Earlier, he had said – *“He that seeth me, seeth Him that sent me”*. (John 12:45) and in John 1:18 we read – *“No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him”*. Here we see that our dear Lord Himself, the living Word, is first and foremost “the truth”.

THE WORD OF TRUTH

But the recorded Word of God is also described as “the truth”. The Psalmist tells us that “all the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep His covenant and His testimonies”. (Psa

25:10) and that “Thou God desirest truth in the inward parts and in the hidden parts Thou shalt make me to know wisdom”. (Psa 51:6) In Psalm 19, David praises all the manifestations of God in creation and in all His instruction and provision for the nation of Israel. In the New Testament, our Lord plainly declares – “Sanctify them by thy truth. Thy word is truth”. (John 17:17)

As we come into relationship with God through His dear Son, so His word becomes the more precious, the more we will seek to know Him who is the author of that word, which is “the truth”. The message of our Lord at His first advent and of the apostles is indeed referred to as “the word of truth” and to understand fully the apostle’s injunction to “speak the truth in love”, we need to find out what influence and power over the Christian it does and should have. In James 1:18, we read that *“of His own will, He (God) begot us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures”*. In Romans 8, we learn that this begetting is a work of God’s Holy Spirit in the heart and mind of the believer. (vv 14-16)

It is the working of the Spirit that first opens our eyes to the truth as it is revealed in God’s word, that brings us, through faith in His dear Son and in His merit, into relationship with God, making us sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. (2 Cor 6:18) Romans 10:10,14,15 further explains the process for each one – *“for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation... How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed, and how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard, and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!”* How important then for our own growth and for the blessing of others it is that we “speak the truth in love” – a message of both truth and love.

In our Lord’s own words already quoted, we learnt that it is the truth that sanctifies. “Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy word is truth”. The thought of sanctifying leads our minds back to the sanctifying of the priests and vessels of the tabernacle in Old Testament times in Israel. These people and utensils were thereafter no longer profane but set apart for the divine service, reckoned holy and dedicated to that purpose alone. Such, under the influence of the Holy Spirit pictured in the anointing oil, is the effect of the sanctifying word of truth on each receptive heart. It is the truth that sanctifies and Paul, writing to the Thessalonians, says – *“God has from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth”*. (2 Thess 2:13) God’s Spirit acting on His

word of truth bears this precious fruit. How well and clearly we need to speak it out!

THE TRUTH MAKES FREE

Further we read in John 8:31, 32, 36 – *“Then said Jesus to those Jews who believed in Him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed. And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free... If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed”*. The truth is not only a begetting and sanctifying power but a liberating power! The literal speaking of truth is itself a freeing power, but more importantly for the Christian the truth frees from the bondage of sin. Romans 6:16-18 reads – *“Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness. But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became servants of righteousness.”*

In the early church, the urgings of the Judaisers who sought to reintroduce the old law rituals and services into the congregation were a cause of trouble and Paul had to remonstrate quite sternly with some, calling on them to *“stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage... for, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty, only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another, for all the law is fulfilled in one word, in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”* (Gal 5:1,13,14) Here both bondage to the law and to the old fleshly ways are included. The liberty into which the Lord's people have been called is precious; it is only the truth as it is in Christ, the living Word, and in the Scriptures, the written Word, that fully frees from whatever it is that would imprison us. Our only captivity is to be a willing submission to our Lord and Saviour and to His service.

Preserving our own liberty in Christ is important, but we sometimes fail to extend that liberty to others. We need not, we cannot, judge others and their liberty – *“Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master, he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be held up, for God is able to make him stand.”* (Rom 14:4) Similarly, on points of Bible interpretation where there are differences, we need to extend the same freedom, and to do it heartily, to others as we expect to receive, realising, with the apostle, that despite the great light which has been shed on God's word, we all still *“see through a glass darkly, but then face to face; now we know in part, but then we shall know even as we also are known”*. (1 Cor 13:12 paraphrased)

The truth should be a unifying force, and that is the point at which the apostle's injunctions in Eph 4 began. *“Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye*

are called... endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace.” He follows these words with seven elements of truth which should have that unifying influence. As we focus on these, we shall surely be drawn closer together. Then follow the several ministries within the Church; not all are called to the same tasks but from verse 7 we note that it is *“unto every one of us”* that grace is given according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Our Lord has a service for every single one of His people and, to a large degree, it is encompassed in the words of the theme – *“speaking the truth in love”*.

