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A NEW YEAR MEDITATION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

IMPLICIT TRUST

(A NEW YEAR PRAYER)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I shall clasp Thy hand once more, dear Lord,

“Whence Cometh My Help”

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

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

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

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

DAVID’S EXPERIENCE

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

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

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

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

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

“HE CHANGETH NOT”

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

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

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

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

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

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

HIS WATCHCARE

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

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

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

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

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

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

PRECIOUS PROMISES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“LIFT UP YOUR EYES”

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

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

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

The Gift of Wisdom

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

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

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

“IF ANY LACK WISDOM”

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

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

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

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

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

“LET HIM ASK IN FAITH”

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

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

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

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

THE CONTRAST

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

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

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

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

God's Inheritance in the Saints

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2 Cor. 6: 16, 18 helps us to see the favour of the Lord to those so blessed as to be invited into this wonderful inheritance of God, by the indwelling of the holy spirit. "Ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And I will be a Father unto you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

Joshua, Son of Nun

PARENTAGE AND EARLY LIFE

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

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

EARLY ACHIEVEMENTS

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

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

CHARACTER AND FITNESS

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

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

LAST WORK (JOSH 23 & 24)

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

DEATH AND BURIAL (JOSH 24: 29, 30)

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

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

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

Christian Fellowship

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

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

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

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

THE BASIS OF FELLOWSHIP

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

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

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

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

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

PREREQUISITES OF FELLOWSHIP

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

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

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

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

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

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

UNITY OF THE SPIRIT

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

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

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

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

MAINTENANCE OF FELLOWSHIP

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

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

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

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

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

not force it upon any. Those who accept must do so upon His terms, namely, acceptance of Jesus as their Ransom and obedience to God, We must do our Heavenly Father's will. This has all been made clear to us now, in the next age it will be made clear to all mankind. Many find it hard to understand why the world in general is not on trial now, why they are not being judged for their actions. There is a very simple answer, that is, accountability. How accountable are they? Only those who are fully enlightened are fully accountable.

We think of the case of Jonah who was sent to preach to Nineveh. When the Ninevites repented and God did not destroy them, Jonah was most upset and displeased with God. We find God's reply in Jonah 4:11, "and should not I spare Nineveh that great city wherein are more than six score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand and also much cattle." This is true of the world today as far as spiritual things are concerned, they cannot discern between their right hand and their left. The sparing of Nineveh seems to typify the salvation that is coming to the world in the next age. Jonah, in this illustration, would picture a class that is not very pleased with the thought non-Christians of this age will receive an opportunity in the next. But we rejoice that God's plan is one of universal opportunity for salvation, for the church in the present age, those whom God is calling and drawing to Jesus, and for the remainder of mankind in the next age.

Heb 6:4-6 makes it very clear that the unbelieving world is not on trial at present. We are given there a list of things that must occur before they are placed on trial, before there is any possibility of their coming under the ultimate penalty. Firstly, they must have been once enlightened, that is, fully enlightened as to all the details of the divine plan. Then it says, "and, have tasted of the heavenly gift", that is understood the call and purpose of the church, the exceeding great and precious promises that are ours. The passage goes on, "and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit". This narrows it down to those whom God calls and draws to Jesus. Those who accept that call, and only those, are made partakers of the Holy Spirit. The portion ends, "and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come." It is crystal clear that at the present time God is not dealing with or judging those he has not called and enlightened. That is why there is to be a resurrection for these in the next age, that is their day of judgement and testing. As Jesus said in John 12:47-48, "if any man hear my words and believe not, I judge him not, for I came not to judge the world but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him, the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." This confirms again that those who do not believe, those who are unenlightened, are not being judged now but will be judged in the last day, the 1000 year millennial day. They will be judged by the words of Jesus which, as our Lord said, were not His own words but God's words. These will then taste of the good word of God, come to understand it, and have to conform their lives to the righteous principles contained therein, if they wish to obtain everlasting life on earth.

We have further confirmation of this in Romans 11:31-32, "even so have these also now not believed that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy, for God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all". This passage is speaking of the nation of Israel but the same principle applies to both Jew and Gentile. Even though they might have failed miserably in this life to come up to the divine standard, if they did so in unbelief, God can show mercy to them in the next age. This is just the opposite to the belief of many, who say God will have no mercy on those who do not believe in the present life.

No one of course can receive eternal salvation in unbelief. When these who are now in unbelief come back in the resurrection, they will then believe on Jesus Christ and the value of his ransom sacrifice will be applied for them. During the gospel age, God is selecting those who are rich in faith, accept His word, and are prepared to believe without seeing the actual evidence with their own eyes. In the next age it will not be a matter of faith to the same extent as it is today. Who can fail to believe, when they see the glory and power of God displayed by the resurrection, when they themselves, their friends, their relations, are brought back from the grave?

Some say "if there is to be a resurrection for all regardless of how they behaved at the present time, why bother to consecrate our lives to God and walk in the narrow way of self sacrifice? Why not live now for our own enjoyment, eat, drink and be merry and wait for our opportunity in the next life?" There are several answers to that question. Firstly, today is the only day of salvation for joint heirship with Christ as a member of His Bride. We are called to something that is very special, not just an ordinary calling, but as the scriptures describe it, "a high calling", and a "so great salvation". We are called to be part of God's own family, the divine family on His plane of existence, immortality. Not that we have any desire for honour or preeminence but we know this is what God has called us to, this is what God wants for us. So to be pleasing to our Heavenly Father we strive to be worthy to have part in the first resurrection as a member of his own Heavenly family, His spiritual children. Nevertheless our attitude should be that we will be happy and content with whatever position we are allocated. As the Psalmist says, even if it is only a doorkeeper in the house of the Lord. The motivating factor in running in the race for the prize of the high calling should be one of service, that is what we have been called to, at the present time especially service to the brethren, in the next age to all of God's family on the earthly plane. Also we receive a blessing at the present time, as our Master said in Mark 10:30

“ye shall receive a hundred fold now in this time”. We have the joy of fellowship with our brethren, a fuller and richer life, and the peace of mind that the knowledge of God’s plan brings, especially in the difficult days that we live in.

For another answer to the question, as to why become a disciple of Jesus now, let us look at Revelation 20:6. “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ and shall reign with Him a thousand years.” Look at that one little sentence “on such the second death hath no power.” In John 5:29, our Lord indicates that two classes are coming forth in the resurrection, one to a resurrection of life, the other to a resurrection of judgement. The class mentioned in Revelation 20:6 upon whom the second death has no power, are those who receive the resurrection to life. What a wonderful blessing! This alone is sufficient reason to become a disciple of our Master now. What a joy when we awake on resurrection morning to know that we have life in the full sense of the word, life that will not be taken away from us again; to know that our period of test and trial is over. This is in contrast to those who have part in the later resurrection, the resurrection to judgement. When they awake, their period of testing and trying is just beginning and it seems that it may not be fully complete until the thousand years are over, and Satan’s little season of release is finished.

We have been looking at the logic of why the world is not on trial for life or death at the present time. We saw one reason is that they have not been enlightened by receiving the Holy Spirit. Another very basic reason is that they are already under a death sentence, the Adamic death sentence. This is what our Lord meant when He said, “let the dead bury the dead.” There are two classes of people in the world, those who have life, the true church, only these yet come under the provisions of the ransom. As- it says in Hebrews 9:24, “Jesus has appeared in the presence of God for us,” i.e. the Church. The value of His ransom sacrifice has been applied to these, so they have been released from the Adamic death sentence. The world must also be released from this death sentence, before they can be placed on trial. The church must be completed before this occurs, then the value of the ransom will be applied to the remainder of mankind, and their trial for life begin.

The understanding that the unbelieving world cannot die eternal death at present is very strongly implied in the term “second death”. Right from Adam’s day until now, all have died in Adam, which is the first death, so no one can become subject to second death until released from first death, the Adamic death. Can we not see how reasonable our gracious Heavenly Father’s plan is in giving all these a resurrection and opportunity for everlasting life in the next age. Not only is it reasonable but it is scriptural as we have already seen.

A very clear statement is that of our Lord in John 5:28,29, already referred to. “Marvel not at this for the hour is coming in which all that are in the grave shall hear His voice and shall come forth, they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgement”. Many seem to feel that God cannot be this kind and merciful and that they must find some way of changing this passage. There can be no exceptions to this statement that “all in their graves are to come forth”, apart from those already mentioned, who have had a full opportunity, have been spirit begotten and have later deliberately rejected Jesus as their Saviour. This may seem at variance with the statement before us that all in their graves are to come forth, but we are not always given all the truth in any one place, we find a little here, a little there. We formulate a doctrine on the basis of the scriptures as a whole. We harmonise scripture with scripture, we modify one scripture with another. (e.g. Matt. 21:22 with 1 John 5:14)

So we read John 5:28 in conjunction with the scriptures as a whole. Nowhere in the scriptures are we told of any other class that will not come forth in the resurrection, so to say that those drowned in the flood, those destroyed in Sodom and Gomorrha, those who die in the time of trouble, are not to receive a resurrection has no scriptural backing. We could term this a man-made doctrine. In fact, the scriptures indicate that the people of Sodom and Gomorrha will come back in the resurrection, (Mark 6:11, Matthew 10:15, Ezekiel 16:53.) Some have insisted that not all the dead are meant in John 5:28,29, but only those that God has in His memory. This thought is based on the fact that the Greek word translated “grave” literally means “memorial tomb”. The Greek word concerned is translated - grave 8 times, sepulchre 28 times, tomb 5 times. It seems clear that no such thought of God’s memory is intended. This is simply the regular word of that day denoting a grave. For example in Mark 5:1-3, we have the account of the man with the unclean spirit who made his dwelling among the tombs. This is the same word again. It is plain that it applies to all in the graves, regardless of who was buried there. Vines dictionary says of this word that “it primarily denotes a memorial, also a monument, anything done to preserve the memory of things or persons. Among the Hebrews, it was generally a cavern closed by a door or stone, often decorated”. Obviously this was done to preserve the memory of a loved one, just as we erect a tombstone or a plaque today. Clearly, the term “memorial tomb” has nothing to do with God’s memory but human memory of departed loved ones.

The apostle Paul, in Acts 24:15, confirms once again the resurrection of two classes. He says “and have hope towards God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust”, meaning believers who have been justified and unbelievers who have not been justified.

Paul said this is the hope he has; he obviously means hope for both classes, not only for the just. And we could consider other such scriptures as Heb. 2:9 “that He (Jesus) by the grace of God should taste death for every man,” and John 1:9 “this (Jesus) was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.”

Many say, yes we accept that life is offered to all, to any who become believers and accept Jesus, but they must do so in this life. We can answer with such texts as 1 Timothy 4:10 which tells us that God is “the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.” This text is very plain because it contrasts the two classes. True, in the present age, God’s special interest is in believers, but He is the Saviour of all men not just those who believe at the present time. As we read in 1 John 2:2, “He is the propitiation of our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” He is the propitiation at the present time for the Church’s sins, but in addition to this, for the whole unbelieving world in the next age.

Those who say that there is no hope for father Adam do not fully understand the workings of the ransom. While Jesus tasted death for all mankind, he did not die for each person individually, but for Adam, thereby redeeming all in Adam. As we are told in 1 Corinthians 15:21-22, “for since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead, for as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” The all that are made alive in Christ are the same all that die in Adam i.e. all mankind. Romans 5:14 shows that Adam was a type of Jesus, and in 1 Corinthians 15:45, Jesus is described as “the last Adam”. In 1 Timothy 2:6, we are told that Jesus gave Himself a ransom for all. The Greek word here translated “ransom” means corresponding price. Adam was a perfect man before he sinned, the perfect man Jesus was the corresponding price, hence He is described as the last Adam. How could the first Adam not benefit from the provisions of the ransom when it was exactly a corresponding price for him? Had Adam not sinned, he would have been the life giver and father of all mankind, but since he did sin, the second or last Adam took his place and became their life giver and father. This is the thought in Isaiah 9:6, where Jesus is described as the “everlasting father”. Some translations render this passage the “father of the age to come.” What a beautiful thought that is, the father of the age to come! Surely the resurrection and opportunity for all is one of the things that attracted us to the truth. This doctrine above all others displays our gracious Heavenly Father’s true character and His love for all His human family. (JGT: 1993)

“O the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! or who has known the mind of the Lord? or who has been His counselor? or who has first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto Him again? For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things to whom be glory forever. Amen” (Rom:11:33-36)

“If God seems far away, guess who has moved.” (Wayside Pulpit).

Daniel, The Beloved

(Convention Address)

DANIEL is certainly one of the great figures of the Old Testament. Like Joseph, he rose to a position of high authority in an alien land and served with great distinction. He is spoken of three times as a man greatly beloved of God and a review of his life, his piety and his utter consistency of character clearly show why he was so highly esteemed and much used by God.

Outside of the book which bears his name, little is known of Daniel. Interestingly, he is mentioned by Ezekiel, an approximate contemporary, as a standard of righteousness, along with Noah and Job, and of wisdom. He is not recorded by name among the illustrious band of faithful ones in Hebrews 11, but would certainly be among “the prophets, who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions.” Heb.11:33.

His lifetime spans the whole of the Jewish captivity in Babylon, where Daniel was taken, with other hostages, on the orders of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, after he had taken Jerusalem and subjugated Jehoiakim, king of Judah. Some indication of Daniel’s background is probably to be gained from Dan.1:3,4, where it states that Nebuchadnezzar directed that the hostages be taken from those of noble birth, skilful, well-educated and able to conduct themselves in a royal court.

Considering the long period of Daniel’s stay and service in Babylon, he must have been quite young at the time of his being taken there, and historians and scholars suggest that he would have been only about 16 or 18 years of age at that time. He was nevertheless evidently already well informed not only in secular subjects but also in the religion of the true God of Israel. This becomes apparent quite early in his determination not to be defiled with the foods provided for the hostages but even in this matter to serve God.

The earliest years of Daniel’s life would have been spent under the reign of Josiah, one of the good and faithful kings of Judah. The record of his reign reads, in brief - “he did that which was right in the sight of the

Lord, and walked in all the way of David, his father, and turned not aside to the right hand nor to the left.” 2 Kings 22:2. He saw how the nobles and people of Judah had so grievously departed from God’s ways and sought earnestly to restore true worship, so that it was said that “like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the Lord with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might - neither after him arose there any like him.” 2 Kings 23:2.

Despite all Josiah’s endeavours during his 31 years reign, however, the nation soon lapsed back under his son, who reigned only 3 months before being deposed by Pharaoh-Nechoh, king of Egypt, who installed Jehoiakim as his vassal king over Judah. Only 3 years later, Nebuchadnezzar came up against Jerusalem, as already seen. All this happened within 4 years of Josiah’s death, in fulfilment of earlier prophecies, of Isaiah to King Hezekiah, as recorded in Isa.39:6,7 and of Jeremiah in Jer.25:11.

The early formative years of Daniel’s life would have therefore been spent during the latter years of the good king Josiah. If as seems probable Daniel was of noble birth, he would no doubt have thus become acquainted with the ideals and endeavours of Josiah. For it was during his reign that the book of the law had been re-discovered in the house of Jehovah, and in this Josiah read the warnings against the waywardness and disobedience of his people. This he sought valiantly to turn round, but alas without any lasting success.

It was accordingly only a few years after Josiah’s death that Daniel and all the other hostages were taken into the Babylonian court and the account given in the book of Daniel begins to unfold. Three other young men among the captives are also brought to our attention; these were also possessed of remarkable faith in the power of their God and their testimony under trial (Dan.3:17,18) stands as their monument and as a challenge to the Lord’s people of every age - “If it be so, our God is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king, but if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image thou hast set up.” Our God is able, but if not!” What faith is there.

In passing, the meanings of the names of the four young men are interesting and suggestive of Godly parentage:

Daniel “God is my judge.”

Hananiah “God is gracious.”

Mishael “This is as God.”

Azariah “God is a helper.”

It is no doubt significant that these names were very soon changed in the Babylonian courts. Whose is the name we bear, as Christians? Do we always honour it as we might, for our Lord is also able?

For us, being invited to partake of the food and drink provided in the royal court would probably not present any very great problem, though most Christians would generally favour a simpler diet. But for a pious Jew, the law made specific provision as to what was clean and permissible and needed to be observed carefully as an act of obedience and as a mark of separateness from other nations. To avoid partaking in Daniel’s circumstances would present a problem in the ordinary course, but we read that “God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs.” Dan.1:9. As a result, the young Hebrews were allowed to adhere to their preferred vegetarian diet, which had proved superior.

For the Lord’s people of every age, there is a need of separateness, and for great care over the nourishment we take in. In place of the world’s delicacies and delights, our Heavenly Father has provided in His dear Son, the pure Water of Life and the Bread of Life for our sustenance. For the young in Christ, He has given the pure milk of His word and for the more mature the meat of the word for our growth and development. As the hymn-writer puts it - “My table is furnished with bounty so free, My soul on Thy word is well fed.” This is better fare than in any earthly royal court.

Already the character of Daniel, under the hand of the Lord, was becoming evident and had made an impression on the master set over him. We are warned in the New Testament to beware when all speak well of us; this may well indicate too close identification with the worldly and failure to stand up for our faith. But at the same time our behaviour, our demeanour, should always be such as to command at least the respect of reasonable people and we read of Jesus in His early years that He “increased in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man.” This is of course the right order - God first.

Because of their faithfulness, God gave all four young men knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom, but Daniel was also given understanding in all visions and dreams. Much of the book of Daniel, from Chapter 2 on, is taken up with accounts of these means of prophecy and these reach right down to our own day and even beyond. It has been said that the book of Daniel not only preserves links in the chain of world history but also provides vital keys to interpretation of all prophecy, including the final book of our Bible - the Revelation

of Jesus Christ, given through the beloved apostle John.

We might indeed see a character link between Daniel, the man greatly beloved of Jehovah and the beloved apostle of our Lord, whose visions recorded in Revelations and given some seven centuries after those of Daniel are, as it were, a continuation and fuller development of them. Both men greatly loved God and were greatly loved for their faithfulness, both were used to bring messages to God's people, not only of immediate local significance and encouragement but of universal and dispensational importance. Both lived to a very great age, both were given final messages of personal assurance.

After a training period of three years, Daniel and his companions were brought to stand before the king but very soon a test of faith was to come upon them. The king had had a most disturbing dream but could not recall it. So he asked his local wise men to tell him what it was and what it meant. Not surprisingly none could and the king ordered all his counsellors, including the four Hebrews, to be put to death. But Daniel and his companions prayed and we read that God answered and further that Daniel blessed the God of heaven for that answer. Thankfulness to our Heavenly Father not only for specially answered prayer but for His daily care - how important it is.

The vision itself, we are now all familiar with - a great image of a man, with head of gold, breast and arms of silver, belly and thighs of brass, legs of iron and feet of part iron and part clay. But even more significant for us - a stone cut out of a mountain, not by human means, that smote the image on the feet and brought the whole image down and itself, that is the stone, became a great mountain filling the whole earth. What a truly remarkable panorama of world history there is in what God made known to Daniel, bringing us right down to the final setting up of God's kingdom.

We might think it strange that such a far-reaching vision or dream should be given to a heathen king and in keeping with his times no doubt a rather despotic one. But it did have an influence on Nebuchadnezzar even at that time for he had to acknowledge that Daniel's God was a God of gods and a Lord of kings. So he set Daniel and his companions over the affairs of his kingdom, with Daniel himself in the presence of the king, who was himself pictured in the image's head of gold. But of what far greater blessing and enlightenment has the dream and its interpretation been to God's people particularly in these last days, when we see the signs of the nearness of the setting up of that great stone kingdom of God.

For we, who live in these last days, have as it were an unbroken link with Daniel the prophet greatly beloved of God, who lived and prophesied so long ago in that first world empire period pictured in the head of gold. We clearly are living in the days of the ten toes kingdoms, when the marvellous stone of no human devising will shortly cast down and replace all the kingdoms that have gone before. John writes in Rev.11-15 - "the seventh angel sounded, and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever." How sorely that everlasting kingdom of peace and righteousness is needed today.

For the revealing of the dream and interpretation to the king, Daniel took no credit to himself - "this secret is not revealed to me of any wisdom that I have more than anyone else"; rather he gave thanks: "blessed be the name of God for ever and ever; for wisdom and might are His. "Any service that we can render for our Lord or for His people is a gracious privilege and no cause for pride for "what have we, that we did not receive?" "For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake." 1 Cor.4:7, 2 Cor.4:5. This is the true perspective of all God's servants and was the spirit of Daniel.

After Nebuchadnezzar's death, the kingdom under Belshazzar soon fell to Darius the Mede, who set over the kingdom three presidents answerable to himself. Of these, Daniel was first in rank, indicating that Darius also recognised the skills and qualities of Daniel, the testimony to him being that "an excellent spirit was in him." This soon provoked envy among the other presidents and the 120 princes set under them and they sought to find fault or error with Daniel but could not do so.

Their final conclusion was - "we shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God." Dan.6:5. Though not meant that way, what a wonderful testimony to Daniel's conduct and consistency of life this was. It sets the standard for the people of God in every age. Daniel's life was open for all to see, yet his detractors could find nothing to accuse him of. While evidently continuing to maintain his own religious duties, his attendance upon the king's business was complete and loyal. Yet all the time his heart was with God's chosen people, as we see later in the account.

The Lord's people are always to be peaceable, law-abiding, diligent and conscientious, seeking to comply not only with the letter but also the spirit of the laws under which they live and which in turn protect them to at least some extent. The only limitation is that which led Peter and John to proclaim - "we ought to obey God rather than men" - when they were ordered to cease preaching the gospel. So it was with Daniel, who was confronted by the statute which the king had been deceived into signing - "that whosoever shall ask a petition of any god or man for thirty days, save of thee (the king himself), shall be cast into the den of lions." No doubt

the king's vanity had been appealed to.

The conspirators had well read Daniel's character, and we are not surprised to read - "now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees, three times a day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime." Dan.6:10. In those days, observance of religious duties was more open and the structure of dwellings would have added to this, making Daniel's actions very obvious.

It has been suggested that Daniel may have been able to comply with some lesser requirement, such as praying less openly but there could be no compromise for Daniel nor can there be for any of the Lord's people in the matter of the One they are to worship. Unlike other nations, Israel's law was very clear - "the Lord our God is one Lord" and "thou shalt have no other gods before me (Jehovah) thou shalt not bow down thyself to them or serve them." So Daniel continued his habit and pattern of prayer "as he did aforetime". While he did nothing extra to provoke trouble, his loyalty to the one true God of his people did not falter.

It is unfortunately possible for Christian people to bring trouble upon themselves needlessly and there is no credit with God in suffering for folly or wrongdoing. The Christian standard, as it no doubt was for Daniel too, is - "as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all".... "be not overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good".... "render to all their dues." To suffer for righteousness' sake is praiseworthy in God's sight and Daniel's faithfulness and steadfastness were wonderfully rewarded by God, as we read in Dan.6:19-23.

Even Darius, who quickly realised that he had been deceived, sought by every means to save Daniel from the lions, and when he could not, he spent a sleepless night, concerned for this man whose noble qualities of character, so different from those of his other counsellors, he had come to appreciate. But God still had further work for Daniel and we read - "so this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian." Dan.6:28. Daniel indeed lived on to a great age, his final vision being received when he would have been nearly 90 years of age.

But before this, further visions were given to him concerning the four great world empires that would ultimately be overcome by the all-consuming kingdom of God, and of events that would occur during those periods. Through it all, we cannot fail to note his deep love and concern for his own people. Though a faithful servant of the powers that be in Babylon, his heart was at all times with his people in their captivity and we read in Dan.9:2 - "in the first year of his (Darius') reign, I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish 70 years in the destruction of Jerusalem."

As a true patriot and as a worshipper of Jehovah, Daniel felt great sorrow over the nation's punishment at His hands and so he besought God that, now the 70 years foretold had come to an end, the nation's return might be no longer deferred. What a wonderful response Daniel received through the angel Gabriel - "at the beginning of thy supplications, the commandment came forth and I am come to show thee, for thou art greatly beloved." Dan.9:23. Still today, our Heavenly Father knows before we ask the desires and intents of our hearts and waits ready to answer and bless the prayer of faith that first and foremost seeks to know His will.

As well as the assurance of his prayer being answered, Daniel was also given a remarkable prophecy of events that would affect his people right down to the time of Messiah the Prince. Students of the Bible are agreed on the accuracy of this prediction of Messiah's advent at the end of the 69th week or 483 years taking a week to represent 7 years, and the further prophecy of the nation and temple being left desolate. But this grim picture, as far as Israel was concerned, was not left as God's last word to the greatly beloved Daniel - he was assured that at the time of the end and after great trouble, Michael (Who is as God), the great Prince who "standeth for the children of thy people" would come and that "at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." Dan.12:1.

God's closing words to Daniel furthermore speak of the resurrection to everlasting life being given to those found worthy, of the "wise" shining as the stars and leading many to turn to righteousness. How these assurances to Daniel remind us of our Lord's words in Matt.13:43 - "then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" - and of the grand times of restoration or restitution spoken of by Peter. Though no doubt much comforted by the assurances given to him, Daniel was not granted full understanding of them; rather he was told to "shut up the words and seal the book even to the time of the end; many shall run to and fro knowledge shall be increased."

The personal promise to this man beloved of God concludes the record - "go thou thy way till the end be, for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days." Dan.12:13. Daniel heard the words of the Lord but was not given to fully understand, as was the case with all the prophets of old, who wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit prophesying of the grace that should come upon the gospel age heirs of salvation and testifying of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. Meantime, Daniel was to rest in the sleep of death, awaiting that "better resurrection" which the faithful ones of old all looked forward to.

In many ways, the prophecies of Daniel provide the key to the understanding of Bible prophecy in general. How all-embracing they are! They cover an outline of world history, the first and second advents of Jesus, his rejection and the casting off of Israel, later their restoration under Michael their Prince, and the resurrection and restoration of the “many” of mankind. How wonderfully was this saint of God used! Over 2500 years later, we rejoice to see what he heard in secret becoming plain and the signs of the soon fulfilment of the glorious things foretold.

One commentator has said that “Daniel’s undeviating integrity as a worshipper of the one God in an alien, dissolute society, as first minister in the first of the world empires, gives him a place among the highest and holiest the world has seen.

To be used by God, even in smaller ways, requires that the child of God be separate from the world, single-minded in faith and devotion to His service, of humble mind, diligent in searching the scriptures, instant in prayer. In all these ways, Daniel stands out as a shining example. When he stands in his lot at the end of the days, what a wonderful guide and standard he will be to the world of mankind, along with all the faithful of old times! These were not offered a heavenly reward, but we are told that they looked for a city which has foundations whose maker and builder is God. How well Daniel will be equipped for service in that everlasting kingdom!

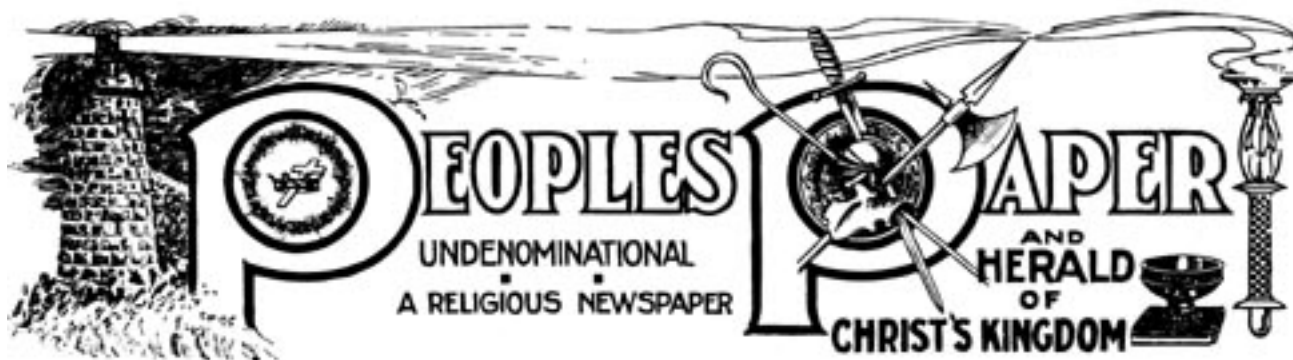
The same faithfulness, as that of Daniel, is required of us who have been blessed with a heavenly calling. May each of us, in our day, stand as Daniel did for truth and righteousness. (DS: 1992)

Dare to be a Daniel,

Dare to stand alone,

Dare to have a purpose true -

Dare to make it known.



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CRUCIFIED & RISEN

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

"IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME"

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

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

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

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

"HE IS RISEN"

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

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

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

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

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

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

He is risen – Hallelujah!

“Children of Promise”

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE HEIR

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

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

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

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

THE BRIDE

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

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

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

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

THE MYSTERY

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

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

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

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

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

THE CALL

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

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

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

THE PRIVILEGE

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

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

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

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

THE PROSPECT

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

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

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

IMPORTANCE OF THE HIGH CALLING

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

Amen

I am the True Vine

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

ABIDING

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

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

PRUNING

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

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

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

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

FRUITAGE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"MUCH FRUIT"

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

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

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

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

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

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

Convention Reflections — Melbourne — New Year 2000/1

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Glory of God

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- Revised Standard Version

(From The Dawn)

Thy Word is True

(PSA. 119:160)

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

Rest in the Lord

(PSA. 37:7)

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

Watch & Pray

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

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

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

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

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

TAKE HEED

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

WATCH

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

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

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

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

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

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

PRAY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PREPARED

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

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

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

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

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

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

In order that we may follow in His footsteps and become living sacrifices, holy, acceptable to God, our reasonable service, our Lord provides the right paths which are advantageous to our development in righteousness. These paths are not always easy, they can be difficult and trying. How fortunate are we that our Master has trod the pathway before us, so He knows of the difficulties, the dangers, the snares, the pitfalls by the way, so that we are not tried beyond our capabilities. He leads us not contrary to our wills but in harmony therewith, to prove what is good, next the acceptable, and finally the perfect will of God, as Paul tells us in Romans 12 :2 “Be not conformed to the world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.”

“YEA, THOU I WALK THROUGH THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH, I WILL FEAR NO EVIL: FOR THOU ART WITH ME; THY ROD AND THY STAFF THEY COMFORT ME.”

The whole of mankind is walking through this valley of death as the result of the sin of father Adam, living with the daily prospect of death. Adam had fallen from the mountain top of life, he lost his footing there and descended into the valley of the shadow of death. Mankind as a whole fear this valley as they can see no way of escape. Scientists have for years been trying to find the key to increasing our life span, looking for the fountain of youth, even to deep freezing of the human body in the hope one day of finding the secret to eternal life. Mankind’s journey through this valley is one of sickness, pain, sorrow, culminating in death. As the Apostle Paul states-Romans 8:22,19 “For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now .. waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God.” The world is yet to realise that only through Christ and his Church during the Millennial Age can they be lifted out of the “valley of the shadow of death”, back to the heights of light, love and Divine likeness.

The sheep however that hear the Shepherd’s voice and follow his directions, although still in the world, walking through this valley, learn to be neither careless nor anxious as they walk. Fear and tremblings, doubts and perplexities are replaced with the realisation that God through his Son has provided a way out of the valley of the shadow of death” He has assured us that death shall not mean extinction of life, but merely, until the resurrection, an undisturbed sleep in Jesus. As we are told in 1 Cor 15 :55 “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” No wonder then that the world looks upon these sheep with amazement as they pass through this valley singing, and rendering praise unto the Lord. They surely “fear no evil” as their shepherd has promised “I will never leave thee or forsake thee”

“Thy Rod and Thy Staff they comfort me” tells us of the ways in which God looks after us as we walk. The Shepherd’s crook or staff was used to assist the sheep out of difficulties, to defend it from its too powerful enemies and to chasten it when inattentive. The word staff means “a support, a stay.” The rod was also used to count the sheep to make sure all were present. How glad we are to know that all power in heaven and in earth is committed unto our Shepherd and that under both his protecting and correcting care we are safe from all foes, and nothing can by any means do us harm.

“THOU PREPAREST A TABLE BEFORE ME IN THE PRESENCE OF MINE ENEMIES”

The figure of the shepherd caring for his sheep is still before us in this verse, and it serves to illustrate the love and care of the Great Heavenly Shepherd for His people. A very important part of the Eastern shepherd’s duties would be that of preparing a suitable pasture for the sheep under his care. Not only must he find a supply of water, and plenty of the right kind of grass for the sheep, but he must also prepare the pasture in the sense of driving off the wild animals and reptiles which may be lurking around. The shepherd walking ahead of his sheep would be able to note any poisonous grasses and avoid such places; also the presence of snakes would be detected; and wolves and hyenas would need to be guarded against. How true of the Good Shepherd who provides the food for His trusting ones, but sees to it that no poisonous elements shall get into it. He sees to it that they are not injured thereby. The Good Shepherd has spread a table for his trusting sheep in this time in the very presence of enemies, but we need to listen and thus keep ourselves in his love and care, by earnest efforts to know and do his will.

“THOU ANOINTEST MY HEAD WITH OIL, MY CUP RUNNETH OVER”

Throughout the Psalm, the leading thought is that of the Lord’s love and care and interest in His people, illustrated by the figure of a shepherd caring for his sheep. The Psalm has sung the whole round of the day’s wandering—all the needs of the sheep, all the care of the Shepherd. Now we close with the final scene of the day. At the door of the sheepfold the shepherd stands, and he carefully inspects each sheep as they pass one by one before him into the fold. He has the horn filled with olive-oil and he has at hand a supply of Cedar-tar, and he anoints a knee bruised on the rocks, or a side scratched by thorns. If one is simply worn out and exhausted, he bathes its face and head in the refreshing olive-oil; he takes the large two-handled cup and dips it brimming full from the water he has brought for that purpose, and he lets the weary sheep drink. There is nothing finer in the Psalm than this. God’s care is not for the wounded only; it is for those who are just worn and weary, to the point that we can say his mercies and goodness are such that our Cup overflows, all our needs are fully

supplied.

“SURELY GOODNESS AND MERCY SHALL FOLLOW ME ALL THE DAYS OF MY LIFE”

These words seem to indicate the ending of the day's experiences, a realisation that the Shepherd's care has lead them safely through another day, and the feeling that while we too are under his watchful eye and obey his commands, we have safety and peace. The sheep have all been led home and are safely sheltered in the fold. David in reflection could see the pictures of his childhood experiences associated with the watching over of his father's sheep, and how these reflected the care Jehovah had shown him as he led him from his position as shepherd boy, through divine intervention, to become King of Israel and to grow old in service to his people and to Jehovah. His life had been a combination of various scenes, experiences both joyful and sorrowful. As he looked back over the long years of his earthly pilgrimage, memories of his life as a shepherd came to mind inspiring him to use these experiences, in caring for his sheep, to create this beautiful song telling of his own life of faith and trust in God.

The roles have been reversed, he no longer thinks of himself as the Shepherd, responsible for all the sheep's needs, but as one of the lowly sheep requiring the protection of the Great Shepherd, Jehovah. He tries to peer into the dim unknown future with a confidence brought about by a long experience. "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the (remaining) days of my life." Only one who had experience of trials and adversities, as well as the blessings that inevitably come in this life on earth, one who had come to realise the need of divine mercy and grace, could have written these words. These words describe the experience of learning good by coming in contact with evil, even at times being overcome by evil, realising that amid the scenes of human life, the only power to deliver us from evil comes through the goodness and mercy of the Lord.

The power to bless, to heal, to work deliverance, is expressed in the Psalm as coming not from man but from God. Every verse covers some aspect of God's dealings with those who put their trust in him. David firmly believed that Jehovah was deeply involved in every aspect of his life, that He was full of compassion for him, remembering him in his weakened fallen nature.

Who can define goodness? Applying goodness to man and his dealings with his fellow man is difficult, nearly impossible, to sum up in one word, but God's goodness to imperfect ones who fear and reverence Him is not measureable. His benevolence of heart is manifested in His gifts of grace, and his discipline.

Mercy is defined as that benevolence, mildness, tenderness, which disposes a person to overlook injuries or to treat an offender better than he deserves. It is the disposition that tempers justice and induces an injured person to forgive trespasses and injuries and to forbear punishment, or to inflict less than the law or justice will warrant. It is said that no word in our language precisely fits the meaning of mercy.

“AND I WILL DWELL IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD FOREVER”.

The shepherd's song is finished, the sheep are all at rest, safe in the good shepherd's fold, home at last.

To dwell in the house of the Lord forever will require a change. We have but temporary abode on earth waiting as strangers for our calling home to be with our Master in the Heavenly mansions or abodes, as some translate the word. This is the promise of Christ when He went away to prepare a place for his disciples. We can only imagine the joy that is set before us when we can dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

We realise more and more as we look back over the way, that He has been with us all the way during the sunny, days, cloudy days, days of joy, days of sorrow, days of trial, days of toil and days of weariness. Along with David we can say that surely goodness and mercy have followed us all the days of our lives and we look forward to dwelling in the house of the Lord forever.

RC: 1992

Crucified & Risen

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

“IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME”

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

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

So at this season, in remembrance of Him, Jesus our Saviour and Lord, we keep that simple Memorial service which He Himself instituted in that upper room, so long ago. We see again in the elements the giving of

His life, the shedding of His blood, ultimately for the blessing of all mankind, but here and now for all those who have ears to hear His loving “follow me.” Again we take to ourselves the merit of His blood and feast on Him who is the Bread of Life. We recall our privilege of following in His footsteps, to be dead with Him, of fellowship with Him in lives of obedience and sacrifice, and we renew our vows of consecration to His service.

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

“HE IS RISEN”

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

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

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

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

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

Note: It is planned to include the address “Resurrection for All” in our next issue.

Master, Speak!

Master, speak! Thy servant heareth,
Waiting for Thy gracious word,
Longing for the voice that cheereth;
Master, let it now be heard.
I am listening, Lord, for Thee;
What hast Thou to say to me.

Speak to me by name, O Master,
Let me know it is to me.
Speak that I may follow faster,
With a step more firm and free.
Where the Shepherd leads the flock
In the shadow of the Rock.

Master, speak, and make me ready,
When Thy Voice is truly heard,
With obedience, glad and steady



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The Mystery Of His Will

(A study of God's Plan in Ephesians 1)

(Contributed Article)

The Church at Ephesus was established by Paul 1 and his associates, as we have it recorded in Acts 19. It was established on Paul's second missionary journey, and then "God gave the increase". It progressed well — so much so that Paul saw good to write this very spiritual epistle to them. Yet, later on, as is seen in the message to this Church in Rev. 2:1, sadly, the progress was not maintained as it should have been, and this fact brought reproof from the One who walketh among the candlesticks.

This fact constitutes a warning to us that it is not sufficient that we run well for a while, but as runners in a foot-race today cannot win if the effort is not maintained, so with us, the effort must be maintained for the full length of the way if we are to win in the end.

After the usual greetings, the Apostle in verse 3 ascribes praise and honour to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. Blessed be the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ — or as one translation has it, Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has given us these spiritual blessings. "Spiritual" means non-carnal, that is not of fleshly or earthly kind. These spiritual blessings are only for the regenerate, for those begotten of the holy spirit of God; "the natural man understands not the things of the spirit of God, neither can he know them for they are spiritually discerned" — 1 Cor. 2:14.

The word "heavenly" means literally "above the sky", therefore refers to the celestial places, but the word is used figuratively here, not literally. "Heavenly places" are used to refer to what has been revealed to His people by the holy spirit and illustrated in the type — namely, in the Holy and the Most Holy of the Tabernacle.

At the present time, that is during this Gospel Age, the saints are depicted as in the Holy of the Tabernacle, eating of the shewbread — the word of God — and enjoying the light from the candlestick, which represents the light of the holy spirit illuminating the word of God, the shewbread. Thus they have meat (food) to eat the world knows not of. The incense of the golden Altar is for their benefit also, this incense representing the perfect sacrifice of Jesus; this incense of His making the sacrifice of his body members acceptable. Rev. 8:3, 4 says much incense is offered for, or with, the prayers (and sacrifices) of the saints, so that they should be acceptable to the Heavenly Father.

We note that some are made to sit together in heavenly places (or as the Diaglott says, "heavenlies"), *plural* in both instances, so the reference could be to that which was typified by the Holy and Most Holy places of the Tabernacle, the Holy being a type of the condition we enjoy now of being spirit-begotten sons of God, and the Most Holy representing our condition when born of the spirit, glorified together with our Head, "which hope we have as an anchor of the soul." That is the hope we have in view, and we hold it prospectively but with strong faith in Him who has promised it.

In verse 4, "We were chosen in him before the foundation of the world." God's plan was made *before* this time; He determined to have a spiritual class of the divine nature to be the bride of Christ, a new creation, *before* the foundation of the world. God did not devise His plan as he went along, that is as each contingency occurred. Even with His Son, it is written, that He was "the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world", and He planned for

the Body of Christ that they should be holy and without blame before Him. While it is probable that the reference here is to the time when the Church is glorified and with her Lord and standing before Him (“before” meaning directly in front of Him), yet there is a way by which his saints can be blameless before him now, in the sense in which Zacharias and Elizabeth, the parents of John the Baptist, were blameless in keeping the commandments of the Law — not faultlessly, but blamelessly when the imperfections of the flesh were taken into account.

Verse 5: Verse 4 ends “holy and without blame before him”. The words “in love” seem to belong to verse 5 (not to v. 4) as in the Diaglott — “Having *in love* previously marked *us* out for sonship through Christ Jesus for Himself according to the good pleasure of His (God’s) will.” The *Father’s* love is manifested by His love and mercy in making His plan this way; the *Son’s* love is manifest in giving His life for His bride. This meant great sacrifice on the part of both Father and Son. The Father gave His son, the dearest treasure of His heart; the Son gave all that He had, His life, for His bride.

The bride was a predestinated *class*, and the word means to limit in advance, to predetermine. The church, the bride, was a predetermined class, and Rev. 7:4 says the *number* was predetermined as 144,000. But they were not predetermined as individuals — they were a part of God’s plan *before* the foundation of the world.

The members were to have the spirit of sonship (the Diaglott translation of the verse) — a begetting of the holy spirit from the Father received at their consecration. However, this is only a begetting; we must live up to the terms of our consecration vow if we would be full sons and eventually be born on the spirit plane of being. We must pass the tests the Heavenly Father sends. Even our Lord Jesus had to be tested. “Though he were a Son (begotten at baptism) yet learned He obedience by the things He suffered.” He passed successfully every test the Father permitted, and later received glory and honour and immortality, the divine nature, as a reward. The saints also have this hope of the divine nature through faith in the merit of the sacrifice of God’s Son, Jesus.

So, as verse 6 says (Diaglott) — through the love of God “we have been graciously favoured in the beloved one.” We deeply appreciate God’s mercy and favour towards us, and yet in time to come after receiving the reward we will appreciate more fully His goodness when we are richly endowed with all the good things the Father has promised to them that love Him. But even now we rejoice in the sunshine of His grace. We have redemption through Christ’s blood, such deliverance from sin and Adamic condemnation being only for the Church now, but for all the faithful of mankind in the Millennial Age.

Passing on, verse 8 says that God caused the riches of his grace to abound towards us in all wisdom and prudence. “Abound” means to superabound, to be in excess, so we have the thought of good measure, pressed down, flowing over. Instead of “abound”, the Weymouth translation uses “lavished”. Reading verses 7, 8 and part of 9; “It is in Him and through the shedding of His blood that we have our deliverance, the forgiveness of our offence, so abundant was God’s grace, which He, the possessor of all wisdom and understanding, lavished upon us, when He made known to us the secret of His will.”

So God’s grace “has abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence” — prudence meaning mental action or activity, that is intellectual or moral insight. God, then, acted toward us in all wisdom in giving us such a good hope through grace, and also God, in thinking of a bride for His Son to live and reign with Him in the heavens, did so with all intellectual and moral insight and foresight. He acted not lightly, but with careful deliberation, because this class were to be given the reward of immortality.

Verse 9: “Having made known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself.” It gave God pleasure to do this, it gave Him satisfaction or delight as the word “pleasure” means. The word “mystery” means a secret-something known only to the initiated. And who are the initiated? We answer, those who have come into Christ by vowing to live as He did. It is to these only, the truly faithful, that the great hope of reigning with Christ as His joint-heirs is promised. They belong to a special class by consecration and the receiving of God’s holy spirit; we could say they belong to an exclusive order, a humble position now, but in time to come, glorious; but above all, useful. (2 Tim. 2:20, 21).

1 Pet. 1:8-12 speaks of this *so great salvation* being placed before the Church, such a salvation that holy men of old and even the angels searched the Scriptures for information concerning this so great salvation (Heb. 2:3). Then Col. 1:26,27 speaks of this same thing — “the secret which had been hid from ages and generations but is, now made manifest to the saints. To whom God would make known what is the fellowship of this secret (secret order) among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

So this so great salvation was the secret, and those called to it are to be a new creation, a new group or company in the heavens, possessing the divine nature and working for the uplift and blessing of all people under the headship of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in the Millennial Age. The Old Testament writers could not see or

understand some of the things they spoke of prophetically. No doubt Abraham wondered what the full significance of the promise to him meant when God said, In thee and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. In Hebrews 11:13, it says that, like others who lived before Christ, Abraham could not see clearly the fulfilment — he saw the fulfilment of the promise afar off, that is indistinctly.

The Apostle Paul was an instrument in God's hand in revealing the deep and hidden truths of God's word, and he deeply appreciated this favour as we see from the exultant way he has written here in Ephesians. Also in Rom. 16:25-26, he speaks of his privilege of "the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations (or people, Jews and Gentiles) for the obedience of faith."

Here Eph. 3:9-12 from Weymouth is good. This is "the stewardship of the truth which from all the ages lay concealed in order that the church might now be used (i.e. in time to come) to display to the powers and authorities in the heavenly realms the innumerable aspects of God's wisdom. Such was *the eternal purpose* which He had formed in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have this bold and confident access through faith in Him."

Verse 10: "In the dispensation of the fulness of times" — Here first of all we should note the basic meaning of "dispensation", which is "an administration of a household or estate, especially of a religious economy". It is God who has this administration to fulfil all His plans on time, that is at the fullness or completion of the time allotted for each feature of His plan. This word "dispensation", meaning "administration", when used as a verb means stewardship; so God has this stewardship, and He is a good and perfect steward of His economy. *Times* in this verse means set or proper times, as also in Gal. 4:4. "In the fullness of time God sent forth His son", and in the fullness of time God will gather all things together under Christ.