WITNESS TO THE TRUTH

There are two aspects to this speaking of the truth in love, the first among the Lord's people, the second to those around us. Opportunities for the second do not often occur for most of us, though some seem skilled in the impromptu word for the Master. The promise is that in time of trouble, our Father will provide both *“a mouth and wisdom”*, so we may trust Him also for the right word of truth when the occasion does arise. All of us, however, are to be *“ready always to give an answer to any that asketh (us) a reason of the hope that is in (us) with meekness and fear.”* (1 Peter 3:15) How blessed we are to have such a reason, to have a message of truth that can be given in love. The gospel which is the heart of that message is by definition ‘good news’, something positive for heart and mind.

Among the Lord's people, to speak the truth in love is made easier by virtue of love for the same Saviour and recognition of His loving kindness and tender mercy as shown in the Divine plan of salvation, but the history of the Church has shown that bitternesses can creep in. The great opponent of truth is ever ready to sow seeds of strife among brethren. One of seven things which the wise man says God hates is *“he that soweth discord among brethren”* (Prov 6:19) but on the other hand, the psalmist declares – *“behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity”* (Psa 133:1, and Paul counsels the Hebrews – *“let brotherly love continue”*. (Heb 13:1) The bonds of truth and love for the truth should surely have that sweet influence if, at all times, we seek to ‘speak the truth in love’.

In Eph 4:29,30 we read – *“let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers, and grieve not the Holy Spirit whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption”*, and in Rom 14:19 – *“let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace and things wherewith we may edify one another”*. These list the positives of truth-speaking out of love. But is this, good as it is, alone enough? James counsels us to be *“doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves”*. Likewise, our speaking out

the word of truth will be of no value, if we do not live out that truth to the limit of our ability in the strength our Father will supply. *"My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue (only) but in deed and in truth". (1 John 3:18)*

THE BEAUTY OF TRUTH

How precious indeed is the truth, how we need to cherish it, to seek to know it more and better and through the Holy Spirit's guidance to know and love its author more dearly. Paul commended the Thessalonians because when they heard the word of God, they 'received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.' (1 Thess 2:13) The word of God is indeed powerful, it sanctifies, purifies and sets apart, it liberates and should bind those together those who truly love the truth. It needs to be witnessed to not only by word, though this is important, but by life. Finally, it needs to be presented always in love.

The truth is itself a message of God's love, His so great love not only to a few now but to all in due course. So it would be expected that those who believe that they have found the truth should want to speak it in love, in a spirit of kindness and goodwill towards all. In Paul's own day, he had to complain that some were preaching Christ of contention, not sincerely. Fortunately, others were preaching Christ of love. Our presentation of Christ in our words and in our lives is to be an exhibition of the love which we ourselves have experienced. Without love, our testimony will be lifeless – the greatest eloquence, Paul says without love is merely an empty sound. Love like our Father's should shine through all our speaking of the truth, not least in the congregation of His people.

Two lovely and well-known verses in Malachi read – *"Then they had feared the Lord spoke often one with another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it; and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels, and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him". (Mal 3:16,17)* What do these verses conjure up in our minds? Surely they are a rather lovely picture of brethren in sweet communion and with the smile of God upon them. May it be so in our midst not only as we gather in times of convention but in all our associations week by week with others who love the truth. *"Let us exhort one another daily, while it is called Today"... and unitedly "hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end". (Heb 3:13,14)*

What is then to be the end result of this cultivation of the daily practice of "speaking the truth in love?" The apostle goes in to tell us it is that we *"may grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, even Christ, from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love".* This pro-

gram involves both individual growth in grace and knowledge and mutual upbuilding of the Body of Christ, as each individual contributes according to the measure of grace given to him or her. This is to be the blessed outcome for each child of God whose desire is always to be found "speaking the truth in love" and growing up in all things into our blessed Head.