In verse 10, we are told that it is God's purpose to reunite all things under one head, even under the Anointed One (Diag.). Weymouth's translation says, "And this is in harmony with God's merciful purpose for the governments of the world when the times are ripe for it — the purpose which he has cherished in His own mind of restoring the whole creation to find its one Head in Christ; yes, things in heaven and things in earth, to find their one Head in Him."

We note that it is "all things in heaven and earth" that are to find their one head in Christ, and we find through the Scriptures (2 Pet. 3:12,13) that the present heavens or ecclesiastical powers are to be removed and a new heavens, Christ and the saints, are to be the new spiritual ruling powers. These shall teach mankind through the Old Testament saints, these forming the new power or authority on earth, and thus a new earth or society shall take the place of the old in this universe. Also, those spirit beings who are at present out of harmony with God will have to repent and serve God again, or be destroyed. (1 Pet. 3:17-20). So we see that restoring the whole universe to find its one Head in Christ will not be fully accomplished until the end of the Millennial Age, when Satan, and all the evil angels who do not reform, as well as the disobedient of mankind, will be destroyed in the second death.

Verse 11: In verse 10 the Apostle has spoken of all things being gathered together in Christ, and now in this verse he says that we share in this wonderful heritage of reuniting all things under Christ, having been chosen beforehand in accordance with the intention of Him whose might carries out in everything the counsel of His *own* will (Weymouth). God has no need to consult with others about His plans.

Verse 12: Those who have first trusted in Christ are the called and faithful of this Gospel Age. We could perhaps think of the Apostles as being special and worthy of additional praise, and certain individuals in the Church since, but it seems Paul had in mind the whole anointed company made up of members from both Jews and Gentiles. In speaking of those who first trusted in Christ, there is the inference that some will trust later, and so we are led to think of redemption for the world in the Millennial Age. The Church, the bride, are, as we have seen, a predestinated class, predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will, and it is to *these* God has given this prior hope that we should come into Christ, be incorporate in Christ.

This is to be a great honour to those who attain to such a position and condition of glory, honour and immortality. It is indeed! but what else is said here — that we should be to the *praise* of *his* glory. Let us note Weymouth's translation — "that we should be devoted to the extolling of his glorious attributes — we who were the first to fix our hopes in Christ." That rendering conveys a good thought — that we should be ever grateful for the love and benevolence of God who, through favour, grace — amazing grace, will grant us so high a favour or blessing, exalting the bride to be forever with Him in the heavens.

In verse 13 the word "sealed" should be noted; it means to stamp for security, or preservation, to keep secret. This seal is the holy spirit, and it is God who grants us the holy spirit; it is a secret sealing, unknown to the

worldly; it is for our preservation as new creatures. In the Diaglott it is called the spirit of the *promise*, as it came by promise of Jesus, who called it the comforter (John 16:7). Also it was promised in the Old Testament, in Joel 2:28-32, which was quoted by Peter in Acts 2:17 when he spoke of the initial giving of the spirit at that time.

In addition to the holy spirit being called a seal, in verse 14 it is called the earnest of our inheritance. The word “earnest” means a pledge or down payment, that is a payment in advance of the blessing to come to us when born of the spirit. It ensures our share in the inheritance of the saints with Christ Jesus our Head so long as we are faithful to our covenant of laying down our lives in God’s service as Jesus did — until the redemption (the ransom in full) of the purchased possession, i.e. the whole anointed company, the church, into the glory and honour promised as joint-heirs of Christ. In Heb. 9:15 the eternal inheritance is also mentioned, and Col. 3:23,24 adds — “whatsoever ye do (particularly service to the Lord) do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance, for ye serve the Lord Christ.”

Verse 14 ends with the phrase, “to the praise of His glory”, as does verse 12, and there we quoted Weymouth’s translation, “that we should be devoted to the extolling of God’s glorious attributes”. It could be added that that is a *present* as well as a future privilege. The motivating force which inspires this is that our God is a God of love, and therefore not selfish — love seeketh not her own. Long ago God was alone, and He wished to have company, and first of all He created his Son, the firstborn of all creation, but He did not create Him of, or in the form of His own immortal nature, for He had a plan for Him and would *later* grant Him the divine nature. But God wanted to have more than one with the immortal nature, He wanted to have a number, a family of his own nature, and in Revelation 7:4 it says 144,000 as noted before.

His Son was to be given the divine nature if He was willing to give his life in sacrifice for mankind in His Father’s plan. So as God knew mankind would fall into sin, the Father planned that His Son should die as a ransom for them, “ransom” meaning a price to correspond. (An angel could not have died as a ransom, because of a different and higher nature, and not of equal value.) Then God, by selecting others from amongst mankind to be exalted to live with Him, Christ Jesus, was able to display more fully His great traits of character, His love, His condescension. His magnanimity by stooping to call some of fallen mankind. In this way, God could display the grandeur of His character most effectively to the rest of mankind and also to the fallen angels, who could be moved to repentance by such an example. Thus in the ages to come the love of God will be the theme of the saints in glory and this theme, this great truth, the love of God manifest in his redeeming grace for *all* mankind who will be obedient, will inspire rejoicing and thankfulness in every redeemed heart in ages to come.

In verse 15, the Apostle Paul begins a prayer of thanks to God for this church. He prayed in a similar way on several occasions when writing to the churches he had been instrumental in establishing. To the church at Philippi he wrote, “I thank my God upon every remembrance of you. Always in every prayer of mine making request with joy, and that He which hath begun a good work in you shall perform it unto the day of Christ.” (Phil. 1:3-6). Yes, this great apostle felt the care of *all* the churches, and thanked God for them.

Verse 15 in the Diaglott reads, “On this account, I having heard of your faith” etc. This expression shows a connection with the previous verses, a reference to the magnitude of the reward, the inheritance set before the faithful followers of Christ, a reward due to all the faithful and elect when their course is fully run.

The Apostle in his prayer was desirous that the Ephesian church, having some knowledge of the great hope for the church, should continue to progress, and this prayer applies to us as well. While giving thanks to God for those at Ephesus who had heard the word so readily, and since hearing it had progressed so well, he desired earnestly that they should continue to progress in “the spirit of wisdom and revelation in (of) the knowledge of God.” Revelation means disclosure, and the Apostle desired that the disclosure or understanding of the deep truths of God’s word should be revealed to them more and more. (*This is the thought* in verses 15, 16 and 17.) Therefore, he says, on this account, or in view of the rich inheritance promised to the saints, they should be earnest in their endeavours to prove worthy and grow in grace and knowledge of God as each day goes by.

We must have the *wisdom* spoken of here, “the spirit of wisdom and revelation”. These things would not be given miraculously, but would need to be developed, and this would come only by the study of God’s Word and the indwelling of the holy spirit. We should not be content with the elementary things, with the milk of the Word, but seek the strong meat that we may grow thereby (1 Pet. 2:2). Col. 1:9 (Diaglott) is in harmony — Paul prayed for the Colossians, according to the Diaglott, “We do not cease praying on your behalf, that ye may be filled as to the exact knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.”

Verse 18, “The eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know (that is with all its value) what is the hope of His calling and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.” The Diaglott says,

“among the saints”. (see later comment).

Verses 19 and 20 continue according to the Diaglott translation, “And what the surpassing greatness of His power towards us who believe, according to the energy of His mighty strength which He exerted in the Anointed One, having raised Him from the dead, and having seated Him at His own right hand in the heavens” — such power being readily available to all His saints now to aid them in making their calling and election sure. Let us always realise this, and avail ourselves of that power, living as we are in the hour of temptation at the very end of this Gospel Age.

Verse 21: So our Saviour, God’s beloved son in whom he was well pleased, was greatly exalted by his Father; “He exalted him above all angels and archangels of every rank and above every name that can be named, whether in this present age or in the ages to come” (T.C.N.T.) Christ Jesus has become the high priest of good things to come, and we cannot visualise all the blessings He will bring either to His body members or to the world of mankind, but as verses 22 and 23 say, God has put all under His feet in His plan for Him, and has “constituted Him a head over all things for that congregation” which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all.” The words “fullness” and “filleth” are closely related words. Fullness meaning repletion or completion, and filleth meaning to make replete or complete. The Christ complete, the composite Christ — mediator, priest and king — will meet these requirements, for when the Christ head and body is complete, this feature of God’s plan will be replete, i.e. completely filled — the mystery or secret purpose of God will be finished — consummated. Will this not be the crowning feature of God’s eternal purpose? Is this not what God has desired to have, a new creation, to be joint-heirs with His Son and of the same divine nature?

So we may think of God as a father and head of a family, a great king dwelling contentedly with a retinue of helpers gladly and willingly carrying out his purpose for the blessing of all mankind. The Diaglott translation of verse 18 supports this view, where it says “God’s inheritance *among* the saints”. This is what God has desired, a blessing and pleasure and an inheritance reserved for Himself. Psalm 132:13,14 tells of this, “For the Lord hath chosen Zion (the church), He hath desired it for His habitation. This is my rest forever, here will I dwell, for I have desired it.”

Verses 15 -18 of that Psalm go on to speak of the blessings to be dispensed to the world in the Millennial Age. “I will satisfy her poor with bread, I will clothe her priests with salvation, and her saints shall shout aloud for joy. There I will make the horn (power) of David (the Christ, the antitypical David) to bud. I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed (a lamp of light and truth). His enemies I will clothe with shame (they will look to him whom they pierced, Zech. 12:10) but upon him (Christ) the crown shall shed its lustre” (R.S.V.). And rightly so, as He is the one who in the Father’s plan made these blessings possible to the church and all mankind.

So we praise God from our hearts for the unspeakable gift of His beloved Son, sent forth to be a ransom for all, this truth to be called to the attention of all in God’s due time. (WJH: 1992)

The First 75 Years

This issue completes 75 years of publication 1 of “Peoples Paper — and Herald of Christ’s Kingdom”. When the first issue came out in 1918, those responsible could hardly have envisaged such a milestone being reached but in the Lord’s providence this ministry has continued until now.

Over the years, the People’s Paper has been a means of contact and blessing to Christian brethren and friends in Australia and overseas, with reports of convention and other addresses, articles on doctrinal and devotional topics, personal reports, etc. and for this, thankful praise is given to our gracious Heavenly Father, who has provided at all times, through His people, for the maintenance of this and the other activities of the Berean Bible Institute.

Though there were evidently two earlier issues, the starting point for the present Peoples Paper seems to have been the issue dated June 1918, numbered Vol. 1, No. 1. All subsequent issues are numbered from this one, which outlined the background to the establishment in that year of what is now the Berean Bible Institute. The Mission of Peoples Paper, as stated in the June 1918 issue, is reprinted hereunder.

For the present, it seems to be the Lord’s will that the publication of Peoples Paper should be continued, and the prayers of the Lord’s people are sought for His guidance and His blessing of this ministry, realising that “unless the Lord build the house, they labour in vain who build.”

Mission of Peoples Paper (from Vol. 1, No. 1, June 1918)

The mission of “Peoples Paper” will be to be a comfort and encouragement to the people of God and to proclaim the glad tidings of the coming Kingdom of Christ to all people. The intention will be to “speak the truth in

love”, so that even where difference of thought with others may be expressed, it will seek not to offend, but to reason along scriptural lines with hope of attaining unity in the faith once delivered to the Saints.

Unto You Is Born a Saviour

Once more we are coming to that season of V the year when, with many around the world, our hearts especially turn again to the birth of our dear Saviour as the Babe of Bethlehem.

How beautifully that careful researcher, Luke, has recorded for us the events leading up to and including that time. In his gospel account, we read of Zacharias and Elizabeth, “righteous before God”, to whom was to be born John, the “prophet of the Highest” and the herald of our Saviour. Here we learn of the wondrous announcement of the angel to Mary, the one “highly favoured of the Lord”, and listen to her heartfelt song of praise to God.

“And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary, for thou has found favour with God, and behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Highest, and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David.” Luke 1:30-32.

Following Jesus’ birth, Luke invites us out into the fields and with the shepherds we hear again that wondrous message: “Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people, for unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. ‘ Luke 2:10,11. What a message! Announced to a few simple shepherds but of import and ultimate blessing to all mankind.

Later, Luke takes us with Mary and Joseph and the newborn child up to the temple with their simple offering and we hear the gracious and prophetic words of the aged Simeon: “Mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.” Luke 2:30-32. Here too we meet Anna, prayerful, dutiful prophetess and listen to her speak of Jesus and redemption in Jerusalem.

In such circumstances, our dear Saviour came into our world. While we need must look forward and realise the purpose of his coming as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, and recall all that it entailed in suffering before final victory, yet for a while, with Luke and with Matthew also, may we reflect again on the lovely story of our Saviour’s birth, and be thankful to God for His unspeakable Gift.

Christlikeness - The Evidence of Sonship

“He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk even as he walked “ — 1 John 2:6

To abide in Christ implies that one has first come into him. This gives us the thought of a body. The Scriptures everywhere represent the church as being this body, with Jesus as the Head. “God gave him to be Head over the church, which is his body.” During the Gospel age an invitation has been given to certain persons to be of this body of Christ. There is only one door by which these may come into the body. It is the door of sacrifice, baptism into Christ’s death. We are accepted only by giving up our own will, and taking instead the will of God. We pledge ourselves to walk in Jesus’ steps, to become his followers, his disciples. We are buried with him and rise to walk in newness of life. — Romans 6:4.

But it is not sufficient that we take these steps, not sufficient that we have received the holy Spirit, and have been accepted of the Father. We should be sure that we continue to abide in Christ. Let us ask ourselves, Are we having the experiences common to all who are associated with Jesus? One of the ways to be sure that we are abiding in him is to realize that we still love him. Another is to know that we are still in harmony with God’s Word. A third way is that we have no will but the Lord’s will. Still another is to have his peace in our hearts and lives as the ruling and controlling influence.

Profession Insufficient

Many have made a profession of being members of the body of Christ who do not give evidence of being his. Our text says that any one who professes to be in Christ ought so to walk even as the Master walked. And how did the Master walk? He lived daily in harmony with the will of the heavenly Father. He was fully submissive to the Father’s will. And this meant sacrifice unto death — the cruel death of the cross.

Whoever has our Lord’s spirit, and is controlled by the same will, is a member of the body of Christ, and will seek to walk after this fashion, to do the will of God in all things. This will mean a walk of holiness, of full devotion to God, and of opposition to sin. Whoever is consecrated to God is opposed to every sinful thing; for God and sin are in opposition. God stands for his own righteousness, and sin is a violation of that righteousness. (1

John 3:4). Whoever walks as Jesus walked is in harmony with the divine Word and will. We are not to trust to our impressions, our own conceptions of what is right and advantageous, as many others do; but the Word of the Lord is to abide in us, and to govern our lives. Jesus said, “I came not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me” — “everything written in the Book.” And so it is to be with us. We must abide in him, walk in him, and be willing to do “everything written in the Book” — not merely forcing ourselves to it, saying, I will take this course; but saying, “I delight to do thy will, O my God; thy law is written in my heart.” — Psa. 40:7,8.

Proofs of Sonship

All who have accepted Christ claim, in a general way at least, to be sons of God, that Christ is their Elder Brother, and that they belong to this great family that God is selecting from the sons of men. They consider themselves heirs with Christ to the great kingdom to come. But not all who claim to be sons of God are such. A great many are making this claim. Statistics tell us that there are millions of professed Christians; but we cannot think that many of these millions are sons of God. The Apostle Paul calls our attention to the fact that since we cannot read the hearts we must go by the professions which others make by mouth and by conduct. But professions of the mouth are not to be taken as final. We know that those who are sons of God will be led by his Spirit. “As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.”

God’s children, begotten of his holy Spirit, will make some manifestation of their harmony with this general Spirit of God. If they are, therefore, walking in unrighteousness, making no endeavour to stem the tendencies of sin in themselves, if they prefer error rather than truth, their fruits condemn them; for God stands for truth, as was exemplified in our Lord Jesus.

Whoever, therefore, has the Spirit of God, is willing to sacrifice himself that he may serve the truth. He loves the truth, and will manifest this fact by the spirit of love and zeal. Satan is the personification of sin, envy, hatred, malice, strife. Righteousness, love, joy, peace, are fruits of the holy Spirit. Wherever we see the works of the devil manifested we have reason to question that such a one is a child of God. The spirit of envy, the spirit of hatred, the spirit of malice, the spirit of opposition to the truth, the spirit of unrighteousness — these are to be repudiated and overcome by all who would be sons of God.

Yet despite one’s best efforts, he might still find in his flesh tendencies to sin which would give him a great deal of trouble. He may take courage for the assurances of the Scriptures that the Lord looketh on the heart. Likewise in regard to others, we should judge according to the endeavour, the intention. Wherever the Spirit of God is, there is the spirit of love. And this spirit will make one wish to make reparation, if he has done wrong or been in error. To do so shows that it was not his spirit, his will to do wrong, but that he was merely entrapped for a time. But one who continues to do according to his natural tendencies, with no evidence of going in the right direction and of serving the truth, has reason to doubt that he is a child of God.

Walk As He Walked

The Apostle’s thought seems to be that those who profess to be the Lord’s followers, profess to be Christians, should see to it that their walk in life is in harmony with their profession. The word disciple signifies one who follows — as a pupil follows his teacher. We recognize Christ as our Redeemer and also as our Pattern, our Instructor, in the glorious things which the Father has invited us to share with our Saviour. If, therefore, we say that we are in him, this profession should be borne out by our walk in life. We should walk as he walked.

But we are not perfect — how can this be done? The answer is that we “are not in the flesh, but in the spirit.” God does not look upon our imperfect flesh. As New Creatures we are not fleshly beings, but spiritual. The Apostle is in our text speaking of that walk that the Master had after he made consecration. He walked in this way three and a half years. It was a walk, not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. And so with us. We are walking, not according to the flesh, but according to the new creature. We reckon ourselves dead according to the flesh, and the Lord so reckons us. If then, we are dead to the flesh, we are not to walk according to the desires of the flesh.

We are to walk as our Lord walked, in our general deportment. We are to love everything that is good and to avoid everything that is evil. We are to walk as nearly as possible in the footsteps of our Lord and Exemplar. We cannot in an imperfect body walk up to all the perfection of Jesus, who was perfect in his flesh as well as in his spirit. But we are to walk as he walked — in the same path, in the same direction, toward the same glorious goal toward which he walked. And so doing, faithful day by day, we shall by his grace attain the same exceeding great reward.

Pure In Heart

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they Shall see God.” Matt. 5:8.

The sixth of the Beatitudes calls for “purity 1 of heart” in all who would attain to the greatest blessings God has to bestow; purity of heart — purity of motive, of intention, of effort, of will — purity in the sense of sincerity, of transparency, of truthfulness.

The thought of “pure in heart” is not perfection of conduct nor of word, nor of thought, but perfection of intention as respects all of these. Our desire and effort must be for perfection — in thought, word and deed. The standard before us to which our hearts, our wills, must give assent is the divine standard. “Be ye perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect.” (Matt. 5:48) God has set no lower standard than this absolute perfection, but he has provided for us grace, mercy and peace through Christ, if we will walk in his footsteps, — this purity of heart being one of the essential steps in the narrow way.

Only the pure in heart have the promise of seeing God. They continue faithfully to the end of the pilgrimage, not only attaining the likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ in the present life (Rom.8:29) in their purity of heart, purity of intention, sincerity of their efforts toward God and men, but eventually according to the Lord’s promise, they shall, by the power of the first resurrection, be changed from earthly to heavenly, spiritual conditions. Then, as the Apostle declares, “we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.” And when we have thus become changed to be like the glorious Son of God, who is “the express image of the Father’s person,” we shall be able also unquestionably to see the Heavenly Father himself, and shall be introduced to him by our dear Redeemer — “complete in him,” without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.” — 1 John 3:2; Heb. 1:3; Eph. 5:27; Col. 2:10.

In this, as in the other blessings, a portion, a foretaste comes in the present life. There is such a thing as having the eyes of our understanding opened, that we may be enabled to “comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ.” (Eph. 3:18) But not all have this opening of the mental eye; not all are privileged to see the glories of Jehovah’s character in symmetrical harmony, divine justice, wisdom, love and power co-ordinated and co-operating in unison for the blessing of every creature, according to the purpose which God purposed in himself before the world was.

But who may enjoy this blessing, this clearer vision, and who may, by seeing it, be enabled more and more to grow in likeness of that glorious perfection? Only “the pure in heart,” only the sincere, the honest-hearted. Those who have a double mind, a double will, are Scripturally said to have a double vision, a double eye. They see spiritual things proportionately indistinctly. Many of God’s people have failed thus far to grow up into Christ in all things, they see something of the heavenly things, and something of the earthly; they see but dimly and indistinctly the lines of the divine character, and proportionately they lack ability to copy it. Let all who have named the name of Christ seek more and more to have but the one Master, and an eye single to his glory and service — a pure, a sincere, a faithful heart.

“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no one shall see the Lord’ Heb. 12: 14

O, Let my love be such to Thee,
That I may ever grateful be
To suffer stigma, brand or shame,
And count it honour for Thy Name
Who didst so much for me.



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Seek Ye First the Kingdom

Matt. 6:33.

(Convention Address)

Our Lord had come to fulfil the Law and to open up “a new and living way” to eternal life. This way to life, while requiring a higher standard than that of the Law, would be a way by which life could be gained, because provision was made for the imperfections of the flesh, so that the heart and will would be accepted instead of actual perfection of word and deed.

John the Baptist had realised his privilege of introducing the Bridegroom, saying, “He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.” He was quite content to realise himself merely as the friend of the Bridegroom. He was not part of the Bride, no, just the friend of the Bridegroom, the one introducing Him. Our Lord confirmed this in Matt. 11:11.

Up to that time Israel as a nation had represented God’s kingdom — an earthly kingdom. From that time the heavenly kingdom was proclaimed. “The kingdom of heaven is at hand” was the message at that time. “The law and the prophets were until John.” A new age was now commencing, during which time the Israel of God, the Church, would be chosen to be joint-heirs with Christ, to bless all the families of the earth. The Lord was then present, directing the closing-down of the Law dispensation. As the “Lord of the Harvest,” His fan was in His hand to thoroughly purge His floor, gathering true Israelites into the garner, the chaff to be burned up in the “wrath to the uttermost”.

The New Way

Jesus explained the principles which would prove whether or not a follower was really an overcomer, and worthy to be a sharer in the Kingdom. While the principles of God’s throne are always righteousness and truth — justice — yet the new way of harmony or at-one-ment with God was different from the way which was offered under the Law. There was no fault to be found with the law itself. It was holy and good; yet by the deeds of the law no man could be justified. The righteousness of the law was unattainable by poor, frail humanity, weakened by the fall, seeking but ever failing to attain to the righteousness which was required. Paul describes the pitiable condition of even the conscientious Jew under the law — Rom. 7. 1425.

Here, then, was the way out, as Paul declares (Gal. 3:13), “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law.” “He was born under the law that He might redeem them also under the law.” The Law (he says) was our school-master to bring us to Christ. That is, the Law proved that man, by his own works, even under the favourable conditions of God’s Law, could not attain righteousness. “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith.” (Heb. 10: 20-22.)

It was this new and living way, with its heavenly hopes and spiritual life, “glory, honour and immortality,” as a reward for faithfulness that Jesus came proclaiming, and inviting the “Israelites indeed” to enter.

In this kingdom of heaven which was proclaimed, they were to sacrifice the selfish ambitions of the world, and seek the spiritual things, not by way of the Law, which was by works, but by a new and living way, which was

justification by faith; not the righteousness which is of the Law, but that which is by the faith of Jesus Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith. (Gal. 2:16).

So we are not to seek to justify ourselves by any good deeds we might be able to do, but seek first the kingdom **of** heaven and its righteousness, which is by faith. That does not mean, however, that we are to be careless about good works. While realising that “Nothing in our hands we bring, Simply to Thy cross we cling,” our faith in Christ would be dead if we did not strive to walk as He walked, and to speak as **He** spoke, and thus show our faith by our works.

Consecration

During this Gospel Age it has only been “such as the Lord our God doth call” that could seek the kingdom. We were all born in sin and shapen in iniquity, and it was in the Lord’s grace that we were led to realise our need for the Saviour, and to long to be at peace with God and free from sin. When thoroughly longing for holiness and to be right with God, it was impressed upon our minds that this was the thing of first importance, “to seek first the kingdom.” It was only as we came to recognise God’s mercy in Christ in providing the means for our justification that we found the peace and joy of reconciliation with God.

This however, did not gain for us the kingdom. Thus far we had sacrificed nothing. Certainly, we had turned away from sin and determined to live a good life as far as we possibly could. But now comes the invitation, to “take up the cross and follow Christ,” to deny ourselves, to offer ourselves in full consecration to God, devoted like Jesus to do God’s will even unto death. This is a great step to take; to be willing to be nothing — **to** be counted, as Paul says, as the offscouring of the world — to suffer persecution, to be ignored, misunderstood, and to suffer loss for Christ’s sake, **to** die daily, to be dead with Christ, to endure just whatever the Lord may permit **to** come to us.

From a human viewpoint the true Christian life is not inviting, but even the appreciation of the loving sacrifice given to redeem us from death would lead the grateful heart to say, “Lord, I am thine, entirely thine.” “**I** am not my own, I am bought with a price, the costly blood of Thy dear Son. **It** is but the reasonable thing to do to give myself entirely to Thee, so here **I** give myself, it is all that I can do.”

Patient Continuance

However, the kingdom is not gained by our consecration, our promise to do God’s will even unto death. **It** is one step, but our whole contract must be carried out. Our consecration is but the entry to the race, we must so run as to obtain. **It** is but the beginning of the good fight **of** faith. We must so fight, not as one who beats the air, but as one in deadly earnest, beating down every stronghold of error in our hearts and minds, casting down every vain imagination, and bringing every thought into the obedience of Christ.

It was comparatively easy to seek first the kingdom of God and its righteousness, which is of faith and not of works of the law, but it **is** more difficult to keep all of our thoughts, words and doings in line with this standard, “Seek first the kingdom.” How is it that there is danger of losing our first love? Our love responded to the Lord’s invitation, “Seek ye my face,” with the words, “Thy face, Lord, **I** will seek”. **It** is one thing to express such love and zeal when filled with a sense **of** God’s love, but our faith and love must be able to stand the stress of trial.

We must, like our Master, learn obedience and be prepared in the fire of experience; we must prove our loyalty under the severity of adverse circumstances. We must have a perfected character which will be true to our duties and obligations. We have a good number of obligations, to our families, towards husband or wife, to parents, and so on. Many have obligations to employers, all indeed have daily obligations to others and there is a test going on as to our loyalty to our various obligations. “Loyalty” is a beautiful word. There is a great loss of loyalty in the world around us today, but as the Lord’s people we should be loyal to each other, as members of one body, seeking to uphold one another for the glory of our Head. Our character is to be proved, our loyalty, by how we meet these tests.

Character is proved in all the small affairs of our daily lives; the place where it is developed, and where it may be manifested and proved and tested in the best way is in our homes — how we are living there. Are we seeking to manifest the law of gentleness and love and peace and joy towards each other? The **Lord is** watching us to see just how we are doing things, whether **His** love is filling our hearts more and more, and finding expression **in** all our thoughts, and words, and doings. How we need to have that Christianity which is just as careful of our conduct in our homes as in public. We should have the loyalty to principle that will enable us to live for Christ just where we are placed.

In this way, then, the Lord is permitting us to be tested; our faith is being proved. We need to remember that

“like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth those that reverence Him.” He knows our frame, and just how the trial of our faith is going on. This trial, as Peter says, is more precious than gold, and the Lord is patiently watching in loving interest to see how well we are standing the test; watching to see us victorious, overcomers. He is watching if we are seeking first “the kingdom of God and its righteousness.” There are so many pitfalls, other interests and pleasures, that our great enemy will take every advantage of, to blot out our one great aim.

We have all, no doubt, repeatedly resolved to more earnestly make God first in everything, and no doubt also have been astonished to realise how much we have come short, how often have failed, and allowed self to come in. Many inducements are held out which may prove our undoing. We must judge ourselves in these matters, and correct ourselves. Only if we keep God first shall we obtain the kingdom. How serious is the warning in Heb. 2:1-3! Dare we neglect so great salvation!

While we have so much to encourage us in promises of grace and strength for every time of need all along the way, and of so great a reward, how serious is our position if we have put our hand to the plough and look back. Our Lord counsels us to “remember Lot’s wife.” How trivial are the things that cause some to look back! We counted the cost when we made our consecration, and signified in the waters of baptism our willingness, our desire, to be “dead with Christ.” Having made that stand, shall we allow the drawings or the allurements of the world or the flesh or angels to prevent us from seeking God first? All is lost if we turn again to the doomed city, as did Lot’s wife. How much then it really means to us — even the loss of all if we lose this chief aim of our life.

God First

As each year passes, our text verse might well go with us, to help us to examine ourselves. Could we have a standard as good as this which the Lord gave at the beginning of His earthly ministry, at the opening up of the call or invitation? “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.” O, that nothing, nobody, come between — God has a right to our whole attention, all our talents, all our wealth, all our powers of mind and body. When He says, “My son, give me thine heart,” He is asking for His own; yet He is not demanding our consecration. He has however privileged us with the most gracious and wonderful call, the invitation to become joint-heirs with Christ in His kingdom.

God Himself has pledged to take care of those who will go with Him. It is for us daily to remember our great aim — seeking first the kingdom; God to be first in everything. No one else has loved us so much, no one has such claim on our hearts, our love. Even in adversity and under the deepest clouds of distress, it is to be God first. Although He may permit affliction and gloom as a trial of our faith, He is watching to see us victorious. Soon the sunshine of His face will dispel the clouds and comfort our hearts, and bring us joy and peace. (P.P. 2/1940)

Watchfulness and Obedience

“Come, My people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee; hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the Lord cometh out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.” — Isa. 26:20, 21.

The greatest comfort which God’s people enjoy is based upon their appreciation of their real and close relationship to Him as their Father and to Christ Jesus as their Redeemer and Head. Without such knowledge it is impossible to estimate the true value of God’s Word, and equally impossible to draw from it the help, instruction, and directions which it contains.

Our text suggests at once by its confidential tone that those so addressed do stand in this true and loving relationship to Him. “Come, My people,” speaks of His tenderness and loving care for those who recognize their continual need of the Divine protection. For such,

*“There is an eye that never sleeps
Beneath the wing of night;
There is an ear that never shuts
When sink the beams of light.”*

Every true earthly father invariably gives the closest attention to the interests and persons of his children, and always provides means and suggestions for their safety, both for mind and body; and the father of experience should always be able to do so with a measure of success. But the Heavenly Father transcends in knowledge, foresight, and skill all human capability, and He sees just where the danger lurks and advises or commands as the need arises.

The Prophet's words in our text indicate two things — a place of safety and a time of great danger. The commanding voice of the Lord is there heard through the Prophet's lips, yet the tones are the softened ones of true parental love, saying, "Come, My people, enter thou into thy chambers."

It is appropriate here to ask, Can we with any accuracy locate the time or period to which this prophecy may be applied? Shall we look for it in Isaiah's day only, or does the picture point us still further? No doubt a large proportion of Old Testament prophecies link themselves to their immediate environment at the time of their utterance, and as a noted writer says, "In such cases (and they are very numerous) the literal application is the true spiritual one."

Many unwise and unproductive efforts have been made to spiritualize practically all the best of the prophetic utterances and thus to "heap upon the Jew all the curses, and transfer to the Christian dispensation all the blessings." Surely such treatment cannot be "rightly" dividing the word of truth." It should not be difficult for Bible students to decide after examination where to place or apply such prophetic lines as bespeak the work, the sorrows, or the joys of the experiences of God's people — prophecies which may well refer to ages future from the prophets' days. An example of such prophecy, surely lies before us in our text, which closes the 26th chapter of Isaiah.

In That Day

The phrase which opens this beautiful section of Scripture would well support this view. It says "In that day" certain gracious favors will have been received by some of God's people and responding acclamations will be accorded to Him; and if we compare the other many references to "that day" we shall be obliged to carry the prophetic words in many instances forward to the time when God shall begin gathering His people to Himself and destroying "them which destroy the earth".

The Prophet Isaiah was one of a minority who maintained the faith of Abraham, approved the Law of Moses, and looked for the consolation of Israel. He knew by heart all details of God's faithfulness to His people from the day that He brought them out of Egypt; and the Prophet's business here was to enthuse the mind of the few faithful ones, who were living in silent semi-isolation, among a decaying and faithless nation. No doubt his message was a means at that time of reviving the hope and cheering the hearts of many; though the real beauty and the far-reaching effect of the message were to be seen and felt in far future times, by those for whom it was written, "Shut thy doors about thee; hide thyself as it were for a little moment."

It is indeed for us that these bright beams of heavenly light have been projected through the ages, in order that we may be in a watchful attitude and hence be enabled to render obedient service to our Lord.

In the Secret of His Presence

Without doubt, when the Prophet's mind was thus pondering the vivid picture of Israel's great deliverance out of Egypt that eventful night, and conjuring up all the wondrous details which Moses had faithfully handed down, he broke forth under the Holy Spirit's influence into the beautiful words of our text, reminding his hearers again that the only place of safety was "in the secret of His presence" — "the secret place of the Most High."

That night in Egypt and its calamitous ending for Egypt was marked by a peculiar inactivity on the part of God's typical people. No one, not even the leader of Israel, was asked to take part in the destruction. No one of Israel was asked for advice, and as far as we know no one of Israel did take part or give advice. Here, then, is a lesson on watchfulness and obedience for us. Should not we be at least equally as careful as they, in observing the Lord's ways and requirements in this our day? The words of Isaiah quoted above seem full of added meaning when we contemplate the passover night.

No words could have been better framed, nor echo more fittingly the instructions which Moses enjoined that night: "Go thou in Israel, for behold Jehovah cometh out!" Israel was safely housed and protected, while Egypt reaped a whirlwind of sorrow. Nor could the Divine love have been better expressed: "When I see the blood, I will pass over you" — I shall know you are inside, watchful and obedient. And the Prophet echoes, "Come, My people, enter in" — remain in the secret place till instructed to come out.

This same beam of prophetic light shows us also that a night is fast approaching; indeed, it has well set in, and it is for us to hide ourselves in the secret place, and be sure not to be found among the disobedient in earth's present danger zone. For surely the greatest deliverance of all is imminent, in which God will complete the number of His elect who have cried day and night unto Him. This great deliverance will be carried out under the instructions of our Lord, earth's new King, and He will marshal them safely into the heavenly and true Canaan of rest, even in the First Resurrection. An abundant entrance is guaranteed to the faithful. — 2 Peter 1:11.

Though centuries had passed since the momentous night in Egypt, in Isaiah's mind the events and details of that great deliverance were as fresh as ever; but with the majority of Israel they were long forgotten and treated as idle tales.

As a result obedience and watchfulness toward their God was at a discount. So today, many who should be on the alert to watch for the Lord's guidance and to give instant and careful obedience to all His minute instructions, are either oblivious of the true issues and carelessly cutting adrift from the anchor of hope, or are being feverishly hurried into unauthorised activities, foreign to the original God-given instructions.

In illustration, suppose a great fire occurs in one of our great cities. How quickly there arrives upon the scene the well equipped and experienced staff with all their modern means for coping with the conflagration. How unwise would any citizen be who would interfere with their work or dare to instruct them. The citizens' place or duty on such occasions is to be out of the way and not in the way. So when the great God of truth and righteousness rises up to quench the fires of human passion, or to reverse the picture, when the "fire of His jealousy" is ignited for the destruction of all His opponents, for the disintegration of every work of evil, and for the disarming of all the forces of error and darkness, where should His people be? Surely, says the Prophet, "hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast, for the Lord cometh out," etc.

Why was it necessary in Isaiah's day to warn the typical people so seriously? Because the proprieties of the true worship, both in time and methods, had been long neglected, and innovations of unholy character had prostituted the truth; hence Jehovah's movements and work were unseen and unheeded.

Taking Heed to God's Word

In further illustration, how much sorrow would the beloved David have avoided if both he and the priests with him had given more heed to the detailed instructions of God's law through Moses. They would have avoided the error of bringing the ark to Jerusalem — a right thing in the wrong way — they would have avoided pushing the work of God forward by unlawful and worldly methods. So again, when David devised his plan to build a house to the Lord — a right thing at a wrong time — disappointment would have been saved had he been more careful in ascertaining the Lord's mind correctly.

Many since David's day, right down to the present, have been actively engaged in more or less extensive though questionable methods of forwarding the great work for human deliverance with the paraphernalia of human schemes; and to that end they have vainly endeavoured to build a house of God in which they might secure the "ark" and thus claim for their own particular community, sect, or organization the sole right to give forth the Divine decrees and thus be (or claim to be) the only true source of light, etc.

All who are deceived by such are bound to lose ground and become deficient both in obedience and watchfulness, giving heed to seducing spirits rather than to the Lord's directions.

The Rest of Faith

God's people still must walk by faith; faith's "doors" must be closed around them, and within those closed doors only will they remain safe and unharmed. While the world is full of sorrow and doubt and apprehension of the future, the Lord's people are calm and content. Neither should they take part in anything which would irritate or annoy their fellow creatures, whose cup of sorrow is already overfull. We can well afford to wait, and with Solomon can truly say, "There hath not failed one word of all His good promise." (1 Kings 8:56.)

We may know with confidence that no necessary information will be withheld from those who with watchfulness and obedience are awaiting the Lord's command, through the antitypical Moses—the present Lord—to "go forward." Let us not attempt to emerge from our hiding place until we are fully assured of His voice and of the nature of His command.

Estimating Costs

(Luke 14:28)

(Young People's Address)

Younger brothers and sisters often have to face major decisions in their teens, and twenties, with perhaps very little knowledge, and without the benefit of previous experience. This is the time when many decide on a professional career, get married, start families, and make other decisions which affect them to more or less degree for life. Some may also start considering the most important matter of all, a decision which not only affects them at the time but also in the future. That decision is whether or not, or when, they should make a commitment and

consecrate their lives to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Whenever we make any important decision, there are always many questions we need to answer. For a moment imagine embarking on a business venture. You and your business partners will sit down and try to work out every conceivable detail of the project, such as

1. what are the objectives
2. what should be the plan of action
3. when is the best time to commence the project
4. what benefits should you expect from it
5. how secure is the project
6. what are your liabilities should something go wrong

The project will also involve some considerable costs, and you hope to have sufficient resources to cover them, so the next thing to do is to sit down with a sheet of paper and make a vertical line down the middle. On one side you write down all the things that will need to be paid for, your risks and liabilities and your best estimate of how much they are likely to cost you. On the other side of the line you list all the assets you have at your disposal, including any credit that you perhaps have been given. Then you add up each of the two columns and the relationship between the totals will indicate either the likely success or failure of the entire project.

Our Lord Jesus Christ encourages us to prepare a similar balance sheet when we are considering following in His footsteps, so let us turn to our key text — Luke 14:28-30: “Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.” (N.I.V.)

We read in this chapter (Luke 14) that there were large crowds following Jesus. Many of them had different reasons for doing so, no doubt some wanted to listen to His teaching, some because Jesus would feed them when they became hungry (see John 6:26), while others hoped to catch Him saying or doing something that would be unlawful. But to all those who truly want to become His disciples, He has a word of caution: “Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me, and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.” Matt. 10:37,38.

Our Lord does not wish to deliberately turn anyone away, He just does not wish us to be misled into thinking that being His disciple is going to be without any personal sacrifices. Other records of His words confirm this:

(a) Matt. 7:13,14 “Enter through the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.”

(b) Matt. 10:22,24,25 “All men will hate you because of me. A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master... if the head of the house has been called Beelzebub, how much more the members of his household.”

(c) John 16:1-3 “All this I have told you so that you will not go astray. They will put you out of the synagogue, in fact a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is doing a service to God. They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me.”

It is difficult for younger Christians to imagine this kind of persecution, especially in so-called civilised countries, but only our Heavenly Father knows to what kind of tests each one as an individual may be put in the future. In Luke 21, Jesus speaks of the times of the end: “Before all this, they will lay hands on you and persecute you. They will deliver you to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name... and they will put some of you to death. All men will hate you because of me. (vv.12,16,17)

The apostle Peter in his first letter also mentions suffering: “Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the suffering of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when His glory is revealed”. 1 Peter 4:12,13. How skilfully he counterbalances the suffering and pain of trials and the glory and honour which are to follow. In 1 Peter 1:6,7 we read further: “though now for a little time you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials, these have come so that your faith — of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire — may be proven genuine and may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed.”

The importance of weighing up carefully the costs of following Jesus before such a serious step is taken is shown by His words in Luke 9:62, “No one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.” To turn back after once being fully enlightened by God will result in very great loss. For our occasional human mistakes and failures, however, full provision has been made, “if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness... if anybody does sin, we have One who speaks to the Father in our defence — Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.” 1 John 1:9, 2:1.

Returning to our key text, which is about estimating costs, we note that it does not just end with adding up costs. Jesus tells us to do this, but then to compare the costs with the resources we have. Considering these will be far more encouraging; for a start let us turn to a favourite verse — John 3:16: “For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.” There is nothing new to tell about Christ’s great atoning sacrifice; it is indeed the great resource that we should use on our balance sheet. Without this resource, no further work could commence, no sacrifice of our own could be accepted.

Jesus invites us: “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me. For I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” Matt. 11:28-30. Further He assures us: “Whoever comes to me I will never drive him away.” John 6:37, and “In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.” John 14:2,3. These are truly wonderful promises; they may sound simple, but it is such promises that give courage and strength to go on.

In John 1:12 we are told: “Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God.” and in Romans 8:16,17: “The Spirit testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs, heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in His sufferings in order that we may also share in His glory.” Do we ever imagine what it would be like to be born into some prominent, perhaps royal family? There is surely no comparison between being born of God, being called God’s children, and being born into even the wealthiest, most prestigious family on earth!

Let us look at what else we are promised, in Jesus’ own words:

(a) John 8:12: “I am the Light of the world, whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

(b) John 6:35: “I am the Bread of life, he who comes to me will never go hungry.”

(c) John 4:14: “Whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst, indeed the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

We are also assured that for any sacrifices we make, we will receive a far greater reward. Speaking to the disciples and then to all believers, our Lord said: “I tell you the truth; at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on His glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And **everyone** who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. Matt. 19:28,29.

We are also encouraged to pray and ask for our needs. “I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.” John 16:23. When Jesus says to “ask in my name” He means to “use my name as a reference, as a guarantee that you are asking in the same way, in the same spirit, as I would ask.” By comparison, we read in James 4:3 how not to ask: “When you ask you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on pleasures.”

Jesus also says: “If you love me, you will obey what I command, and I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counsellor to be with you forever — the Spirit of Truth — I will not leave you as orphans” John 14:15-18. Then in verse 26: “But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”

We also have a strong support in our Christian family members — Jesus once said that those who do God’s will are to Him His brothers and sisters and mother. In Romans 12:5, the Lord’s people are compared to members of one body, where each member belongs to the other. In Galatians 6:2 we are told to carry one another’s burdens, and in this way to fulfill the law of Christ. We have each other to share in joys and sorrows, in our victories and falls, and we can count on each other’s love, support and prayers.

We could find still more examples of positive influences on our consecrated lives, but these should suffice to inspire us to look deeper into the costs of discipleship. As we weigh up costs and resources, may we each find a healthy surplus on the credit side and resolve to follow Jesus.

“Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say I find no pleasure in them.” Eccl. 12:1. N.I.V. (RJ: 1991)

Timothy, A Good Minister of Jesus Christ

(continued from previous issue)

“Stir Up The Gift” (2 Tim.1:3-8)

Paul’s reflections on the trials likely to come upon Timothy would no doubt have had much to do with the Apostle’s prayers for Timothy “night and day”; and he now writes with a view to strengthening him along these lines, reminding him of the genuine faith and piety which he had inherited both from his mother and his grandmother, and assuring him that he believed that this had laid a deep foundation of true piety and faith in Timothy’s own heart. We notice the fact everywhere kept prominent in the Scriptures that according to the Divine arrangement not only are the sins of the parents visited upon the children for several generations, but also that the faith and godliness of the parents, when rightly based on the Word of God and the true promises of that Word, lay the foundation of character in their children, upon which there is the greater hope that a life of godliness and usefulness may be built.

Not only does the Apostle strengthen Timothy’s mind by a remembrance of the goodly heritage of faith and piety received from his mother and grandmother, but in addition he reminds him of the grace of God specially conferred upon him (Timothy) at that certain time when he made a full consecration of himself to the Lord, to be God’s servant; when the Apostle, exercising his power as an Apostle, and as was common in those days, communicated to Timothy by supernatural power an outward gift or token of the Holy Spirit, through the laying on of his hands. The Apostle had evidently either heard or surmised that Timothy was allowing the fervor of his zeal for God to die out, and hence here he urges him to “stir up the gift of God which is in thee.” The Greek word here rendered “stir up” has the significance of *re-ignite*: as though the Apostle said, Re-ignite your gift by renewed energy.

The next verse enforces this view, implying that the Apostle thought that Timothy was in danger of being overcome by *fear*, so as to allow his zeal to abate. Hence he reminds him that the spirit of the Lord imparted to His people is not a spirit of fear, but on the contrary a spirit of power, energy, zeal awakened by love; loving devotion to God, and a desire to please and serve Him; loving devotion to the truth, and a loving devotion to God’s people and a desire to build them up in holy things, and to do good unto all men as we have opportunity. Yet, lest Timothy should get the thought that the spirit of God led only to a zeal of energy — that might at times be unwise in its exercise and do more harm than good — the Apostle adds that the spirit of God which He bestows upon those who are begotten as His sons is a spirit of a “sound mind” — a mind that is fortified and strengthened by the Word of the Lord on every subject, and hence, while thoroughly fearless of man, is wise in judging of times, seasons, and methods for using the energy of love which burns as a fire within the consecrated heart. Would that all of God’s children might appreciate, and more and more obtain, the spirit of a sound mind, by which all of their talents might be used, not only fearlessly but wisely, in the Master’s service.

“Wise Unto Salvation”

Continuing his exhortation’ (3:14,15) the Apostle impresses upon Timothy two things (1) that he had been taught of God, and (2) that this teaching of God had come to him through the Scriptures, which he assures him are sufficient to bring him all the way to the complete realization (in the resurrection) of that salvation which God has provided through faith in Christ Jesus. It will be well for us all to remember that all the graces of the spirit, all the progress in the knowledge of Divine things to which we already have attained, that may have really helped us nearer to God and to holiness, have come to us through the Scriptures of the Old Testament and through the words of our Lord and His inspired Apostles: nor will it ever be necessary to go to other channels for the true wisdom which would prepare us for the salvation promised.

Proceeding, the Apostle shows (Ver. 16,17) that the Scriptures which God inspired are profitable in every direction, and quite sufficient for the man of God, needing no supplements of visions or dreams, either his own or other. They are profitable for doctrine, containing the full statement of the Divine Plan; and no human authority is competent to add thereto. Who hath known the mind of the Lord? Who hath been His counselor? They are useful also for reproof toward others. No words that we can use in correcting the errors of others either in word



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Looking Unto Jesus

(Convention Address)

At one time, people used to think in terms of lasting values, but in the fast-changing world of today, it would be difficult to say just what is a lasting value. Wherever we look, everything is in a state of flux and change.

In such conditions, each Christian can be grateful to our Heavenly Father for His wonderful love and unmerited favour. A scripture verse which we all might apply to ourselves, to our own previous condition and to our own development, is Eph. 2:12. There the apostle says: "at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world."

How thankful each of us can be to our Heavenly Father, how we can praise Him in the presence of His people with all sincerity, confessing that while we in no way deserved His favour toward us, yet we greatly treasure it and praise the Lord for His wonderful love and mercy in that "now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." Eph. 2:19.

How true are the apostle's words in Eph. 5:14 "wherefore He saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." For many years, as His people, we have enjoyed the Lord's marvellous light, His leading and His care, and His wonderful provisions for us. Even His great sacrifice on Calvary is the precious provision of our Heavenly Father, for there is no other way of salvation. No wonder the apostle could say: "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." 1 Cor. 2:2.

All the Lord's people are seeking to walk in the light of our Lord, we are looking to Him in all circumstances of our lives, happy or unhappy. In times of gladness, we thank Him, even though we realise that earthly joy is of a transient nature — it is here today and gone tomorrow. In times of sadness, we look to Him for consolation, for His over-ruling and his strength to overcome such experiences. Indeed, whatever we do, we look to our Lord Jesus.

For every Christian, the purpose of the knowledge and acknowledgment of the Lord is to look to Him and to grow in His likeness. "Speaking the truth in love (we) may grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, even Christ." Eph. 4:15. Our looking unto Christ in all situations of life does not depend on our own wisdom, our education or ability, for as Jesus said to His disciples while He was with them during His earthly ministry: "The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house of Beelzebub, how much more them of his household." Mat. 10:24,25.

Every disciple of Christ has gone through practical experiences of privation, difficulties and persecutions; this has been so from the beginning even till now. But we realise that the Divine wisdom and the Divine mercy are revealed to babes, not to the wise of this world, nor to the powerful who can manage and change many things. Our Lord said: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father; and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him." Mat. 11:25-27.

Then come our Lord's words of invitation: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will

give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” Mat. 11:28-30. How often we think of these words of our Lord and apply them to ourselves in the many problems and difficulties of this life, realising how much we need the attitude of meekness of our Lord, to come and take His yoke upon ourselves, to be meek and lowly of heart ourselves, and so to find His rest to our souls. We know that Christians throughout the Gospel Age have experienced persecution and troubles, to greater or less extent, but that this is part of normal Christian development.

When we consider our Lord, did He live His life and was His earthly ministry peaceful and restful, with everything plain sailing? No, He continued to endure the contradiction of sinners against Himself and had to carry on His work in the face of persecution and difficulty. But our Lord revealed that wonderful truth of Divine love when He declared: “God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” John 3:16. His preceding words tell how this was to be accomplished: “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:14,15.

We are all familiar with the experiences of Israel during the forty years of wanderings in the wilderness after they left Egypt. Very often their’s was quite a difficult situation and we read in Num. 21:5-9: “the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread (the manna). And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died. Therefore the people came to Moses and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee; pray unto the Lord, that He take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole, and it shall come to pass, that everyone that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.”

What an amazing story! It was as if a look at that serpent of brass (or copper) in itself contained some kind of anti-venene, to counter the venom of those serpents; these it seems were Egyptian cobras, very deadly snakes. It was just a look at that serpent on the pole which was sufficient for the person to recover and feel no ill-effects. In itself, this was a miracle, but again consider how it happened. A man or a woman was suddenly bitten by a snake; unless they believed Moses’ words, they would just lie down and die. But on the other hand, whoever believed Moses and the instructions of the Lord, lifted their heads in faith and looked to that snake on the pole — these did not suffer any ill-effects and recovered.

And so our Lord compared Himself to that brazen serpent, saying: “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up.” With the brazen serpent, it was a Divine ordinance, God ruled it that way. And so it is with our Lord — if we have faith enough, we look to be the Lord. We look to Him for forgiveness of our sins, for that covering robe of His righteousness. By virtue of His blood shed on Calvary for us, He is our wisdom, He is our justification, for we know that it is only through acceptance of our Lord as our personal Saviour that we have a right to life. So we look to Jesus in all the affairs of our lives, for encouragement, for strength, for everything. For us, He has become our “all in all.”

It is the Divine ordinance that only through faith in Christ as our Saviour can we have life. Similarly, those Jewish people of old, those Israelites, had to lift up their heads and look toward that pole where the serpent of brass was glistening in the sun and that alone saved their lives. Speaking of God’s provision for us, the apostle John writes: “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” 1 John 4:9,10.

The Christmas season is the generally accepted time of our Saviour’s coming into the world as the Babe of Bethlehem. He came as a little child, but with what rejoicing! The shepherds there in the fields were told to go and see Him and they went and they saw Him, just a new-born child but how they rejoiced. The angels too rejoiced and praised God. Only a small beginning but what a wonderful thing. Thirty years later, when our Lord at His baptism became the Messiah in His full authority and began His ministry, it reached out first to those that heard and believed in Him. That was the time when Divine mercy and Divine forgiveness was turned to the people. Before that, there was no way out, the Jews were under the Law of Moses but were in bondage to the law, because none could keep it perfectly; even if 99 per cent of it were kept, failure in one point resulted in the law condemning that one to death.

So the apostle John writes: “The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” John 1:17. That is the grace extended to and accepted by us, when we first looked towards our Lord. He is our Saviour, in

due time we accepted Him and we became reconciled to God, who is now able to overlook all our imperfections because He looks to us through the merit of the sacrifice of Jesus. Nothing of this is of ourselves, though we are trying to do our best, are trying to look to our Lord and grow into His likeness, and surely enough are being transformed by the Spirit of God dwelling within us. But still we are imperfect and it is only through the merit of Christ's sacrifice on Calvary that we are acceptable to God and have right to life.

The same apostle puts the situation simply and positively "He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." 1 John 5:12. In other words, the person who does not accept Jesus is still under condemnation. The apostle Paul writing to the Corinthian brethren points to the Divine grace revealed to us as part of His plan of salvation. "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation." 2 Cor. 5:18. This ministry is first for the believers of this gospel age; we are reconciled to God by faith in our Lord and in His great sacrifice.

The ministry of reconciliation has only a small beginning however in this gospel age; during the millennium when the kingdom of God is established, uncounted billions of people will come back from the grave and will be restored. To them too will that gospel be preached — that ministry of reconciliation will reach them too and they will have the possibility of being saved and living forever. But it will still need to be by faith, for that is what God desires. For as the apostle writes under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit: "without faith it is impossible to please Him; for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." Heb. 11:6.

In the same chapter, the apostle goes on to describe, as it were, a gallery of the great victors of faith, beginning with the first martyr, Abel, then going on to Enoch, Noah, and so on. Finally he says that time would fail him to tell of everyone who pleased God, not through keeping of the Mosaic law but by faith. Then to conclude the chapter he writes: "these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise, God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." Heb. 11:32,39,40.

Then as if to show supreme faith and the pinnacle of faithfulness and loyalty, he exhorts us to be "looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin." Heb. 12:2,3. What an encouragement we have — to look to our Lord, to look to Him for everything. We look to Him for wisdom, for our salvation, for redemption and for the great reward He promised when he said: "I go to prepare a place for you and... I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." John 14:2,3. Where the Master is, there will be His servants!

So let us look unto Jesus, our confidence and trust in Him will bring great reward in our own lives here and now and in the work of restoration of all mankind in the age to come. Especially in these insecure times, when there is no such thing as a lasting value or a secure tenure, our Lord is the best and indeed only security. He is our Leader, He is our elder Brother and we can depend on Him for all things. (SS:1991)

Justification, Sanctification, Redemption

These are the three steps by which we are to reach "the prize of our high calling"—glory, honor and immortality. Not one of these steps can be omitted by those who win the great prize, nor can they be taken in any way but their order as directed in the Scriptures.

Justification

Justification comes first as a necessity, because, all the human race being sinners, as such God could not either sanctify or glorify them; therefore, by some means, they must be "made free from sin" (brought to a condition of sin-less-ness) in order that they might "have their fruit unto holiness" (sanctification), and eventually receive "the end thereof—eternal life" (redemption). Rom. 6:22.

As sinners, men "are not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can, they be." (Rom. 8: 7). We are "made free from sin" by faith; that is, we are told of God that a ransom has been given for our sin, and that if we by faith accept the ransom, He no longer regards or treats us as sinners, but as perfect and sinless beings. This cleansing from sin is a complete work. You are justified — reckoned of God just and perfect, but it cannot be seen with the natural eye. You cannot realise that physically you are any more perfect than before you believed yourself justified. It is entirely by the eye of faith that you know yourself now as a being, justified freely from all things. God's word declares it and you believe Him.

We need not fear that our justification is incomplete, for Jehovah Himself is the justifier, as we read, God is "just

and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (Rom. 3: 26); and again, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? it is God that justifieth.”

Upon what grounds does God reckon human sinners as justified or righteous persons? Because the ransom for our sins has been paid by Jesus, who “Himself bare our sins in His own body on the tree.” (1 Pet. 2:24). For “Christ suffered, the just for the unjust (sinners), that He might bring us to God” (1 Pet. 3:18) as justified beings. Jesus was treated as a sinner on our behalf, and we are now treated as just persons on His behalf. As we read again, “Ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus.” (1 Cor. 6:11). And again, “Being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.” (Rom. 5:9). But *only believers are justified* during this Gospel age. They who do not believe that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He rose again the third day for our justification (1 Cor. 15: 14; Rom. 4: 25), are not justified: “Ye are yet in your sins.” So we read, God, “is the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” Again, “All that believe are justified from all things” (Acts 13:39), and “A man is justified by faith.” (Gal. 2: 16 and 3:24).

When we believe the “good news” of our justification, it causes us joy and peace to realise that we may now come to God; and we no longer dread but now love God, because we see His goodness and love, for “herein is the love of God manifested.” (1 John 4:9).

We are thus brought into fellowship with God as justified human beings—“Being justified by faith, we have peace with God.” (Rom. 5:1). Few, very few, lay hold upon justification fully; few believe God that they “are justified from all things” and are in God’s sight clothed in the spotlessness of Jesus, in whom was no sin; consequently very few have the joy and peace which spring from believing. And it is no uncommon thing to hear, in church meetings of all denominations, men and women tell God that they know themselves to be “miserable sinners.” No wonder they agonize and daily ask the forgiveness of those sins which God’s word declares *are* forgiven. 2 Pet. 1:9. They know not that they partake of the justification by believing. If they would only believe God, they would have the realization of forgiveness, and consequently joy and peace. “For without faith it is impossible to please God.” Beyond this point of rejoicing in a consciousness of forgiveness of sins, and acceptableness in God’s sight, few Christians go.

Did you ever think why God has made known to us our justification now, but keeps it hidden from the great mass of the race until the millennial age, though the ransom price is eventually to release all mankind from sin and its penalty, and bring them to the same condition of acceptance—sinlessness—perfection which we now enjoy by faith! It is because God has a plan which he is working out according to the counsel of His own will, and a part of that plan is that He will select from among mankind a number who will eventually be transferred from the earthly conditions and human nature to spiritual conditions and the “divine nature” to be “heirs of God, joint heirs with Jesus Christ our Lord.”

God’s object in the development of this “little flock” is two-fold: first, He will make them everlasting monuments of His goodness, to be known and read of angels and men. As Paul expresses it (Eph. 2:7), God’s plan in the development of the Gospel church of overcomers, is, “that in the ages to come, He might show the exceeding riches of His grace, in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.” The second part of God’s plan, in which we are directly associated, is that he purposes to use us during the next Millennial—age as kings (rulers) and priests (teachers), when we shall reign with Christ a thousand years. (Rev. 5: 10, 20:6). Thus shall the “seed,” of which Jesus is the Head, bless all the families of the earth. (Gal. 3:29).

No sinners are called to have part in this “high calling, which is of God in Christ Jesus.” True, Jesus called “sinners to repentance”—so does the word of God, and all His children seek to bring men to repentance and faith in Christ and consequent justification. But only the justified ones are called to be “kings and priests unto God, and to reign on the earth. ‘ It is worse than useless to present the grand prize for which we run to the attention of sinners—the unjustified. For the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned—they are foolishness unto him. Therefore, “cast not your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.”

This being true, that none are called to the high calling except the justified ones, the fact that you know of your justification may be the proof to you that you are one of those whom God has “called” to spiritual life and joint-heirship with Jesus. What a blessed privilege to be called with such a high calling. Now do you realise that you are called to be a member of the bride of Christ? Then remember who called you—God; and that “Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it.” (1 Thess. 5: 24). Our Father mocks none with a call which they cannot attain to. His grace is sufficient for us.

All who are called may take the second step—

Sanctification

To sanctify is to set apart or separate to a special purpose or use. God's will is that all justified ones should be sanctified or set apart to His service as we read: "This is the will of God even your (believers) sanctification." (1 Thes. 4:3). There are two parts to sanctification—first ours, secondly God's part. As we have seen, God provides for our justification as men and then calls us to set apart-sanctify-or consecrate to him, that justified humanity. When we thus consecrate or give up our will, our time, talent, life and all we have and are to God, and ask Him to take our little all and use it as seemeth to Him good, and agree to let the will of God dwell in us richly—when we have done this we have done all that we can do; and here God, who accepts of every such sacrifice, begins His part of the sanctification work. He begins to use this will resigned to His care and "to work in you both to will and to do" in harmony with His will. From that moment it is no longer you (the human) but "Christ in you." Even the earthly (human) body, under the new controlling will (God's) is used in God's service and is thereby made holy.

From this moment when we give—consecrate—ourselves, we are reckoned dead, as human beings; for the human will should be buried from that moment forward; and when the will of God—the mind of Christ—the Holy Spirit takes possession of us so that it becomes our will and our mind, we are called "new creatures"—we are thus begotten to newness of life. This new creature is only an embryo being. It is not complete; but it grows and develops as "we all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Cor. 3:18.) Thus as new spiritual creatures we grow in His likeness during the time we abide in this earthly condition. As the spiritual nature grows stronger the human nature grows weaker and is the easier to keep dead, for I must not only give up my will to God, but keep it in a surrendered condition, "keep my body under"—under God's will.

As the new spiritual nature grows, it longs for its perfection when it will no longer be trammelled and fettered by human conditions, but be "like unto Christ's glorious body." This is promised us—we have been begotten, and by and by shall be born of the Spirit—spiritual bodies, for "that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit," just as truly as "that which was born of the flesh was flesh." Our begetting we have and our spiritual life is begun. It is to be completed, perfected, when this corruptible and mortal condition shall give place to the incorruptible, immortal conditions of the spiritual body. This is at the moment of resurrection to those who sleep in Jesus—raised spiritual bodies; and it will be at the moment of change to the living (from the fleshly body to their own spiritual bodies—theirs as new creatures.) Thus, "we which are alive and remain shall be changed in a moment." 1 Cor. 15:52.

This change of residence or condition, from the earthly body to the spiritual body is the third step of our development, viz:

Redemption

This redemption from the present earthly conditions finishes and completes our salvation and the glory and power will follow.

Toward this, the end of the race, we are looking with longing eyes, "Ourselves, that have the first fruits (begetting) of the Spirit, even we groan within ourselves waiting for sonship—the redemption of our body" (the body of which Jesus is the Head and all overcomers are members.) Rom. 8:23.

Let us recall to mind the steps: First, justification of the human nature; second, consecration or sacrifice of that human nature to God, its consequent death and the beginning of our existence as a spiritual new creature in the human body during the present life; third, the completion of our new, divine nature by the power of God, when we will be made like unto Christ's glorious body—who is the express image of the Father's person. What a glorious, high calling it is to which we are called!

How can each one of us make this glorious calling sure? Surely by continuing to maintain daily our consecration vows, giving over all things to our Heavenly Father for Him to use as He sees best. For the apostle assures us: "If ye do these things ye shall never fall; for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." 2 Peter 1:10,11. God will assuredly keep His part of the agreement for "He is faithful who promised." Heb. 10:23.

*"All for Jesus! All for Jesus!
All my being's ransomed powers;
All my thoughts and words and doings,
All my days and all my hours."*

Provoking To Love

“Let us consider one another, to provoke unto love, and to good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more as ye see the day drawing on.” — Heb. 10: 24-25.

“The word “provoke” signifies to arouse or I incite, or stimulate to activity. It is generally used in an evil sense, but is applicable, as in our text, to describe an incitement to good works, good thoughts, etc. The tendency of fallen human nature is toward things that are mean and selfish, and the natural bent is to incite or provoke or encourage similarly mean and unworthy thoughts, actions and words in others, and it has become a proverb that “Evil communications corrupt good manners.” Everyone of experience knows this general tendency of evil to beget evil, and to corrupt and to pollute what is nobler and purer than itself; hence we have the Scriptural pronouncement, “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.” Those who neglect this counsel need not be surprised if they are continually falling into temptation, and if the influence upon their own lives results in a measure at least of ungodliness and sin, and disfellowship from those things which are noble and true and pure.

But the “New Creature in Christ Jesus” is one in whom the transforming influences of the Lord’s Spirit have already begun — one who has a new heart, a new will, a new disposition. With such “old things have passed away and all things have become new,” they have been begotten again, i.e., re-begotten, to new hopes, new wishes, new ideas of propriety. Instead of the earthly wisdom and way, with its “bitter envying and strife,” which “descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish,” they have now the wisdom that is from above, and a heart (a disposition) to appreciate and pursue its counsels, which are, first purity, then peaceableness, gentleness, meekness, mercy, good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the disposition of this class, in proportion to their attainment of this heavenly wisdom and new nature, will be to “provoke” or incite or encourage one another, and all with whom they come in contact, to similar goodness of thought and word and act, in harmony with the heavenly wisdom which is guiding their own course.

The New Nature

This is laid down in the Scriptures as an unvarying rule; “A bitter fountain cannot send forth sweet water, and a good fountain cannot send forth brackish water.” A thistle cannot bear grapes, and a grape-vine cannot bear thistles. It is the Master Himself who says: “By their fruits ye shall know them.” If, therefore, we desire to prove ourselves, and to judge respecting our progress in mortifying (putting to death) the old nature, and our growth in the new nature, we will judge ourselves by this standard, answering to ourselves the question, Is my own spirit (disposition) one which delights in sin in its various forms (not necessarily in its grosser forms of murder, theft, etc., but in its more refined forms, falsity, envy, strife, vainglory, slander, evil-speaking, evil surmises, etc.), or is my delight increasingly in righteousness, truth, goodness, gentleness, meekness, patience, love? If the former, we are yet, either wholly or partially, in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity, and have need to go at once to the Great Physician, and to submit ourselves to His radical treatment — the cutting off of sin, the mortifying of such fleshly desires, etc. If the latter be our condition of heart, we have cause for rejoicing, yet no cause for pride or boastfulness; for we can say no more than that we only have done our duty, having merely learned, and that imperfectly, the lessons set before us by our great Teacher.

The Apostle is addressing the Church, the consecrated New Creatures in Christ Jesus. This is shown in the text, for he classes himself with these, using the word “us”; it is also shown by the context. He calls the attention of the consecrated to the influence which goes out from each to each, and the consequent importance that the influence shall always be stimulating, or provocative of that which is good. No doubt the Apostle found in his day, as we find now, that many who are consecrated at heart fail to see clearly how this consecration should associate itself with and mark itself upon our every act and word.

Consider One Another

We are not to be reckless of each other’s interests. In our contact with each other, whether a personal contact or a contact by mail, we are to “consider one another”. We are to consider what would be helps, and what would be hindrances, what would be encouragements, and what would be stumbling blocks; and we are to do all in our power to assist one another to run with patience the race for the heavenly prize. If we are truly consecrated to the Lord, we can do nothing “against the truth, but (every effort must be) for the truth” (2. Cor. 13: 8). What a burning and shining light every Christian would be if their every act were considered and shaped for the benefit of those with whom they come in contact! What a blessing it would be in the home! What a blessing it would be in the church! This loving consideration is what the Apostle is urging upon us: Consider one another to provoke (incite, encourage), to love and to good works.” Avoid every word and every act, so far as possible, that might incite to

hatred, envy, strife, bitterness (and bad works, corresponding to these feelings), all of which are “of the flesh and of the devil.”

The Apostle links this advice with the exhortation to forget not the assembling of ourselves together, as the Lord’s people. None of us is so strong in the new nature that we can disregard the fellowship of kindred minds. But even if we did feel sufficiently strong for ourselves, the spirit of love in us should so control that we would delight to meet with “the brethren” for their sakes. We are more or less like coals of fire, which, if separated, will tend to cool rapidly, but which, if brought together, will tend to increase in fervency the entire mass. Our Lord has encouraged His people to seek each other’s fellowship for companionship in the study of His word, and in prayer. He indeed has pronounced special blessings upon the meeting together of His people even if they be only two or three.

Our Privilege

The “provoking” of one another to love and good works, the extending of true Christian fellowship and the exhortation and encouragement of each other in the Narrow Way are very real and precious privileges of all God’s people. They are ministries which all are invited to take up, as they have talent and opportunity, remembering the apostle’s words:

“God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shown toward His name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.” (Heb. 6:10)

Timothy, A Good Minister Of Jesus Christ

“Very little can be known of Timothy outside of the New Testament records. His birthplace was that of either Derbe or Lystra, though it is not certainly known which. From the account given in Acts 16:1 it is stated that the Apostle Paul found him in those places and it appears that he had not been acquainted with Timothy before. His mother Eunice was a Jewess and evidently a woman of unusual piety as was also Timothy’s grandmother, Lois. Though his father was a Greek, he was evidently not unfriendly to the Jewish religion, for Timothy had been carefully instructed in the Scriptures.

It is claimed that it was about A.D. 51 or 52 when the Apostle Paul came to Derbe and Lystra and became acquainted with Timothy; and though there is no way of ascertaining the exact age of Timothy at that time, it is reasonably presumed that he was then a youth. (1 Tim. 4:12.) From what is said concerning him he was undoubtedly a young man of unusual hope and promise and there were some special indications that he would rise to a place of influence and power as a religious man and would fill an important position in the ministry of the Gospel. - 1 Tim. 1:18.

The records indicate that Timothy was already a disciple, a Christian convert when the Apostle Paul first met him, but the means by which he became converted are not known. His mother too had been converted to the Christian faith before (Acts 16:1), so that they seemed well known to the Christians of the neighboring towns of Lystra and Iconium. It was some six or seven years before Paul met with Timothy that he and Barnabas had preached the Gospel in Iconium, Derbe, and Lystra and it is not improbable that Timothy had been converted in the meantime.

Introduction To The Ministry

Barnes in a very interesting way observes several things that “appear to have combined to induce the Apostle to introduce him [Timothy] into the ministry and to make him a travelling companion. His youth; his acquaintance with the Holy Scriptures; the ‘prophecies which went before on him,’ his talents; his general reputation in the church; and, it would seem also, his amiableness of manners, fitting him to be an agreeable companion, attracted the attention of the Apostle, and led him to desire that he might be a fellow-laborer with him. To satisfy the prejudices of the Jews, and to prevent any possible objection which might be made against his qualifications for the ministerial office, Paul circumcised him (Acts 16:3), and he was ordained to the office of the ministry by ‘the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.’ (1 Tim. 4:14.) *When* this ordination occurred is not known, but it is most probable that it was before he went on his travels with Paul, as it is known that Paul was present on the occasion, and took a leading part in the transaction. - 2 Tim 1:6.”

Some account of Timothy’s travels and collaboration with Paul are given in Acts 16 to 18. It is clear from this and references in Paul’s epistles that Timothy enjoyed the apostle’s full trust and affection. Of Timothy’s later life, there is no dependable evidence. The belief that he was “bishop” of Ephesus rests mainly on the subscription to 2 Timothy—not any real authority.

“Timothy was long the companion and the friend of the Apostle Paul, and is often mentioned by him with affectionate interest. Indeed there seems to have been no one of his fellow-laborers to whom he was so warmly attached. See 1 Tim. 1:2,18, 2 Tim. 1:2, 2:1, 1 Cor. 4:17, where he calls him ‘his own son,’ and ‘his beloved son’; 2 Tim. 1:4 where he expresses his earnest desire to see him, and makes a reference to the tears which Timothy shed at parting from him; 1 Cor. 16:10, 11, where he bespeaks for him a kind reception among the Corinthians; 1 Cor. 16:10, Rom. 16:21, 1 Thess. 3:2, and especially Phil. 2:19, 20, where he speaks of his fidelity, of his usefulness to him in his labors, and of the interest which he took in the churches which the Apostle had established.” (Barnes).

Advice For All Christians

Paul’s letters to Timothy are amongst the most valuable of the New Testament writings. Indeed they contain sound advice to all Christians, especially to such as are young in the truth, and particularly if they have consecrated their lives to the Lord and His service, and are seeking to be useful according to their consecration as His ministers or servants—whether in a public or in a private service, according to their talents and opportunities.

Paul introduces himself not by calling attention to his personal qualities as a logician, nor by boasting of any service which he had performed as the Lord’s servant and minister of the Truth; but, properly, by reminding Timothy of his apostleship, specially commissioned by the Lord to introduce His Gospel, and specially prepared for the work by being made a witness of the Lord’s resurrection, having been granted a glimpse of His glorious person on his way to Damascus and commissioned to declare the conditions for the fulfilment to men of God’s promise of life, provided in Christ Jesus.

Although the Apostle had no natural children of his own, his tender address to Timothy as his “dearly beloved son,” and his invocation upon him of a Divine blessing, shows that he lacked none of those fine, noble and endearing sentiments, which belong to a true parent. Indeed, the very fact that he had no natural children seems to have broadened the Apostle’s sentiments to such an extent that figuratively he took into his affections, as his own children, all who accepted the Gospel. We remember that he frequently used this figure of speech, “Although ye have many teachers, ye have not many fathers in the Gospel”—“I have begotten you in my bonds.” On another occasion he represents his efforts for a development of a fully consecrated Christian life amongst the believers under the figure of a mother travailing for her children. This being true of the Apostle’s general sentiment toward the household of faith, it would be much more true in the case of Timothy who had so nobly and truly filled the part of a son to him.

We note the Apostle’s care over this younger brother in the Truth, in whom he sees such great promise of present and future service. He realizes, perhaps better than Timothy does, the snares of the Adversary, by which one placed in so prominent a position is likely to be assailed. Would he become heady and high minded?—Would he lose his faith in the cross of Christ?—Would he fall into the snare of some of the philosophies, falsely so-called?—Would he become vainly puffed up by a fleshly mind, and get to feeling himself to be a “somebody?”—Or, would he, on the contrary, be a faithful soldier of the cross, meek, humble, gentle toward all, an example both in faith and practice to those with whom he came in contact?

And withal, would he hold fast to the Scriptures and be apt to teach others to look to this Divine source of information? He remembered that heretofore Timothy had been so close to himself in the work that he had been measurably shielded from many trials to which he would now be exposed; and yet, no doubt he realized that, if Timothy would be prepared to take the work of a general minister, which Paul the prisoner and growing old must shortly lay aside, it was time that he was learning how to stand, complete in the strength which God supplies through His Word, without leaning so particularly, as heretofore, upon any earthly prop.

To be Continued.



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Hope

(Convention Address)

“And now abideth Faith, Hope, Love, these three, but the greatest of these is Love.” 1. Cor. 13:13.

The apostle in these words highlights the supremacy of love, but it is also clear from them that faith and hope are also great qualities. So how would we define the second of these —Hope? Dictionaries and other sources are in general agreement on the meaning of hope, for instance:

- (a) Strong — anticipation, usually with pleasure.
- (b) Vine — favourable and confident expectation.
- (c) Reader’s Digest (in a Note) — enjoyment of the future in advance.

A reporter in a daily paper, in a search for the meaning of hope, referred to it as an “eternal generator” — the hope of attaining something drives men and women to the extreme of endurance to attain the goal desired. This accords with what the apostle Paul states in Phil. 3: 8-11. “I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.... that I may know Him (Jesus), and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death, if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.” If by ANY means I might ATTAIN unto the resurrection — this was indeed Paul’s great hope.

A Lively Hope

The apostle Peter describes the Christian’s hope as a lively or living hope. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.” 1 Pet. 1:3,4.

True faith and living hope must be based on the sure promises of the word of God. This contrasts with the empty hope of many. Some hope that they may win a lottery, believing that wealth will bring them happiness. With very many, their hope is never realised, while some, After they have perhaps gained some wealth, find that it can only provide temporary realisation of their hope and often merely creates a desire for more.

The hope set out in the Scriptures for the Lord’s people, however, is based on that which we can be absolutely sure will be fully realised, provided only that we remain faithful to our Lord and do not let that hope become dimmed, for “He is faithful who promised”. Heb. 10:23.

We learn from Heb. 11:1 that faith is the substance or basis of things hoped for. The greater our faith, the greater will the hope shine out before us. This is well brought out in Rom. 5: 1-5. “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” (vv 1,2) These two verses show the progression of the Christian from the time he or she is drawn by the Father to have faith in Jesus. Faith-justification means we have peace with God, then we have access into His grace or favour, in which we stand. This favoured position of consecration, this “fa-

your upon favour” (John 1:16) we have received, leads to our rejoicing in the great hope of the glory of God.

The following three verses (vv 3-5) show how our hope increases. The Amplified Version brings out well the thought. “Moreover, let us be full of joy now! Let us exult and triumph in our troubles and rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that pressure and affliction and hardship produce unswerving endurance; and endurance (fortitude) develops maturity of character — that is, approved faith and tried integrity; and character (of this sort) produces (the habit of) joyful and confident hope of eternal salvation. Such hope never disappoints or eludes or shames us, for God’s love has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given unto us”.

Patience of Hope

To wait patiently for something indicates that we are hoping for it. An example of this is brought out in 1 Thes. 1: 3, where Paul writes — “Remembering without ceasing your work of faith and labour of love and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God, our Father.” The church at Thessalonica was a persecuted church and the apostle commends them for their faith and love and hope. Patience under persecution had only sharpened their faith and hope in the promises that were to be fulfilled in Jesus.

There are other scriptures which tell of the importance of patient, cheerful endurance in hope, such as Heb. 10: 3 5-3 7. “Cast not away therefore your confidence which has great recompense of reward. For you have need of patience, that after you have done the will of God, you might receive the promise. For yet a little while and He that shall come will come and will not tarry.” This clearly implies that after one makes a vow to do the will of God, there is a testing time before that one realises his or her hope.

Luke 8: 5-8 recounts the parable of the sower. Jesus speaks of the seed of truth falling on four different kinds of soil — by the wayside, upon rocks, among thorns and upon good ground. He went on, on this occasion, to tell the meaning of the parable in Verses 11-15. “Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. Those by the wayside are they that hear, then cometh the devil and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. They on the rocks are they who when they hear, receive the word with joy, and these have no root, who for a while believe and in time of temptation fall away. They which fell among thorns are they, which when they have heard, go forth and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life and bring no fruit to perfection.—But they on the good ground are they, which, in an honest and good heart having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.”

This parable describes the various ways in which Christians may be turned away from the realisation of their hope. Only they who bring forth fruit with patience will realise their hope. The first three classes described in the parable are those who make a start along the narrow way but then allow hindrances to prevent them from fulfilling their consecration.

Various hindrances can indeed arise to prevent one from carrying out his or her commitment to the Lord, probably more so than ever before. The rush and tear of life that surround us today can allow weeds to grow unchecked and to choke the growth of the Christian. The apostle Paul admonishes — “See that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise; redeeming the time because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be ye filled with the Spirit.” Eph. 5: 15.

Victory for Christians can be gained only if they continue faithful with hope undimmed. In Matt. 24: 13, Jesus told His disciples — “He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved.” Heb. 6: 10,11 tells us further — “For God is not unrighteous to forget your labour of love which you have showed toward His name in that you have ministered to the saints and do minister. And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end.”

Assurance of Hope

Note here the reference to the full assurance of hope. Later in the passage the apostle links this up with the hope set before us. “That you be not slothful but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” Here again the point is made that faith and patience are needed to ensure the hope is realised. “For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no greater, He swore by Himself, saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And so after he had patiently endured, he obtained

the promise.” Heb. 6: 12-15.

The apostle then brings the lesson home to the Lord’s people of this age. “For men verily swear by the greater and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us, which hope we have as an anchor to the soul, both sure and steadfast and which entereth into that within the vail, whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made a high priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec.” Heb. 6: 16-20.

Hope is here likened to an anchor. A ship in a storm drops its anchor to hold it from drifting, possibly on to dangerous rocks. Most importantly, the anchor needs a strong line or cable to hold the ship. So in the picture, the anchor represents our hope the cable represents our faith. If we lose faith and let go of our hope, it will be like the ship breaking loose from its anchor, to drift possibly into grave danger and to be damaged or lost.

Hope — An Anchor

So our hope is the anchor to our spiritual life. If our love for our Lord is strong and our faith remains firm, our hope will hold fast “within the vail”, that is to say, to those precious things promised to us beyond this life. There Jesus has already entered, as our forerunner, a high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. The apostle John enlarges on this — “Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the children of God ...beloved, now are we the children of God and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone that hath this hope purifieth himself as He is pure.” 1 John 3: 1-3.

Thus we can understand what this great hope has done for us. Above all, it has given direction to our lives and a confident expectation for the future. It is a force operating in our minds and lives to urge us onward to the ultimate goal, that of being fitted for usefulness to our Heavenly Father and our Lord Jesus, in a small way now but more so in the age to come. But beyond the hope of the church of this gospel age, we know and rejoice that there is hope for all mankind. This in God’s due time will include the blessing of all who will be willing to accept the conditions of salvation in the new age.

One reason why the truth of the plan of God means so much to us is that we have learned that His love embraces not only a hope for His people of this age but a hope for all the families of the earth in God’s due time. Such thoughts are old but ever new and have been an anchor to the hope of the church all down the age. The gospel age church has assuredly a favourable and confident hope for the future, which in anticipation it can already enjoy in some measure.

Such hope can indeed be said to be an “eternal generator” urging those who possess it to the extreme of endurance to attain the goal set before them. Paul said of our Lord that “for the joy set before Him, He endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” Heb. 12: 2. So too may our hope sustain us day by day, as we seek to run with patience the race set before us. (JBH: 1991)

Parting of the Red Sea

(News Item)

Two expert oceanographers have developed 1 what they say is a plausible explanation for the parting of the waters which enabled the Israelites under Moses to escape from the Egyptians. They have calculated that strong winds blowing along the narrow, shallow Gulf of Suez, a northern extension of the Red Sea and the likely site of the crossing, could account for the phenomenon.

Their report adds: “whether this theory explains the crossing or not, (we) believe it should not affect the religious aspects of the Exodus.... Some may even find our proposed mechanism to be a supportive argument for the original Biblical description of this event.” (*From the New York Times, published in The Age, Melbourne*)

NOTE: The Bible Study Monthly (Mar/Apr 1992) carries a review of a book — “Look for the Ancient Paths” 11 Beresford King-Smith. (92 pages, 16 maps, 16 illustrations.) This presents the results of an investigation of the

route of the Exodus based on the premise that the events as related are historically true and the reviewer considers that overall it should be useful to students of the period.

It is available direct from Bethany Enterprises, Moorwood Lane, Nuneaton, Warks CV10 OQH, England at £UK.4.95, incl. postage, or through the Institute at \$A 11.00.

PEOPLES PAPER
AND HERALD OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM

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

The Whole Armour

(Convention Address)

In nearly all ancient civilisations, armour was used for the protection of fighting men. It was usually made of metal, sometimes of leather. Websters Dictionary defines Armour as protective covering for the body in battle. The word "Armour" appears 24 times in the Bible, and Strong's Concordance defines the Greek word as full armour or whole armour, or as one hymn puts it — the "panoply" of God.

In Eph 6: 10 & 11 we read "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the Adversary". Note that the apostle is very specific that we need the whole armour because the conflict will be with the prince of darkness himself, and that God is the supplier of this armour. The apostle then presents us with a sequence of 7 individual pieces of the soldier's armour, that when put on together form the whole armour of God.

What is to be protected by the armour? Paul writes in (2 Cor. 5: 17), "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." The Christian is a new creature in the sense that he, as an individual, has a new mental outlook on life. He is under the influence of the Holy Spirit of Truth.

The Christian through these influences, and a willingness of mind, has the viewpoint of Christ, who said "Not my will, but Thine, be done." (Luke 22: 42). As Christ looked upon life from the standpoint of God's plan as revealed in His Holy Word, so does the Christian. Therefore, the armour of God is for the protection of his mental state, the new mind, the viewpoint of Christ, which the Christian has adopted as his own. Let us examine each piece of armour, and as we do so, we shall find that the use for each piece has a purpose and a protective power.

We have to go back some 2000 years and visualise what a soldier looked like in the ancient world when he went out to battle. i.e. a Roman Soldier. The FIRST piece of armour is the girdle of Truth (verse 14). In olden times, a girdle was used to bind up the garments while work was performed. Therefore a girdle could be a fitting symbol of work or service. The girdle of truth could signify that the Christian is a servant of the Truth. We find this clearly taught in the Bible — that a Christian is an ambassador for Christ holding forth the word of reconciliation. (2 Cor 5: 18-20 Phil 2: 16).

How is the girdle of truth a protecting power? The piece of armour called the girdle of Truth protects the mind against all teachings or tendencies which draw the Christian away from being a servant of the Truth. The girdle of Truth, therefore, is really the definite teaching of the word of God. If the Christian understands this teaching, and brings his heart into harmony with the spirit and intent of it, he has set up in his mind a barrier to all hostile or intruding teachings, Thus the Christian is protected against the world and the Adversary.

The SECOND piece of armour is stated as "the breastplate of righteousness" (v 14). The fact that it is spoken of as a "breastplate" covering the vital organs of the body (including the heart) suggests that it is extremely important. There are two very prominent teachings in the Bible covering the thought of righteousness.

The first one relates to the righteousness that is in the perfect human sacrifice, the man Christ Jesus. In Heb 7:26 we read he was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." He gave himself a ransom sacrifice for Adam and his race. We, being sinners, can approach God only through faith in the perfect sacrifice of Jesus. We recognise that only as we are covered by the merit of our Lord Jesus, do we have a standing in God's presence. Christ is spoken of as our Advocate in 1 John 2: 1, and an advocate is one who "stands beside" as an attorney pleading one's cause. This is an important teaching, and protects us from all ideas which would provoke in us a

feeling of actual personal perfection. “The breastplate of righteousness” accomplishes this proper state of mind, and keeps us humble and thankful.

The second prominent teaching, covering the thought of righteousness, is the one that teaches us that we must be righteous, just, honest in thought and motive. The Christian is to “love righteousness and hate iniquity,” (Heb 1: 9) even as our Lord did. This teaching will protect one when temptations present themselves to the mind. Many temptations may prompt us to be a little dishonest or unjust for selfish reasons. If one has on the “breastplate of righteousness”, he will resist these temptations and thus be protected from them.

The THIRD piece of armour is for the feet — “And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.” (v. 15) The word preparation is translated from a Greek word, the root of which is to prepare, make ready. Therefore the meaning would be that this piece of armour prepares one to walk in the Narrow Christian Way. The explanation is beautiful and simple. The gospel of peace is really the good news of the Kingdom of God. It is good news to know that a literal kingdom is to be established here upon earth when God’s will shall be done here upon earth as it is done in heaven (Matt 6:10). Then all wars and troubles and death will cease. In due time those who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake under new conditions, when the Son of God shall be king. (Dan 12:2).

The Christian has been convinced of the truthfulness of this good news. He has accepted it. He has done more — he has responded to the invitation to walk in the footsteps of the Redeemer, which means that he stands for the same ideals and purposes as Jesus did. The Christian lays down his own life as a willing sacrifice in the service of God, which is the service of the Truth and on behalf of the Lord’s people. In connection with all this are certain precious promises of God’s watchcare and affection. The precious promises also include a rich reward at the end of the Christian way, of “glory, honour and immortality.” (Rom 2:7).

The good news of the coming kingdom of God, the invitation to walk in the footsteps of the Redeemer, and the precious promises bring to the Christian a state of mind called the “peace of God” (Phil 4: 7) In the midst of the difficulties of life and the troubles in this world, and even while he walks in the “valley of the shadow of death,” (Psalm 23: 4) the Christian has peace of mind. No wonder the third piece of armour is spoken of as sandals protecting the feet. Without the “peace of God” the Christian would not be prepared to go through such difficulties. God in a very simple way protects the Christian against discouragement, and provides him with joy, peace and hope.

In still another way the Christian is protected by the sandals of the preparation of the gospel of peace. The Christian is taught to use his faculty of readiness to resist the tendencies of the old will to be selfish and self-reliant. He must be a fighter in the good “fight of faith.” (1 Tim 6:12). He must endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. (2 Tim 2:3) However, he must not use his fighting qualities against his fellow man, but only against evil in himself, and in defence of the Truth. Therefore he is taught to be a peacemaker — “blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God” (Math 5: 9).

The Christian is taught to prefer peace to uncontrolled aggression. Thus the Christian is protected against any natural tendencies he might have to argue or fight just for the sake of opposing something. When the Christian understands that the ultimate object of discussion or resistance is to establish peace upon proper grounds, how it helps him to be self-controlled and kind! Even when the Christian finds it his duty to speak sharply he is protected against bitterness and unrighteous anger by the sandals of peace.

The FOURTH piece of armour is the “shield of faith.” (V. 16) “Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.” The words “above all”, suggests that the shield is extremely important. How true! If one does not have the faith, or confident belief in the teachings of the Bible, he is not a Christian, neither can he stand the assaults of the adversary. Faith is increased and strengthened in at least 3 ways:

1. By the knowledge of the attributes of God as revealed in His plan of loving kindness;
2. By a consideration of fulfilled prophecy;
3. By the witness of the Spirit.

In the first way, how it increases our faith to understand that our Creator is loving and kind, even in permitting the reign of evil for a time! How our gratitude goes out to Him when we are assured that eventually this earth will be

made a paradise, man's eternal home, and that the dead will be awakened from the tomb to live forever, if obedient to the laws of righteousness; the wicked only shall be destroyed! How it increases our faith to know that God's special reward to the church — joint heirship with His Son — is an evidence of His infinite wisdom, and generous love.

In the second way, how it increases our faith to understand prophecy and to be able to appreciate the significance of world events! More than 2,500 years ago, Daniel prophesied (Dan 12: 4) that in the time of the end there would be a "running to and fro, and an increase of knowledge, and a time of trouble such as never was upon the earth." And now the Christian can see the actual fulfilment of these events in the modern contraptions enabling man to "run to and fro" in cars, aeroplanes, rockets, etc.; in the increase of man's knowledge; and in the distress of nations, which is indeed the greatest "time of trouble" (Dan 12: 1) the world has ever known.

In the third way, how it increases the Christian's faith to be able to detect in his life the witness of the Spirit! If he can trace in his life the fulfilment of the Spirit, the intention, the purpose of God (as revealed in the New Testament), then he has reason to rejoice and be full of confidence and trust. God has written us a letter, by His Holy Book. A letter is one's mind or purpose expressed in words. If our minds (spirits) witness or show a fulfilment of God's purpose in us, then our spirit witnesses with God's Spirit that we are God's children.

In this turbulent and changing world there is much to challenge faith, unless faith is founded upon something sound and understandable! Increase of knowledge has stimulated the minds of all to think. As a result, religious beliefs have suffered. The Bible has suffered too, because many had the erroneous thought that the Bible encouraged ignorance. In this time when knowledge has increased, the Christian has his portion of knowledge to enable him to exercise a strong faith in a reasonable and proved Bible beyond any doubt.

The FIFTH piece of armour is the "helmet of salvation" (v. 17) As with the other pieces of armour, so with this one, the position gives us a clue as to its function in protecting the Christian. "The "helmet" being worn upon the head suggests a protection in the form of knowledge, intelligence, information. Christians all down through the Gospel age have had knowledge from God's Holy Word. This knowledge has been an explanation of God's plan of salvation, enabling them to grasp His will concerning them.

It has been suggested that in the end of the age, the Christian is provided with a much larger helmet than was provided for God's people in the past. We are living in a very different time. Daniel said that in the time of the end, knowledge would be increased. This is true. The disciple of Christ has need of a larger helmet to enable him to stand in an intellectual world. The increase of knowledge has discredited many former beliefs that were not well founded in Scripture. Just at the right time the Christian has been provided with concordances, Bible dictionaries and numerous translations of the Scriptures.

All of this is of tremendous importance to God's people, in view of the numerous appeals to the mind from all quarters and on every subject. Libraries and second hand book stores give evidence of the time in which we are living. There are thousands of books, each one possessing a power to affect the mind in some way. How bewildered the Christian would be if he were not provided with the helmet of proper knowledge of the Bible, the Word of God. His helmet proves that the Bible is true, shows what God's plan of loving kindness is, refutes arguments against the Bible, explains prophecy, and intercepts the significance of world events. Thus Christian belief is founded upon proper knowledge which cannot be refuted.