Is the truth becoming every more precious to us as the days go by? Are we continuing to grow in grace and knowledge of our Heavenly Father and of His love shed abroad in His Son, that love which is eventually to bless all mankind? We have a grand message of hope; above all it is a message of truth. Let us encourage one another in the truth at all times, let us be ready to pass on a message of hope where we have opportunity to the broken-hearted. Let us be glad that a time is coming when all shall know Him whose Word alone is truth and when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. Meantime, let us all continue "speaking the truth in love."

Amen.

HE LEADETH ME

In pastures green? Not always; sometimes He
Who knoweth best, in kindness leadeth me
In weary ways, where heavy shadows be.
Out of the sunshine, warm and soft and bright,
Out of the sunshine into darkest night;
I oft would faint with terror and with fright,
Only for this—I know He holds my hand;
So, whether in the green or desert land,
I trust, although I may not understand.
And by still waters? No, not always so:
Ofttimes the heavy tempests round me blow,
And o'er my soul the waves and billows go.
But when the storm beats loudest, and I cry
Aloud for help, the Master standeth by,
And whispers to my soul, "Lo, it is I!"
Above the tempest wild I hear Him say,
"Beyond this darkness lies the perfect day,
In every path of thine I lead the way."
So, whether on the hill-tops, high and fair,
I dwell, or in the sunless valleys, where
The shadows lie—what matter? He is there.
And more than this, where'er the pathway lead,
He gives to me no helpless, broken reed,
But His own hand, sufficient for my need.
So, where He leads me I can safely go;
And in the blest hereafter I shall know,
Why, in His wisdom, He hath led me so.

(Poems of Dawn)



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

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

A RENDEZVOUS WITH GOD

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

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

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

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

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

“HE IS OUR PEACE”

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

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

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

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

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

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

“GIVE ME THINE HEART”

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

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

“Take my love, my God; I pour

At Thy feet its treasure store;

Take myself, I wish to be

Ever, only, all for Thee.”

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

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

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

"THE LORD IS THY KEEPER"

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

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

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

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

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

Fear Not, Little Flock

(Luke 12:32.)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE MERCY SEAT

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

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

(BSH 89)

The Mind

MAN'S AUTOMATIC STEERING MECHANISM

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

lives.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"In the Days of Thy Youth"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“We Cease not to Pray for You”

(Col. 1:9-14)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Thankfulness

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(Gertrude W. Seibert)

Gifts of Faith

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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“WAIT PATIENTLY FOR HIM”

(Psalm 37:7)

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

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

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

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

TAKE TIME TO BE HOLY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

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

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

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

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

"TO DO THY WILL, O GOD"

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

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

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

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

"LET US DRAW NEAR"

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

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

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

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

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

THE BLESSEDNESS OF WAITING

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

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

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

“The Truth Shall Make You Free”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Harsh and Kind Words

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

Still Wait

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

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

(Anon)

A Mountain Top Experience

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

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

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

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

SPIRITUAL RENEWAL

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

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

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

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

"INTO A MOUNTAIN TO PRAY"

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

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

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

THE MEANING OF THE VISION

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

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

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

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

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

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

“ALL THINGS ARE BECOME NEW”

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

In 2 Cor. 6: 15, 16 we read about somebody who is going to come and live with us. “What concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them: and I will be their God and they shall be my people.” So God says He will come and live with us. Whenever we have an important visitor come to our house, we immediately try to clean up the house better than it usually is. So if an important visitor is coming, we will try to have the whole house cleaned up and everything made ready. That is how we should treat our minds and hearts. God wishes His Holy Spirit or power to live here, but not in a dirty house.

“MY BELOVED SON – HEAR HIM”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Effectual Prayer

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

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

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

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

CONCENTRATION

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

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

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

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

QUIET

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

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

A LAST RESORT?

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

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

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

The Miracle Book

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Wholly Thine

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

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

Purged from the promptings of evil within,

Freed by Thy grace from the thralldom of sin!

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

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