The SIXTH piece of armour is the "sword of the spirit, which is the Word of God." (v.17) This is the only offensive piece of the Christian's armour. Like all other weapons, it can be used properly or improperly. The sword of the spirit is not intended to be used to cut and wound others, but is intended to be used in defence of one's own position and for one's upbuilding. Our Lord Jesus gave us an illustration of its use in defence of His position in Matt. 4: 1-10, where we read how in three ways Satan tempted Him.

These temptations were suggestions to our Lord's mind by the Adversary. We know our minds are capable of forming pictures by our imagination. Such was the case with our Lord. He was not literally taken to a pinnacle of the temple, nor was He literally taken to a mountain top. Rather, his mind formed impressions suggested by the Adversary. It is important to observe the use our Lord made of the sword of the spirit in resisting the temptations. Not once did he bitterly accuse or threaten Satan. Instead, he countered the Adversary's argument with the well chosen and properly applied Scripture. In all three temptations He extinguished the Adversary's intent with "It is written", the sword of the spirit. Satan used the sword of the spirit too, in the second temptation; but he misap-

plied it in his attempt to invite our Lord into unrighteousness.

The sword of the spirit is also for the purpose of destroying everything contrary to the knowledge of God, so that every thought may be brought into full obedience to Christ. (2 Cor. 10: 3-5). So we can see the purpose of the sword of the spirit, according to this scripture, is to put aside all teachings and influences that are against the knowledge of God.

The SEVENTH and final piece of armour is described (v.18) as “praying always”. — The verse reads: “praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.” A good soldier of the Lord Jesus must keep in touch with headquarters; this he is privileged to do by coming daily to the throne of grace in prayer. We read in John 15:7 — “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you.”

One of Satan’s chief lines of attack is to cut off our communication with the Lord. In Mark 14:38, our Master warned, “Watch ye and pray lest ye enter into temptation.” By watching and praying always, besides having on the whole armour, we will progress. With all our armour, we need to cultivate and use the privilege of prayer.

It is a very great favour to be allowed to approach the supreme ruler of the universe and we should come therefore in a spirit of deep appreciation, earnestness, humility and reverence. The apostle adds the words “watching thereunto” — this calls for an attitude of mental alertness. We should also take heed as to the things for which we ask and be sure that we seek those things which we are promised and are entitled to ask for.

Our Lord frequently called attention to the fact that we should be persevering in prayer. Perseverance is an essential quality in the sight of God. It includes patience, carefulness and interest. Our praying should be in the spirit, in other words, from the heart. The very isolation of our Lord from all human help drew Him the nearer and more frequently to the Father in prayer and communion. As we grow in this character likeness, we will, like Him, “pray without ceasing”, rejoicing in the Lord and recognising Him as the centre of all our hopes.

When all the armour is properly worn, a state of mind is created, which is quite as important as the armour itself. Our Lord was 40 days and 40 nights in the wilderness, weak and exhausted physically, yet when He came forth He was strong in mind, strengthened by the word and the spirit of God. The Christian too must be moulded around the word and spirit of God; when this is fully grasped, then we know the means by which we are strong in the Lord and the power of His might.

So may each one of us put on and keep on the whole armour of God; by so doing we will be alert to danger signals and fully prepared, “able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.” (AK: 1991).

Out of the Abundance of the Heart

“Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by the words thou shalt be condemned.” (Mat. 12:34, 37).

The words of our Lord indicate that the heart and the mouth are under very special scrutiny, the former representing the individual character, and the latter being an index of the character.

It is in this same view of the matter that these words of wisdom were penned — “Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life. Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee.” (Prov. 4: 23, 24.) The indication is clear that a right condition of the heart is necessary to right words, for “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh,” as experience testifies to every man. It is therefore just that our words should be a criterion of judgment in the Lord’s estimation, as He tells us they are.

Our first concern, then, should be for the heart, that its affections and dispositions may be fully under the control of divine grace, that every principle of truth and righteousness may be enthroned there; that justice, mercy, brotherly kindness, faith, meekness, temperance and love may be firmly fixed as the governing principles of life. If these principles be fixed, established in the heart, then out of the good treasures of the heart, the mouth will speak forth words of truth, soberness, wisdom and grace. Of our Lord Jesus, whose heart was perfect, in whom was no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth, it was said, “Grace is poured into thy lips,” and again, “All bare him

witness and wondered at the gracious words that proceedeth out of his mouth.” (Psa. 45: 2; Luke 4: 22.)

So wise, just, and true were the Lord’s words, that though His enemies were continually seeking to find some fault, it is said, “They could not take hold of his words before the people; and they marvelled at his answers, and held their peace.” (Luke 20:26). And others said, “Never man spake like this man.” (John 7:46.) Thus our Lord left a worthy example to His people, which the Apostle urges all to follow, saying — “Let your speech be always with grace (with manifest love and kindness) seasoned with salt.” (Col. 4:6) And Peter adds, “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God,” — wisely and in accordance with the spirit and mind of the Lord. Again, it is written, “Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips that they speak no guile.” “Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles.” “The words of a wise man’s mouth are gracious words, but the lips of a fool will swallow up himself. The beginning of the words of his mouth is foolishness; and the end of his talk is mischievous madness.” “Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God, for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth; therefore let thy words be few.” (Psa. 34:13; Prov. 21: 23 Eccles. 10:12, 13; 5: 2.)

Job, in the midst of all his afflictions was very careful not to sin with his lips. He knew that his words would be taken by the Lord as an index of his heart, and he was careful to keep both the heart and his words right, saying “What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil (or troubles for disciplining). The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” (Job 2: 10; 1: 21.) There was no spirit of rebellion in a heart out of whose abundance came such words of loving submission, patience and faith under severe testings, and that, too, without a clear vision of the divine wisdom in permitting them.

The Psalmist puts into the mouths of God’s consecrated and tried people these words of firm resolution — “I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue; I will keep my mouth in a bridle, while the wicked is before me.” (Psa. 39:1). How necessary to the stability of Christian character is such a resolution, and the self control which develops under an adherence to it. The world, the flesh and the devil oppose our way; there are fightings within and storms without, and many are the arrows and darts aimed at the righteous, and the safe attitude of the Christian in the face of the opposition of the world is to be silent, and to allow the Lord to work all these trials for our good, for the servant is not above his Lord. As Jesus took the opposition of sinners against Himself with such humble patience, so we too should “go therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach;” as He said, “Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man’s sake.” So the Psalmist suggests, saying — “I was dumb with silence; I held my peace even from good” (or from doing what seemed good in my sight). Again it is written — “He that keepeth his mouth, keepeth his life, but he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction.” (Prov. 13: 3.)

So we see what importance the Lord attaches to our words, for if our words are rebellious, or disloyal, or frivolous, or flippant, or unkind, unthankful, unholy, or impure, the heart is judged accordingly on the principle that “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” Thus, our words in all the varied circumstances of our daily life are bearing testimony before God of the condition of our hearts, and the Psalmist puts this prayer into the lips of all the Lord’s people — “Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips. Permit not my heart to incline after any evil things. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer. My lips shall utter praise, when thou hast taught me thy statutes. My tongue shall speak of thy word; for all thy commandments are righteousness. Let thine hand help me; for I have chosen thy precepts. I have longed for thy salvation (and for the perfection and beauty of holiness), O Lord; and thy law is my delight.” (Psa. 141:3, 4; 19:14; 119:171-174).

In many things we are all faulty. If any one does not err in word he is a perfect man, able to control the whole body. (James 3:2.) But such a man does not exist; we all need to continually plead the merit of our Saviour and Advocate, while we strive daily to perfect holiness in the reverence of the Lord. Therefore, let our words be few; let them be thoughtful and wise, as uttered before God, and not rash, hasty and ill considered. Let our conversation be as becometh the Gospel of Christ. “Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.” (Phil. 4:8.) Thus, out of the good treasure of the heart, we shall be able to speak words of truth and soberness, and so honour and glorify Jesus and our loving Heavenly Father.

I Will Abide With Thee

I will abide, though night is drawing nigh,
Though clouds and darkness now obscure the sky.
I know thy sorrow, see thy falling tear —
Give Me thy hand, for I am very near.

The earthly joys are passing fast away;
Lean thou on Me and I will be thy stay.
My grace is all-sufficient, rich and free.
Have perfect faith—I will abide with thee.

My eyes are watching o'er thee, troubled child,
My arm shall guide thee, though the path be wild.
Midst storms and tempest, to My bosom flee,
Be not afraid—I will abide with thee.
A little while and then it will be light,
Thy faith shall be exchanged for perfect sight;
No fear to vex thee, nothing to molest,
For thou shall be with Me in perfect rest

When friends may fail thee, I will be thy friend,
My love shall last until thy journey's end.
And when heaven's golden gates thine eyes shall see,
I will eternally abide with thee.

(Inspired by the much-loved hymn “Abide with Me”)



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Fellowship One With Another

(Convention Address)

“ But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.” 1 John 1:7.

The first few verses of John’s epistle introduce us to two separate but closely related aspects of the Christian life. In verses 3 and 4, the apostle is explaining the purpose of his letter and indeed of his ministry. “That we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ. And these things we write unto you that your joy may be full.”

The basis of fellowship one with another is that joint fellowship which each one has with the Father and the Son. This basic fellowship or communion is intensely personal and individual, for each must come by faith to God through Christ to know His salvation. Even after each has personally confessed Him and committed his or her life to following the Saviour, there are still the personal experiences of life to be met up with.

We remember Jesus’ kindly words to Peter when he had just been told by Jesus what his lot would be in later life. Peter seeing John said to Jesus—“Lord and what shall this man do?” To this Jesus replied—“If I will that he tarry till I come what is that to thee? Follow thou me.” John 21:21,22. Jesus was not recommending a total lack of concern for the welfare of other followers, but gently teaching Peter the lesson of personal discipleship. For each individual Christian since Peter including ourselves at this end of the age are in constant fellowship with our loving Father and with His dear Son, so that even if we were deprived of all human association with others, we should still not be alone.

But the communion of each one with the Father and the Son should and surely does lead into that fellowship which the apostle John describes in our text. “If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another and the blood of His Son Jesus purifies from every sin.” (N.I.V.) This is certainly one of the greatest treasures and privileges of the Christian way, that fellowship one with another—the fellowship of kindred minds, like to that above. “That they all may be one, as Thou Father art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us.” John 17:21. This was our Master’s prayer and the bonding agent of this unity, this fellowship, is love.

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

What then is behind the thought of the fellowship that is so precious in Christian discipleship? The word so translated is elsewhere given as communion, contribution, communication, while related words are translated partaker, partner, companion. The basic thought in every case is of jointly sharing or jointly participating in some activity, experience or blessing. One commentator has written thus—“Fellowship is a specifically Christian word and denotes that common participation in the grace of God, the salvation of Christ and the indwelling of the Spirit which is the spiritual birthright of all Christian believers. It is their common possession of God which makes them one. Our fellowship with each other arises from and depends on our fellowship with God. This then is John’s objective—through proclamation of the message of life in Jesus Christ to bring each of his hearers and readers into relationship with the Father and hence to each other.”

It is not surprising therefore to find the New Testament writers encouraging believers of all ages to foster and develop the spirit of fellowship. This is best achieved by each one striving by God's grace and by faith to draw daily closer to the heavenly Father. For as we draw nearer to Him and become the more engrossed in His love and power and glory, then the human frailties from which none of us is free will fade and we will see more of God's workmanship and the likeness of our Saviour in each one instead.

Having seen that the basis of mutual fellowship is the personal relationship with God through Christ, we note that the apostle Paul in Eph. 4:46 lists those things which all true believers share and upon which real unity in the Spirit and productive fellowship rest. "There is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in you all." One body of His children, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one baptism, one loving Father—what a heritage is ours!

This oneness is particularly brought to our attention each time we remember our Saviour's death in the Memorial observance. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread." 1 Cor. 10:16,17. These rich verses remind us not only of the common basis of our acceptance with God and the source of our new life in Christ, but also of our privilege of sharing with our Master and with each other in all the experiences and sacrifices of the Christian way, that way which our Saviour has already trodden before us.

Let us consider some of the aspects of this fellowship with one another which should be the gladly accepted and cherished lot of every child of God. In Eph. 4 after referring to the one body, the apostle next mentions the one Spirit and it is surely by that one Spirit that each one is begotten into the family of God. "In whom (Jesus) also after ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." Eph. 1:13. "As many as are lead by the Spirit of God, they are the children of God." Rom. 8:14. Each one has been marked out as a child of God, a member of the one family, and the apostle writing to the Philippians challenges them and us to live out that family relationship.

"If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind." Phil. 2:1,2.

This fellowship in the Spirit should be productive in each one of love for those things that are best in God's sight, that edify and build up. This communion should be developing in us each a greater love for God's word and a delight in the precious truths and promises which it contains.

The privilege of sharing in such riches is beautifully portrayed in Mal. 3:16. "They that feared the Lord spake often one to another and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon His name." The promise follows in verse 17. "And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels." They that feared the Lord spake often one to another. We need not to be told what sort of things they spoke about, but we remember the much later record of the noble souls at Berea, who "received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether these things were so." Acts 17:11. The personal study of God's word is always important, but shared fellowship in its treasures is a rich experience which none should ever neglect. For just such reasons, the apostles and those who followed them set up, under God's leading, local churches—assemblies of believers, as soon as possible, wherever the gospel went. Today we are blessed that we can freely meet to praise God and meditate upon His word.

"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as ye see the day approaching." Heb. 10:25. If these words of the apostle were so important in his day, how much more so now, when all the signs about us speak of the near and fast approach of that day. This assembling is a two-way matter, for each of us has something to give and something to receive from that gathering of ourselves together. In each case, this is of the Lord, who promised—"I am with you always, even to the end of the age," but by God's grace He can use anyone of His people to be a channel of His blessing.

In another lovely picture, the apostle represents the individual members of the church as parts of the one body, dependent on each other, but each under the headship of one, even Jesus Christ. "For by the one Spirit are we all baptised into one body and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member but many

and whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it, or if one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ and members in particular.” 1 Cor. 12:12-27.

In such an intimate relationship, the fellowship of shared experience will be a further bonding agent. The apostle Paul in all his ministry for his Lord was eager and thankful for the fellowship of the brethren far and near, for their prayers, for their material support, for their constant remembrance of him. How precious is this privilege and joy of all God’s people—to bear one another up before the throne of grace, to give the word of encouragement or gratitude, to extend the helping hand in time of need! Yet it is possible to neglect or overlook the privileges of this aspect of our fellowship in Christ. In Phil. 1:5, the apostle thanks the brethren for their “fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now” and still today we also can support those who labour for the Lord in the gospel. Like the Philippian of old who shared with Paul in the work of the gospel, and to whom therefore we also owe some debt, we can be partners, albeit in a small way, with those whom the Lord calls and enables to help spread the wonderful message of the gospel of the kingdom.

In 1 Pet. 4:13-16, we read further of the privilege of the fellowship in sufferings with Christ. “Rejoice, in as much as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye, for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you..... if any suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed but let him glorify God on this behalf.” Here again, the individual believer’s fellowship, his participation or sharing in sufferings is first and foremost with Christ, for His name and His cause. But this is also a shared experience with all the Lord’s people and in the preceding verse, the apostle has had to remind his readers—“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.” In some form or other, this fellowship of suffering is the common lot of every Christian. We may not always know just what fiery troubles others are going through, but all have the assurance of Rom. 8:17—“if children, then heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together.”

Nor can we always appreciate what chastisings, what afflictions, the Father may be allowing others to endure for their character development and faithfulness, nor can they ours, but we know that every true child of God must receive some share. We know also that it is in love and not in anger that all His chastenings will come. So we all have the opportunity to seek and strengthen and support and comfort one another in the fellowship of trial and difficult experience. James tells us to “count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations, knowing that the trial of your faith worketh patience.” Jas. 1:2,3. But he also stresses the need for practical expression of concern for the welfare of other brethren and Paul in writing to the Galatians urges them—“as we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.” Gal. 6:10.

The fellowship of the Lord’s people provides scope for practical help as well as the ministry of comfort and of prayer. Furthermore, because of diversity of background, personal qualities and temperament, it provides a school in which we may learn and perfect the graces of kindness, long-suffering, forbearance, forgiveness and, above all, love—the bond of perfectness. Col. 3:12-14.

Then there is the ultimate glorious fellowship which all the faithful saints of the gospel age will enjoy together with Him whose prayer for them was—“Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory.” John 17:24. “We know that when He (Jesus) shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.” 1 John 3:2. What perfect fellowship will then be ours, first and foremost with our dear Saviour and with our loving Father in heaven, but also with each one of the Lord’s people! How important it is then that our present fellowship with all those who name the name of Christ in sincerity and truth be characterised by that selfless love which our Master commanded of us! How necessary it is that we remember that our real “citizenship is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our lowly body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body.” Phil. 3:20,21.

This glorious hope, these grand expectations, are the heritage of all the Lord’s people; how they should cheer and encourage us on as members of that one great communion of Christ’s brethren. By our words, by our actions, by the witness of our lives, we can help each other along the way. This is our privilege, indeed it is our duty, to be gladly and lovingly accepted by every child of God. He can bless this ministry of service through every passing year for each one of us, as long as we maintain that close fellowship with the Father and His dear Son, and walk in the light as He is in the light. This alone is the context, the climate, in which true fellowship can develop and bring mutual blessing to each one.

In summary, we might say that our fellowship one with another entails:

1. a fellowship in common loyalty—in allegiance to and loving communion with the one gracious Heavenly Father and His Son, our Saviour.
2. a fellowship in the same walk in light—in single-minded desire to think and speak and act as children of light, seeking only that which is true and pure and will stand the searching test of light.
3. a fellowship in mutual love—in willing obedience to our Lord's command and in recognition of His life manifest in each of His people.
4. a fellowship in shared experience—in readiness to accept from God's hand whatever He sees best for the honour of His name and for our growth and fruitfulness.
5. a fellowship in Christ's sufferings—in determination to follow Him whatever the cost, laying aside every weight and looking to Him.
6. a fellowship in the one hope and calling—rejoicing together in confident trust that what God has promised He can and will richly fulfil in and for us.
7. a fellowship in Christ's glory—seen only yet in prospect and experienced only in foretaste, but finally to be realised in all its fullness. "I go to prepare a place for you that where I am, there ye may be also."

“In Remembrance of Me.”

The Scriptures contain no request by our Lord that his followers should observe His birth but He made special request that all who would be His consecrated disciples should truly celebrate His death. As our Lord's sacrifice as “the Lamb of God” took the place of the annual Jewish Passover ceremony, it is reasonable that the observance of the Memorial of Christ's death be celebrated yearly also, on the anniversary of the institution of this observance “on the night in which he was betrayed.”

The Apostle Peter presents the matter of our Lord's sacrifice as our Redeemer beautifully in 1 Pet. 1:18-20—“Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conduct received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot; who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you.” The perfection of Christ as the Man Christ Jesus is clearly indicated in this passage, and it is just as clear that the Passover lamb which the people of Israel were instructed to sacrifice each year was a type of Christ, our Passover Lamb.

The sprinkled blood of the Passover Lamb was the means of saving Israel's firstborns from death in Egypt, as well as being the means of delivering all Israel out of Egyptian bondage on that special Passover night so long ago. That was a wonderful deliverance! What shall we think and say, however, about the saving of the spiritual firstborns unto God of this Gospel Age, and the ultimate deliverance of all the human race from the bondage of sin and death, because of the sacrifice of the antitypical Lamb of God, even Jesus Christ? Truly this wonderful prospect fills us with joy and thankfulness beyond description!

From Matthew's account of the Memorial, we read in chapter 26:26—“And as they were eating”—finishing the Jewish Passover supper—“Jesus took bread”—the unleavened bread of the Jewish supper, picturing His own perfect humanity—“and blessed it”—gave thanks to God for this fitting symbol—“and brake it”—picturing the breaking of His own body—“and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.” In other words, appropriate His perfect humanity, thus gaining justification by faith in the perfect sacrifice of Jesus. As expressed by Paul in Rom. 5:1—“Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The following verse, Matt. 26:27, reads—“And he took the cup”—the cup of the fruit of the vine—“and gave thanks”—thanked God for this symbol of His own blood—“and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it.” Again, Jesus was saying, appropriate my blood, my life, my perfect humanity, thus also gaining justification by faith in the sight of God. It is the justified human life that true believers in Christ have the privilege of laying down in the steps of the Master.

A secondary and deeper meaning of our Lord's Memorial the Apostle Paul was used of God to explain so beautifully in 1 Cor 10:16,17—"The cup of blessing which we bless is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? for we being many are one bread, and one body for we are all partakers of that one bread." Here we see the oneness of Christ and His members beautifully revealed. So, in observing our Lord's Memorial we not only do so "in remembrance of Christ," but we also signify our own willingness to be broken with Him, and have our life poured out in sacrifice with Him.

"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death, if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus"—Phil. 3:10-14.

As we meet each year at the Memorial of our Lord's death, it is required that we do so with pure hearts, having sought forgiveness for all shortcomings through the merit of Christ, and thus acceptable in the sight of God. 1 Cor. 5:7,8—"Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover (Lamb) is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast...with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

A Purchased People

The Apostle Peter (1 Pet 2:9) speaks of the I consecrated followers of the Master as being a peculiar people. The Greek word used by him has the thought of a "purchased" people, or a people acquired by purchase. The thought is essentially the same as that outlined by Paul in Titus 2:14. This people is purchased at a great cost, even by Jesus' laying down His life for them. Acquired at so great a sacrifice they are precious in His sight, a very special treasure.

A Chosen Generation

Peter mentions other characteristics of these peculiar people. He says, for example, that they are a "chosen generation." In 1 Peter 1:2 we are told that these people are "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience." Paul explains the manner in which God's foreknowledge operates in connection with this elect people, saying, "Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son."—Rom. 8:29.

Here again we are reminded of the condition requisite to being the peculiar people of God, that condition being zeal for good works. God has predestinated that each one of this class must be conformed to the image of Christ. The zeal of God's house consumed the Master, and if we are like Him, then the same zeal will consume us. The Master's zeal was for the good work, of God, and our zeal must also be for God's work. It will not do merely to be zealous. Our zeal must be controlled by the will of God, then it will result in blessings to others and to the glory of the Lord.

God wants us to "give diligence to make our calling and election sure," and if we do, we will become more and more conformed to the likeness of His beloved Son. (2 Pet. 1:10.) To be like Jesus we need to get acquainted with Him. We can do this through the Word. As we note the details of His consecrated life we are at once impressed with the full extent to which he sought to know and to do His Father's will at all times and under all circumstances. In the most trying moment of His earthly career He lifted up His heart to God and said, "not My will, but Thine, be done."—Luke 22:42.

Jesus was faithful in prayer, and could say to His Father, "I knew that Thou hearest Me always." (John 11:42.) Jesus let His light shine so faithfully that it finally cost Him His life. Jesus was ever on the alert to bless others, even the little children. Such is the portrait of the Master and God has predestinated that if we are to be a part of the "chosen generation" of this age, we must be conformed to the Master's image.

A Royal Priesthood

"Ye are a royal priesthood," the apostle asserts. Here again the language God employed to describe his typical people is applied to spiritual Israel. Israel was designated "a kingdom of priests," but in order to make good that

title continued zeal for the doing of God's will was necessary. (Exod. 19:5,6.) This zeal was lacking, and now the title is transferred "to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof."—Matt. 21:43.

The priests of Israel represented God among the people. Their work was twofold. They offered sacrifice, and they dispensed the blessings of God to the people vouchsafed by the sacrifices. All Israel was to be a nation of priests in representing God before the rest of the world, but failed to actually attain this high position of divine favor. Now the title and privilege goes to God's peculiar people of the Gospel age. In 1 Peter 2:5 the apostle explains that the consecrated are "an holy priesthood" to "offer up sacrifices." Peter also says that we are built up a "spiritual house." This is a reference to the symbolism of the temple as the meeting place between God and Israel. The people came to the temple to receive God's blessings. So God's peculiar people are to be the channel of divine blessings to the whole world when the work of sacrifice is complete. What wondrous grace is thus bestowed upon those who are "zealous of good works."

A Holy Nation

To be holy means to be pure, unadulterated, and God expects that His peculiar people will be undivided in their devotion to Him. He does not want us to be "double minded." There may be little danger today that we will worship Moloch or other heathen deities, but there are, nevertheless, many "idols" which our wayward hearts may set up, and through the worship of which we would become unholy in our devotion to God. There is the god of pleasure; the god of wealth; the god of ease; the god of pride and ambition; and there is the "self" god. To qualify as a part of God's holy nation of today the divine will must reign supreme in our hearts and lives.

God wants us to be "obedient children, not fashioning ourselves according to the former lusts. "But as He which hath called you is holy," says the apostle, "so be ye holy in all manner of conversation." Then the apostle quotes from the Old Testament, "Be ye holy; for I am holy." (1 Pet. 1:14-16; Lev. 11:45.) The entire text in Leviticus from which Peter quoted, reads, "For I am the Lord that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt, *to be your God*; ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy."

God is there reminding Israel that He was exclusively their God. Later, through Amos, God declared, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth." (Amos 3:2.) God is pure and sinless from whatever standpoint we may view Him, but in these passages he seems to be emphasising the point that He had not been a God to any other nation except Israel. It is upon the basis of this holiness toward them, that He asks them to be holy toward Him. He had no other people; they were to have no other gods.

The same thing is true today. God loves all nations, and has provided blessings for them but He considers the "holy nation" only as being His peculiar people. To these he becomes Father, Helper, and Friend. He engraves them upon the palms of His hands; they are as dear to Him as the apple of His eye. His name is written in their foreheads. He provides for all their needs; gives them strength when they are weak; comforts when they are sorrowful. In the end, He will exalt them to His own nature and glory. They are a peculiar treasure unto Him, and no good thing will he withhold from them.

God's Praises

After applying these various symbolically descriptive titles to the followers of the Master the apostle explains the practical significance of what they all imply, saying, "that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light." (1 Peter 2:9.) This, after all, is the objective of the "good works" for which God's peculiar people should be zealous. All that is done by them, both in this age and in the next, shows forth the praises of God.

The Millennial age work of healing the sick and raising the dead will certainly show forth God's praises. When the knowledge of God's glory fills the earth as the waters cover the sea, all mankind will praise the Lord. Then every creature in heaven and in earth will be praising Him that sitteth upon the throne, and will also give glory to the Lamb that was slain. (Rev. 5:13.) But those who are privileged to share in that future work of filling the earth with the glory of God will be those only who previously have zealously sacrificed all their earthly interests in showing forth the praises of the Lord in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation among whom—now this side of the veil—they shine as lights.

The extent to which the light of the Gospel penetrates the darkness of this world is not the responsibility of the

Christian; but we are responsible for letting the light shine. Whether men hear or not does not affect the responsibility imposed upon us by divine grace to show forth the praises of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvellous light. We are a royal priesthood to this end; we are a holy nation for this purpose; we are a chosen generation to be the light of the world. A consuming zeal for carrying on this good work as God directs in His Word, and recognition of the fact that it is all by grace that the privilege is extended to us, will mean that God will continue to encircle us with His love as His peculiar people.

This does not mean that we can earn our way into the Kingdom. It does not mean that salvation is of works, and not of grace. It *does* mean that we will be demonstrating our faith by our works; and that, realizing we have been bought with a price, we do not belong to ourselves, but to Him, and are to be His servants forever. It means that we qualify to be God's peculiar treasure by showing our appreciation of what He has done for us. If we really appreciate His love, we will want to tell it and live it out, and by doing this, to show forth His praises.

Matthew the Publican

"I am not come to call the righteous but sinners. "Luke 5:32.

It has been truly said that "the story of Matthew X is an emphatic witness to the truth that the Gospel is no respecter of persons, and that even in the selection of His more immediate followers Jesus thought not of anything in their outward surroundings, but simply and solely of their spiritual fitness for their new task." Surely the Saviour made no mistake in calling Matthew to be one of twelve Apostles. His life subsequent to his call gives evidence of having been most fruitful, and to him was assigned the honor of giving to the followers of Christ a most inspiring account of the life and ministry of our blessed Redeemer.

It was in or near the city of Capernaum that Matthew received the call from the Master. This city where our Lord had been teaching and healing, was situated on the sea of Galilee. It was a city of considerable commercial importance, and undoubtedly the lake-shore in that vicinity was quite populous. The tense of the Greek would seem to indicate that our Lord kept going by the sea-shore, stopping here and there to discourse to the people, multitudes of whom flocked to hear Him. It was during this journey that He passed Matthew, formerly known as Levi, a custom-house agent of the Roman government — a revenue collector, who was attending to his business, and whom our Lord addressed, saying, "Follow Me," and who obeyed the call to discipleship.

Many get a false thought from the brevity of the narrative, and infer that Levi (Matthew) had never heard of Jesus before, and that our Lord, as He passed him, cast upon him some kind of a spell which led him to instantly drop his business. On the contrary, the Lord and His disciples were well known in that vicinity and probably Matthew had not only knowledge of our Lord, but also faith in Him, as the Messiah. Not until then, however, had Jesus invited him to become one of His immediate disciples; not until then, therefore, could Matthew essay to become such. There evidently were many who heard the Lord discourse time and again, and who were to be reckoned as amongst His friends, but who were by no means invited to become special followers, companions and associates in the ministry of the Gospel, as were the Twelve.

Nor are we to suppose that Matthew left his money-drawer open, and his accounts with the Roman government unsettled, to immediately follow the Master. Rather, we may assume that it may have taken days, or possibly weeks, to straighten his affairs and to enable him to respond to the Lord's call to apostleship. We should remember that the history of several years, and many discourses, conversations and incidents, are crowded in the gospel narrative into very brief space.

Publicans Despised

The office of a publican offered many opportunities for dishonesty and extortion, bribery, etc., but we cannot suppose that Levi was one of these dishonest publicans, for had he been so we may be sure he would not have been called to the apostleship and would not have responded to the call, for we are not to forget that it is written, "No man can come to Me except the Father which sent Me draw him."—John 6:44.

Quoting Peloubet's Notes as to the general character of the publicans: "To become a publican in Palestine nineteen centuries ago a man had first of all to sell his country. The publican was the embodiment and representative of the foreign government. And to become a publican, in the second place, a man had to sell his conscience. The publican's trade was a dishonest trade. Taxes today are fixed by responsible and representative bodies, and the tax-gatherer, as a result, can never exact more than is due. But taxes long ago were 'farmed'. The taxes of a town or

district or province would be sold to the highest bidder, and that highest bidder would then be allowed to squeeze out of the people of his district what money he could. It was a system that encouraged corruption and extortion.

Matthew was a man of influence, and as soon as he accepted the Lord's call, and responded by consecrating himself and his all, he set about to use his influence in drawing others to the Savior. He would announce his own devotion to the cause in such a manner and under such favorable circumstances as if possible would win some. To these ends he arranged a banquet for the Lord and His disciples at his house, and invited many of his friends and business associates. These are called "Many publicans and sinners."

We have seen why the publicans were ostracized by the scribes and Pharisees—not always because they were wicked, but because their business was disesteemed: and being thus cut off socially from the ultra-religious, the publicans were forced to have most of their social intercourse with the non-religious, by way of contrast called "sinners." By the term sinners we are not necessarily to understand vile persons and evil-doers, but rather persons who did not profess nor attempt the holiness claimed by the Pharisees—persons who did not claim to be absolute keepers of the Divine Law—who did not profess to make the outside of the cup or platter absolutely clean, though perhaps in many instances the inside was as clean or more clean than were the hearts of the Pharisees, who professed perfect holiness.

Matthew Ready

The words of Dean Farrar are well in place at this point: "But He who came to seek and save the lost—He who could evoke Christian holiness out of the midst of heathen corruption—could make even out of a Jewish publican, the Apostle and the first Evangelist of a new and living Faith. His choice of apostles was dictated by a spirit far different from that of calculating policy or conventional prudence. He rejected the dignified scribe (Matt. 8:19); He chose the despised and hated tax-gatherer. It was the glorious unworldliness of a Divine insight and a perfect charity, and Matthew more than justified it by turning his knowledge of writing to a sacred use, and becoming the biographer of his Savior and his Lord.

"No doubt Matthew had heard some of the discourses, has seen some of the miracles of Christ. His heart had been touched, and to the eyes of Him who despised none and despaired of none, the publican, even as he sat at 'the receipt of custom', was ready for the call. One word was enough. The 'Follow Me' which showed to Matthew that his Lord loved him, and was ready to use him as a chosen instrument in spreading the good tidings of the kingdom of God, was sufficient to break the temptations of avarice and the routine of a daily calling, and 'he left all, rose up, and followed Him,' touched into noblest transformation by a forgiving and redeeming love."

A Consecrated Home

Matthew's endeavour to bring his friends and associates into contact with the Master and His teaching is certainly commendable, and is a good illustration of what each one who enters the Lord's flock should do. Each should seek to exert his influence where it is greatest, amongst those with whom he is acquainted and who are acquainted with him, and upon whom either his past honesty and good character should have an influence, or else those to whom his radical change of life would be the most manifest.

Another lesson for us is the propriety of using hospitality as a channel for the advancement of the truth—the homes of those who have consecrated themselves to the Lord should be consecrated homes, in which the first consideration should be the service of the Master; and its influence should be to draw out friends to the Lord, that they might be taught of Him. Too frequently the consecration of the home is overlooked and antagonistic influences are permitted to dominate, with the result that neither the Lord nor the Lord's people are entertained, nor His Cause served in them. Such a house and home loses a great blessing.

Spiritual Food

It would seem from other narratives of this same banquet (which was probably several weeks after Matthew's call) that a large number of people were gathered at Matthew's house aside from those who partook of the banquet (Luke 5:29), and from the connection of the narrative it is supposed that it was on one of the regular fast days of the Pharisees. These facts led to the question:

Why does your Teacher associate with these people, who do not profess sanctification? The objection was not

because our Lord taught the publicans and sinners, but because He ate with them, which implied a social equality, and the Pharisees evidently recognized that our Lord and His apostles were professing and living lives of entire consecration to God.

In answer to this query our Lord said, “They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick”—the implication being that the physician had a right to go to and mingle with those whom he sought to relieve, and might mingle with them in whatever manner he saw to be expedient for their cure. This language does not imply that the Pharisees were not sick, and that they did not need our Lord’s ministry, though the fact was that not admitting that they were sin-sick they were not disposed to receive his good medicine of doctrine.

The same thought is otherwise expressed by our Lord in the same connection, saying, “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” Any one who considered himself to be righteous would be beyond the call of repentance. His first lesson would be to learn that he was not righteous, not perfect; hence our Lord went chiefly to those who admitted that they were not righteous, and whose hearts therefore were better soil for the truth than others. Our Lord intimated this in His parable of the publican’s and the Pharisee’s prayers, assuring us that in God’s sight the publican had the better standing, because of his acknowledgment of imperfections and his petition for mercy.

To all who feel their need, who hunger and thirst after righteousness, the Lord is gracious. Such a one of nobler spirit must Matthew have been, whom our Lord knew and called to His service.

(from the “Herald”)



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Think on These Things (Phil. 4:8)

(Convention Address)

What things should we be thinking about? What should be the character of our thoughts? Thoughts are the beginning of all things — the creation of the universe began with a thought.

Thoughts are the seeds which are planted to make our characters grow. Each person is like a farm; Paul wrote to the Corinthian church: "Ye are God's husbandry." The thought is—you are God's farm. As with natural farms, there is great diversity. Sometimes we come to a farm where everything looks nice—rows of corn appear lush and everything is green and thriving. There are no weeds, indicating good cultivation. It is refreshing to see a farm like that. However, we may then see another farm where the rows are crooked, the crops do not look well, weeds are thriving and there is evidence of neglect. It is so with the individual. One has a character like a nicely cultivated farm—patience, love, zeal, godliness, earnestness and other grand qualities are growing in his or her character. Another whose character is like the farm overgrown with weeds is growing envy, jealousy, malice, strife and all kinds of evil fruitage. Just as a farmer plants seed to raise crops, so something is needed to raise or grow a character. The little seed which the farmer plants corresponds with the little thought which we plant. The seed is very small yet it produces a large plant. A thought also is a very small thing, yet how much will grow from it.

"Be not deceived, God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, but he that soweth to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting." (Gal. 6:7,8) When Paul says "he that sows to the flesh" he refers to those who think thoughts out of harmony with God's will—thoughts in keeping with the spirit of the flesh. If we entertain such thoughts, we are sowing to the flesh. When we read "whatever he sows, that shall he reap," we tend to think of this more along the lines of actions. But why do we do what we do? We begin by thinking—our thoughts determine where we go, what we do, how we spend our money, what words we speak. Everything starts with a thought. The same apostle further states: "I have sown, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase." Here again he refers to thoughts; when Paul came among them he planted certain thoughts in their minds which they never had before. Apollos encouraged these thoughts and finally God brought them to fruition.

If we are trying to serve the Lord, and a wrong thought comes to mind, then if we plant that thought we are sowing corruption and we will reap corruption. We may not be lost on that account, but we are making it harder for ourselves and if we get into the kingdom, we will have a lower place because we were willing to retain these wrong thoughts. If you or I entertain the thought that God may desert us, we are entertaining an untrue thought and as we do so, it will begin to develop the weeds of doubt. If we go on to harbour these, we may lose our faith. When a thought of this kind comes to our mind, let us reason that it is impossible for God to forget His promises, it is impossible for Him to go back on His word, it is impossible for Him to desert His child. "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

The two words—thought and think—can have different meanings:

THOUGHT — idea, notion

THINK — deliberate, meditate, reflect, contemplate

We are not to blame for our thoughts, but we are to blame for what we think. We are not necessarily to be commended for our good thoughts, nor blamed for our bad thoughts. But if we entertain them, that is a different matter.

“As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.” Let us take for our guidance in this matter the apostle Paul’s final admonition to the Philippian church, as recorded in Ch. 4:8. In this chapter, Paul is giving instructions to the church as to how they should build themselves up in the most holy faith. Preceding the text scripture, he gives the following thought: “Therefore my brethren whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord my beloved. Rejoice in the Lord always, again I say rejoice. Let all men know your forbearance. The Lord is at hand. Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God which passes all understanding will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 4:1, 4-7 RSV)

Then in the text scripture, Paul imparts to us very detailed instructions on what to think about: “Finally brethren whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.” (Phil. 4:8 KJV); and continuing on into the next verse: “What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, do, and the God of peace will be with you.” They should have heard and seen that these good thoughts had brought the peace of God to Paul. In verses 7 and 9, we see that they also can bring us this peace which passes all understanding. If we have this peace, we can then rejoice in the Lord, have no anxiety about anything and let our requests be known to God.

The Manna Comment for April 27 says, in part: “To have the mind of Christ is indeed the one requirement of lawful striving.... a mind which humbly and faithfully submits itself to the will of God, as expressed in His great plan of the ages, and which devotes all energy to the accomplishment of His will, because of an intelligent appreciation of the end He has in view.” All know what a great influence the mind has over the body. The more we think on good things, the better we will be; and just the opposite, the more we think on evil things, the more evil we will become. If a thing has none of the qualities of the text scripture, then we should not think on it at all. But if we think on those things which have the wisdom and depth which comes from God alone, then a wonderful change of character is effected. We must desire to be led by God and to conform our thoughts to His. Thoughts can be controlled, just as words and actions can be controlled.

“My son, be attentive to my words; incline thine ear to my sayings. Let them not escape from your sight; keep them within your heart. For they are life to him who finds them, and healing to all his flesh. Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life. Put away from you crooked speech and put devious talk far from you. Let your eyes look directly forward and your gaze be straight before you. Take heed to the path of your feet, then all your ways will be straight.” (Prov. 4:20-26 RSV) “Out of the heart flow the springs of life.” The heart is the governing power of mankind and represents the will and intention. It must be kept true and centred in God. But the will is subject to many influences and if our thoughts are impure, unjust or unholy, the power of the will becomes weaker. The thoughts of those who are striving to make their calling and election sure must not be permitted to dwell on evil things, but must be disciplined to dwell on the deeper things of the word of God. The new heart is to be kept loyal to God, to the principles of righteousness and to His covenant, to be active in love and helpfulness and in the cultivation of thoughts in accord with the divine.

The Criteria

Turning to the text scripture (Phil. 4:8), the first test quality for our thinking is: “Is it TRUE?” This is the first consideration in any matter. Webster defines true as—reliable, certain, in accordance with fact, agreeing with reality, not false. We know that the word of God is true, and that He will be true to His word, as we read in Psa. 119:160—“The sum of Thy words is truth, and everyone of Thy righteous ordinances endures for ever.” We know that He is the only true God (Jer. 10:10) and that His ways are true (Rev. 15:3). And no person was truer than Jesus—He was the True Light, the True Vine, His word was true and He was the True and Faithful Witness.

But does our text mean to think on anything that is true? There are hundreds of branches of science, each based upon profound truths. Are we to seek to master these, to think upon these things? And beside these, there are many unwholesome, scandalous and trivial things which are also true. Are we to fill our minds with these? Of course not! The apostle’s words require some qualification, a right dividing of the word of truth. (2 Tim. 2:15)

When Paul directs us to think on whatsoever things are true, he is speaking of the Truth, as the Lord’s people use and understand His precious words, a knowledge of the great divine plan of ages, the only way in which the scriptures are seen to be both beautiful and harmonious. As we contemplate and meditate on the truth, let us thank God for

1. the plan of salvation, revealing God to be a God of love, compassion and mercy,
2. the philosophy of the ransom, whereby Christ died for all—that God will have all to be saved and come

to a knowledge of the truth, the times of restitution of all things, which God has spoken by all His holy prophets since the world began, the great mystery of Christ, the Head, and the church, His body—"Christ in you, the hope of glory."

3. the exceeding great and precious promises of God,
4. the special care of God over the church, leading them in the narrow way, and
5. His divine plan of ages, and our part in it, whereby if we are faithful, we may be actually God's instruments in bringing these things to pass, and thus the blessing of the whole world.

"Make me to know Thy ways, O Lord; teach me Thy paths. Lead me in Thy truth and teach me, for Thou art the God of my salvation; for Thee I wait all the day long." (Psa. 25:4,5 RSV) Love for truth lies at the foundation of a righteous life. If we want to be the precious treasure of the Lord, if we want Him to claim us as His own, we must establish habits of thought which will keep the truth fresh, lively and inspiring to us. Whatsoever things are true, of the truth, think on these things.

But the truth of a thing is only one of the tests we should apply. Another is—"Is it HONEST?" Honest means trustworthy, honorable, genuine, real, respectable, showing fairness and sincerity. There are many things that are true, but dishonorable and not worthy of our thought. Honesty is a basic quality; we cannot even start our Christian walk without it. When the apostles chose seven helpers, they chose men who were of honest report, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom. "Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles, that whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation." (1 Pet. 2:12 KJV) We should be honorable in all our affairs, confessing to being children of God and walking in the footsteps of Jesus. All should see to it that they are honest in treatment of neighbours, in treatment of the brethren, and above all in their confessions respecting their God and their faith. All of us desire honesty in ourselves, as well as in others. "Repay no one evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all." (Rom. 12:17 RSV)

We should dismiss all thoughts that are dishonorable and unworthy. Rom. 13:13 admonishes us to walk honestly, as in the day. That day points us to the millennial day, when all will have to walk honestly, if they are to receive the earthly blessings of that age. As new creatures, we have a much higher calling and should voluntarily give the same meticulous attention to our conduct now, as in that day. We know that God is honorable and that He should be honored, along with our Redeemer. Any dishonorable act of ours will bring dishonor on God's name. We desire to bring honor and glory to His name, so whatsoever things are honest or honorable, let us think on these things.

Things that are JUST—here is another test quality we should look for. Justice should be the rule of our lives. Webster gives just as - lawful, right, fair, proper, righteous, upright. We know that God and His dear Son Jesus are just, as we read:

"There is no God beside me, a just God and a Saviour, there is none beside me." (Isa. 45:21 KJV)

"By myself I can do nothing. As I hear from God, I judge and my judgment is true, because I do not live to please myself, but to do the will of God who sent me." (John 5:30 JBP)

That which is just is that which is right; justice and righteousness are synonymous terms. The golden rule—"Do unto others as you would have others do unto you"—is the rule of justice.

We have no right to expect more than justice; whatever we receive more than justice is love or favour. God will be pleased with nothing less than our continued opposition to every form of unrighteousness. Many claiming to be Christians are blind to justice and righteousness in the affairs of life. They have too much mercy on their own shortcomings and not enough on the shortcomings of others. The October 14 Manna comment reads: "We are to grow in love and love is the principal thing, but before we can make much development in the cultivation of love, we must learn to be just, right, righteous. It is a proper presentation of the matter that is given in the proverb that a man should be just before he is generous. All love that is founded upon injustice, or wrong ideas of righteousness, is delusive, is not the love which the Lord will require as the test of discipleship."

We are to learn to apply this test of justice to our every thought, word and act, at the same time learning to view the conduct of others, so far as reason will permit, from the standpoint of mercy, pity, forgiveness, helpfulness. We cannot be too careful of how we criticise, of every thought we entertain, of every plan we nurture, so that the lines of justice shall in no way be infringed willingly by us. We should think not only of the good things, the higher things, but the blessed things to come, and thus have our minds busy thinking on whatsoever things are just. Once it becomes a habit, it will be a constant delight.

Whatsoever things are PURE—this is the next test quality. To be pure means to be free from anything that adulterates, free from defects, perfect, faultless, free from sin and guilt. Our thoughts should avoid anything that while not impure in itself might have the effect of arousing impurity in another. The heart that is corrupt expects and looks for corruption in others. But the pure avoids evil surmisings. “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” (Matt. 5:8 KJV) The heart refers to intention or will. Purity of mind and conduct must be developed insofar as is possible. This must command our best efforts; we are to love and cultivate that which is pure to such an extent that what is impure will become painful to us and distressing, and we shall desire to drop it from memory. This will be accomplished only by continually thinking upon those things that are pure. To think on the purest of things, we must of necessity lift our mental vision to as high a point as possible. Peter said that we are to purify our lives by obedience to the truth and sincere love for the brethren. (1 Peter 1:22)

The scriptures speak to us of the pure doctrine and the pure messages of truth given by the Lord for our enlightenment: “The promises of the Lord are promises that are pure, silver refined in a furnace, on the ground, purified seven times.” (Psa. 12:6 RSV) “Thy promise is well tried and Thy servant loves it.” (Psa. 119:140 RSV) “The wisdom that comes from above is pure.” (Jas. 3:17 JBP)

The early church had the pure truth; the apostles kept them straight in doctrine. “For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.” (Acts 20:27) But when the apostles died, the light began to fade and perverse, impure doctrines were introduced. (See Acts 20:29,30) During the Dark Ages, the truth all but disappeared, but the Lord determined to restore the truth to the household of faith at His second presence and did so by the hand of a faithful and wise servant. “Contend for the faith, which was once for all delivered to the saints.” (Jude 3) These pure truths are worth thinking about, fighting for and holding on to.

Think on those things that are LOVELY. This calls our attention to the need not to allow our minds to dwell upon things that are not lovely—we might permit our business to so fill our thoughts that we think continually on that particular thing. Constant thought on these lines is not profitable to the new creature. We must endeavour to bring our thoughts into subjection and train them along the lines that will transform us into the glorious character-likeness of our Lord. The dictionary defines lovely as—beautiful, exquisite, morally or spiritually attractive, having those qualities that inspire love, affection or admiration. How wonderful if our minds were filled only with lovely thoughts! These relate to the things of character, such as the fruits of the Spirit outlined in Gal. 5:22,23—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. If we cultivate these in our hearts, we become more and more God-like, but if we fail to do so, the works of the flesh and the devil will be developed.

There are so many lovely things that we can think about:

1. The divine plan of ages is lovely,
2. God the author of the divine plan is most worthy of love,
3. An object of great loveliness is Jesus—we never tire of thinking of Him, the author and finisher of faith,
4. Our opportunity to reign with Him, if faithful, is also a lovely prospect.

So let us think upon whatsoever things are lovely.

If things are of GOOD REPORT, then they are reputable, well thought of, respectable, not sub-standard, but gracious (as translated in RSV). Two references to this great quality are:

“But Thou Lord art a God merciful and gracious.” (Psa. 86:15 RSV)

“And He began to say to them, Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing. And all spoke well of Him, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth.” (Luke 4:21,22 RSV)

The word used includes the thought of being reputable (Diag.), that which would be well thought of by reputable people, or those of good repute. It would not mean that it was necessarily well spoken of by the world. Jesus was of good report but was reviled by the world, which said all manner of things against Him falsely. We need to be so careful in our daily lives, that the only thing which we would suffer for would be that we are Christians.

Just as good report can build one up, so evil report can injure one's reputation. Fallen human nature is inclined towards evil, and a human trait is to believe evil more readily than good of a person. This is bad enough, but worse, the good things we know about anyone are often forgotten, but the evil things we think we know are repeated and circulated, often with relish. This could have terrible results and seriously hamper usefulness in the Lord's service. It makes no difference whether the evil thing is true or not; just because it may be true is in itself no reason for telling it. Our thoughts must be gracious, reputable and of good repute if we are to be faithful and give our will to God. Whatsoever things are of good report, think on these things.

If there be any VIRTUE, or as Webster defines it, excellence in general, moral excellence, good quality, goodness of character; things that are in any degree noble...noble words, noble deeds, noble sentiments of anyone—if we meditate on these, we will find ourselves growing towards those ideals and upon these, our mind—the new nature feeds. Peter tells us:

“His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us to His own glory and excellence. For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge.” (2 Peter 1:3,5 RSV) We need to listen carefully to his following words (verse 8):

“For if these things are yours and abound, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Thinking on these things will keep us fruitful in the knowledge of God. The people of God who follow the instructions of the divine word become noble people, helpful people, possessed of the spirit of a sound mind. These will also extol the virtues of God Himself, understand more of His glorious character, see that His every act is motivated by love and that He loves us, particularly and individually. If there be any virtue, think on these things.

The last of the eight great qualities is PRAISE. Praise is defined as a simple, basic word implying an expression of approval, esteem, commendation or of lauding the glory of God. We should not even think about praising ourselves, and yet we should try to make our actions praiseworthy. We are to think mainly about the praise of God. Praise to God is an acceptable act of worship. Many psalms speak of praise, such as:

“Praise the Lord. I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart, in the company of the upright, in the congregation.” (Psa. 111:1 RSV) “Praise the Lord! O give thanks to the Lord, for He is good.” (Psa. 106:1 RSV)

Can we imagine any more sincere or enthusiastic occasion of praise than that of the man lame from birth who was healed by Peter and entered the temple, walking and leaping and praising God?

In Acts 16:23-26 we read that Paul and Silas had been brutally beaten in Philippi and were put in chains. At midnight they sang and praised God and the other prisoners heard. Suddenly there was a great earthquake, all the doors were opened and everyone's bonds were loosed. Do we want doors opened, bonds loosed or problems solved? Let us praise God, extol His virtues, name and recount every wonderful thing we can remember about Him—His personal attributes, His marvellous works of creation, His divine plan so just and yet so merciful, the precious gift of His Son, His incredible provision that we might be associated with Jesus in His kingdom, His providences in our lives, His exceeding great and precious promises, and there are still many more things for which we may praise Him. Let us think indeed about praising God from whom all blessings flow.

These are then the eight scriptural qualities which things must have, before we think upon them. They are to be:

1. True - 2. Honest (honorable) - 3. Just - 4. Pure - 5. Lovely - 6. Of good report (gracious) - 7. Virtuous (excellent) - 8. Praise-worthy

And we need further to remember:

“As a man thinketh, so he is.” (Prov. 23:7) “Whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.” (Gal. 6:7)

Every thought should therefore be challenged because it affects our words and our conduct and extends to others. We should desire to have in our hearts and minds things that are positively good, beneficial and uplifting. Desires for earthly things have a natural attraction for all mankind, but if we want to keep ourselves in the love of God, we must put our affections on heavenly things and continually keep on weeding out earthly desires and attractions. We can hardly over-estimate the importance of right thinking, because of the great influence of the mind over the body. Let us take pleasure in the cultivation of the fruits and graces of the Holy Spirit. Thus we shall become transformed by the renewing of our minds and come nearer to the glorious likeness of our Master, being changed inch by inch, step by step, little by little during this present life.

Let thoughts of the blessedness of our future work in co-operation with Christ, of the magnitude and benevolence of the divine plan, and of the glory and blessedness of our gathering together into Christ, when the work of the present age is finished, fill our minds and inspire our hearts. And further, let us also receive the additional comfort and blessing of personal communion and fellowship with God through prayer, the study of His word and the assembling of ourselves together for worship and praise. Those who are thinking on the true and lovely and good and beautiful things will speak to each other of these things, hence the importance of having our hearts filled with good things, in order that out of the abundance of our hearts, our mouths may speak continually that which the Lord would approve and that would bring blessing to all who hear. (A.A. 9/91)

THINK ON THESE THINGS!

A New Year Prayer

Another year is dawning;
Dear Master, let it be,
In working or in waiting,
Another year with Thee.

Another year of mercies,
Of faithfulness and grace;
Another year of gladness,
In the shining of Thy face.

Another year of progress,
Another year of praise,
Another year of proving
Thy presence all the days.

Another year of service,
Of witness for Thy love;
Another year of training
For holier work above.

Another year is dawning;
Dear Master, let it be,
In working or in waiting,
Another year for Thee.
(ER.H.)

Precious Promises
(Convention Address)

“May favour and peace be multiplied to you by a knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; even as His divine power has granted to us all things relating to life and piety, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue; on account of which very great and precious promises have been bestowed on us, so that through these you might become partakers of the divine nature, having fled away from the corruption that is in the world through lust.” (2 Peter 1: 2-4 — Diaglott)

For whom do these words apply? Were these instructions given to sinners? Is this the way sinners approach God? No, these instructions are addressed to those justified through faith in the blood of Christ, as shown in Verse 1: “to those who have obtained an equally precious faith with us, by the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ.” To become a believer in Jesus Christ, a justified and consecrated believer, is not enough. There has to be a progress while in these earthly bodies; if we are faithful, this will be completed in the first resurrection. The apostle’s thought is that of continuous progress.

Many might think of additions and subtractions of grace and peace, finding and losing, but Peter speaks of multiplication. “May favour and peace be MULTIPLIED to you.” Many again lack a knowledge of the things necessary to preserve to them the favour and peace found in Christ as their Redeemer, and lack sufficient understanding to multiply their favour and peace. These are mentioned in 1 Cor. 3:1; “And I, brethren, was not able to speak to you as to spiritual, but as to fleshly persons, as to babes in Christ.”

The true foundation upon which to build is faith in the righteousness of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, faith that His sacrifice for sin was once for all, a full and complete ransom price for Adam and all his posterity, so that all may be brought to a knowledge of Christ in due time. It is those who build upon this foundation who may hope to multiply their grace and peace. But how? Peter answers: “through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.” To some it may seem that we come to know God and to know that there is a Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, but a knowledge of God is much more than this. It means an intimate acquaintance with the Father and with the Son, a knowledge of the mind of Christ, which itself is a full and clear representation of the mind of the Father.

We grow in this knowledge by study of the Word of God and by ascertaining how divine justice, wisdom, love and power operate. These are progressive studies. Peter shows us that, through this knowledge of God, there are imparted to us all things related to life and piety or godliness. To know God, as Peter here explains, means an intimate knowledge and it is only when we see the beauties of His character that we can become intimately acquainted with Him. The influence of this knowledge and fellowship reacts upon our hearts and has a cleansing and sanctifying effect. "But we all beholding the glory of the Lord in a face unveiled, are transformed into the same likeness, as from the Lord, the Spirit." 2 Cor. 3:18.

The apostle Paul prays that believers may grow in the knowledge of God, as in Eph. 3:14-19: "For this cause I bend my knees to the Father, from whom the whole family in the heavens and on earth is named, that He may give you according to His glorious wealth, to be powerfully strengthened through His spirit in the inner man; that the Anointed One, through the faith, may dwell in your hearts; that, being rooted in love and well-established, you may be fully able to understand with all the saints, what is the breadth and length, and depth and height, to know even that which surpasses knowledge—the love of the Anointed One; so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."

The world in general does not know God, and it is evident also that many professing Christians know little about Him. Paul explains to us that Satan is particularly interested in hindering any from obtaining the light of truth. He declares in 2 Cor. 4:4: "the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." Here we see the constant conflict of darkness against light; the darkness hates the light for all who see and rejoice in the light are the children of the light. After the image of the Lord has been impressed upon their hearts, they become light-bearers, reflecting to others the light shining on them from the divine source.

On account of this call of God, great and precious promises have been given to His people. These are so many and so precious that it is difficult to know which to rank first. But perhaps the first of all is the precious promise that, although what we shall be like has not yet been made known, "when He our Lord shall appear, we shall be LIKE HIM, for we shall see Him as He is." "If I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself." "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I overcame and am set down with my Father on His throne." "They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels." (my treasured possessions).

"For these light afflictions do work out in us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." "Then we will be heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in His sufferings, that we may also share in His glory." "To him that overcometh I will give authority over the nations, just as I received authority from my Father." (1 John 3:2, John 14:3, Rev. 3:21, Mal. 3:17, 2 Cor. 4:17, Rom. 8:17, Rev. 2:26,27)

These are only a few of all His exceeding great and precious promises; they are summed up by Peter, who says that it is God's will and purpose that through these we might become partakers of the divine nature. Who could have thought of such a thing? Our earthly minds might have thought to reach human perfection, or even to go to heaven as an angel, but though the angelic nature is higher than the human, that is not what God has promised. No, He has promised the overcoming church, the little flock, that they shall share the divine nature of her Lord, as well as share in His heavenly kingdom. We cannot really comprehend why the great Creator should exalt to His own nature, but we accept that the lengths and breadths of His grand designs surpass all human knowledge. Having been privileged to see something of His glorious character, shall we not want to attain to all He might be pleased to reveal to us? to be partakers of His likeness, more and more acceptable? and finally to be actually and everlastingly accepted in our beloved Lord? This will indeed be the full realisation of the blessings and promises God has given us.

Such promises and such knowledge should inspire our hearts to love and sacrifice, as the apostle John tells us in 1 John 3:3: "Everyone having this hope in him purifies himself, as He is pure." May the exceeding great and precious promises of God continue to sustain us in the narrow way. (D.O.)

A Peculiar People

"Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." —Titus 2:14.

A Special Treasure

The Greek word translated “peculiar” in our text, according to Prof. Strong, means that which is special, or beyond the usual. The apostle’s thought evidently is that this people whom Christ purifies unto Himself are esteemed by Him and by the Heavenly Father as a special treasure. Similar language is used by God concerning natural Israel. We read, “Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is Mine. And ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.”—Ex. 19:5,6.

High indeed was the possibility of Israel’s relationship toward God, but it was dependent upon continued faithfulness in obeying His voice and keeping His commandments. As a nation Israel failed all along the line; and finally, when the nation rejected Jesus, was cast off from all hope of enjoying the chief place of favor in the divine arrangement. Concerning this Paul explains: “Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded.”—Romans 11:7.

The apostle explains, however, that a remnant of individuals from among Israel qualified for the chief blessing. This agrees with the statement concerning Jesus which says that “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not; but as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God.” (John 1:11,12). But there were not sufficient who received the Master to make up the foreordained number of the special people, so the remaining ones were called from among the Gentiles. Explaining this Paul says that the Gentile branches were grafted into the Jewish olive tree to take the places of the natural branches that were broken off because of unbelief. (Rom. 11:17-30). This is a “graft” which is “contrary to nature,” because usually it is tame branches that are grafted into a wild root; and the nature of the branches determines the kind and quality of the fruit. But not so with the Gentiles grafted into the Jewish tree.

Zeal For God’s Will

Israel’s standing as God’s peculiar treasure continued only as long as the nation was zealous for hearing and obeying the voice of God. So we, who have come into this favored position as spiritual Israelites can hope to be reckoned among God’s choice treasure only if we are “zealous for good works”. “Take heed,” the apostle warns, for if God spared not the natural branches He will certainly not spare us if we become unfaithful. Evidently the one characteristic above all others which commends an individual to God is that of zeal for doing His will. Without this zeal no one can hope to be a part of God’s peculiar people.

The example of zeal which we should endeavour to emulate is that which was displayed by Jesus. The zeal of God’s house consumed Him; and we are called to follow in His steps. Jesus’ zeal was manifested in the sacrifice of His earthly life on behalf of the church and the world. We are invited to lay down our lives for the brethren, and also to be baptized for the dead. Jesus’ sacrifice constitutes the basis of redemption for both the church and the world, and we are invited to share with Him in administering the benefits of the ransom. No matter how much zeal we might display, our sacrifice would not be acceptable apart from the Master’s; but because we serve in His name we have the assurance of being “holy and acceptable.”

Redeemed and Purified

In our text the apostle tells us that Christ “gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity.” As members of the condemned and fallen race we were contaminated with sin, because “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” (Rom. 3:23). Jesus’ redemptive work makes it possible for us to be made free from “the law of sin and death,” and acceptable unto God by Him. But the mere fact that we accept this provision of divine grace is not sufficient to constitute us a part of God’s peculiar people. In addition to this we must be “purified.”

This purification is effected by our obedience to the truth—the “washing of water by the Word.” This is a cleansing from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit. It is the washing away of selfishness and self-will so that the divine will may reign supreme in our hearts. This cleansing must be thorough if we are to be God’s peculiar people. It must be more than a mere passive submission to His will. It must be a consuming zeal for the accomplishment of the divine will irrespective of what the cost to us may be. To thus be purified will mean that we are, indeed, a people “zealous of good works.”

These “good works” for which we will be zealous are God’s works. It was so in Jesus’ case. He came, not to do His own will and work, but the will and work of His Father. In a prayer to His Father, Jesus said, “As Thou has sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them in to the world.” (John 17:18). This is a wondrous partnership in which we are invited to share. We can add nothing of value to the partnership, and the only way by which we can commend ourselves to the Lord is through our zeal for the work that is being done. As “workers together with Him” are we endeavouring to set everything else aside in order that we may zealously engage in that which



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

“THE MIGHTY HAND OF GOD”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Importance of the Call of the Church

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What Would Jesus say?

Have we ever stopped to really think seriously 1 just how the Saviour would view matters and what He would say to us were He visibly to appear in our midst in these times? Some have said, “Oh! how I wish the Master would visit us as He did those disciples long ago; how I wish I might consult Him with regard to many questions that have so troubled me; I am sure, if the Master were right in our midst, we could soon have the burning, vexing problems and issues that have disturbed us in these recent years quickly settled.” But, brethren, is there any question, problem or difficulty before us today that the Master has not already answered in one or another of His many sayings when He was here long ago? Has He not through the spirit in the Apostolic messages dealt with all the present issues?

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

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

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

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

(1930 Convention Report)

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

(G. Keith)

Discord Precedes Harmony

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

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

Steadfast, Immovable

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

Watching and Praying

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

Predestination (Part 1)

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

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

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

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

FREE WILL

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

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

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

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

Free Will: Disobedience

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

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

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

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

Free Will: Obedience

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

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

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

Free Will: True Choice

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

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

FREE WILL: PERSONAL EFFORT

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

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

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

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

Free Will: The Prize

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

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

oneself to the will of God.

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

Free Will: Personal Responsibility

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

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

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

Free Will: The Fallen Nature

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

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

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

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

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

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

Free Will: The Ransom

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

(To be Continued)

They Had Been With Jesus

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

* * * * *

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

Oneness in Christ

“ALL ONE IN CHRIST JESUS”

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

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

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

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

THE REALITY OF ONENESS

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

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

according to the promise”.

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

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

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

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

THE DEVELOPMENT OF ONENESS

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

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

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

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

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

THE PRESERVATION OF ONENESS

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE FOUNDATION OF ONENESS

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

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

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

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

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

THE NATURE OF ONENESS

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

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

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

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

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

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

with which he addressed his disciples right down the age:

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

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

THE BOND OF ONENESS

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

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

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

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

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

THE CHALLENGE OF ONENESS

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

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



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Resurrection For All

(Convention Address)

The subject of the resurrection is a basic and fundamental one which most are very familiar with. Nevertheless, it is good to be reminded of such things, as the apostle tells us in 2 Peter 1:12,13. This is not only for our own sakes, but so that we may give a ready answer to others.

Some today who do not understand the wideness of God's mercy insist that there is not to be a resurrection for all - not for those who are really wicked, those destroyed in the flood or in Sodom and Gomorrhah, or for those killed in the great time of trouble which is to come upon the world in Armageddon. They say also that there is no hope for father Adam. How do we answer these things? Any doctrine we hold must first be scriptural, it must also be logical and reasonable. It must bring honour and glory to our great Creator and show Him to be just what the Scriptures say He is, a God of love.

Is there to be a resurrection for all? Those whom God has called now, the members of the true church, have already in this life received a resurrection, not a literal one but a figurative one. Romans 6:3,4 says "know ye not that so many of us as were baptised into Jesus Christ were baptised into His death; therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." When we go down into the waters of baptism to symbolise our consecration, what a beautiful picture it is of going down into death and being raised up again into life. We have already passed from death unto life, as our Lord said in John 5:24 "verily, verily I say unto you he that heareth my word and believeth on Him that sent me hath everlasting life and shall not come into condemnation, but has passed from death unto life." Our Heavenly Father views us very differently from the rest of mankind, we already have life, we are no longer under the Adamic death sentence which still rests at the present time on the unbelieving world. This life that we have is provisional. Throughout our earthly sojourn we are being tested and tried. As Jesus said "be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life." This is the crown of eternal, immortal life. This is our day of judgement, we are not to receive a further opportunity in the next age, that is the world's day of judgement. We have already come under the provisions of the ransom. This lifetime is our opportunity for eternal salvation.

Is there to be a resurrection for all? Yes, in the fullness of time, all will come under the provisions of the ransom, be saved from the Adamic death sentence and be granted a full trial for everlasting life. This is the thought in 1 Timothy 2:3-4 which tells us "God will have all men to be saved and come unto the knowledge of the truth." None can receive eternal salvation without first coming to a knowledge of the truth. So this passage means saved in the same way we are saved at the present time, saved from the Adamic death sentence. The Greek word here translated "knowledge" has the meaning of "accurate knowledge". In God's due time all are to come unto an accurate knowledge of the truth and be fully enlightened.

The scriptures indicate that there could be some who will not receive a literal resurrection, those who have been called and fully enlightened, have come under the provisions of the ransom and later deliberately and wilfully turned their backs on the Saviour and rejected the only way provided by our Heavenly Father. As we read in Hebrews 6:4-6, "for it is impossible for those who were once enlightened and have tasted the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come, if they should fall away to renew them again unto repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh and put Him to an open shame". It is not that God has rejected these, quite the opposite, they have rejected Him and the gracious provisions He has made for them, and they are quite unrepentant. As the scripture says, "it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance." We would hope that there would be few of this class.

Life on whatever plane of existence is a priceless gift which our Heavenly Father gives freely, but He does

not force it upon any. Those who accept must do so upon His terms, namely, acceptance of Jesus as their Ransom and obedience to God, We must do our Heavenly Father's will. This has all been made clear to us now, in the next age it will be made clear to all mankind. Many find it hard to understand why the world in general is not on trial now, why they are not being judged for their actions. There is a very simple answer, that is, accountability. How accountable are they? Only those who are fully enlightened are fully accountable.

We think of the case of Jonah who was sent to preach to Nineveh. When the Ninevites repented and God did not destroy them, Jonah was most upset and displeased with God. We find God's reply in Jonah 4:11, "and should not I spare Nineveh that great city wherein are more than six score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand and also much cattle." This is true of the world today as far as spiritual things are concerned, they cannot discern between their right hand and their left. The sparing of Nineveh seems to typify the salvation that is coming to the world in the next age. Jonah, in this illustration, would picture a class that is not very pleased with the thought non-Christians of this age will receive an opportunity in the next. But we rejoice that God's plan is one of universal opportunity for salvation, for the church in the present age, those whom God is calling and drawing to Jesus, and for the remainder of mankind in the next age.

Heb 6:4-6 makes it very clear that the unbelieving world is not on trial at present. We are given there a list of things that must occur before they are placed on trial, before there is any possibility of their coming under the ultimate penalty. Firstly, they must have been once enlightened, that is, fully enlightened as to all the details of the divine plan. Then it says, "and, have tasted of the heavenly gift", that is understood the call and purpose of the church, the exceeding great and precious promises that are ours. The passage goes on, "and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit". This narrows it down to those whom God calls and draws to Jesus. Those who accept that call, and only those, are made partakers of the Holy Spirit. The portion ends, "and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come." It is crystal clear that at the present time God is not dealing with or judging those he has not called and enlightened. That is why there is to be a resurrection for these in the next age, that is their day of judgement and testing. As Jesus said in John 12:47-48, "if any man hear my words and believe not, I judge him not, for I came not to judge the world but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him, the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." This confirms again that those who do not believe, those who are unenlightened, are not being judged now but will be judged in the last day, the 1000 year millennial day. They will be judged by the words of Jesus which, as our Lord said, were not His own words but God's words. These will then taste of the good word of God, come to understand it, and have to conform their lives to the righteous principles contained therein, if they wish to obtain everlasting life on earth.

We have further confirmation of this in Romans 11:31-32, "even so have these also now not believed that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy, for God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all". This passage is speaking of the nation of Israel but the same principle applies to both Jew and Gentile. Even though they might have failed miserably in this life to come up to the divine standard, if they did so in unbelief, God can show mercy to them in the next age. This is just the opposite to the belief of many, who say God will have no mercy on those who do not believe in the present life.

No one of course can receive eternal salvation in unbelief. When these who are now in unbelief come back in the resurrection, they will then believe on Jesus Christ and the value of his ransom sacrifice will be applied for them. During the gospel age, God is selecting those who are rich in faith, accept His word, and are prepared to believe without seeing the actual evidence with their own eyes. In the next age it will not be a matter of faith to the same extent as it is today. Who can fail to believe, when they see the glory and power of God displayed by the resurrection, when they themselves, their friends, their relations, are brought back from the grave?

Some say "if there is to be a resurrection for all regardless of how they behaved at the present time, why bother to consecrate our lives to God and walk in the narrow way of self sacrifice? Why not live now for our own enjoyment, eat, drink and be merry and wait for our opportunity in the next life?" There are several answers to that question. Firstly, today is the only day of salvation for joint heirship with Christ as a member of His Bride. We are called to something that is very special, not just an ordinary calling, but as the scriptures describe it, "a high calling", and a "so great salvation". We are called to be part of God's own family, the divine family on His plane of existence, immortality. Not that we have any desire for honour or preeminence but we know this is what God has called us to, this is what God wants for us. So to be pleasing to our Heavenly Father we strive to be worthy to have part in the first resurrection as a member of his own Heavenly family, His spiritual children. Nevertheless our attitude should be that we will be happy and content with whatever position we are allocated. As the Psalmist says, even if it is only a doorkeeper in the house of the Lord. The motivating factor in running in the race for the prize of the high calling should be one of service, that is what we have been called to, at the present time especially service to the brethren, in the next age to all of God's family on the earthly plane. Also we receive a blessing at the present time, as our Master said in Mark 10:30

“ye shall receive a hundred fold now in this time”. We have the joy of fellowship with our brethren, a fuller and richer life, and the peace of mind that the knowledge of God’s plan brings, especially in the difficult days that we live in.

For another answer to the question, as to why become a disciple of Jesus now, let us look at Revelation 20:6. “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ and shall reign with Him a thousand years.” Look at that one little sentence “on such the second death hath no power.” In John 5:29, our Lord indicates that two classes are coming forth in the resurrection, one to a resurrection of life, the other to a resurrection of judgement. The class mentioned in Revelation 20:6 upon whom the second death has no power, are those who receive the resurrection to life. What a wonderful blessing! This alone is sufficient reason to become a disciple of our Master now. What a joy when we awake on resurrection morning to know that we have life in the full sense of the word, life that will not be taken away from us again; to know that our period of test and trial is over. This is in contrast to those who have part in the later resurrection, the resurrection to judgement. When they awake, their period of testing and trying is just beginning and it seems that it may not be fully complete until the thousand years are over, and Satan’s little season of release is finished.

We have been looking at the logic of why the world is not on trial for life or death at the present time. We saw one reason is that they have not been enlightened by receiving the Holy Spirit. Another very basic reason is that they are already under a death sentence, the Adamic death sentence. This is what our Lord meant when He said, “let the dead bury the dead.” There are two classes of people in the world, those who have life, the true church, only these yet come under the provisions of the ransom. As- it says in Hebrews 9:24, “Jesus has appeared in the presence of God for us,” i.e. the Church. The value of His ransom sacrifice has been applied to these, so they have been released from the Adamic death sentence. The world must also be released from this death sentence, before they can be placed on trial. The church must be completed before this occurs, then the value of the ransom will be applied to the remainder of mankind, and their trial for life begin.

The understanding that the unbelieving world cannot die eternal death at present is very strongly implied in the term “second death”. Right from Adam’s day until now, all have died in Adam, which is the first death, so no one can become subject to second death until released from first death, the Adamic death. Can we not see how reasonable our gracious Heavenly Father’s plan is in giving all these a resurrection and opportunity for everlasting life in the next age. Not only is it reasonable but it is scriptural as we have already seen.

A very clear statement is that of our Lord in John 5:28,29, already referred to. “Marvel not at this for the hour is coming in which all that are in the grave shall hear His voice and shall come forth, they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgement”. Many seem to feel that God cannot be this kind and merciful and that they must find some way of changing this passage. There can be no exceptions to this statement that “all in their graves are to come forth”, apart from those already mentioned, who have had a full opportunity, have been spirit begotten and have later deliberately rejected Jesus as their Saviour. This may seem at variance with the statement before us that all in their graves are to come forth, but we are not always given all the truth in any one place, we find a little here, a little there. We formulate a doctrine on the basis of the scriptures as a whole. We harmonise scripture with scripture, we modify one scripture with another. (e.g. Matt. 21:22 with 1 John 5:14)

So we read John 5:28 in conjunction with the scriptures as a whole. Nowhere in the scriptures are we told of any other class that will not come forth in the resurrection, so to say that those drowned in the flood, those destroyed in Sodom and Gomorrha, those who die in the time of trouble, are not to receive a resurrection has no scriptural backing. We could term this a man-made doctrine. In fact, the scriptures indicate that the people of Sodom and Gomorrha will come back in the resurrection, (Mark 6:11, Matthew 10:15, Ezekiel 16:53.) Some have insisted that not all the dead are meant in John 5:28,29, but only those that God has in His memory. This thought is based on the fact that the Greek word translated “grave” literally means “memorial tomb”. The Greek word concerned is translated - grave 8 times, sepulchre 28 times, tomb 5 times. It seems clear that no such thought of God’s memory is intended. This is simply the regular word of that day denoting a grave. For example in Mark 5:1-3, we have the account of the man with the unclean spirit who made his dwelling among the tombs. This is the same word again. It is plain that it applies to all in the graves, regardless of who was buried there. Vines dictionary says of this word that “it primarily denotes a memorial, also a monument, anything done to preserve the memory of things or persons. Among the Hebrews, it was generally a cavern closed by a door or stone, often decorated”. Obviously this was done to preserve the memory of a loved one, just as we erect a tombstone or a plaque today. Clearly, the term “memorial tomb” has nothing to do with God’s memory but human memory of departed loved ones.

The apostle Paul, in Acts 24:15, confirms once again the resurrection of two classes. He says “and have hope towards God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust”, meaning believers who have been justified and unbelievers who have not been justified.

Paul said this is the hope he has; he obviously means hope for both classes, not only for the just. And we could consider other such scriptures as Heb. 2:9 “that He (Jesus) by the grace of God should taste death for every man,” and John 1:9 “this (Jesus) was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.”

Many say, yes we accept that life is offered to all, to any who become believers and accept Jesus, but they must do so in this life. We can answer with such texts as 1 Timothy 4:10 which tells us that God is “the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.” This text is very plain because it contrasts the two classes. True, in the present age, God’s special interest is in believers, but He is the Saviour of all men not just those who believe at the present time. As we read in 1 John 2:2, “He is the propitiation of our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” He is the propitiation at the present time for the Church’s sins, but in addition to this, for the whole unbelieving world in the next age.

Those who say that there is no hope for father Adam do not fully understand the workings of the ransom. While Jesus tasted death for all mankind, he did not die for each person individually, but for Adam, thereby redeeming all in Adam. As we are told in 1 Corinthians 15:21-22, “for since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead, for as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” The all that are made alive in Christ are the same all that die in Adam i.e. all mankind. Romans 5:14 shows that Adam was a type of Jesus, and in 1 Corinthians 15:45, Jesus is described as “the last Adam”. In 1 Timothy 2:6, we are told that Jesus gave Himself a ransom for all. The Greek word here translated “ransom” means corresponding price. Adam was a perfect man before he sinned, the perfect man Jesus was the corresponding price, hence He is described as the last Adam. How could the first Adam not benefit from the provisions of the ransom when it was exactly a corresponding price for him? Had Adam not sinned, he would have been the life giver and father of all mankind, but since he did sin, the second or last Adam took his place and became their life giver and father. This is the thought in Isaiah 9:6, where Jesus is described as the “everlasting father”. Some translations render this passage the “father of the age to come.” What a beautiful thought that is, the father of the age to come! Surely the resurrection and opportunity for all is one of the things that attracted us to the truth. This doctrine above all others displays our gracious Heavenly Father’s true character and His love for all His human family. (JGT: 1993)

“O the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! or who has known the mind of the Lord? or who has been His counselor? or who has first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto Him again? For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things to whom be glory forever. Amen” (Rom:11:33-36)

“If God seems far away, guess who has moved.” (Wayside Pulpit).

Daniel, The Beloved

(Convention Address)

DANIEL is certainly one of the great figures of the Old Testament. Like Joseph, he rose to a position of high authority in an alien land and served with great distinction. He is spoken of three times as a man greatly beloved of God and a review of his life, his piety and his utter consistency of character clearly show why he was so highly esteemed and much used by God.

Outside of the book which bears his name, little is known of Daniel. Interestingly, he is mentioned by Ezekiel, an approximate contemporary, as a standard of righteousness, along with Noah and Job, and of wisdom. He is not recorded by name among the illustrious band of faithful ones in Hebrews 11, but would certainly be among “the prophets, who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions.” Heb.11:33.

His lifetime spans the whole of the Jewish captivity in Babylon, where Daniel was taken, with other hostages, on the orders of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, after he had taken Jerusalem and subjugated Jehoiakim, king of Judah. Some indication of Daniel’s background is probably to be gained from Dan.1:3,4, where it states that Nebuchadnezzar directed that the hostages be taken from those of noble birth, skilful, well-educated and able to conduct themselves in a royal court.

Considering the long period of Daniel’s stay and service in Babylon, he must have been quite young at the time of his being taken there, and historians and scholars suggest that he would have been only about 16 or 18 years of age at that time. He was nevertheless evidently already well informed not only in secular subjects but also in the religion of the true God of Israel. This becomes apparent quite early in his determination not to be defiled with the foods provided for the hostages but even in this matter to serve God.

The earliest years of Daniel’s life would have been spent under the reign of Josiah, one of the good and faithful kings of Judah. The record of his reign reads, in brief - “he did that which was right in the sight of the

Lord, and walked in all the way of David, his father, and turned not aside to the right hand nor to the left.” 2 Kings 22:2. He saw how the nobles and people of Judah had so grievously departed from God’s ways and sought earnestly to restore true worship, so that it was said that “like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the Lord with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might - neither after him arose there any like him.” 2 Kings 23:2.

Despite all Josiah’s endeavours during his 31 years reign, however, the nation soon lapsed back under his son, who reigned only 3 months before being deposed by Pharaoh-Nechoh, king of Egypt, who installed Jehoiakim as his vassal king over Judah. Only 3 years later, Nebuchadnezzar came up against Jerusalem, as already seen. All this happened within 4 years of Josiah’s death, in fulfilment of earlier prophecies, of Isaiah to King Hezekiah, as recorded in Isa.39:6,7 and of Jeremiah in Jer.25:11.

The early formative years of Daniel’s life would have therefore been spent during the latter years of the good king Josiah. If as seems probable Daniel was of noble birth, he would no doubt have thus become acquainted with the ideals and endeavours of Josiah. For it was during his reign that the book of the law had been re-discovered in the house of Jehovah, and in this Josiah read the warnings against the waywardness and disobedience of his people. This he sought valiantly to turn round, but alas without any lasting success.

It was accordingly only a few years after Josiah’s death that Daniel and all the other hostages were taken into the Babylonian court and the account given in the book of Daniel begins to unfold. Three other young men among the captives are also brought to our attention; these were also possessed of remarkable faith in the power of their God and their testimony under trial (Dan.3:17,18) stands as their monument and as a challenge to the Lord’s people of every age - “If it be so, our God is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king, but if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image thou hast set up.” Our God is able, but if not!” What faith is there.

In passing, the meanings of the names of the four young men are interesting and suggestive of Godly parentage:

Daniel “God is my judge.”

Hananiah “God is gracious.”

Mishael “This is as God.”

Azariah “God is a helper.”

It is no doubt significant that these names were very soon changed in the Babylonian courts. Whose is the name we bear, as Christians? Do we always honour it as we might, for our Lord is also able?

For us, being invited to partake of the food and drink provided in the royal court would probably not present any very great problem, though most Christians would generally favour a simpler diet. But for a pious Jew, the law made specific provision as to what was clean and permissible and needed to be observed carefully as an act of obedience and as a mark of separateness from other nations. To avoid partaking in Daniel’s circumstances would present a problem in the ordinary course, but we read that “God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs.” Dan.1:9. As a result, the young Hebrews were allowed to adhere to their preferred vegetarian diet, which had proved superior.

For the Lord’s people of every age, there is a need of separateness, and for great care over the nourishment we take in. In place of the world’s delicacies and delights, our Heavenly Father has provided in His dear Son, the pure Water of Life and the Bread of Life for our sustenance. For the young in Christ, He has given the pure milk of His word and for the more mature the meat of the word for our growth and development. As the hymn-writer puts it - “My table is furnished with bounty so free, My soul on Thy word is well fed.” This is better fare than in any earthly royal court.

Already the character of Daniel, under the hand of the Lord, was becoming evident and had made an impression on the master set over him. We are warned in the New Testament to beware when all speak well of us; this may well indicate too close identification with the worldly and failure to stand up for our faith. But at the same time our behaviour, our demeanour, should always be such as to command at least the respect of reasonable people and we read of Jesus in His early years that He “increased in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man.” This is of course the right order - God first.

Because of their faithfulness, God gave all four young men knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom, but Daniel was also given understanding in all visions and dreams. Much of the book of Daniel, from Chapter 2 on, is taken up with accounts of these means of prophecy and these reach right down to our own day and even beyond. It has been said that the book of Daniel not only preserves links in the chain of world history but also provides vital keys to interpretation of all prophecy, including the final book of our Bible - the Revelation

of Jesus Christ, given through the beloved apostle John.

We might indeed see a character link between Daniel, the man greatly beloved of Jehovah and the beloved apostle of our Lord, whose visions recorded in Revelations and given some seven centuries after those of Daniel are, as it were, a continuation and fuller development of them. Both men greatly loved God and were greatly loved for their faithfulness, both were used to bring messages to God's people, not only of immediate local significance and encouragement but of universal and dispensational importance. Both lived to a very great age, both were given final messages of personal assurance.

After a training period of three years, Daniel and his companions were brought to stand before the king but very soon a test of faith was to come upon them. The king had had a most disturbing dream but could not recall it. So he asked his local wise men to tell him what it was and what it meant. Not surprisingly none could and the king ordered all his counsellors, including the four Hebrews, to be put to death. But Daniel and his companions prayed and we read that God answered and further that Daniel blessed the God of heaven for that answer. Thankfulness to our Heavenly Father not only for specially answered prayer but for His daily care - how important it is.

The vision itself, we are now all familiar with - a great image of a man, with head of gold, breast and arms of silver, belly and thighs of brass, legs of iron and feet of part iron and part clay. But even more significant for us - a stone cut out of a mountain, not by human means, that smote the image on the feet and brought the whole image down and itself, that is the stone, became a great mountain filling the whole earth. What a truly remarkable panorama of world history there is in what God made known to Daniel, bringing us right down to the final setting up of God's kingdom.

We might think it strange that such a far-reaching vision or dream should be given to a heathen king and in keeping with his times no doubt a rather despotic one. But it did have an influence on Nebuchadnezzar even at that time for he had to acknowledge that Daniel's God was a God of gods and a Lord of kings. So he set Daniel and his companions over the affairs of his kingdom, with Daniel himself in the presence of the king, who was himself pictured in the image's head of gold. But of what far greater blessing and enlightenment has the dream and its interpretation been to God's people particularly in these last days, when we see the signs of the nearness of the setting up of that great stone kingdom of God.

For we, who live in these last days, have as it were an unbroken link with Daniel the prophet greatly beloved of God, who lived and prophesied so long ago in that first world empire period pictured in the head of gold. We clearly are living in the days of the ten toes kingdoms, when the marvellous stone of no human devising will shortly cast down and replace all the kingdoms that have gone before. John writes in Rev.11-15 - "the seventh angel sounded, and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever." How sorely that everlasting kingdom of peace and righteousness is needed today.

For the revealing of the dream and interpretation to the king, Daniel took no credit to himself - "this secret is not revealed to me of any wisdom that I have more than anyone else"; rather he gave thanks: "blessed be the name of God for ever and ever; for wisdom and might are His. "Any service that we can render for our Lord or for His people is a gracious privilege and no cause for pride for "what have we, that we did not receive?" "For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake." 1 Cor.4:7, 2 Cor.4:5. This is the true perspective of all God's servants and was the spirit of Daniel.

After Nebuchadnezzar's death, the kingdom under Belshazzar soon fell to Darius the Mede, who set over the kingdom three presidents answerable to himself. Of these, Daniel was first in rank, indicating that Darius also recognised the skills and qualities of Daniel, the testimony to him being that "an excellent spirit was in him." This soon provoked envy among the other presidents and the 120 princes set under them and they sought to find fault or error with Daniel but could not do so.

Their final conclusion was - "we shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God." Dan.6:5. Though not meant that way, what a wonderful testimony to Daniel's conduct and consistency of life this was. It sets the standard for the people of God in every age. Daniel's life was open for all to see, yet his detractors could find nothing to accuse him of. While evidently continuing to maintain his own religious duties, his attendance upon the king's business was complete and loyal. Yet all the time his heart was with God's chosen people, as we see later in the account.

The Lord's people are always to be peaceable, law-abiding, diligent and conscientious, seeking to comply not only with the letter but also the spirit of the laws under which they live and which in turn protect them to at least some extent. The only limitation is that which led Peter and John to proclaim - "we ought to obey God rather than men" - when they were ordered to cease preaching the gospel. So it was with Daniel, who was confronted by the statute which the king had been deceived into signing - "that whosoever shall ask a petition of any god or man for thirty days, save of thee (the king himself), shall be cast into the den of lions." No doubt

the king's vanity had been appealed to.

The conspirators had well read Daniel's character, and we are not surprised to read - "now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees, three times a day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime." Dan.6:10. In those days, observance of religious duties was more open and the structure of dwellings would have added to this, making Daniel's actions very obvious.

It has been suggested that Daniel may have been able to comply with some lesser requirement, such as praying less openly but there could be no compromise for Daniel nor can there be for any of the Lord's people in the matter of the One they are to worship. Unlike other nations, Israel's law was very clear - "the Lord our God is one Lord" and "thou shalt have no other gods before me (Jehovah) thou shalt not bow down thyself to them or serve them." So Daniel continued his habit and pattern of prayer "as he did aforetime". While he did nothing extra to provoke trouble, his loyalty to the one true God of his people did not falter.

It is unfortunately possible for Christian people to bring trouble upon themselves needlessly and there is no credit with God in suffering for folly or wrongdoing. The Christian standard, as it no doubt was for Daniel too, is - "as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all".... "be not overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good".... "render to all their dues." To suffer for righteousness' sake is praiseworthy in God's sight and Daniel's faithfulness and steadfastness were wonderfully rewarded by God, as we read in Dan.6:19-23.

Even Darius, who quickly realised that he had been deceived, sought by every means to save Daniel from the lions, and when he could not, he spent a sleepless night, concerned for this man whose noble qualities of character, so different from those of his other counsellors, he had come to appreciate. But God still had further work for Daniel and we read - "so this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian." Dan.6:28. Daniel indeed lived on to a great age, his final vision being received when he would have been nearly 90 years of age.

But before this, further visions were given to him concerning the four great world empires that would ultimately be overcome by the all-consuming kingdom of God, and of events that would occur during those periods. Through it all, we cannot fail to note his deep love and concern for his own people. Though a faithful servant of the powers that be in Babylon, his heart was at all times with his people in their captivity and we read in Dan.9:2 - "in the first year of his (Darius') reign, I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish 70 years in the destruction of Jerusalem."

As a true patriot and as a worshipper of Jehovah, Daniel felt great sorrow over the nation's punishment at His hands and so he besought God that, now the 70 years foretold had come to an end, the nation's return might be no longer deferred. What a wonderful response Daniel received through the angel Gabriel - "at the beginning of thy supplications, the commandment came forth and I am come to show thee, for thou art greatly beloved." Dan.9:23. Still today, our Heavenly Father knows before we ask the desires and intents of our hearts and waits ready to answer and bless the prayer of faith that first and foremost seeks to know His will.

As well as the assurance of his prayer being answered, Daniel was also given a remarkable prophecy of events that would affect his people right down to the time of Messiah the Prince. Students of the Bible are agreed on the accuracy of this prediction of Messiah's advent at the end of the 69th week or 483 years taking a week to represent 7 years, and the further prophecy of the nation and temple being left desolate. But this grim picture, as far as Israel was concerned, was not left as God's last word to the greatly beloved Daniel - he was assured that at the time of the end and after great trouble, Michael (Who is as God), the great Prince who "standeth for the children of thy people" would come and that "at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." Dan.12:1.

God's closing words to Daniel furthermore speak of the resurrection to everlasting life being given to those found worthy, of the "wise" shining as the stars and leading many to turn to righteousness. How these assurances to Daniel remind us of our Lord's words in Matt.13:43 - "then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" - and of the grand times of restoration or restitution spoken of by Peter. Though no doubt much comforted by the assurances given to him, Daniel was not granted full understanding of them; rather he was told to "shut up the words and seal the book even to the time of the end; many shall run to and fro knowledge shall be increased."

The personal promise to this man beloved of God concludes the record - "go thou thy way till the end be, for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days." Dan.12:13. Daniel heard the words of the Lord but was not given to fully understand, as was the case with all the prophets of old, who wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit prophesying of the grace that should come upon the gospel age heirs of salvation and testifying of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. Meantime, Daniel was to rest in the sleep of death, awaiting that "better resurrection" which the faithful ones of old all looked forward to.

In many ways, the prophecies of Daniel provide the key to the understanding of Bible prophecy in general. How all-embracing they are! They cover an outline of world history, the first and second advents of Jesus, his rejection and the casting off of Israel, later their restoration under Michael their Prince, and the resurrection and restoration of the “many” of mankind. How wonderfully was this saint of God used! Over 2500 years later, we rejoice to see what he heard in secret becoming plain and the signs of the soon fulfilment of the glorious things foretold.

One commentator has said that “Daniel’s undeviating integrity as a worshipper of the one God in an alien, dissolute society, as first minister in the first of the world empires, gives him a place among the highest and holiest the world has seen.

To be used by God, even in smaller ways, requires that the child of God be separate from the world, single-minded in faith and devotion to His service, of humble mind, diligent in searching the scriptures, instant in prayer. In all these ways, Daniel stands out as a shining example. When he stands in his lot at the end of the days, what a wonderful guide and standard he will be to the world of mankind, along with all the faithful of old times! These were not offered a heavenly reward, but we are told that they looked for a city which has foundations whose maker and builder is God. How well Daniel will be equipped for service in that everlasting kingdom!

The same faithfulness, as that of Daniel, is required of us who have been blessed with a heavenly calling. May each of us, in our day, stand as Daniel did for truth and righteousness. (DS: 1992)

Dare to be a Daniel,

Dare to stand alone,

Dare to have a purpose true -

Dare to make it known.



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Christ in You, the Hope of Glory

(Col. 1:27)

OUR text describes an exceedingly precious experience. There are various scriptures which make reference to this happy condition; for example: "If Christ be in you" (Rom. 8:10), "Christ liveth in me" (Gal 2:20), "until Christ be formed in you."—Gal. 4:19

The Bible also describes the Lord's true people as being "in Christ," giving the thought of membership in his body—"So we, being many, are one body in Christ."—Rom. 12:5

To the fully consecrated children of God, both of these scripturally described conditions, "being in Christ," and "Christ being in us," are joyous realities, which become increasingly rich as progress is made in the Christian life. Once they were not children of God, but "were by nature the children of wrath, even as others"; "in darkness," and without any proper direction in life, not having heard the glorious true Gospel of the kingdom. But happy indeed was the day when, hearing the true good news, they yielded to God's gracious drawing power, and appreciated, little by little, the grandeur and beauty of the Gospel message being revealed to them in the Scriptures.

Realizing their own unworthiness, and real need of a Saviour, they accepted Jesus as their personal Lord and Redeemer, By faith they accepted the righteousness from God on account of their faith in Christ Jesus, and fully consecrating themselves to God, the Holy Spirit then truly worked within them.

Here was the beginning of a new life, and they could gratefully exclaim in the sentiments of I Peter 1:3, 4, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven." They now had a blessed hope of an actual birth to the divine nature in the first resurrection.

Christ Jesus was now their "Head." Indeed, they rejoiced to know that he is the Head over all things to the church, which is his body. Just as the human body is made up of many members, so also is The Christ. The Greek word translated Christ corresponds to the Hebrew word rendered Messiah, and in either language the significance of the word is "the Anointed."

The anointing process was pictured during the Jewish Age at the installation into office and the anointing of the kings and the high priests of Israel. The oil used in that ceremony was, according to Exodus 30:22-33, a peculiar kind, which might not be used for any other purpose. Similarly, the anointing which our Lord and the members of his mystical body have received is different from anything else in the world. It is the anointing of the Holy Spirit—the spirit of truth, the spirit of righteousness.

"YOU ALL KNOW IT"

In proportion as we, here and now, have the Holy Spirit, in that proportion we are faithful members of the body of Christ, and have the anointing in us. As the apostle says, "The anointing which you received from him abides in you"; "You have an anointing [unction, AV] from the Holy One; you all know it." (I John 2:20, 27, Diaglott) It manifests itself to us as it would not to the world.

The signification of "unction" (AV), and of its Greek original, chrisma, is smoothness, oiliness, lubrication. From custom, the word carries with it also the thought of fragrance, perfume. How beautifully and forcefully this word represents the effect of God's influence toward goodness upon those who come under this antitypical anointing—holiness, gentleness, patience, brotherly-kindness, love!

What a sweet, pure perfume does this anointing of the Holy Spirit of love bring to all who receive it! How-

ever ungainly, or coarse, or rude the outer man—"the earthen vessel"—how soon it partakes of the sweetening and purifying influence of the treasure of the "new heart," the new will within, anointed with the Holy Spirit and brought into harmony with whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report.—Phil. 4:8

Just as the anointing of kings and high priests of old in Israel was the divine evidence that they were accepted to office, so was it with Jesus. It is described in Acts 10:38: "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power." Our Lord was thus set apart for a very high office, that great antitypical King and Priest "after the order of Melchisedec"—a priest upon his throne.—Heb. 5:6

During the Gospel Age, God has been, and still is, setting apart those who are to be members of the body of Christ—taking out a people for his name. (Acts 15:14) These are invited to be (with Christ) kings and priests unto God. "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light."—I Pet. 2:9

Consequently, when one who is begotten of the Holy Spirit, and by the Word of truth, here and now is received (through full consecration) into this body of the Anointed, under the headship of Christ, he or she comes under the anointing of the Holy Spirit. And it is of vital importance that we remain in Christ so that we continue to experience, in a growing measure, the sweet, fragrant influence of this anointing—this "Christ" within us.

"LED BY THE SPIRIT"

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." (Rom. 8:14) The Lord's true people are aware that it costs something to be led by the Spirit. And in all the tests and trials full, complete consecration is to be maintained. Not even a little of our own will should be retained, because "self" is to be put completely in the background. This means a new direction in life, because of the anointing with the Holy Spirit, and on account of being fully led by the Spirit of God. What are some of the evidences of our being thus led?

We are not now conformed to this world, but are being transformed.

We are subjects of a new kingdom, and are being instructed, disciplined, and trained with a view to our development as sons of God.

We are minding the things of the Spirit, and not the things of the flesh.

We seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God; and our affections are on things above, and not on things of the earth.

Through the Spirit we mortify, or put to death, the deeds of the body, fervently desiring to be more and more conformed to the image of God's dear Son.

We seek to have a growing knowledge of the manifold wisdom of God as revealed in the Holy Scriptures, according to a plan of the ages, which he has purposed in Christ Jesus.

We lay hold upon the exceeding great and precious promises in God's Word, that by these we might be partakers of the divine nature.

We let our light shine before men, holding forth the Word of life.

It is our privilege and joy not only to suffer for Christ, but also to suffer with him.

We drink of the cup of which he drank, and are baptised with the baptism with which he was baptised.

We realize that to be planted together in the likeness of his death means that we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.

Whoever find on self-examination that they have these foregoing evidences in their own hearts can be fully assured that they are "in Christ", members of his mystical body and, as a result, anointed with the Holy Spirit. Such can gladly and gratefully testify in the words of the Apostle Paul, "Christ liveth in me."—Gal. 2:20.

CHRIST FORMED IN YOU

The Apostle Paul wrote very pathetically to the Galatian Christians, "O my little children ! whom I am bearing again, till Christ be formed in you." (Gal. 4:19, Diaglott) The apostle sought, by the Lord's grace, to nourish and sustain those 'seeds!' (as it were) of spiritual being in those Galatian Christians by his own personal work and influence until they would be able to appropriate for themselves the God-given elements of spiritual life contained in the Word of truth.

How important that we, who hope to have a share with Christ in the glories of the heavenly phase of the kingdom, and in his glorious future work of establishing God's kingdom in the earth, see to it that, as individuals, Christ is now actually formed in us:

A living Christ, our spirits need,
A loving Christ, our souls to feed.
A dying Christ our ransom he,
A risen Christ, to set us free.
What more our need? A Christ within,
A life with God, afar from sin.
A Christ whose love our hearts shall fill,
And quite subdue our wayward will.

Because this is to be the personal condition of every heir of the heavenly kingdom we, individually, give diligence to make our own precious calling and election sure, and assist others to do the same.

And we must not be satisfied when those within the range of our influence are merely begotten, in the early stage, by the Word of truth, but by instruction, example, and assistance, labour diligently to have Christ formed in them. So far as possible we wish to help their faithful walking, that they also may eventually be “partakers of the divine nature,” in the first resurrection.

Experiencing, here and now, this treasured anointing by the Holy Spirit, our heart’s sentiments are those of the Lord Jesus when he exclaimed, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.” —Luke 4:18,19

Jesus here quoted from the prophecy of Isaiah 61:1, 2, and applied the words to himself. And because his faithful Spirit-begotten followers are members of his body, it applies to them also.

The purpose of our being anointed by the Holy Spirit is that we might “preach,” or be “ministers” of God and of his truth. We today can extend those prophetic words of Isaiah, quoted by Jesus, and proclaim additionally, “the day of vengeance of our God,” thus announcing on every suitable occasion the scriptural explanation of present world distress, also the glorious outcome, and indeed declare the whole counsel of God, as revealed in his Holy Word.

“QUENCH NOT THE SPIRIT”

This “anointing,” this “Christ” in us, is the prelude to the glory which God has promised to those who are faithful, even to be joint-heirs with Christ beyond the veil, and to be privileged to assist in the honoured and glorious work (as Abraham’s seed) of bringing earth’s dead millions from the tomb, and richly blessing all the families of the earth.

We should heed the admonition not to quench this anointing or Holy Spirit: “Quench not the Spirit.” (I Thess. 5:19) On the contrary, with the Lord’s help we are to cultivate, develop, give special attention to this treasured anointing—realizing that we as yet hold it in an earthen vessel.

“Abide, sweet Spirit, heavenly Dove, With light and comfort from above; Be thou our Guardian, thou our Guide, O’er ev’ry thought and step preside.”

The Shepherd’s Psalm

(Convention Address)

THE Book of Psalms, it can be safely said, has had more influence and has accomplished more good than any other collection of poetry ever written.

There are many beautiful poems but none with the sentiments of the Psalms which seem to touch every soul at every turn, in sorrow, and in joy. Of the 150 Psalms, Bible scholars attribute 73 to the writings of David. What a wealth of experiences David had to draw on as inspiration for these beautiful songs!

The Hebrew definition of Psalms gives the meaning of praises, a term that reflects much of the book’s contents. The title given to Psalm 145 is Psalm of Praise. Its name in the Latin and English bibles comes from the Greek PSALMOI which means twangings (of harped strings) or songs sung to the accompaniments of harps. Several of the Psalms have been written to music and even with the English translation little is lost of their meaning or beauty.

Probably the most well known of all of the Psalms is Psalm 23, the Shepherd’s Psalm. One scholar (Beech-

er) wrote of this Psalm “It is a nightingale amongst the Psalms, it is small, of homely feather, singing shyly, out of obscurity, but it fills the air of the whole world with joy”. Another commentator writes, “This is the Pearl of Psalms, whose soft and pure radiance delights every eye”.

Commentators feel that Psalm 23 was written quite late in David’s life. As a result, he could call upon all of his experiences of life and of his intimate relationship with God. He could draw on his experiences as a young lad attending to his father’s sheep. He remembered being anointed with oil, as we read in 1 Sam 16: 11,12—”And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all thy children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and behold, he keepeth the sheep. . . And he sent, and brought him in. Now he [was] ruddy, [and] withal of a beautiful countenance and goodly to look to. And the LORD said, Arise, anoint him: for this is he”.

He remembered the battles with his enemies with the Lord on his side, especially with Goliath, as we read in 1 Sam 17:45 - 50. “Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou has defied. This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the LORD saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the LORD’S, and he will give you into our hands. And it came to pass, when the Philistine arose, and came and drew nigh to meet David, that David hasted, and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine. And David put his hand in his bag, and took thence a stone, and slung it, and smote the Philistine in his forehead, that the stone sunk into his forehead; and he fell upon his face to the earth. So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone and smote the Philistine, and slew him; but there was no sword in the hand of David.”

He desired to build a house for God, to replace the temporary tabernacle which he felt did not do justice to God. We read in 1 Chron 17:1 - 4 -”Now it came to pass, as David sat in his house, that David said to Nathan the prophet, Lo, I dwell in an house of cedars, but the ark of the covenant of the LORD remaineth under curtains. Then Nathan said unto David, Do all that is in thine heart; for God is with thee. And it came to pass the same night, that the word of God came to Nathan, saying, Go and tell David my servant, Thus saith the LORD, Thou shalt not build me an house to dwell in:” At times, he was very close to God working in full harmony with him; but on this occasion, David’s will was not God’s will for him.

“THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD, I SHALL NOT WANT.”

The opening line of the Psalm tells of the intimate relationship that David had with his Lord. “The Lord is my Shepherd” tells of the covenanted relationship that the psalmist had with Jehovah. Only those who have a covenant relationship with God can properly appreciate the sentiments that David expresses in the following verses and how they apply in their lives, David had this relationship with God through the covenant which God had made with his favoured nation, Israel, at Mount Sinai. The Israelites had a covenant to walk in the Lord’s ways and to obey His statutes, and in return God covenanted with them that, in proportion as they would walk in His ways, He would bestow His blessings upon their every interest.

Only a few of the Israelites were trying to keep their part of the covenant, but David apparently was one of these, for the Lord declared him “a man after his own heart”. If he failed God, he confessed, repented, received his punishment, and rejoiced when restored to God’s favor, striving in the future to maintain his fellowship with God. David also gives a beautiful picture of the relationship between Christ and his Church,, Jesus speaking to his disciples in John 10 :14 says “I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep and am known of mine”

We too have a covenant relationship with Jehovah through Christ our Shepherd. If we accept this relationship with our Father, we can appropriate the various pictures of this Psalm. The world as a whole has no idea of this relationship. Jesus declares that there is only one way to enter the sheepfold, namely through the door. John 10: 9 “I am the door, by me if any man enter in he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture”.

To fully understand the sentiments of the Psalm, we must realise there is a great difference between the shepherd in olden times in Palestine and the care of sheep as we know it today. It was the eastern shepherd who illustrated our heavenly shepherd’s care for his little flock. An eastern pasture is vast, often boundless, it has to be extensive for the greater part of it is barren, in fact, the Hebrew word for desert and pasture is the same. It consists mostly of dry stony soil out of which for the greater part of the year the sun has sucked all life. In this desert, the breaks are few and consist of paths, gorges or thickets where wild beasts lurk, as well as oases of pleasant grass and water. It is evident that the person and character of the shepherd meant a great deal more to the sheep than it does with us. With us a flock of sheep without a shepherd is a common sight but unheard of in the east.

As a rule, a shepherd during David’s time owned the sheep that he cared for, he was no hireling, he asked

and received no wages, he was acquainted with all of his sheep. He was quick to discover and supply their individual needs; it was his duty in the morning to lead his sheep out and find good pasture for them. He needed to be familiar with the territory to know the special places where good pasture could be found. It was his duty to find quiet waters where they could quench their thirst and shady places to protect them from the heat of the noonday sun. He had to defend them when attacked by their enemies.

It was his duty to seek out straying sheep and to bring them back to the fold, to carry the weak lambs in his arms and tenderly to lead those who were lame or footsore. Occasionally he would be called upon to protect his sheep against the ravages of the wolves and bears who were lurking near some of the best feeding places, preying especially upon the weaker sheep. When the day was done, before darkness set in, the shepherd led them back to the fold. If any were wounded, he poured oil into the wound and bathed the bruises. When he found one hot and thirsty, and almost exhausted, he filled the large cup that hung by his side with cool water and gave it drink. The day's toil was over and the Shepherd settled down to guard the sheep over night.

David could not have put his faith in God more strongly than in the words "I shall not want". He shows us the trust that we too are to have in our Heavenly Father. Isaiah tells us in 33:15, 16—"He that walketh righteously and speaketh uprightly, . . . Bread shall be given him; his water shall be sure." "What a beautiful promise to us from our Heavenly Father. Jesus speaking to his disciples during the sermon on the mount, Matt. 6:25-34—"Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, neither gather into barns; yet your Heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought saying, what shall we eat? or, what shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (for all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness: and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself."

The Lord's sheep, abiding in perfection of relationship with Him, will lack nothing. Their every need will be supplied. This may not mean great earthly wealth, fame or name or luxury. The Lord's blessings to natural Israel were earthly blessings, supplying their every earthly need; but his blessings to spiritual Israel are spiritual blessings. Psalm 84: 11 "no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." again re-affirms God's commitment to his sheep.

"HE MAKETH ME TO LIE DOWN IN GREEN PASTURES: HE LEADETH ME BESIDE THE STILL WATERS".

Although the experiences of the Lord's sheep include many experiences in the parched wilderness of sin, yet he graciously gives them experiences in the oases of divine favour. These are not always with immunity from trial but certainly are seasons of rest and refreshment. The Psalmist assures us that, as the Lord's sheep, we will be provided with green pastures and cool refreshing waters of truth. Moreover, while being spiritually fed and refreshed, we shall have the peace of God as is implied in the suggestion that the sheep will lie down in green pastures. We may truthfully say, "The peace of God which passeth all understanding" rules in our heart. Which of the Lord's sheep has not found such green pasture of spiritual refreshment in his private devotion and studies or when assembling together with those of like precious faith to study and pray and give thanks for the Lord's goodness and mercies?

The still waters are contrasted with the rushing torrents of the mountain slope. They are not stagnant waters but rather smooth flowing so that the sheep can receive proper refreshment. The Hebrew meaning is water of quietness and Christ speaking in John 14:27 tells us "Peace I leave with you my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth unto you. Let not your heart be troubled neither let it be afraid". Alas! not all of the sheep have full confidence in the Shepherd and are fully resigned to have no will but His. Some are continually getting into trouble because they wander off into the desert straying far from the Shepherd. Only after difficult experiences do they return to the quietness offered.

"HE RESTORETH MY SOUL: HE LEADETH ME IN THE PATHS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS FOR HIS NAME'S SAKE."

"He restoreth my Soul" These words are amongst the most precious of this priceless Psalm. They are words that everyone of God's children will have been able to say on many occasions, We are often tempted and troubled by the world; this can lead us into lethargy and indifference and as a result we need our souls restored. If He alone was always followed and if His commands were instantly obeyed, we would not need this restoring.

In order that we may follow in His footsteps and become living sacrifices, holy, acceptable to God, our reasonable service, our Lord provides the right paths which are advantageous to our development in righteousness. These paths are not always easy, they can be difficult and trying. How fortunate are we that our Master has trod the pathway before us, so He knows of the difficulties, the dangers, the snares, the pitfalls by the way, so that we are not tried beyond our capabilities. He leads us not contrary to our wills but in harmony therewith, to prove what is good, next the acceptable, and finally the perfect will of God, as Paul tells us in Romans 12 :2 “Be not conformed to the world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.”

“YEA, THOU I WALK THROUGH THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH, I WILL FEAR NO EVIL: FOR THOU ART WITH ME; THY ROD AND THY STAFF THEY COMFORT ME.”

The whole of mankind is walking through this valley of death as the result of the sin of father Adam, living with the daily prospect of death. Adam had fallen from the mountain top of life, he lost his footing there and descended into the valley of the shadow of death. Mankind as a whole fear this valley as they can see no way of escape. Scientists have for years been trying to find the key to increasing our life span, looking for the fountain of youth, even to deep freezing of the human body in the hope one day of finding the secret to eternal life. Mankind’s journey through this valley is one of sickness, pain, sorrow, culminating in death. As the Apostle Paul states-Romans 8:22,19 “For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now .. waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God.” The world is yet to realise that only through Christ and his Church during the Millennial Age can they be lifted out of the “valley of the shadow of death”, back to the heights of light, love and Divine likeness.

The sheep however that hear the Shepherd’s voice and follow his directions, although still in the world, walking through this valley, learn to be neither careless nor anxious as they walk. Fear and tremblings, doubts and perplexities are replaced with the realisation that God through his Son has provided a way out of the valley of the shadow of death” He has assured us that death shall not mean extinction of life, but merely, until the resurrection, an undisturbed sleep in Jesus. As we are told in 1 Cor 15 :55 “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” No wonder then that the world looks upon these sheep with amazement as they pass through this valley singing, and rendering praise unto the Lord. They surely “fear no evil” as their shepherd has promised “I will never leave thee or forsake thee”

“Thy Rod and Thy Staff they comfort me” tells us of the ways in which God looks after us as we walk. The Shepherd’s crook or staff was used to assist the sheep out of difficulties, to defend it from its too powerful enemies and to chasten it when inattentive. The word staff means “a support, a stay.” The rod was also used to count the sheep to make sure all were present. How glad we are to know that all power in heaven and in earth is committed unto our Shepherd and that under both his protecting and correcting care we are safe from all foes, and nothing can by any means do us harm.

“THOU PREPAREST A TABLE BEFORE ME IN THE PRESENCE OF MINE ENEMIES”

The figure of the shepherd caring for his sheep is still before us in this verse, and it serves to illustrate the love and care of the Great Heavenly Shepherd for His people. A very important part of the Eastern shepherd’s duties would be that of preparing a suitable pasture for the sheep under his care. Not only must he find a supply of water, and plenty of the right kind of grass for the sheep, but he must also prepare the pasture in the sense of driving off the wild animals and reptiles which may be lurking around. The shepherd walking ahead of his sheep would be able to note any poisonous grasses and avoid such places; also the presence of snakes would be detected; and wolves and hyenas would need to be guarded against. How true of the Good Shepherd who provides the food for His trusting ones, but sees to it that no poisonous elements shall get into it. He sees to it that they are not injured thereby. The Good Shepherd has spread a table for his trusting sheep in this time in the very presence of enemies, but we need to listen and thus keep ourselves in his love and care, by earnest efforts to know and do his will.

“THOU ANOINTEST MY HEAD WITH OIL, MY CUP RUNNETH OVER”

Throughout the Psalm, the leading thought is that of the Lord’s love and care and interest in His people, illustrated by the figure of a shepherd caring for his sheep. The Psalm has sung the whole round of the day’s wandering—all the needs of the sheep, all the care of the Shepherd. Now we close with the final scene of the day. At the door of the sheepfold the shepherd stands, and he carefully inspects each sheep as they pass one by one before him into the fold. He has the horn filled with olive-oil and he has at hand a supply of Cedar-tar, and he anoints a knee bruised on the rocks, or a side scratched by thorns. If one is simply worn out and exhausted, he bathes its face and head in the refreshing olive-oil; he takes the large two-handled cup and dips it brimming full from the water he has brought for that purpose, and he lets the weary sheep drink. There is nothing finer in the Psalm than this. God’s care is not for the wounded only; it is for those who are just worn and weary, to the point that we can say his mercies and goodness are such that our Cup overflows, all our needs are fully

supplied.

“SURELY GOODNESS AND MERCY SHALL FOLLOW ME ALL THE DAYS OF MY LIFE”

These words seem to indicate the ending of the day's experiences, a realisation that the Shepherd's care has lead them safely through another day, and the feeling that while we too are under his watchful eye and obey his commands, we have safety and peace. The sheep have all been led home and are safely sheltered in the fold. David in reflection could see the pictures of his childhood experiences associated with the watching over of his father's sheep, and how these reflected the care Jehovah had shown him as he led him from his position as shepherd boy, through divine intervention, to become King of Israel and to grow old in service to his people and to Jehovah. His life had been a combination of various scenes, experiences both joyful and sorrowful. As he looked back over the long years of his earthly pilgrimage, memories of his life as a shepherd came to mind inspiring him to use these experiences, in caring for his sheep, to create this beautiful song telling of his own life of faith and trust in God.

The roles have been reversed, he no longer thinks of himself as the Shepherd, responsible for all the sheep's needs, but as one of the lowly sheep requiring the protection of the Great Shepherd, Jehovah. He tries to peer into the dim unknown future with a confidence brought about by a long experience. "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the (remaining) days of my life." Only one who had experience of trials and adversities, as well as the blessings that inevitably come in this life on earth, one who had come to realise the need of divine mercy and grace, could have written these words. These words describe the experience of learning good by coming in contact with evil, even at times being overcome by evil, realising that amid the scenes of human life, the only power to deliver us from evil comes through the goodness and mercy of the Lord.

The power to bless, to heal, to work deliverance, is expressed in the Psalm as coming not from man but from God. Every verse covers some aspect of God's dealings with those who put their trust in him. David firmly believed that Jehovah was deeply involved in every aspect of his life, that He was full of compassion for him, remembering him in his weakened fallen nature.

Who can define goodness? Applying goodness to man and his dealings with his fellow man is difficult, nearly impossible, to sum up in one word, but God's goodness to imperfect ones who fear and reverence Him is not measureable. His benevolence of heart is manifested in His gifts of grace, and his discipline.

Mercy is defined as that benevolence, mildness, tenderness, which disposes a person to overlook injuries or to treat an offender better than he deserves. It is the disposition that tempers justice and induces an injured person to forgive trespasses and injuries and to forbear punishment, or to inflict less than the law or justice will warrant. It is said that no word in our language precisely fits the meaning of mercy.

“AND I WILL DWELL IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD FOREVER”.

The shepherd's song is finished, the sheep are all at rest, safe in the good shepherd's fold, home at last.

To dwell in the house of the Lord forever will require a change. We have but temporary abode on earth waiting as strangers for our calling home to be with our Master in the Heavenly mansions or abodes, as some translate the word. This is the promise of Christ when He went away to prepare a place for his disciples. We can only imagine the joy that is set before us when we can dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

We realise more and more as we look back over the way, that He has been with us all the way during the sunny, days, cloudy days, days of joy, days of sorrow, days of trial, days of toil and days of weariness. Along with David we can say that surely goodness and mercy have followed us all the days of our lives and we look forward to dwelling in the house of the Lord forever.

RC: 1992

Crucified & Risen

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

“IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME”

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

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

So at this season, in remembrance of Him, Jesus our Saviour and Lord, we keep that simple Memorial service which He Himself instituted in that upper room, so long ago. We see again in the elements the giving of

His life, the shedding of His blood, ultimately for the blessing of all mankind, but here and now for all those who have ears to hear His loving “follow me.” Again we take to ourselves the merit of His blood and feast on Him who is the Bread of Life. We recall our privilege of following in His footsteps, to be dead with Him, of fellowship with Him in lives of obedience and sacrifice, and we renew our vows of consecration to His service.

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

“HE IS RISEN”

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

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

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

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

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

Note: It is planned to include the address “Resurrection for All” in our next issue.

Master, Speak!

Master, speak! Thy servant heareth,
Waiting for Thy gracious word,
Longing for the voice that cheereth;
Master, let it now be heard.
I am listening, Lord, for Thee;
What hast Thou to say to me.

Speak to me by name, O Master,
Let me know it is to me.
Speak that I may follow faster,
With a step more firm and free.
Where the Shepherd leads the flock
In the shadow of the Rock.

Master, speak, and make me ready,
When Thy Voice is truly heard,
With obedience, glad and steady



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The Mystery Of His Will

(A study of God's Plan in Ephesians 1)

(Contributed Article)

The Church at Ephesus was established by Paul 1 and his associates, as we have it recorded in Acts 19. It was established on Paul's second missionary journey, and then "God gave the increase". It progressed well — so much so that Paul saw good to write this very spiritual epistle to them. Yet, later on, as is seen in the message to this Church in Rev. 2:1, sadly, the progress was not maintained as it should have been, and this fact brought reproof from the One who walketh among the candlesticks.

This fact constitutes a warning to us that it is not sufficient that we run well for a while, but as runners in a foot-race today cannot win if the effort is not maintained, so with us, the effort must be maintained for the full length of the way if we are to win in the end.

After the usual greetings, the Apostle in verse 3 ascribes praise and honour to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. Blessed be the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ — or as one translation has it, Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has given us these spiritual blessings. "Spiritual" means non-carnal, that is not of fleshly or earthly kind. These spiritual blessings are only for the regenerate, for those begotten of the holy spirit of God; "the natural man understands not the things of the spirit of God, neither can he know them for they are spiritually discerned" — 1 Cor. 2:14.

The word "heavenly" means literally "above the sky", therefore refers to the celestial places, but the word is used figuratively here, not literally. "Heavenly places" are used to refer to what has been revealed to His people by the holy spirit and illustrated in the type — namely, in the Holy and the Most Holy of the Tabernacle.

At the present time, that is during this Gospel Age, the saints are depicted as in the Holy of the Tabernacle, eating of the shewbread — the word of God — and enjoying the light from the candlestick, which represents the light of the holy spirit illuminating the word of God, the shewbread. Thus they have meat (food) to eat the world knows not of. The incense of the golden Altar is for their benefit also, this incense representing the perfect sacrifice of Jesus; this incense of His making the sacrifice of his body members acceptable. Rev. 8:3, 4 says much incense is offered for, or with, the prayers (and sacrifices) of the saints, so that they should be acceptable to the Heavenly Father.

We note that some are made to sit together in heavenly places (or as the Diaglott says, "heavenlies"), *plural* in both instances, so the reference could be to that which was typified by the Holy and Most Holy places of the Tabernacle, the Holy being a type of the condition we enjoy now of being spirit-begotten sons of God, and the Most Holy representing our condition when born of the spirit, glorified together with our Head, "which hope we have as an anchor of the soul." That is the hope we have in view, and we hold it prospectively but with strong faith in Him who has promised it.

In verse 4, "We were chosen in him before the foundation of the world." God's plan was made *before* this time; He determined to have a spiritual class of the divine nature to be the bride of Christ, a new creation, *before* the foundation of the world. God did not devise His plan as he went along, that is as each contingency occurred. Even with His Son, it is written, that He was "the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world", and He planned for

the Body of Christ that they should be holy and without blame before Him. While it is probable that the reference here is to the time when the Church is glorified and with her Lord and standing before Him (“before” meaning directly in front of Him), yet there is a way by which his saints can be blameless before him now, in the sense in which Zacharias and Elizabeth, the parents of John the Baptist, were blameless in keeping the commandments of the Law — not faultlessly, but blamelessly when the imperfections of the flesh were taken into account.

Verse 5: Verse 4 ends “holy and without blame before him”. The words “in love” seem to belong to verse 5 (not to v. 4) as in the Diaglott — “Having *in love* previously marked *us* out for sonship through Christ Jesus for Himself according to the good pleasure of His (God’s) will.” The *Father’s* love is manifested by His love and mercy in making His plan this way; the *Son’s* love is manifest in giving His life for His bride. This meant great sacrifice on the part of both Father and Son. The Father gave His son, the dearest treasure of His heart; the Son gave all that He had, His life, for His bride.

The bride was a predestinated *class*, and the word means to limit in advance, to predetermine. The church, the bride, was a predetermined class, and Rev. 7:4 says the *number* was predetermined as 144,000. But they were not predetermined as individuals — they were a part of God’s plan *before* the foundation of the world.

The members were to have the spirit of sonship (the Diaglott translation of the verse) — a begetting of the holy spirit from the Father received at their consecration. However, this is only a begetting; we must live up to the terms of our consecration vow if we would be full sons and eventually be born on the spirit plane of being. We must pass the tests the Heavenly Father sends. Even our Lord Jesus had to be tested. “Though he were a Son (begotten at baptism) yet learned He obedience by the things He suffered.” He passed successfully every test the Father permitted, and later received glory and honour and immortality, the divine nature, as a reward. The saints also have this hope of the divine nature through faith in the merit of the sacrifice of God’s Son, Jesus.

So, as verse 6 says (Diaglott) — through the love of God “we have been graciously favoured in the beloved one.” We deeply appreciate God’s mercy and favour towards us, and yet in time to come after receiving the reward we will appreciate more fully His goodness when we are richly endowed with all the good things the Father has promised to them that love Him. But even now we rejoice in the sunshine of His grace. We have redemption through Christ’s blood, such deliverance from sin and Adamic condemnation being only for the Church now, but for all the faithful of mankind in the Millennial Age.

Passing on, verse 8 says that God caused the riches of his grace to abound towards us in all wisdom and prudence. “Abound” means to superabound, to be in excess, so we have the thought of good measure, pressed down, flowing over. Instead of “abound”, the Weymouth translation uses “lavished”. Reading verses 7, 8 and part of 9; “It is in Him and through the shedding of His blood that we have our deliverance, the forgiveness of our offence, so abundant was God’s grace, which He, the possessor of all wisdom and understanding, lavished upon us, when He made known to us the secret of His will.”

So God’s grace “has abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence” — prudence meaning mental action or activity, that is intellectual or moral insight. God, then, acted toward us in all wisdom in giving us such a good hope through grace, and also God, in thinking of a bride for His Son to live and reign with Him in the heavens, did so with all intellectual and moral insight and foresight. He acted not lightly, but with careful deliberation, because this class were to be given the reward of immortality.

Verse 9: “Having made known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself.” It gave God pleasure to do this, it gave Him satisfaction or delight as the word “pleasure” means. The word “mystery” means a secret-something known only to the initiated. And who are the initiated? We answer, those who have come into Christ by vowing to live as He did. It is to these only, the truly faithful, that the great hope of reigning with Christ as His joint-heirs is promised. They belong to a special class by consecration and the receiving of God’s holy spirit; we could say they belong to an exclusive order, a humble position now, but in time to come, glorious; but above all, useful. (2 Tim. 2:20, 21).

1 Pet. 1:8-12 speaks of this *so great salvation* being placed before the Church, such a salvation that holy men of old and even the angels searched the Scriptures for information concerning this so great salvation (Heb. 2:3). Then Col. 1:26,27 speaks of this same thing — “the secret which had been hid from ages and generations but is, now made manifest to the saints. To whom God would make known what is the fellowship of this secret (secret order) among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

So this so great salvation was the secret, and those called to it are to be a new creation, a new group or company in the heavens, possessing the divine nature and working for the uplift and blessing of all people under the headship of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in the Millennial Age. The Old Testament writers could not see or

understand some of the things they spoke of prophetically. No doubt Abraham wondered what the full significance of the promise to him meant when God said, In thee and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. In Hebrews 11:13, it says that, like others who lived before Christ, Abraham could not see clearly the fulfilment — he saw the fulfilment of the promise afar off, that is indistinctly.

The Apostle Paul was an instrument in God's hand in revealing the deep and hidden truths of God's word, and he deeply appreciated this favour as we see from the exultant way he has written here in Ephesians. Also in Rom. 16:25-26, he speaks of his privilege of "the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations (or people, Jews and Gentiles) for the obedience of faith."

Here Eph. 3:9-12 from Weymouth is good. This is "the stewardship of the truth which from all the ages lay concealed in order that the church might now be used (i.e. in time to come) to display to the powers and authorities in the heavenly realms the innumerable aspects of God's wisdom. Such was *the eternal purpose* which He had formed in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have this bold and confident access through faith in Him."

Verse 10: "In the dispensation of the fulness of times" — Here first of all we should note the basic meaning of "dispensation", which is "an administration of a household or estate, especially of a religious economy". It is God who has this administration to fulfil all His plans on time, that is at the fullness or completion of the time allotted for each feature of His plan. This word "dispensation", meaning "administration", when used as a verb means stewardship; so God has this stewardship, and He is a good and perfect steward of His economy. *Times* in this verse means set or proper times, as also in Gal. 4:4. "In the fullness of time God sent forth His son", and in the fullness of time God will gather all things together under Christ.

In verse 10, we are told that it is God's purpose to reunite all things under one head, even under the Anointed One (Diag.). Weymouth's translation says, "And this is in harmony with God's merciful purpose for the governments of the world when the times are ripe for it — the purpose which he has cherished in His own mind of restoring the whole creation to find its one Head in Christ; yes, things in heaven and things in earth, to find their one Head in Him."

We note that it is "all things in heaven and earth" that are to find their one head in Christ, and we find through the Scriptures (2 Pet. 3:12,13) that the present heavens or ecclesiastical powers are to be removed and a new heavens, Christ and the saints, are to be the new spiritual ruling powers. These shall teach mankind through the Old Testament saints, these forming the new power or authority on earth, and thus a new earth or society shall take the place of the old in this universe. Also, those spirit beings who are at present out of harmony with God will have to repent and serve God again, or be destroyed. (1 Pet. 3:17-20). So we see that restoring the whole universe to find its one Head in Christ will not be fully accomplished until the end of the Millennial Age, when Satan, and all the evil angels who do not reform, as well as the disobedient of mankind, will be destroyed in the second death.

Verse 11: In verse 10 the Apostle has spoken of all things being gathered together in Christ, and now in this verse he says that we share in this wonderful heritage of reuniting all things under Christ, having been chosen beforehand in accordance with the intention of Him whose might carries out in everything the counsel of His *own* will (Weymouth). God has no need to consult with others about His plans.

Verse 12: Those who have first trusted in Christ are the called and faithful of this Gospel Age. We could perhaps think of the Apostles as being special and worthy of additional praise, and certain individuals in the Church since, but it seems Paul had in mind the whole anointed company made up of members from both Jews and Gentiles. In speaking of those who first trusted in Christ, there is the inference that some will trust later, and so we are led to think of redemption for the world in the Millennial Age. The Church, the bride, are, as we have seen, a predestinated class, predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will, and it is to *these* God has given this prior hope that we should come into Christ, be incorporate in Christ.

This is to be a great honour to those who attain to such a position and condition of glory, honour and immortality. It is indeed! but what else is said here — that we should be to the *praise* of *his* glory. Let us note Weymouth's translation — "that we should be devoted to the extolling of his glorious attributes — we who were the first to fix our hopes in Christ." That rendering conveys a good thought — that we should be ever grateful for the love and benevolence of God who, through favour, grace — amazing grace, will grant us so high a favour or blessing, exalting the bride to be forever with Him in the heavens.

In verse 13 the word "sealed" should be noted; it means to stamp for security, or preservation, to keep secret. This seal is the holy spirit, and it is God who grants us the holy spirit; it is a secret sealing, unknown to the

worldly; it is for our preservation as new creatures. In the Diaglott it is called the spirit of the *promise*, as it came by promise of Jesus, who called it the comforter (John 16:7). Also it was promised in the Old Testament, in Joel 2:28-32, which was quoted by Peter in Acts 2:17 when he spoke of the initial giving of the spirit at that time.

In addition to the holy spirit being called a seal, in verse 14 it is called the earnest of our inheritance. The word “earnest” means a pledge or down payment, that is a payment in advance of the blessing to come to us when born of the spirit. It ensures our share in the inheritance of the saints with Christ Jesus our Head so long as we are faithful to our covenant of laying down our lives in God’s service as Jesus did — until the redemption (the ransom in full) of the purchased possession, i.e. the whole anointed company, the church, into the glory and honour promised as joint-heirs of Christ. In Heb. 9:15 the eternal inheritance is also mentioned, and Col. 3:23,24 adds — “whatsoever ye do (particularly service to the Lord) do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance, for ye serve the Lord Christ.”

Verse 14 ends with the phrase, “to the praise of His glory”, as does verse 12, and there we quoted Weymouth’s translation, “that we should be devoted to the extolling of God’s glorious attributes”. It could be added that that is a *present* as well as a future privilege. The motivating force which inspires this is that our God is a God of love, and therefore not selfish — love seeketh not her own. Long ago God was alone, and He wished to have company, and first of all He created his Son, the firstborn of all creation, but He did not create Him of, or in the form of His own immortal nature, for He had a plan for Him and would *later* grant Him the divine nature. But God wanted to have more than one with the immortal nature, He wanted to have a number, a family of his own nature, and in Revelation 7:4 it says 144,000 as noted before.

His Son was to be given the divine nature if He was willing to give his life in sacrifice for mankind in His Father’s plan. So as God knew mankind would fall into sin, the Father planned that His Son should die as a ransom for them, “ransom” meaning a price to correspond. (An angel could not have died as a ransom, because of a different and higher nature, and not of equal value.) Then God, by selecting others from amongst mankind to be exalted to live with Him, Christ Jesus, was able to display more fully His great traits of character, His love, His condescension. His magnanimity by stooping to call some of fallen mankind. In this way, God could display the grandeur of His character most effectively to the rest of mankind and also to the fallen angels, who could be moved to repentance by such an example. Thus in the ages to come the love of God will be the theme of the saints in glory and this theme, this great truth, the love of God manifest in his redeeming grace for *all* mankind who will be obedient, will inspire rejoicing and thankfulness in every redeemed heart in ages to come.

In verse 15, the Apostle Paul begins a prayer of thanks to God for this church. He prayed in a similar way on several occasions when writing to the churches he had been instrumental in establishing. To the church at Philippi he wrote, “I thank my God upon every remembrance of you. Always in every prayer of mine making request with joy, and that He which hath begun a good work in you shall perform it unto the day of Christ.” (Phil. 1:3-6). Yes, this great apostle felt the care of *all* the churches, and thanked God for them.

Verse 15 in the Diaglott reads, “On this account, I having heard of your faith” etc. This expression shows a connection with the previous verses, a reference to the magnitude of the reward, the inheritance set before the faithful followers of Christ, a reward due to all the faithful and elect when their course is fully run.

The Apostle in his prayer was desirous that the Ephesian church, having some knowledge of the great hope for the church, should continue to progress, and this prayer applies to us as well. While giving thanks to God for those at Ephesus who had heard the word so readily, and since hearing it had progressed so well, he desired earnestly that they should continue to progress in “the spirit of wisdom and revelation in (of) the knowledge of God.” Revelation means disclosure, and the Apostle desired that the disclosure or understanding of the deep truths of God’s word should be revealed to them more and more. (*This is the thought* in verses 15, 16 and 17.) Therefore, he says, on this account, or in view of the rich inheritance promised to the saints, they should be earnest in their endeavours to prove worthy and grow in grace and knowledge of God as each day goes by.

We must have the *wisdom* spoken of here, “the spirit of wisdom and revelation”. These things would not be given miraculously, but would need to be developed, and this would come only by the study of God’s Word and the indwelling of the holy spirit. We should not be content with the elementary things, with the milk of the Word, but seek the strong meat that we may grow thereby (1 Pet. 2:2). Col. 1:9 (Diaglott) is in harmony — Paul prayed for the Colossians, according to the Diaglott, “We do not cease praying on your behalf, that ye may be filled as to the exact knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.”

Verse 18, “The eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know (that is with all its value) what is the hope of His calling and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.” The Diaglott says,

“among the saints”. (see later comment).

Verses 19 and 20 continue according to the Diaglott translation, “And what the surpassing greatness of His power towards us who believe, according to the energy of His mighty strength which He exerted in the Anointed One, having raised Him from the dead, and having seated Him at His own right hand in the heavens” — such power being readily available to all His saints now to aid them in making their calling and election sure. Let us always realise this, and avail ourselves of that power, living as we are in the hour of temptation at the very end of this Gospel Age.

Verse 21: So our Saviour, God’s beloved son in whom he was well pleased, was greatly exalted by his Father; “He exalted him above all angels and archangels of every rank and above every name that can be named, whether in this present age or in the ages to come” (T.C.N.T.) Christ Jesus has become the high priest of good things to come, and we cannot visualise all the blessings He will bring either to His body members or to the world of mankind, but as verses 22 and 23 say, God has put all under His feet in His plan for Him, and has “constituted Him a head over all things for that congregation” which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all.” The words “fullness” and “filleth” are closely related words. Fullness meaning repletion or completion, and filleth meaning to make replete or complete. The Christ complete, the composite Christ — mediator, priest and king — will meet these requirements, for when the Christ head and body is complete, this feature of God’s plan will be replete, i.e. completely filled — the mystery or secret purpose of God will be finished — consummated. Will this not be the crowning feature of God’s eternal purpose? Is this not what God has desired to have, a new creation, to be joint-heirs with His Son and of the same divine nature?

So we may think of God as a father and head of a family, a great king dwelling contentedly with a retinue of helpers gladly and willingly carrying out his purpose for the blessing of all mankind. The Diaglott translation of verse 18 supports this view, where it says “God’s inheritance *among* the saints”. This is what God has desired, a blessing and pleasure and an inheritance reserved for Himself. Psalm 132:13,14 tells of this, “For the Lord hath chosen Zion (the church), He hath desired it for His habitation. This is my rest forever, here will I dwell, for I have desired it.”

Verses 15 -18 of that Psalm go on to speak of the blessings to be dispensed to the world in the Millennial Age. “I will satisfy her poor with bread, I will clothe her priests with salvation, and her saints shall shout aloud for joy. There I will make the horn (power) of David (the Christ, the antitypical David) to bud. I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed (a lamp of light and truth). His enemies I will clothe with shame (they will look to him whom they pierced, Zech. 12:10) but upon him (Christ) the crown shall shed its lustre” (R.S.V.). And rightly so, as He is the one who in the Father’s plan made these blessings possible to the church and all mankind.

So we praise God from our hearts for the unspeakable gift of His beloved Son, sent forth to be a ransom for all, this truth to be called to the attention of all in God’s due time. (WJH: 1992)

The First 75 Years

This issue completes 75 years of publication 1 of “Peoples Paper — and Herald of Christ’s Kingdom”. When the first issue came out in 1918, those responsible could hardly have envisaged such a milestone being reached but in the Lord’s providence this ministry has continued until now.

Over the years, the People’s Paper has been a means of contact and blessing to Christian brethren and friends in Australia and overseas, with reports of convention and other addresses, articles on doctrinal and devotional topics, personal reports, etc. and for this, thankful praise is given to our gracious Heavenly Father, who has provided at all times, through His people, for the maintenance of this and the other activities of the Berean Bible Institute.

Though there were evidently two earlier issues, the starting point for the present Peoples Paper seems to have been the issue dated June 1918, numbered Vol. 1, No. 1. All subsequent issues are numbered from this one, which outlined the background to the establishment in that year of what is now the Berean Bible Institute. The Mission of Peoples Paper, as stated in the June 1918 issue, is reprinted hereunder.

For the present, it seems to be the Lord’s will that the publication of Peoples Paper should be continued, and the prayers of the Lord’s people are sought for His guidance and His blessing of this ministry, realising that “unless the Lord build the house, they labour in vain who build.”

Mission of Peoples Paper (from Vol. 1, No. 1, June 1918)

The mission of “Peoples Paper” will be to be a comfort and encouragement to the people of God and to proclaim the glad tidings of the coming Kingdom of Christ to all people. The intention will be to “speak the truth in

love”, so that even where difference of thought with others may be expressed, it will seek not to offend, but to reason along scriptural lines with hope of attaining unity in the faith once delivered to the Saints.

Unto You Is Born a Saviour

Once more we are coming to that season of V the year when, with many around the world, our hearts especially turn again to the birth of our dear Saviour as the Babe of Bethlehem.

How beautifully that careful researcher, Luke, has recorded for us the events leading up to and including that time. In his gospel account, we read of Zacharias and Elizabeth, “righteous before God”, to whom was to be born John, the “prophet of the Highest” and the herald of our Saviour. Here we learn of the wondrous announcement of the angel to Mary, the one “highly favoured of the Lord”, and listen to her heartfelt song of praise to God.

“And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary, for thou has found favour with God, and behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Highest, and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David.” Luke 1:30-32.

Following Jesus’ birth, Luke invites us out into the fields and with the shepherds we hear again that wondrous message: “Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people, for unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. ‘ Luke 2:10,11. What a message! Announced to a few simple shepherds but of import and ultimate blessing to all mankind.

Later, Luke takes us with Mary and Joseph and the newborn child up to the temple with their simple offering and we hear the gracious and prophetic words of the aged Simeon: “Mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.” Luke 2:30-32. Here too we meet Anna, prayerful, dutiful prophetess and listen to her speak of Jesus and redemption in Jerusalem.

In such circumstances, our dear Saviour came into our world. While we need must look forward and realise the purpose of his coming as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, and recall all that it entailed in suffering before final victory, yet for a while, with Luke and with Matthew also, may we reflect again on the lovely story of our Saviour’s birth, and be thankful to God for His unspeakable Gift.

Christlikeness - The Evidence of Sonship

“He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk even as he walked “ — 1 John 2:6

To abide in Christ implies that one has first come into him. This gives us the thought of a body. The Scriptures everywhere represent the church as being this body, with Jesus as the Head. “God gave him to be Head over the church, which is his body.” During the Gospel age an invitation has been given to certain persons to be of this body of Christ. There is only one door by which these may come into the body. It is the door of sacrifice, baptism into Christ’s death. We are accepted only by giving up our own will, and taking instead the will of God. We pledge ourselves to walk in Jesus’ steps, to become his followers, his disciples. We are buried with him and rise to walk in newness of life. — Romans 6:4.

But it is not sufficient that we take these steps, not sufficient that we have received the holy Spirit, and have been accepted of the Father. We should be sure that we continue to abide in Christ. Let us ask ourselves, Are we having the experiences common to all who are associated with Jesus? One of the ways to be sure that we are abiding in him is to realize that we still love him. Another is to know that we are still in harmony with God’s Word. A third way is that we have no will but the Lord’s will. Still another is to have his peace in our hearts and lives as the ruling and controlling influence.

Profession Insufficient

Many have made a profession of being members of the body of Christ who do not give evidence of being his. Our text says that any one who professes to be in Christ ought so to walk even as the Master walked. And how did the Master walk? He lived daily in harmony with the will of the heavenly Father. He was fully submissive to the Father’s will. And this meant sacrifice unto death — the cruel death of the cross.

Whoever has our Lord’s spirit, and is controlled by the same will, is a member of the body of Christ, and will seek to walk after this fashion, to do the will of God in all things. This will mean a walk of holiness, of full devotion to God, and of opposition to sin. Whoever is consecrated to God is opposed to every sinful thing; for God and sin are in opposition. God stands for his own righteousness, and sin is a violation of that righteousness. (1

John 3:4). Whoever walks as Jesus walked is in harmony with the divine Word and will. We are not to trust to our impressions, our own conceptions of what is right and advantageous, as many others do; but the Word of the Lord is to abide in us, and to govern our lives. Jesus said, “I came not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me” — “everything written in the Book.” And so it is to be with us. We must abide in him, walk in him, and be willing to do “everything written in the Book” — not merely forcing ourselves to it, saying, I will take this course; but saying, “I delight to do thy will, O my God; thy law is written in my heart.” — Psa. 40:7,8.

Proofs of Sonship

All who have accepted Christ claim, in a general way at least, to be sons of God, that Christ is their Elder Brother, and that they belong to this great family that God is selecting from the sons of men. They consider themselves heirs with Christ to the great kingdom to come. But not all who claim to be sons of God are such. A great many are making this claim. Statistics tell us that there are millions of professed Christians; but we cannot think that many of these millions are sons of God. The Apostle Paul calls our attention to the fact that since we cannot read the hearts we must go by the professions which others make by mouth and by conduct. But professions of the mouth are not to be taken as final. We know that those who are sons of God will be led by his Spirit. “As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.”

God’s children, begotten of his holy Spirit, will make some manifestation of their harmony with this general Spirit of God. If they are, therefore, walking in unrighteousness, making no endeavour to stem the tendencies of sin in themselves, if they prefer error rather than truth, their fruits condemn them; for God stands for truth, as was exemplified in our Lord Jesus.

Whoever, therefore, has the Spirit of God, is willing to sacrifice himself that he may serve the truth. He loves the truth, and will manifest this fact by the spirit of love and zeal. Satan is the personification of sin, envy, hatred, malice, strife. Righteousness, love, joy, peace, are fruits of the holy Spirit. Wherever we see the works of the devil manifested we have reason to question that such a one is a child of God. The spirit of envy, the spirit of hatred, the spirit of malice, the spirit of opposition to the truth, the spirit of unrighteousness — these are to be repudiated and overcome by all who would be sons of God.

Yet despite one’s best efforts, he might still find in his flesh tendencies to sin which would give him a great deal of trouble. He may take courage for the assurances of the Scriptures that the Lord looketh on the heart. Likewise in regard to others, we should judge according to the endeavour, the intention. Wherever the Spirit of God is, there is the spirit of love. And this spirit will make one wish to make reparation, if he has done wrong or been in error. To do so shows that it was not his spirit, his will to do wrong, but that he was merely entrapped for a time. But one who continues to do according to his natural tendencies, with no evidence of going in the right direction and of serving the truth, has reason to doubt that he is a child of God.

Walk As He Walked

The Apostle’s thought seems to be that those who profess to be the Lord’s followers, profess to be Christians, should see to it that their walk in life is in harmony with their profession. The word disciple signifies one who follows — as a pupil follows his teacher. We recognize Christ as our Redeemer and also as our Pattern, our Instructor, in the glorious things which the Father has invited us to share with our Saviour. If, therefore, we say that we are in him, this profession should be borne out by our walk in life. We should walk as he walked.

But we are not perfect — how can this be done? The answer is that we “are not in the flesh, but in the spirit.” God does not look upon our imperfect flesh. As New Creatures we are not fleshly beings, but spiritual. The Apostle is in our text speaking of that walk that the Master had after he made consecration. He walked in this way three and a half years. It was a walk, not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. And so with us. We are walking, not according to the flesh, but according to the new creature. We reckon ourselves dead according to the flesh, and the Lord so reckons us. If then, we are dead to the flesh, we are not to walk according to the desires of the flesh.

We are to walk as our Lord walked, in our general deportment. We are to love everything that is good and to avoid everything that is evil. We are to walk as nearly as possible in the footsteps of our Lord and Exemplar. We cannot in an imperfect body walk up to all the perfection of Jesus, who was perfect in his flesh as well as in his spirit. But we are to walk as he walked — in the same path, in the same direction, toward the same glorious goal toward which he walked. And so doing, faithful day by day, we shall by his grace attain the same exceeding great reward.

Pure In Heart

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they Shall see God.” Matt. 5:8.

The sixth of the Beatitudes calls for “purity 1 of heart” in all who would attain to the greatest blessings God has to bestow; purity of heart — purity of motive, of intention, of effort, of will — purity in the sense of sincerity, of transparency, of truthfulness.

The thought of “pure in heart” is not perfection of conduct nor of word, nor of thought, but perfection of intention as respects all of these. Our desire and effort must be for perfection — in thought, word and deed. The standard before us to which our hearts, our wills, must give assent is the divine standard. “Be ye perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect.” (Matt. 5:48) God has set no lower standard than this absolute perfection, but he has provided for us grace, mercy and peace through Christ, if we will walk in his footsteps, — this purity of heart being one of the essential steps in the narrow way.

Only the pure in heart have the promise of seeing God. They continue faithfully to the end of the pilgrimage, not only attaining the likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ in the present life (Rom.8:29) in their purity of heart, purity of intention, sincerity of their efforts toward God and men, but eventually according to the Lord’s promise, they shall, by the power of the first resurrection, be changed from earthly to heavenly, spiritual conditions. Then, as the Apostle declares, “we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.” And when we have thus become changed to be like the glorious Son of God, who is “the express image of the Father’s person,” we shall be able also unquestionably to see the Heavenly Father himself, and shall be introduced to him by our dear Redeemer — “complete in him,” without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.” — 1 John 3:2; Heb. 1:3; Eph. 5:27; Col. 2:10.

In this, as in the other blessings, a portion, a foretaste comes in the present life. There is such a thing as having the eyes of our understanding opened, that we may be enabled to “comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ.” (Eph. 3:18) But not all have this opening of the mental eye; not all are privileged to see the glories of Jehovah’s character in symmetrical harmony, divine justice, wisdom, love and power co-ordinated and co-operating in unison for the blessing of every creature, according to the purpose which God purposed in himself before the world was.

But who may enjoy this blessing, this clearer vision, and who may, by seeing it, be enabled more and more to grow in likeness of that glorious perfection? Only “the pure in heart,” only the sincere, the honest-hearted. Those who have a double mind, a double will, are Scripturally said to have a double vision, a double eye. They see spiritual things proportionately indistinctly. Many of God’s people have failed thus far to grow up into Christ in all things, they see something of the heavenly things, and something of the earthly; they see but dimly and indistinctly the lines of the divine character, and proportionately they lack ability to copy it. Let all who have named the name of Christ seek more and more to have but the one Master, and an eye single to his glory and service — a pure, a sincere, a faithful heart.

“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no one shall see the Lord’ Heb. 12: 14

O, Let my love be such to Thee,
That I may ever grateful be
To suffer stigma, brand or shame,
And count it honour for Thy Name
Who didst so much for me.



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Seek Ye First the Kingdom

Matt. 6:33.

(Convention Address)

Our Lord had come to fulfil the Law and to open up “a new and living way” to eternal life. This way to life, while requiring a higher standard than that of the Law, would be a way by which life could be gained, because provision was made for the imperfections of the flesh, so that the heart and will would be accepted instead of actual perfection of word and deed.

John the Baptist had realised his privilege of introducing the Bridegroom, saying, “He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.” He was quite content to realise himself merely as the friend of the Bridegroom. He was not part of the Bride, no, just the friend of the Bridegroom, the one introducing Him. Our Lord confirmed this in Matt. 11:11.

Up to that time Israel as a nation had represented God’s kingdom — an earthly kingdom. From that time the heavenly kingdom was proclaimed. “The kingdom of heaven is at hand” was the message at that time. “The law and the prophets were until John.” A new age was now commencing, during which time the Israel of God, the Church, would be chosen to be joint-heirs with Christ, to bless all the families of the earth. The Lord was then present, directing the closing-down of the Law dispensation. As the “Lord of the Harvest,” His fan was in His hand to thoroughly purge His floor, gathering true Israelites into the garner, the chaff to be burned up in the “wrath to the uttermost”.

The New Way

Jesus explained the principles which would prove whether or not a follower was really an overcomer, and worthy to be a sharer in the Kingdom. While the principles of God’s throne are always righteousness and truth — justice — yet the new way of harmony or at-one-ment with God was different from the way which was offered under the Law. There was no fault to be found with the law itself. It was holy and good; yet by the deeds of the law no man could be justified. The righteousness of the law was unattainable by poor, frail humanity, weakened by the fall, seeking but ever failing to attain to the righteousness which was required. Paul describes the pitiable condition of even the conscientious Jew under the law — Rom. 7. 1425.

Here, then, was the way out, as Paul declares (Gal. 3:13), “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law.” “He was born under the law that He might redeem them also under the law.” The Law (he says) was our school-master to bring us to Christ. That is, the Law proved that man, by his own works, even under the favourable conditions of God’s Law, could not attain righteousness. “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith.” (Heb. 10: 20-22.)

It was this new and living way, with its heavenly hopes and spiritual life, “glory, honour and immortality,” as a reward for faithfulness that Jesus came proclaiming, and inviting the “Israelites indeed” to enter.

In this kingdom of heaven which was proclaimed, they were to sacrifice the selfish ambitions of the world, and seek the spiritual things, not by way of the Law, which was by works, but by a new and living way, which was

justification by faith; not the righteousness which is of the Law, but that which is by the faith of Jesus Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith. (Gal. 2:16).

So we are not to seek to justify ourselves by any good deeds we might be able to do, but seek first the kingdom **of** heaven and its righteousness, which is by faith. That does not mean, however, that we are to be careless about good works. While realising that “Nothing in our hands we bring, Simply to Thy cross we cling,” our faith in Christ would be dead if we did not strive to walk as He walked, and to speak as **He** spoke, and thus show our faith by our works.

Consecration

During this Gospel Age it has only been “such as the Lord our God doth call” that could seek the kingdom. We were all born in sin and shapen in iniquity, and it was in the Lord’s grace that we were led to realise our need for the Saviour, and to long to be at peace with God and free from sin. When thoroughly longing for holiness and to be right with God, it was impressed upon our minds that this was the thing of first importance, “to seek first the kingdom.” It was only as we came to recognise God’s mercy in Christ in providing the means for our justification that we found the peace and joy of reconciliation with God.

This however, did not gain for us the kingdom. Thus far we had sacrificed nothing. Certainly, we had turned away from sin and determined to live a good life as far as we possibly could. But now comes the invitation, to “take up the cross and follow Christ,” to deny ourselves, to offer ourselves in full consecration to God, devoted like Jesus to do God’s will even unto death. This is a great step to take; to be willing to be nothing — **to** be counted, as Paul says, as the offscouring of the world — to suffer persecution, to be ignored, misunderstood, and to suffer loss for Christ’s sake, **to** die daily, to be dead with Christ, to endure just whatever the Lord may permit **to** come to us.

From a human viewpoint the true Christian life is not inviting, but even the appreciation of the loving sacrifice given to redeem us from death would lead the grateful heart to say, “Lord, I am thine, entirely thine.” “**I** am not my own, I am bought with a price, the costly blood of Thy dear Son. **It** is but the reasonable thing to do to give myself entirely to Thee, so here **I** give myself, it is all that I can do.”

Patient Continuance

However, the kingdom is not gained by our consecration, our promise to do God’s will even unto death. **It** is one step, but our whole contract must be carried out. Our consecration is but the entry to the race, we must so run as to obtain. **It** is but the beginning of the good fight **of** faith. We must so fight, not as one who beats the air, but as one in deadly earnest, beating down every stronghold of error in our hearts and minds, casting down every vain imagination, and bringing every thought into the obedience of Christ.

It was comparatively easy to seek first the kingdom of God and its righteousness, which is of faith and not of works of the law, but it **is** more difficult to keep all of our thoughts, words and doings in line with this standard, “Seek first the kingdom.” How is it that there is danger of losing our first love? Our love responded to the Lord’s invitation, “Seek ye my face,” with the words, “Thy face, Lord, **I** will seek”. **It** is one thing to express such love and zeal when filled with a sense **of** God’s love, but our faith and love must be able to stand the stress of trial.

We must, like our Master, learn obedience and be prepared in the fire of experience; we must prove our loyalty under the severity of adverse circumstances. We must have a perfected character which will be true to our duties and obligations. We have a good number of obligations, to our families, towards husband or wife, to parents, and so on. Many have obligations to employers, all indeed have daily obligations to others and there is a test going on as to our loyalty to our various obligations. “Loyalty” is a beautiful word. There is a great loss of loyalty in the world around us today, but as the Lord’s people we should be loyal to each other, as members of one body, seeking to uphold one another for the glory of our Head. Our character is to be proved, our loyalty, by how we meet these tests.

Character is proved in all the small affairs of our daily lives; the place where it is developed, and where it may be manifested and proved and tested in the best way is in our homes — how we are living there. Are we seeking to manifest the law of gentleness and love and peace and joy towards each other? The **Lord is** watching us to see just how we are doing things, whether **His** love is filling our hearts more and more, and finding expression **in** all our thoughts, and words, and doings. How we need to have that Christianity which is just as careful of our conduct in our homes as in public. We should have the loyalty to principle that will enable us to live for Christ just where we are placed.

In this way, then, the Lord is permitting us to be tested; our faith is being proved. We need to remember that

“like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth those that reverence Him.” He knows our frame, and just how the trial of our faith is going on. This trial, as Peter says, is more precious than gold, and the Lord is patiently watching in loving interest to see how well we are standing the test; watching to see us victorious, overcomers. He is watching if we are seeking first “the kingdom of God and its righteousness.” There are so many pitfalls, other interests and pleasures, that our great enemy will take every advantage of, to blot out our one great aim.

We have all, no doubt, repeatedly resolved to more earnestly make God first in everything, and no doubt also have been astonished to realise how much we have come short, how often have failed, and allowed self to come in. Many inducements are held out which may prove our undoing. We must judge ourselves in these matters, and correct ourselves. Only if we keep God first shall we obtain the kingdom. How serious is the warning in Heb. 2:1-3! Dare we neglect so great salvation!

While we have so much to encourage us in promises of grace and strength for every time of need all along the way, and of so great a reward, how serious is our position if we have put our hand to the plough and look back. Our Lord counsels us to “remember Lot’s wife.” How trivial are the things that cause some to look back! We counted the cost when we made our consecration, and signified in the waters of baptism our willingness, our desire, to be “dead with Christ.” Having made that stand, shall we allow the drawings or the allurements of the world or the flesh or angels to prevent us from seeking God first? All is lost if we turn again to the doomed city, as did Lot’s wife. How much then it really means to us — even the loss of all if we lose this chief aim of our life.

God First

As each year passes, our text verse might well go with us, to help us to examine ourselves. Could we have a standard as good as this which the Lord gave at the beginning of His earthly ministry, at the opening up of the call or invitation? “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.” O, that nothing, nobody, come between — God has a right to our whole attention, all our talents, all our wealth, all our powers of mind and body. When He says, “My son, give me thine heart,” He is asking for His own; yet He is not demanding our consecration. He has however privileged us with the most gracious and wonderful call, the invitation to become joint-heirs with Christ in His kingdom.

God Himself has pledged to take care of those who will go with Him. It is for us daily to remember our great aim — seeking first the kingdom; God to be first in everything. No one else has loved us so much, no one has such claim on our hearts, our love. Even in adversity and under the deepest clouds of distress, it is to be God first. Although He may permit affliction and gloom as a trial of our faith, He is watching to see us victorious. Soon the sunshine of His face will dispel the clouds and comfort our hearts, and bring us joy and peace. (P.P. 2/1940)

Watchfulness and Obedience

“Come, My people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee; hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the Lord cometh out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.” — Isa. 26:20, 21.

The greatest comfort which God’s people enjoy is based upon their appreciation of their real and close relationship to Him as their Father and to Christ Jesus as their Redeemer and Head. Without such knowledge it is impossible to estimate the true value of God’s Word, and equally impossible to draw from it the help, instruction, and directions which it contains.

Our text suggests at once by its confidential tone that those so addressed do stand in this true and loving relationship to Him. “Come, My people,” speaks of His tenderness and loving care for those who recognize their continual need of the Divine protection. For such,

*“There is an eye that never sleeps
Beneath the wing of night;
There is an ear that never shuts
When sink the beams of light.”*

Every true earthly father invariably gives the closest attention to the interests and persons of his children, and always provides means and suggestions for their safety, both for mind and body; and the father of experience should always be able to do so with a measure of success. But the Heavenly Father transcends in knowledge, foresight, and skill all human capability, and He sees just where the danger lurks and advises or commands as the need arises.

The Prophet's words in our text indicate two things — a place of safety and a time of great danger. The commanding voice of the Lord is there heard through the Prophet's lips, yet the tones are the softened ones of true parental love, saying, "Come, My people, enter thou into thy chambers."

It is appropriate here to ask, Can we with any accuracy locate the time or period to which this prophecy may be applied? Shall we look for it in Isaiah's day only, or does the picture point us still further? No doubt a large proportion of Old Testament prophecies link themselves to their immediate environment at the time of their utterance, and as a noted writer says, "In such cases (and they are very numerous) the literal application is the true spiritual one."

Many unwise and unproductive efforts have been made to spiritualize practically all the best of the prophetic utterances and thus to "heap upon the Jew all the curses, and transfer to the Christian dispensation all the blessings." Surely such treatment cannot be "rightly" dividing the word of truth." It should not be difficult for Bible students to decide after examination where to place or apply such prophetic lines as bespeak the work, the sorrows, or the joys of the experiences of God's people — prophecies which may well refer to ages future from the prophets' days. An example of such prophecy, surely lies before us in our text, which closes the 26th chapter of Isaiah.

In That Day

The phrase which opens this beautiful section of Scripture would well support this view. It says "In that day" certain gracious favors will have been received by some of God's people and responding acclamations will be accorded to Him; and if we compare the other many references to "that day" we shall be obliged to carry the prophetic words in many instances forward to the time when God shall begin gathering His people to Himself and destroying "them which destroy the earth".

The Prophet Isaiah was one of a minority who maintained the faith of Abraham, approved the Law of Moses, and looked for the consolation of Israel. He knew by heart all details of God's faithfulness to His people from the day that He brought them out of Egypt; and the Prophet's business here was to enthuse the mind of the few faithful ones, who were living in silent semi-isolation, among a decaying and faithless nation. No doubt his message was a means at that time of reviving the hope and cheering the hearts of many; though the real beauty and the far-reaching effect of the message were to be seen and felt in far future times, by those for whom it was written, "Shut thy doors about thee; hide thyself as it were for a little moment."

It is indeed for us that these bright beams of heavenly light have been projected through the ages, in order that we may be in a watchful attitude and hence be enabled to render obedient service to our Lord.

In the Secret of His Presence

Without doubt, when the Prophet's mind was thus pondering the vivid picture of Israel's great deliverance out of Egypt that eventful night, and conjuring up all the wondrous details which Moses had faithfully handed down, he broke forth under the Holy Spirit's influence into the beautiful words of our text, reminding his hearers again that the only place of safety was "in the secret of His presence" — "the secret place of the Most High."

That night in Egypt and its calamitous ending for Egypt was marked by a peculiar inactivity on the part of God's typical people. No one, not even the leader of Israel, was asked to take part in the destruction. No one of Israel was asked for advice, and as far as we know no one of Israel did take part or give advice. Here, then, is a lesson on watchfulness and obedience for us. Should not we be at least equally as careful as they, in observing the Lord's ways and requirements in this our day? The words of Isaiah quoted above seem full of added meaning when we contemplate the passover night.

No words could have been better framed, nor echo more fittingly the instructions which Moses enjoined that night: "Go thou in Israel, for behold Jehovah cometh out!" Israel was safely housed and protected, while Egypt reaped a whirlwind of sorrow. Nor could the Divine love have been better expressed: "When I see the blood, I will pass over you" — I shall know you are inside, watchful and obedient. And the Prophet echoes, "Come, My people, enter in" — remain in the secret place till instructed to come out.

This same beam of prophetic light shows us also that a night is fast approaching; indeed, it has well set in, and it is for us to hide ourselves in the secret place, and be sure not to be found among the disobedient in earth's present danger zone. For surely the greatest deliverance of all is imminent, in which God will complete the number of His elect who have cried day and night unto Him. This great deliverance will be carried out under the instructions of our Lord, earth's new King, and He will marshal them safely into the heavenly and true Canaan of rest, even in the First Resurrection. An abundant entrance is guaranteed to the faithful. — 2 Peter 1:11.

Though centuries had passed since the momentous night in Egypt, in Isaiah's mind the events and details of that great deliverance were as fresh as ever; but with the majority of Israel they were long forgotten and treated as idle tales.

As a result obedience and watchfulness toward their God was at a discount. So today, many who should be on the alert to watch for the Lord's guidance and to give instant and careful obedience to all His minute instructions, are either oblivious of the true issues and carelessly cutting adrift from the anchor of hope, or are being feverishly hurried into unauthorised activities, foreign to the original God-given instructions.

In illustration, suppose a great fire occurs in one of our great cities. How quickly there arrives upon the scene the well equipped and experienced staff with all their modern means for coping with the conflagration. How unwise would any citizen be who would interfere with their work or dare to instruct them. The citizens' place or duty on such occasions is to be out of the way and not in the way. So when the great God of truth and righteousness rises up to quench the fires of human passion, or to reverse the picture, when the "fire of His jealousy" is ignited for the destruction of all His opponents, for the disintegration of every work of evil, and for the disarming of all the forces of error and darkness, where should His people be? Surely, says the Prophet, "hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast, for the Lord cometh out," etc.

Why was it necessary in Isaiah's day to warn the typical people so seriously? Because the proprieties of the true worship, both in time and methods, had been long neglected, and innovations of unholy character had prostituted the truth; hence Jehovah's movements and work were unseen and unheeded.

Taking Heed to God's Word

In further illustration, how much sorrow would the beloved David have avoided if both he and the priests with him had given more heed to the detailed instructions of God's law through Moses. They would have avoided the error of bringing the ark to Jerusalem — a right thing in the wrong way — they would have avoided pushing the work of God forward by unlawful and worldly methods. So again, when David devised his plan to build a house to the Lord — a right thing at a wrong time — disappointment would have been saved had he been more careful in ascertaining the Lord's mind correctly.

Many since David's day, right down to the present, have been actively engaged in more or less extensive though questionable methods of forwarding the great work for human deliverance with the paraphernalia of human schemes; and to that end they have vainly endeavoured to build a house of God in which they might secure the "ark" and thus claim for their own particular community, sect, or organization the sole right to give forth the Divine decrees and thus be (or claim to be) the only true source of light, etc.

All who are deceived by such are bound to lose ground and become deficient both in obedience and watchfulness, giving heed to seducing spirits rather than to the Lord's directions.

The Rest of Faith

God's people still must walk by faith; faith's "doors" must be closed around them, and within those closed doors only will they remain safe and unharmed. While the world is full of sorrow and doubt and apprehension of the future, the Lord's people are calm and content. Neither should they take part in anything which would irritate or annoy their fellow creatures, whose cup of sorrow is already overfull. We can well afford to wait, and with Solomon can truly say, "There hath not failed one word of all His good promise." (1 Kings 8:56.)

We may know with confidence that no necessary information will be withheld from those who with watchfulness and obedience are awaiting the Lord's command, through the antitypical Moses—the present Lord—to "go forward." Let us not attempt to emerge from our hiding place until we are fully assured of His voice and of the nature of His command.

Estimating Costs

(Luke 14:28)

(Young People's Address)

Younger brothers and sisters often have to face major decisions in their teens, and twenties, with perhaps very little knowledge, and without the benefit of previous experience. This is the time when many decide on a professional career, get married, start families, and make other decisions which affect them to more or less degree for life. Some may also start considering the most important matter of all, a decision which not only affects them at the time but also in the future. That decision is whether or not, or when, they should make a commitment and

consecrate their lives to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Whenever we make any important decision, there are always many questions we need to answer. For a moment imagine embarking on a business venture. You and your business partners will sit down and try to work out every conceivable detail of the project, such as

1. what are the objectives
2. what should be the plan of action
3. when is the best time to commence the project
4. what benefits should you expect from it
5. how secure is the project
6. what are your liabilities should something go wrong

The project will also involve some considerable costs, and you hope to have sufficient resources to cover them, so the next thing to do is to sit down with a sheet of paper and make a vertical line down the middle. On one side you write down all the things that will need to be paid for, your risks and liabilities and your best estimate of how much they are likely to cost you. On the other side of the line you list all the assets you have at your disposal, including any credit that you perhaps have been given. Then you add up each of the two columns and the relationship between the totals will indicate either the likely success or failure of the entire project.

Our Lord Jesus Christ encourages us to prepare a similar balance sheet when we are considering following in His footsteps, so let us turn to our key text — Luke 14:28-30: “Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.” (N.I.V.)

We read in this chapter (Luke 14) that there were large crowds following Jesus. Many of them had different reasons for doing so, no doubt some wanted to listen to His teaching, some because Jesus would feed them when they became hungry (see John 6:26), while others hoped to catch Him saying or doing something that would be unlawful. But to all those who truly want to become His disciples, He has a word of caution: “Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me, and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.” Matt. 10:37,38.

Our Lord does not wish to deliberately turn anyone away, He just does not wish us to be misled into thinking that being His disciple is going to be without any personal sacrifices. Other records of His words confirm this:

(a) Matt. 7:13,14 “Enter through the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.”

(b) Matt. 10:22,24,25 “All men will hate you because of me. A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master... if the head of the house has been called Beelzebub, how much more the members of his household.”

(c) John 16:1-3 “All this I have told you so that you will not go astray. They will put you out of the synagogue, in fact a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is doing a service to God. They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me.”

It is difficult for younger Christians to imagine this kind of persecution, especially in so-called civilised countries, but only our Heavenly Father knows to what kind of tests each one as an individual may be put in the future. In Luke 21, Jesus speaks of the times of the end: “Before all this, they will lay hands on you and persecute you. They will deliver you to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name... and they will put some of you to death. All men will hate you because of me. (vv.12,16,17)

The apostle Peter in his first letter also mentions suffering: “Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the suffering of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when His glory is revealed”. 1 Peter 4:12,13. How skilfully he counterbalances the suffering and pain of trials and the glory and honour which are to follow. In 1 Peter 1:6,7 we read further: “though now for a little time you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials, these have come so that your faith — of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire — may be proven genuine and may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed.”

The importance of weighing up carefully the costs of following Jesus before such a serious step is taken is shown by His words in Luke 9:62, “No one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.” To turn back after once being fully enlightened by God will result in very great loss. For our occasional human mistakes and failures, however, full provision has been made, “if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness... if anybody does sin, we have One who speaks to the Father in our defence — Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.” 1 John 1:9, 2:1.

Returning to our key text, which is about estimating costs, we note that it does not just end with adding up costs. Jesus tells us to do this, but then to compare the costs with the resources we have. Considering these will be far more encouraging; for a start let us turn to a favourite verse — John 3:16: “For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.” There is nothing new to tell about Christ’s great atoning sacrifice; it is indeed the great resource that we should use on our balance sheet. Without this resource, no further work could commence, no sacrifice of our own could be accepted.

Jesus invites us: “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me. For I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” Matt. 11:28-30. Further He assures us: “Whoever comes to me I will never drive him away.” John 6:37, and “In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.” John 14:2,3. These are truly wonderful promises; they may sound simple, but it is such promises that give courage and strength to go on.

In John 1:12 we are told: “Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God.” and in Romans 8:16,17: “The Spirit testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs, heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in His sufferings in order that we may also share in His glory.” Do we ever imagine what it would be like to be born into some prominent, perhaps royal family? There is surely no comparison between being born of God, being called God’s children, and being born into even the wealthiest, most prestigious family on earth!

Let us look at what else we are promised, in Jesus’ own words:

(a) John 8:12: “I am the Light of the world, whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

(b) John 6:35: “I am the Bread of life, he who comes to me will never go hungry.”

(c) John 4:14: “Whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst, indeed the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

We are also assured that for any sacrifices we make, we will receive a far greater reward. Speaking to the disciples and then to all believers, our Lord said: “I tell you the truth; at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on His glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And **everyone** who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. Matt. 19:28,29.

We are also encouraged to pray and ask for our needs. “I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.” John 16:23. When Jesus says to “ask in my name” He means to “use my name as a reference, as a guarantee that you are asking in the same way, in the same spirit, as I would ask.” By comparison, we read in James 4:3 how not to ask: “When you ask you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on pleasures.”

Jesus also says: “If you love me, you will obey what I command, and I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counsellor to be with you forever — the Spirit of Truth — I will not leave you as orphans” John 14:15-18. Then in verse 26: “But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”

We also have a strong support in our Christian family members — Jesus once said that those who do God’s will are to Him His brothers and sisters and mother. In Romans 12:5, the Lord’s people are compared to members of one body, where each member belongs to the other. In Galatians 6:2 we are told to carry one another’s burdens, and in this way to fulfill the law of Christ. We have each other to share in joys and sorrows, in our victories and falls, and we can count on each other’s love, support and prayers.

We could find still more examples of positive influences on our consecrated lives, but these should suffice to inspire us to look deeper into the costs of discipleship. As we weigh up costs and resources, may we each find a healthy surplus on the credit side and resolve to follow Jesus.

“Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say I find no pleasure in them.” Eccl. 12:1. N.I.V. (RJ: 1991)

Timothy, A Good Minister of Jesus Christ

(continued from previous issue)

“Stir Up The Gift” (2 Tim.1:3-8)

Paul’s reflections on the trials likely to come upon Timothy would no doubt have had much to do with the Apostle’s prayers for Timothy “night and day”; and he now writes with a view to strengthening him along these lines, reminding him of the genuine faith and piety which he had inherited both from his mother and his grandmother, and assuring him that he believed that this had laid a deep foundation of true piety and faith in Timothy’s own heart. We notice the fact everywhere kept prominent in the Scriptures that according to the Divine arrangement not only are the sins of the parents visited upon the children for several generations, but also that the faith and godliness of the parents, when rightly based on the Word of God and the true promises of that Word, lay the foundation of character in their children, upon which there is the greater hope that a life of godliness and usefulness may be built.

Not only does the Apostle strengthen Timothy’s mind by a remembrance of the goodly heritage of faith and piety received from his mother and grandmother, but in addition he reminds him of the grace of God specially conferred upon him (Timothy) at that certain time when he made a full consecration of himself to the Lord, to be God’s servant; when the Apostle, exercising his power as an Apostle, and as was common in those days, communicated to Timothy by supernatural power an outward gift or token of the Holy Spirit, through the laying on of his hands. The Apostle had evidently either heard or surmised that Timothy was allowing the fervor of his zeal for God to die out, and hence here he urges him to “stir up the gift of God which is in thee.” The Greek word here rendered “stir up” has the significance of *re-kindle*: as though the Apostle said, Re-kindle your gift by renewed energy.

The next verse enforces this view, implying that the Apostle thought that Timothy was in danger of being overcome by *fear*, so as to allow his zeal to abate. Hence he reminds him that the spirit of the Lord imparted to His people is not a spirit of fear, but on the contrary a spirit of power, energy, zeal awakened by love; loving devotion to God, and a desire to please and serve Him; loving devotion to the truth, and a loving devotion to God’s people and a desire to build them up in holy things, and to do good unto all men as we have opportunity. Yet, lest Timothy should get the thought that the spirit of God led only to a zeal of energy — that might at times be unwise in its exercise and do more harm than good — the Apostle adds that the spirit of God which He bestows upon those who are begotten as His sons is a spirit of a “sound mind” — a mind that is fortified and strengthened by the Word of the Lord on every subject, and hence, while thoroughly fearless of man, is wise in judging of times, seasons, and methods for using the energy of love which burns as a fire within the consecrated heart. Would that all of God’s children might appreciate, and more and more obtain, the spirit of a sound mind, by which all of their talents might be used, not only fearlessly but wisely, in the Master’s service.

“Wise Unto Salvation”

Continuing his exhortation’ (3:14,15) the Apostle impresses upon Timothy two things (1) that he had been taught of God, and (2) that this teaching of God had come to him through the Scriptures, which he assures him are sufficient to bring him all the way to the complete realization (in the resurrection) of that salvation which God has provided through faith in Christ Jesus. It will be well for us all to remember that all the graces of the spirit, all the progress in the knowledge of Divine things to which we already have attained, that may have really helped us nearer to God and to holiness, have come to us through the Scriptures of the Old Testament and through the words of our Lord and His inspired Apostles: nor will it ever be necessary to go to other channels for the true wisdom which would prepare us for the salvation promised.

Proceeding, the Apostle shows (Ver. 16,17) that the Scriptures which God inspired are profitable in every direction, and quite sufficient for the man of God, needing no supplements of visions or dreams, either his own or other. They are profitable for doctrine, containing the full statement of the Divine Plan; and no human authority is competent to add thereto. Who hath known the mind of the Lord? Who hath been His counselor? They are useful also for reproof toward others. No words that we can use in correcting the errors of others either in word



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Looking Unto Jesus

(Convention Address)

At one time, people used to think in terms of lasting values, but in the fast-changing world of today, it would be difficult to say just what is a lasting value. Wherever we look, everything is in a state of flux and change.

In such conditions, each Christian can be grateful to our Heavenly Father for His wonderful love and unmerited favour. A scripture verse which we all might apply to ourselves, to our own previous condition and to our own development, is Eph. 2:12. There the apostle says: "at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world."

How thankful each of us can be to our Heavenly Father, how we can praise Him in the presence of His people with all sincerity, confessing that while we in no way deserved His favour toward us, yet we greatly treasure it and praise the Lord for His wonderful love and mercy in that "now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." Eph. 2:19.

How true are the apostle's words in Eph. 5:14 "wherefore He saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." For many years, as His people, we have enjoyed the Lord's marvellous light, His leading and His care, and His wonderful provisions for us. Even His great sacrifice on Calvary is the precious provision of our Heavenly Father, for there is no other way of salvation. No wonder the apostle could say: "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." 1 Cor. 2:2.

All the Lord's people are seeking to walk in the light of our Lord, we are looking to Him in all circumstances of our lives, happy or unhappy. In times of gladness, we thank Him, even though we realise that earthly joy is of a transient nature — it is here today and gone tomorrow. In times of sadness, we look to Him for consolation, for His over-ruling and his strength to overcome such experiences. Indeed, whatever we do, we look to our Lord Jesus.

For every Christian, the purpose of the knowledge and acknowledgment of the Lord is to look to Him and to grow in His likeness. "Speaking the truth in love (we) may grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, even Christ." Eph. 4:15. Our looking unto Christ in all situations of life does not depend on our own wisdom, our education or ability, for as Jesus said to His disciples while He was with them during His earthly ministry: "The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house of Beelzebub, how much more them of his household." Mat. 10:24,25.

Every disciple of Christ has gone through practical experiences of privation, difficulties and persecutions; this has been so from the beginning even till now. But we realise that the Divine wisdom and the Divine mercy are revealed to babes, not to the wise of this world, nor to the powerful who can manage and change many things. Our Lord said: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father; and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him." Mat. 11:25-27.

Then come our Lord's words of invitation: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will

give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” Mat. 11:28-30. How often we think of these words of our Lord and apply them to ourselves in the many problems and difficulties of this life, realising how much we need the attitude of meekness of our Lord, to come and take His yoke upon ourselves, to be meek and lowly of heart ourselves, and so to find His rest to our souls. We know that Christians throughout the Gospel Age have experienced persecution and troubles, to greater or less extent, but that this is part of normal Christian development.

When we consider our Lord, did He live His life and was His earthly ministry peaceful and restful, with everything plain sailing? No, He continued to endure the contradiction of sinners against Himself and had to carry on His work in the face of persecution and difficulty. But our Lord revealed that wonderful truth of Divine love when He declared: “God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” John 3:16. His preceding words tell how this was to be accomplished: “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:14,15.

We are all familiar with the experiences of Israel during the forty years of wanderings in the wilderness after they left Egypt. Very often their’s was quite a difficult situation and we read in Num. 21:5-9: “the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread (the manna). And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died. Therefore the people came to Moses and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee; pray unto the Lord, that He take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole, and it shall come to pass, that everyone that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.”

What an amazing story! It was as if a look at that serpent of brass (or copper) in itself contained some kind of anti-venene, to counter the venom of those serpents; these it seems were Egyptian cobras, very deadly snakes. It was just a look at that serpent on the pole which was sufficient for the person to recover and feel no ill-effects. In itself, this was a miracle, but again consider how it happened. A man or a woman was suddenly bitten by a snake; unless they believed Moses’ words, they would just lie down and die. But on the other hand, whoever believed Moses and the instructions of the Lord, lifted their heads in faith and looked to that snake on the pole — these did not suffer any ill-effects and recovered.

And so our Lord compared Himself to that brazen serpent, saying: “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up.” With the brazen serpent, it was a Divine ordinance, God ruled it that way. And so it is with our Lord — if we have faith enough, we look to be the Lord. We look to Him for forgiveness of our sins, for that covering robe of His righteousness. By virtue of His blood shed on Calvary for us, He is our wisdom, He is our justification, for we know that it is only through acceptance of our Lord as our personal Saviour that we have a right to life. So we look to Jesus in all the affairs of our lives, for encouragement, for strength, for everything. For us, He has become our “all in all.”

It is the Divine ordinance that only through faith in Christ as our Saviour can we have life. Similarly, those Jewish people of old, those Israelites, had to lift up their heads and look toward that pole where the serpent of brass was glistening in the sun and that alone saved their lives. Speaking of God’s provision for us, the apostle John writes: “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” 1 John 4:9,10.

The Christmas season is the generally accepted time of our Saviour’s coming into the world as the Babe of Bethlehem. He came as a little child, but with what rejoicing! The shepherds there in the fields were told to go and see Him and they went and they saw Him, just a new-born child but how they rejoiced. The angels too rejoiced and praised God. Only a small beginning but what a wonderful thing. Thirty years later, when our Lord at His baptism became the Messiah in His full authority and began His ministry, it reached out first to those that heard and believed in Him. That was the time when Divine mercy and Divine forgiveness was turned to the people. Before that, there was no way out, the Jews were under the Law of Moses but were in bondage to the law, because none could keep it perfectly; even if 99 per cent of it were kept, failure in one point resulted in the law condemning that one to death.

So the apostle John writes: “The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” John 1:17. That is the grace extended to and accepted by us, when we first looked towards our Lord. He is our Saviour, in

due time we accepted Him and we became reconciled to God, who is now able to overlook all our imperfections because He looks to us through the merit of the sacrifice of Jesus. Nothing of this is of ourselves, though we are trying to do our best, are trying to look to our Lord and grow into His likeness, and surely enough are being transformed by the Spirit of God dwelling within us. But still we are imperfect and it is only through the merit of Christ's sacrifice on Calvary that we are acceptable to God and have right to life.

The same apostle puts the situation simply and positively "He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." 1 John 5:12. In other words, the person who does not accept Jesus is still under condemnation. The apostle Paul writing to the Corinthian brethren points to the Divine grace revealed to us as part of His plan of salvation. "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation." 2 Cor. 5:18. This ministry is first for the believers of this gospel age; we are reconciled to God by faith in our Lord and in His great sacrifice.

The ministry of reconciliation has only a small beginning however in this gospel age; during the millennium when the kingdom of God is established, uncounted billions of people will come back from the grave and will be restored. To them too will that gospel be preached — that ministry of reconciliation will reach them too and they will have the possibility of being saved and living forever. But it will still need to be by faith, for that is what God desires. For as the apostle writes under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit: "without faith it is impossible to please Him; for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." Heb. 11:6.

In the same chapter, the apostle goes on to describe, as it were, a gallery of the great victors of faith, beginning with the first martyr, Abel, then going on to Enoch, Noah, and so on. Finally he says that time would fail him to tell of everyone who pleased God, not through keeping of the Mosaic law but by faith. Then to conclude the chapter he writes: "these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise, God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." Heb. 11:32,39,40.

Then as if to show supreme faith and the pinnacle of faithfulness and loyalty, he exhorts us to be "looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin." Heb. 12:2,3. What an encouragement we have — to look to our Lord, to look to Him for everything. We look to Him for wisdom, for our salvation, for redemption and for the great reward He promised when he said: "I go to prepare a place for you and... I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." John 14:2,3. Where the Master is, there will be His servants!

So let us look unto Jesus, our confidence and trust in Him will bring great reward in our own lives here and now and in the work of restoration of all mankind in the age to come. Especially in these insecure times, when there is no such thing as a lasting value or a secure tenure, our Lord is the best and indeed only security. He is our Leader, He is our elder Brother and we can depend on Him for all things. (SS:1991)

Justification, Sanctification, Redemption

These are the three steps by which we are to reach "the prize of our high calling"—glory, honor and immortality. Not one of these steps can be omitted by those who win the great prize, nor can they be taken in any way but their order as directed in the Scriptures.

Justification

Justification comes first as a necessity, because, all the human race being sinners, as such God could not either sanctify or glorify them; therefore, by some means, they must be "made free from sin" (brought to a condition of sin-less-ness) in order that they might "have their fruit unto holiness" (sanctification), and eventually receive "the end thereof—eternal life" (redemption). Rom. 6:22.

As sinners, men "are not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can, they be." (Rom. 8: 7). We are "made free from sin" by faith; that is, we are told of God that a ransom has been given for our sin, and that if we by faith accept the ransom, He no longer regards or treats us as sinners, but as perfect and sinless beings. This cleansing from sin is a complete work. You are justified — reckoned of God just and perfect, but it cannot be seen with the natural eye. You cannot realise that physically you are any more perfect than before you believed yourself justified. It is entirely by the eye of faith that you know yourself now as a being, justified freely from all things. God's word declares it and you believe Him.

We need not fear that our justification is incomplete, for Jehovah Himself is the justifier, as we read, God is "just

and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (Rom. 3: 26); and again, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? it is God that justifieth.”

Upon what grounds does God reckon human sinners as justified or righteous persons? Because the ransom for our sins has been paid by Jesus, who “Himself bare our sins in His own body on the tree.” (1 Pet. 2:24). For “Christ suffered, the just for the unjust (sinners), that He might bring us to God” (1 Pet. 3:18) as justified beings. Jesus was treated as a sinner on our behalf, and we are now treated as just persons on His behalf. As we read again, “Ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus.” (1 Cor. 6:11). And again, “Being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.” (Rom. 5:9). But *only believers are justified* during this Gospel age. They who do not believe that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He rose again the third day for our justification (1 Cor. 15: 14; Rom. 4: 25), are not justified: “Ye are yet in your sins.” So we read, God, “is the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” Again, “All that believe are justified from all things” (Acts 13:39), and “A man is justified by faith.” (Gal. 2: 16 and 3:24).

When we believe the “good news” of our justification, it causes us joy and peace to realise that we may now come to God; and we no longer dread but now love God, because we see His goodness and love, for “herein is the love of God manifested.” (1 John 4:9).

We are thus brought into fellowship with God as justified human beings—“Being justified by faith, we have peace with God.” (Rom. 5:1). Few, very few, lay hold upon justification fully; few believe God that they “are justified from all things” and are in God’s sight clothed in the spotlessness of Jesus, in whom was no sin; consequently very few have the joy and peace which spring from believing. And it is no uncommon thing to hear, in church meetings of all denominations, men and women tell God that they know themselves to be “miserable sinners.” No wonder they agonize and daily ask the forgiveness of those sins which God’s word declares *are* forgiven. 2 Pet. 1:9. They know not that they partake of the justification by believing. If they would only believe God, they would have the realization of forgiveness, and consequently joy and peace. “For without faith it is impossible to please God.” Beyond this point of rejoicing in a consciousness of forgiveness of sins, and acceptableness in God’s sight, few Christians go.

Did you ever think why God has made known to us our justification now, but keeps it hidden from the great mass of the race until the millennial age, though the ransom price is eventually to release all mankind from sin and its penalty, and bring them to the same condition of acceptance—sinlessness—perfection which we now enjoy by faith! It is because God has a plan which he is working out according to the counsel of His own will, and a part of that plan is that He will select from among mankind a number who will eventually be transferred from the earthly conditions and human nature to spiritual conditions and the “divine nature” to be “heirs of God, joint heirs with Jesus Christ our Lord.”

God’s object in the development of this “little flock” is two-fold: first, He will make them everlasting monuments of His goodness, to be known and read of angels and men. As Paul expresses it (Eph. 2:7), God’s plan in the development of the Gospel church of overcomers, is, “that in the ages to come, He might show the exceeding riches of His grace, in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.” The second part of God’s plan, in which we are directly associated, is that he purposes to use us during the next Millennial—age as kings (rulers) and priests (teachers), when we shall reign with Christ a thousand years. (Rev. 5: 10, 20:6). Thus shall the “seed,” of which Jesus is the Head, bless all the families of the earth. (Gal. 3:29).

No sinners are called to have part in this “high calling, which is of God in Christ Jesus.” True, Jesus called “sinners to repentance”—so does the word of God, and all His children seek to bring men to repentance and faith in Christ and consequent justification. But only the justified ones are called to be “kings and priests unto God, and to reign on the earth. ‘ It is worse than useless to present the grand prize for which we run to the attention of sinners—the unjustified. For the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned—they are foolishness unto him. Therefore, “cast not your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.”

This being true, that none are called to the high calling except the justified ones, the fact that you know of your justification may be the proof to you that you are one of those whom God has “called” to spiritual life and joint-heirship with Jesus. What a blessed privilege to be called with such a high calling. Now do you realise that you are called to be a member of the bride of Christ? Then remember who called you—God; and that “Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it.” (1 Thess. 5: 24). Our Father mocks none with a call which they cannot attain to. His grace is sufficient for us.

All who are called may take the second step—

Sanctification

To sanctify is to set apart or separate to a special purpose or use. God's will is that all justified ones should be sanctified or set apart to His service as we read: "This is the will of God even your (believers) sanctification." (1 Thes. 4:3). There are two parts to sanctification—first ours, secondly God's part. As we have seen, God provides for our justification as men and then calls us to set apart-sanctify-or consecrate to him, that justified humanity. When we thus consecrate or give up our will, our time, talent, life and all we have and are to God, and ask Him to take our little all and use it as seemeth to Him good, and agree to let the will of God dwell in us richly—when we have done this we have done all that we can do; and here God, who accepts of every such sacrifice, begins His part of the sanctification work. He begins to use this will resigned to His care and "to work in you both to will and to do" in harmony with His will. From that moment it is no longer you (the human) but "Christ in you." Even the earthly (human) body, under the new controlling will (God's) is used in God's service and is thereby made holy.

From this moment when we give—consecrate—ourselves, we are reckoned dead, as human beings; for the human will should be buried from that moment forward; and when the will of God—the mind of Christ—the Holy Spirit takes possession of us so that it becomes our will and our mind, we are called "new creatures"—we are thus begotten to newness of life. This new creature is only an embryo being. It is not complete; but it grows and develops as "we all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Cor. 3:18.) Thus as new spiritual creatures we grow in His likeness during the time we abide in this earthly condition. As the spiritual nature grows stronger the human nature grows weaker and is the easier to keep dead, for I must not only give up my will to God, but keep it in a surrendered condition, "keep my body under"—under God's will.

As the new spiritual nature grows, it longs for its perfection when it will no longer be trammelled and fettered by human conditions, but be "like unto Christ's glorious body." This is promised us—we have been begotten, and by and by shall be born of the Spirit—spiritual bodies, for "that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit," just as truly as "that which was born of the flesh was flesh." Our begetting we have and our spiritual life is begun. It is to be completed, perfected, when this corruptible and mortal condition shall give place to the incorruptible, immortal conditions of the spiritual body. This is at the moment of resurrection to those who sleep in Jesus—raised spiritual bodies; and it will be at the moment of change to the living (from the fleshly body to their own spiritual bodies—theirs as new creatures.) Thus, "we which are alive and remain shall be changed in a moment." 1 Cor. 15:52.

This change of residence or condition, from the earthly body to the spiritual body is the third step of our development, viz:

Redemption

This redemption from the present earthly conditions finishes and completes our salvation and the glory and power will follow.

Toward this, the end of the race, we are looking with longing eyes, "Ourselves, that have the first fruits (begetting) of the Spirit, even we groan within ourselves waiting for sonship—the redemption of our body" (the body of which Jesus is the Head and all overcomers are members.) Rom. 8:23.

Let us recall to mind the steps: First, justification of the human nature; second, consecration or sacrifice of that human nature to God, its consequent death and the beginning of our existence as a spiritual new creature in the human body during the present life; third, the completion of our new, divine nature by the power of God, when we will be made like unto Christ's glorious body—who is the express image of the Father's person. What a glorious, high calling it is to which we are called!

How can each one of us make this glorious calling sure? Surely by continuing to maintain daily our consecration vows, giving over all things to our Heavenly Father for Him to use as He sees best. For the apostle assures us: "If ye do these things ye shall never fall; for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." 2 Peter 1:10,11. God will assuredly keep His part of the agreement for "He is faithful who promised." Heb. 10:23.

*"All for Jesus! All for Jesus!
All my being's ransomed powers;
All my thoughts and words and doings,
All my days and all my hours."*

Provoking To Love

“Let us consider one another, to provoke unto love, and to good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more as ye see the day drawing on.” — Heb. 10: 24-25.

“The word “provoke” signifies to arouse or I incite, or stimulate to activity. It is generally used in an evil sense, but is applicable, as in our text, to describe an incitement to good works, good thoughts, etc. The tendency of fallen human nature is toward things that are mean and selfish, and the natural bent is to incite or provoke or encourage similarly mean and unworthy thoughts, actions and words in others, and it has become a proverb that “Evil communications corrupt good manners.” Everyone of experience knows this general tendency of evil to beget evil, and to corrupt and to pollute what is nobler and purer than itself; hence we have the Scriptural pronouncement, “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.” Those who neglect this counsel need not be surprised if they are continually falling into temptation, and if the influence upon their own lives results in a measure at least of ungodliness and sin, and disfellowship from those things which are noble and true and pure.

But the “New Creature in Christ Jesus” is one in whom the transforming influences of the Lord’s Spirit have already begun — one who has a new heart, a new will, a new disposition. With such “old things have passed away and all things have become new,” they have been begotten again, i.e., re-begotten, to new hopes, new wishes, new ideas of propriety. Instead of the earthly wisdom and way, with its “bitter envying and strife,” which “descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish,” they have now the wisdom that is from above, and a heart (a disposition) to appreciate and pursue its counsels, which are, first purity, then peaceableness, gentleness, meekness, mercy, good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the disposition of this class, in proportion to their attainment of this heavenly wisdom and new nature, will be to “provoke” or incite or encourage one another, and all with whom they come in contact, to similar goodness of thought and word and act, in harmony with the heavenly wisdom which is guiding their own course.

The New Nature

This is laid down in the Scriptures as an unvarying rule; “A bitter fountain cannot send forth sweet water, and a good fountain cannot send forth brackish water.” A thistle cannot bear grapes, and a grape-vine cannot bear thistles. It is the Master Himself who says: “By their fruits ye shall know them.” If, therefore, we desire to prove ourselves, and to judge respecting our progress in mortifying (putting to death) the old nature, and our growth in the new nature, we will judge ourselves by this standard, answering to ourselves the question, Is my own spirit (disposition) one which delights in sin in its various forms (not necessarily in its grosser forms of murder, theft, etc., but in its more refined forms, falsity, envy, strife, vainglory, slander, evil-speaking, evil surmises, etc.), or is my delight increasingly in righteousness, truth, goodness, gentleness, meekness, patience, love? If the former, we are yet, either wholly or partially, in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity, and have need to go at once to the Great Physician, and to submit ourselves to His radical treatment — the cutting off of sin, the mortifying of such fleshly desires, etc. If the latter be our condition of heart, we have cause for rejoicing, yet no cause for pride or boastfulness; for we can say no more than that we only have done our duty, having merely learned, and that imperfectly, the lessons set before us by our great Teacher.

The Apostle is addressing the Church, the consecrated New Creatures in Christ Jesus. This is shown in the text, for he classes himself with these, using the word “us”; it is also shown by the context. He calls the attention of the consecrated to the influence which goes out from each to each, and the consequent importance that the influence shall always be stimulating, or provocative of that which is good. No doubt the Apostle found in his day, as we find now, that many who are consecrated at heart fail to see clearly how this consecration should associate itself with and mark itself upon our every act and word.

Consider One Another

We are not to be reckless of each other’s interests. In our contact with each other, whether a personal contact or a contact by mail, we are to “consider one another”. We are to consider what would be helps, and what would be hindrances, what would be encouragements, and what would be stumbling blocks; and we are to do all in our power to assist one another to run with patience the race for the heavenly prize. If we are truly consecrated to the Lord, we can do nothing “against the truth, but (every effort must be) for the truth” (2. Cor. 13: 8). What a burning and shining light every Christian would be if their every act were considered and shaped for the benefit of those with whom they come in contact! What a blessing it would be in the home! What a blessing it would be in the church! This loving consideration is what the Apostle is urging upon us: Consider one another to provoke (incite, encourage), to love and to good works.” Avoid every word and every act, so far as possible, that might incite to

hatred, envy, strife, bitterness (and bad works, corresponding to these feelings), all of which are “of the flesh and of the devil.”

The Apostle links this advice with the exhortation to forget not the assembling of ourselves together, as the Lord’s people. None of us is so strong in the new nature that we can disregard the fellowship of kindred minds. But even if we did feel sufficiently strong for ourselves, the spirit of love in us should so control that we would delight to meet with “the brethren” for their sakes. We are more or less like coals of fire, which, if separated, will tend to cool rapidly, but which, if brought together, will tend to increase in fervency the entire mass. Our Lord has encouraged His people to seek each other’s fellowship for companionship in the study of His word, and in prayer. He indeed has pronounced special blessings upon the meeting together of His people even if they be only two or three.

Our Privilege

The “provoking” of one another to love and good works, the extending of true Christian fellowship and the exhortation and encouragement of each other in the Narrow Way are very real and precious privileges of all God’s people. They are ministries which all are invited to take up, as they have talent and opportunity, remembering the apostle’s words:

“God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shown toward His name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.” (Heb. 6:10)

Timothy, A Good Minister Of Jesus Christ

“Very little can be known of Timothy outside of the New Testament records. His birthplace was that of either Derbe or Lystra, though it is not certainly known which. From the account given in Acts 16:1 it is stated that the Apostle Paul found him in those places and it appears that he had not been acquainted with Timothy before. His mother Eunice was a Jewess and evidently a woman of unusual piety as was also Timothy’s grandmother, Lois. Though his father was a Greek, he was evidently not unfriendly to the Jewish religion, for Timothy had been carefully instructed in the Scriptures.

It is claimed that it was about A.D. 51 or 52 when the Apostle Paul came to Derbe and Lystra and became acquainted with Timothy; and though there is no way of ascertaining the exact age of Timothy at that time, it is reasonably presumed that he was then a youth. (1 Tim. 4:12.) From what is said concerning him he was undoubtedly a young man of unusual hope and promise and there were some special indications that he would rise to a place of influence and power as a religious man and would fill an important position in the ministry of the Gospel. - 1 Tim. 1:18.

The records indicate that Timothy was already a disciple, a Christian convert when the Apostle Paul first met him, but the means by which he became converted are not known. His mother too had been converted to the Christian faith before (Acts 16:1), so that they seemed well known to the Christians of the neighboring towns of Lystra and Iconium. It was some six or seven years before Paul met with Timothy that he and Barnabas had preached the Gospel in Iconium, Derbe, and Lystra and it is not improbable that Timothy had been converted in the meantime.

Introduction To The Ministry

Barnes in a very interesting way observes several things that “appear to have combined to induce the Apostle to introduce him [Timothy] into the ministry and to make him a travelling companion. His youth; his acquaintance with the Holy Scriptures; the ‘prophecies which went before on him,’ his talents; his general reputation in the church; and, it would seem also, his amiableness of manners, fitting him to be an agreeable companion, attracted the attention of the Apostle, and led him to desire that he might be a fellow-laborer with him. To satisfy the prejudices of the Jews, and to prevent any possible objection which might be made against his qualifications for the ministerial office, Paul circumcised him (Acts 16:3), and he was ordained to the office of the ministry by ‘the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.’ (1 Tim. 4:14.) *When* this ordination occurred is not known, but it is most probable that it was before he went on his travels with Paul, as it is known that Paul was present on the occasion, and took a leading part in the transaction. - 2 Tim 1:6.”

Some account of Timothy’s travels and collaboration with Paul are given in Acts 16 to 18. It is clear from this and references in Paul’s epistles that Timothy enjoyed the apostle’s full trust and affection. Of Timothy’s later life, there is no dependable evidence. The belief that he was “bishop” of Ephesus rests mainly on the subscription to 2 Timothy—not any real authority.

“Timothy was long the companion and the friend of the Apostle Paul, and is often mentioned by him with affectionate interest. Indeed there seems to have been no one of his fellow-laborers to whom he was so warmly attached. See 1 Tim. 1:2,18, 2 Tim. 1:2, 2:1, 1 Cor. 4:17, where he calls him ‘his own son,’ and ‘his beloved son’; 2 Tim. 1:4 where he expresses his earnest desire to see him, and makes a reference to the tears which Timothy shed at parting from him; 1 Cor. 16:10, 11, where he bespeaks for him a kind reception among the Corinthians; 1 Cor. 16:10, Rom. 16:21, 1 Thess. 3:2, and especially Phil. 2:19, 20, where he speaks of his fidelity, of his usefulness to him in his labors, and of the interest which he took in the churches which the Apostle had established.” (Barnes).

Advice For All Christians

Paul’s letters to Timothy are amongst the most valuable of the New Testament writings. Indeed they contain sound advice to all Christians, especially to such as are young in the truth, and particularly if they have consecrated their lives to the Lord and His service, and are seeking to be useful according to their consecration as His ministers or servants—whether in a public or in a private service, according to their talents and opportunities.

Paul introduces himself not by calling attention to his personal qualities as a logician, nor by boasting of any service which he had performed as the Lord’s servant and minister of the Truth; but, properly, by reminding Timothy of his apostleship, specially commissioned by the Lord to introduce His Gospel, and specially prepared for the work by being made a witness of the Lord’s resurrection, having been granted a glimpse of His glorious person on his way to Damascus and commissioned to declare the conditions for the fulfilment to men of God’s promise of life, provided in Christ Jesus.

Although the Apostle had no natural children of his own, his tender address to Timothy as his “dearly beloved son,” and his invocation upon him of a Divine blessing, shows that he lacked none of those fine, noble and endearing sentiments, which belong to a true parent. Indeed, the very fact that he had no natural children seems to have broadened the Apostle’s sentiments to such an extent that figuratively he took into his affections, as his own children, all who accepted the Gospel. We remember that he frequently used this figure of speech, “Although ye have many teachers, ye have not many fathers in the Gospel”—“I have begotten you in my bonds.” On another occasion he represents his efforts for a development of a fully consecrated Christian life amongst the believers under the figure of a mother travailing for her children. This being true of the Apostle’s general sentiment toward the household of faith, it would be much more true in the case of Timothy who had so nobly and truly filled the part of a son to him.

We note the Apostle’s care over this younger brother in the Truth, in whom he sees such great promise of present and future service. He realizes, perhaps better than Timothy does, the snares of the Adversary, by which one placed in so prominent a position is likely to be assailed. Would he become heady and high minded?—Would he lose his faith in the cross of Christ?—Would he fall into the snare of some of the philosophies, falsely so-called?—Would he become vainly puffed up by a fleshly mind, and get to feeling himself to be a “somebody?”—Or, would he, on the contrary, be a faithful soldier of the cross, meek, humble, gentle toward all, an example both in faith and practice to those with whom he came in contact?

And withal, would he hold fast to the Scriptures and be apt to teach others to look to this Divine source of information? He remembered that heretofore Timothy had been so close to himself in the work that he had been measurably shielded from many trials to which he would now be exposed; and yet, no doubt he realized that, if Timothy would be prepared to take the work of a general minister, which Paul the prisoner and growing old must shortly lay aside, it was time that he was learning how to stand, complete in the strength which God supplies through His Word, without leaning so particularly, as heretofore, upon any earthly prop.

To be Continued.



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Hope

(Convention Address)

“And now abideth Faith, Hope, Love, these three, but the greatest of these is Love.” 1. Cor. 13:13.

The apostle in these words highlights the supremacy of love, but it is also clear from them that faith and hope are also great qualities. So how would we define the second of these —Hope? Dictionaries and other sources are in general agreement on the meaning of hope, for instance:

- (a) Strong — anticipation, usually with pleasure.
- (b) Vine — favourable and confident expectation.
- (c) Reader’s Digest (in a Note) — enjoyment of the future in advance.

A reporter in a daily paper, in a search for the meaning of hope, referred to it as an “eternal generator” — the hope of attaining something drives men and women to the extreme of endurance to attain the goal desired. This accords with what the apostle Paul states in Phil. 3: 8, 11. “I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.... that I may know Him (Jesus), and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death, if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.” If by ANY means I might ATTAIN unto the resurrection — this was indeed Paul’s great hope.

A Lively Hope

The apostle Peter describes the Christian’s hope as a lively or living hope. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.” 1 Pet. 1:3,4.

True faith and living hope must be based on the sure promises of the word of God. This contrasts with the empty hope of many. Some hope that they may win a lottery, believing that wealth will bring them happiness. With very many, their hope is never realised, while some, After they have perhaps gained some wealth, find that it can only provide temporary realisation of their hope and often merely creates a desire for more.

The hope set out in the Scriptures for the Lord’s people, however, is based on that which we can be absolutely sure will be fully realised, provided only that we remain faithful to our Lord and do not let that hope become dimmed, for “He is faithful who promised”. Heb. 10:23.

We learn from Heb. 11:1 that faith is the substance or basis of things hoped for. The greater our faith, the greater will the hope shine out before us. This is well brought out in Rom. 5: 1-5. “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” (vv 1,2) These two verses show the progression of the Christian from the time he or she is drawn by the Father to have faith in Jesus. Faith-justification means we have peace with God, then we have access into His grace or favour, in which we stand. This favoured position of consecration, this “fa-

your upon favour” (John 1:16) we have received, leads to our rejoicing in the great hope of the glory of God.

The following three verses (vv 3-5) show how our hope increases. The Amplified Version brings out well the thought. “Moreover, let us be full of joy now! Let us exult and triumph in our troubles and rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that pressure and affliction and hardship produce unswerving endurance; and endurance (fortitude) develops maturity of character — that is, approved faith and tried integrity; and character (of this sort) produces (the habit of) joyful and confident hope of eternal salvation. Such hope never disappoints or eludes or shames us, for God’s love has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given unto us”.

Patience of Hope

To wait patiently for something indicates that we are hoping for it. An example of this is brought out in 1 Thes. 1: 3, where Paul writes — “Remembering without ceasing your work of faith and labour of love and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God, our Father.” The church at Thessalonica was a persecuted church and the apostle commends them for their faith and love and hope. Patience under persecution had only sharpened their faith and hope in the promises that were to be fulfilled in Jesus.

There are other scriptures which tell of the importance of patient, cheerful endurance in hope, such as Heb. 10: 3 5-3 7. “Cast not away therefore your confidence which has great recompense of reward. For you have need of patience, that after you have done the will of God, you might receive the promise. For yet a little while and He that shall come will come and will not tarry.” This clearly implies that after one makes a vow to do the will of God, there is a testing time before that one realises his or her hope.

Luke 8: 5-8 recounts the parable of the sower. Jesus speaks of the seed of truth falling on four different kinds of soil — by the wayside, upon rocks, among thorns and upon good ground. He went on, on this occasion, to tell the meaning of the parable in Verses 11-15. “Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. Those by the wayside are they that hear, then cometh the devil and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. They on the rocks are they who when they hear, receive the word with joy, and these have no root, who for a while believe and in time of temptation fall away. They which fell among thorns are they, which when they have heard, go forth and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life and bring no fruit to perfection.—But they on the good ground are they, which, in an honest and good heart having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.”

This parable describes the various ways in which Christians may be turned away from the realisation of their hope. Only they who bring forth fruit with patience will realise their hope. The first three classes described in the parable are those who make a start along the narrow way but then allow hindrances to prevent them from fulfilling their consecration.

Various hindrances can indeed arise to prevent one from carrying out his or her commitment to the Lord, probably more so than ever before. The rush and tear of life that surround us today can allow weeds to grow unchecked and to choke the growth of the Christian. The apostle Paul admonishes — “See that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise; redeeming the time because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be ye filled with the Spirit.” Eph. 5: 15.

Victory for Christians can be gained only if they continue faithful with hope undimmed. In Matt. 24: 13, Jesus told His disciples — “He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved.” Heb. 6: 10,11 tells us further — “For God is not unrighteous to forget your labour of love which you have showed toward His name in that you have ministered to the saints and do minister. And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end.”

Assurance of Hope

Note here the reference to the full assurance of hope. Later in the passage the apostle links this up with the hope set before us. “That you be not slothful but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” Here again the point is made that faith and patience are needed to ensure the hope is realised. “For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no greater, He swore by Himself, saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And so after he had patiently endured, he obtained

the promise.” Heb. 6: 12-15.

The apostle then brings the lesson home to the Lord’s people of this age. “For men verily swear by the greater and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us, which hope we have as an anchor to the soul, both sure and steadfast and which entereth into that within the vail, whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made a high priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec.” Heb. 6: 16-20.

Hope is here likened to an anchor. A ship in a storm drops its anchor to hold it from drifting, possibly on to dangerous rocks. Most importantly, the anchor needs a strong line or cable to hold the ship. So in the picture, the anchor represents our hope the cable represents our faith. If we lose faith and let go of our hope, it will be like the ship breaking loose from its anchor, to drift possibly into grave danger and to be damaged or lost.

Hope — An Anchor

So our hope is the anchor to our spiritual life. If our love for our Lord is strong and our faith remains firm, our hope will hold fast “within the vail”, that is to say, to those precious things promised to us beyond this life. There Jesus has already entered, as our forerunner, a high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. The apostle John enlarges on this — “Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the children of God ...beloved, now are we the children of God and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone that hath this hope purifieth himself as He is pure.” 1 John 3: 1-3.

Thus we can understand what this great hope has done for us. Above all, it has given direction to our lives and a confident expectation for the future. It is a force operating in our minds and lives to urge us onward to the ultimate goal, that of being fitted for usefulness to our Heavenly Father and our Lord Jesus, in a small way now but more so in the age to come. But beyond the hope of the church of this gospel age, we know and rejoice that there is hope for all mankind. This in God’s due time will include the blessing of all who will be willing to accept the conditions of salvation in the new age.

One reason why the truth of the plan of God means so much to us is that we have learned that His love embraces not only a hope for His people of this age but a hope for all the families of the earth in God’s due time. Such thoughts are old but ever new and have been an anchor to the hope of the church all down the age. The gospel age church has assuredly a favourable and confident hope for the future, which in anticipation it can already enjoy in some measure.

Such hope can indeed be said to be an “eternal generator” urging those who possess it to the extreme of endurance to attain the goal set before them. Paul said of our Lord that “for the joy set before Him, He endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” Heb. 12: 2. So too may our hope sustain us day by day, as we seek to run with patience the race set before us. (JBH: 1991)

Parting of the Red Sea

(News Item)

Two expert oceanographers have developed 1 what they say is a plausible explanation for the parting of the waters which enabled the Israelites under Moses to escape from the Egyptians. They have calculated that strong winds blowing along the narrow, shallow Gulf of Suez, a northern extension of the Red Sea and the likely site of the crossing, could account for the phenomenon.

Their report adds: “whether this theory explains the crossing or not, (we) believe it should not affect the religious aspects of the Exodus.... Some may even find our proposed mechanism to be a supportive argument for the original Biblical description of this event.” (*From the New York Times, published in The Age, Melbourne*)

NOTE: The Bible Study Monthly (Mar/Apr 1992) carries a review of a book — “Look for the Ancient Paths” 11 Beresford King-Smith. (92 pages, 16 maps, 16 illustrations.) This presents the results of an investigation of the

route of the Exodus based on the premise that the events as related are historically true and the reviewer considers that overall it should be useful to students of the period.

It is available direct from Bethany Enterprises, Moorwood Lane, Nuneaton, Warks CV10 OQH, England at £UK.4.95, incl. postage, or through the Institute at \$A 11.00.

PEOPLES PAPER
AND HERALD OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM

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

The Whole Armour

(Convention Address)

In nearly all ancient civilisations, armour was used for the protection of fighting men. It was usually made of metal, sometimes of leather. Websters Dictionary defines Armour as protective covering for the body in battle. The word "Armour" appears 24 times in the Bible, and Strong's Concordance defines the Greek word as full armour or whole armour, or as one hymn puts it — the "panoply" of God.

In Eph 6: 10 & 11 we read "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the Adversary". Note that the apostle is very specific that we need the whole armour because the conflict will be with the prince of darkness himself, and that God is the supplier of this armour. The apostle then presents us with a sequence of 7 individual pieces of the soldier's armour, that when put on together form the whole armour of God.

What is to be protected by the armour? Paul writes in (2 Cor. 5: 17), "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." The Christian is a new creature in the sense that he, as an individual, has a new mental outlook on life. He is under the influence of the Holy Spirit of Truth.

The Christian through these influences, and a willingness of mind, has the viewpoint of Christ, who said "Not my will, but Thine, be done." (Luke 22: 42). As Christ looked upon life from the standpoint of God's plan as revealed in His Holy Word, so does the Christian. Therefore, the armour of God is for the protection of his mental state, the new mind, the viewpoint of Christ, which the Christian has adopted as his own. Let us examine each piece of armour, and as we do so, we shall find that the use for each piece has a purpose and a protective power.

We have to go back some 2000 years and visualise what a soldier looked like in the ancient world when he went out to battle. i.e. a Roman Soldier. The FIRST piece of armour is the girdle of Truth (verse 14). In olden times, a girdle was used to bind up the garments while work was performed. Therefore a girdle could be a fitting symbol of work or service. The girdle of truth could signify that the Christian is a servant of the Truth. We find this clearly taught in the Bible — that a Christian is an ambassador for Christ holding forth the word of reconciliation. (2 Cor 5: 18-20 Phil 2: 16).

How is the girdle of truth a protecting power? The piece of armour called the girdle of Truth protects the mind against all teachings or tendencies which draw the Christian away from being a servant of the Truth. The girdle of Truth, therefore, is really the definite teaching of the word of God. If the Christian understands this teaching, and brings his heart into harmony with the spirit and intent of it, he has set up in his mind a barrier to all hostile or intruding teachings, Thus the Christian is protected against the world and the Adversary.

The SECOND piece of armour is stated as "the breastplate of righteousness" (v 14). The fact that it is spoken of as a "breastplate" covering the vital organs of the body (including the heart) suggests that it is extremely important. There are two very prominent teachings in the Bible covering the thought of righteousness.

The first one relates to the righteousness that is in the perfect human sacrifice, the man Christ Jesus. In Heb 7:26 we read he was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." He gave himself a ransom sacrifice for Adam and his race. We, being sinners, can approach God only through faith in the perfect sacrifice of Jesus. We recognise that only as we are covered by the merit of our Lord Jesus, do we have a standing in God's presence. Christ is spoken of as our Advocate in 1 John 2: 1, and an advocate is one who "stands beside" as an attorney pleading one's cause. This is an important teaching, and protects us from all ideas which would provoke in us a

feeling of actual personal perfection. “The breastplate of righteousness” accomplishes this proper state of mind, and keeps us humble and thankful.

The second prominent teaching, covering the thought of righteousness, is the one that teaches us that we must be righteous, just, honest in thought and motive. The Christian is to “love righteousness and hate iniquity,” (Heb 1: 9) even as our Lord did. This teaching will protect one when temptations present themselves to the mind. Many temptations may prompt us to be a little dishonest or unjust for selfish reasons. If one has on the “breastplate of righteousness”, he will resist these temptations and thus be protected from them.

The THIRD piece of armour is for the feet — “And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.” (v. 15) The word preparation is translated from a Greek word, the root of which is to prepare, make ready. Therefore the meaning would be that this piece of armour prepares one to walk in the Narrow Christian Way. The explanation is beautiful and simple. The gospel of peace is really the good news of the Kingdom of God. It is good news to know that a literal kingdom is to be established here upon earth when God’s will shall be done here upon earth as it is done in heaven (Matt 6:10). Then all wars and troubles and death will cease. In due time those who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake under new conditions, when the Son of God shall be king. (Dan 12:2).

The Christian has been convinced of the truthfulness of this good news. He has accepted it. He has done more — he has responded to the invitation to walk in the footsteps of the Redeemer, which means that he stands for the same ideals and purposes as Jesus did. The Christian lays down his own life as a willing sacrifice in the service of God, which is the service of the Truth and on behalf of the Lord’s people. In connection with all this are certain precious promises of God’s watchcare and affection. The precious promises also include a rich reward at the end of the Christian way, of “glory, honour and immortality.” (Rom 2:7).

The good news of the coming kingdom of God, the invitation to walk in the footsteps of the Redeemer, and the precious promises bring to the Christian a state of mind called the “peace of God” (Phil 4: 7) In the midst of the difficulties of life and the troubles in this world, and even while he walks in the “valley of the shadow of death,” (Psalm 23: 4) the Christian has peace of mind. No wonder the third piece of armour is spoken of as sandals protecting the feet. Without the “peace of God” the Christian would not be prepared to go through such difficulties. God in a very simple way protects the Christian against discouragement, and provides him with joy, peace and hope.

In still another way the Christian is protected by the sandals of the preparation of the gospel of peace. The Christian is taught to use his faculty of readiness to resist the tendencies of the old will to be selfish and self-reliant. He must be a fighter in the good “fight of faith.” (1 Tim 6:12). He must endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. (2 Tim 2:3) However, he must not use his fighting qualities against his fellow man, but only against evil in himself, and in defence of the Truth. Therefore he is taught to be a peacemaker — “blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God” (Math 5: 9).

The Christian is taught to prefer peace to uncontrolled aggression. Thus the Christian is protected against any natural tendencies he might have to argue or fight just for the sake of opposing something. When the Christian understands that the ultimate object of discussion or resistance is to establish peace upon proper grounds, how it helps him to be self-controlled and kind! Even when the Christian finds it his duty to speak sharply he is protected against bitterness and unrighteous anger by the sandals of peace.

The FOURTH piece of armour is the “shield of faith.” (V. 16) “Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.” The words “above all”, suggests that the shield is extremely important. How true! If one does not have the faith, or confident belief in the teachings of the Bible, he is not a Christian, neither can he stand the assaults of the adversary. Faith is increased and strengthened in at least 3 ways:

1. By the knowledge of the attributes of God as revealed in His plan of loving kindness;
2. By a consideration of fulfilled prophecy;
3. By the witness of the Spirit.

In the first way, how it increases our faith to understand that our Creator is loving and kind, even in permitting the reign of evil for a time! How our gratitude goes out to Him when we are assured that eventually this earth will be

made a paradise, man's eternal home, and that the dead will be awakened from the tomb to live forever, if obedient to the laws of righteousness; the wicked only shall be destroyed! How it increases our faith to know that God's special reward to the church — joint heirship with His Son — is an evidence of His infinite wisdom, and generous love.

In the second way, how it increases our faith to understand prophecy and to be able to appreciate the significance of world events! More than 2,500 years ago, Daniel prophesied (Dan 12: 4) that in the time of the end there would be a "running to and fro, and an increase of knowledge, and a time of trouble such as never was upon the earth." And now the Christian can see the actual fulfilment of these events in the modern contraptions enabling man to "run to and fro" in cars, aeroplanes, rockets, etc.; in the increase of man's knowledge; and in the distress of nations, which is indeed the greatest "time of trouble" (Dan 12: 1) the world has ever known.

In the third way, how it increases the Christian's faith to be able to detect in his life the witness of the Spirit! If he can trace in his life the fulfilment of the Spirit, the intention, the purpose of God (as revealed in the New Testament), then he has reason to rejoice and be full of confidence and trust. God has written us a letter, by His Holy Book. A letter is one's mind or purpose expressed in words. If our minds (spirits) witness or show a fulfilment of God's purpose in us, then our spirit witnesses with God's Spirit that we are God's children.

In this turbulent and changing world there is much to challenge faith, unless faith is founded upon something sound and understandable! Increase of knowledge has stimulated the minds of all to think. As a result, religious beliefs have suffered. The Bible has suffered too, because many had the erroneous thought that the Bible encouraged ignorance. In this time when knowledge has increased, the Christian has his portion of knowledge to enable him to exercise a strong faith in a reasonable and proved Bible beyond any doubt.

The FIFTH piece of armour is the "helmet of salvation" (v. 17) As with the other pieces of armour, so with this one, the position gives us a clue as to its function in protecting the Christian. "The "helmet" being worn upon the head suggests a protection in the form of knowledge, intelligence, information. Christians all down through the Gospel age have had knowledge from God's Holy Word. This knowledge has been an explanation of God's plan of salvation, enabling them to grasp His will concerning them.

It has been suggested that in the end of the age, the Christian is provided with a much larger helmet than was provided for God's people in the past. We are living in a very different time. Daniel said that in the time of the end, knowledge would be increased. This is true. The disciple of Christ has need of a larger helmet to enable him to stand in an intellectual world. The increase of knowledge has discredited many former beliefs that were not well founded in Scripture. Just at the right time the Christian has been provided with concordances, Bible dictionaries and numerous translations of the Scriptures.

All of this is of tremendous importance to God's people, in view of the numerous appeals to the mind from all quarters and on every subject. Libraries and second hand book stores give evidence of the time in which we are living. There are thousands of books, each one possessing a power to affect the mind in some way. How bewildered the Christian would be if he were not provided with the helmet of proper knowledge of the Bible, the Word of God. His helmet proves that the Bible is true, shows what God's plan of loving kindness is, refutes arguments against the Bible, explains prophecy, and intercepts the significance of world events. Thus Christian belief is founded upon proper knowledge which cannot be refuted.

The SIXTH piece of armour is the "sword of the spirit, which is the Word of God." (v.17) This is the only offensive piece of the Christian's armour. Like all other weapons, it can be used properly or improperly. The sword of the spirit is not intended to be used to cut and wound others, but is intended to be used in defence of one's own position and for one's upbuilding. Our Lord Jesus gave us an illustration of its use in defence of His position in Matt. 4: 1-10, where we read how in three ways Satan tempted Him.

These temptations were suggestions to our Lord's mind by the Adversary. We know our minds are capable of forming pictures by our imagination. Such was the case with our Lord. He was not literally taken to a pinnacle of the temple, nor was He literally taken to a mountain top. Rather, his mind formed impressions suggested by the Adversary. It is important to observe the use our Lord made of the sword of the spirit in resisting the temptations. Not once did he bitterly accuse or threaten Satan. Instead, he countered the Adversary's argument with the well chosen and properly applied Scripture. In all three temptations He extinguished the Adversary's intent with "It is written", the sword of the spirit. Satan used the sword of the spirit too, in the second temptation; but he misap-

plied it in his attempt to invite our Lord into unrighteousness.

The sword of the spirit is also for the purpose of destroying everything contrary to the knowledge of God, so that every thought may be brought into full obedience to Christ. (2 Cor. 10: 3-5). So we can see the purpose of the sword of the spirit, according to this scripture, is to put aside all teachings and influences that are against the knowledge of God.

The SEVENTH and final piece of armour is described (v.18) as “praying always”. — The verse reads: “praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.” A good soldier of the Lord Jesus must keep in touch with headquarters; this he is privileged to do by coming daily to the throne of grace in prayer. We read in John 15:7 — “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you.”

One of Satan’s chief lines of attack is to cut off our communication with the Lord. In Mark 14:38, our Master warned, “Watch ye and pray lest ye enter into temptation.” By watching and praying always, besides having on the whole armour, we will progress. With all our armour, we need to cultivate and use the privilege of prayer.

It is a very great favour to be allowed to approach the supreme ruler of the universe and we should come therefore in a spirit of deep appreciation, earnestness, humility and reverence. The apostle adds the words “watching thereunto” — this calls for an attitude of mental alertness. We should also take heed as to the things for which we ask and be sure that we seek those things which we are promised and are entitled to ask for.

Our Lord frequently called attention to the fact that we should be persevering in prayer. Perseverance is an essential quality in the sight of God. It includes patience, carefulness and interest. Our praying should be in the spirit, in other words, from the heart. The very isolation of our Lord from all human help drew Him the nearer and more frequently to the Father in prayer and communion. As we grow in this character likeness, we will, like Him, “pray without ceasing”, rejoicing in the Lord and recognising Him as the centre of all our hopes.

When all the armour is properly worn, a state of mind is created, which is quite as important as the armour itself. Our Lord was 40 days and 40 nights in the wilderness, weak and exhausted physically, yet when He came forth He was strong in mind, strengthened by the word and the spirit of God. The Christian too must be moulded around the word and spirit of God; when this is fully grasped, then we know the means by which we are strong in the Lord and the power of His might.

So may each one of us put on and keep on the whole armour of God; by so doing we will be alert to danger signals and fully prepared, “able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.” (AK: 1991).

Out of the Abundance of the Heart

“Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by the words thou shalt be condemned.” (Mat. 12:34, 37).

The words of our Lord indicate that the heart and the mouth are under very special scrutiny, the former representing the individual character, and the latter being an index of the character.

It is in this same view of the matter that these words of wisdom were penned — “Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life. Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee.” (Prov. 4: 23, 24.) The indication is clear that a right condition of the heart is necessary to right words, for “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh,” as experience testifies to every man. It is therefore just that our words should be a criterion of judgment in the Lord’s estimation, as He tells us they are.

Our first concern, then, should be for the heart, that its affections and dispositions may be fully under the control of divine grace, that every principle of truth and righteousness may be enthroned there; that justice, mercy, brotherly kindness, faith, meekness, temperance and love may be firmly fixed as the governing principles of life. If these principles be fixed, established in the heart, then out of the good treasures of the heart, the mouth will speak forth words of truth, soberness, wisdom and grace. Of our Lord Jesus, whose heart was perfect, in whom was no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth, it was said, “Grace is poured into thy lips,” and again, “All bare him

witness and wondered at the gracious words that proceedeth out of his mouth.” (Psa. 45: 2; Luke 4: 22.)

So wise, just, and true were the Lord’s words, that though His enemies were continually seeking to find some fault, it is said, “They could not take hold of his words before the people; and they marvelled at his answers, and held their peace.” (Luke 20:26). And others said, “Never man spake like this man.” (John 7:46.) Thus our Lord left a worthy example to His people, which the Apostle urges all to follow, saying — “Let your speech be always with grace (with manifest love and kindness) seasoned with salt.” (Col. 4:6) And Peter adds, “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God,” — wisely and in accordance with the spirit and mind of the Lord. Again, it is written, “Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips that they speak no guile.” “Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles.” “The words of a wise man’s mouth are gracious words, but the lips of a fool will swallow up himself. The beginning of the words of his mouth is foolishness; and the end of his talk is mischievous madness.” “Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God, for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth; therefore let thy words be few.” (Psa. 34:13; Prov. 21: 23 Eccles. 10:12, 13; 5: 2.)

Job, in the midst of all his afflictions was very careful not to sin with his lips. He knew that his words would be taken by the Lord as an index of his heart, and he was careful to keep both the heart and his words right, saying “What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil (or troubles for disciplining). The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” (Job 2: 10; 1: 21.) There was no spirit of rebellion in a heart out of whose abundance came such words of loving submission, patience and faith under severe testings, and that, too, without a clear vision of the divine wisdom in permitting them.

The Psalmist puts into the mouths of God’s consecrated and tried people these words of firm resolution — “I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue; I will keep my mouth in a bridle, while the wicked is before me.” (Psa. 39:1). How necessary to the stability of Christian character is such a resolution, and the self control which develops under an adherence to it. The world, the flesh and the devil oppose our way; there are fightings within and storms without, and many are the arrows and darts aimed at the righteous, and the safe attitude of the Christian in the face of the opposition of the world is to be silent, and to allow the Lord to work all these trials for our good, for the servant is not above his Lord. As Jesus took the opposition of sinners against Himself with such humble patience, so we too should “go therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach;” as He said, “Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man’s sake.” So the Psalmist suggests, saying — “I was dumb with silence; I held my peace even from good” (or from doing what seemed good in my sight). Again it is written — “He that keepeth his mouth, keepeth his life, but he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction.” (Prov. 13: 3.)

So we see what importance the Lord attaches to our words, for if our words are rebellious, or disloyal, or frivolous, or flippant, or unkind, unthankful, unholy, or impure, the heart is judged accordingly on the principle that “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” Thus, our words in all the varied circumstances of our daily life are bearing testimony before God of the condition of our hearts, and the Psalmist puts this prayer into the lips of all the Lord’s people — “Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips. Permit not my heart to incline after any evil things. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer. My lips shall utter praise, when thou hast taught me thy statutes. My tongue shall speak of thy word; for all thy commandments are righteousness. Let thine hand help me; for I have chosen thy precepts. I have longed for thy salvation (and for the perfection and beauty of holiness), O Lord; and thy law is my delight.” (Psa. 141:3, 4; 19:14; 119:171-174).

In many things we are all faulty. If any one does not err in word he is a perfect man, able to control the whole body. (James 3:2.) But such a man does not exist; we all need to continually plead the merit of our Saviour and Advocate, while we strive daily to perfect holiness in the reverence of the Lord. Therefore, let our words be few; let them be thoughtful and wise, as uttered before God, and not rash, hasty and ill considered. Let our conversation be as becometh the Gospel of Christ. “Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.” (Phil. 4:8.) Thus, out of the good treasure of the heart, we shall be able to speak words of truth and soberness, and so honour and glorify Jesus and our loving Heavenly Father.

I Will Abide With Thee

I will abide, though night is drawing nigh,
Though clouds and darkness now obscure the sky.
I know thy sorrow, see thy falling tear —
Give Me thy hand, for I am very near.

The earthly joys are passing fast away;
Lean thou on Me and I will be thy stay.
My grace is all-sufficient, rich and free.
Have perfect faith—I will abide with thee.

My eyes are watching o'er thee, troubled child,
My arm shall guide thee, though the path be wild.
Midst storms and tempest, to My bosom flee,
Be not afraid—I will abide with thee.
A little while and then it will be light,
Thy faith shall be exchanged for perfect sight;
No fear to vex thee, nothing to molest,
For thou shall be with Me in perfect rest

When friends may fail thee, I will be thy friend,
My love shall last until thy journey's end.
And when heaven's golden gates thine eyes shall see,
I will eternally abide with thee.

(Inspired by the much-loved hymn “Abide with Me”)



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Fellowship One With Another

(Convention Address)

“ But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.” 1 John 1:7.

The first few verses of John’s epistle introduce us to two separate but closely related aspects of the Christian life. In verses 3 and 4, the apostle is explaining the purpose of his letter and indeed of his ministry. “That we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ. And these things we write unto you that your joy may be full.”

The basis of fellowship one with another is that joint fellowship which each one has with the Father and the Son. This basic fellowship or communion is intensely personal and individual, for each must come by faith to God through Christ to know His salvation. Even after each has personally confessed Him and committed his or her life to following the Saviour, there are still the personal experiences of life to be met up with.

We remember Jesus’ kindly words to Peter when he had just been told by Jesus what his lot would be in later life. Peter seeing John said to Jesus—“Lord and what shall this man do?” To this Jesus replied—“If I will that he tarry till I come what is that to thee? Follow thou me.” John 21:21,22. Jesus was not recommending a total lack of concern for the welfare of other followers, but gently teaching Peter the lesson of personal discipleship. For each individual Christian since Peter including ourselves at this end of the age are in constant fellowship with our loving Father and with His dear Son, so that even if we were deprived of all human association with others, we should still not be alone.

But the communion of each one with the Father and the Son should and surely does lead into that fellowship which the apostle John describes in our text. “If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another and the blood of His Son Jesus purifies from every sin.” (N.I.V.) This is certainly one of the greatest treasures and privileges of the Christian way, that fellowship one with another—the fellowship of kindred minds, like to that above. “That they all may be one, as Thou Father art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us.” John 17:21. This was our Master’s prayer and the bonding agent of this unity, this fellowship, is love.

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

What then is behind the thought of the fellowship that is so precious in Christian discipleship? The word so translated is elsewhere given as communion, contribution, communication, while related words are translated partaker, partner, companion. The basic thought in every case is of jointly sharing or jointly participating in some activity, experience or blessing. One commentator has written thus—“Fellowship is a specifically Christian word and denotes that common participation in the grace of God, the salvation of Christ and the indwelling of the Spirit which is the spiritual birthright of all Christian believers. It is their common possession of God which makes them one. Our fellowship with each other arises from and depends on our fellowship with God. This then is John’s objective—through proclamation of the message of life in Jesus Christ to bring each of his hearers and readers into relationship with the Father and hence to each other.”

It is not surprising therefore to find the New Testament writers encouraging believers of all ages to foster and develop the spirit of fellowship. This is best achieved by each one striving by God's grace and by faith to draw daily closer to the heavenly Father. For as we draw nearer to Him and become the more engrossed in His love and power and glory, then the human frailties from which none of us is free will fade and we will see more of God's workmanship and the likeness of our Saviour in each one instead.

Having seen that the basis of mutual fellowship is the personal relationship with God through Christ, we note that the apostle Paul in Eph. 4:46 lists those things which all true believers share and upon which real unity in the Spirit and productive fellowship rest. "There is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in you all." One body of His children, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one baptism, one loving Father—what a heritage is ours!

This oneness is particularly brought to our attention each time we remember our Saviour's death in the Memorial observance. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread." 1 Cor. 10:16,17. These rich verses remind us not only of the common basis of our acceptance with God and the source of our new life in Christ, but also of our privilege of sharing with our Master and with each other in all the experiences and sacrifices of the Christian way, that way which our Saviour has already trodden before us.

Let us consider some of the aspects of this fellowship with one another which should be the gladly accepted and cherished lot of every child of God. In Eph. 4 after referring to the one body, the apostle next mentions the one Spirit and it is surely by that one Spirit that each one is begotten into the family of God. "In whom (Jesus) also after ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." Eph. 1:13. "As many as are lead by the Spirit of God, they are the children of God." Rom. 8:14. Each one has been marked out as a child of God, a member of the one family, and the apostle writing to the Philippians challenges them and us to live out that family relationship.

"If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind." Phil. 2:1,2.

This fellowship in the Spirit should be productive in each one of love for those things that are best in God's sight, that edify and build up. This communion should be developing in us each a greater love for God's word and a delight in the precious truths and promises which it contains.

The privilege of sharing in such riches is beautifully portrayed in Mal. 3:16. "They that feared the Lord spake often one to another and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon His name." The promise follows in verse 17. "And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels." They that feared the Lord spake often one to another. We need not to be told what sort of things they spoke about, but we remember the much later record of the noble souls at Berea, who "received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether these things were so." Acts 17:11. The personal study of God's word is always important, but shared fellowship in its treasures is a rich experience which none should ever neglect. For just such reasons, the apostles and those who followed them set up, under God's leading, local churches—assemblies of believers, as soon as possible, wherever the gospel went. Today we are blessed that we can freely meet to praise God and meditate upon His word.

"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as ye see the day approaching." Heb. 10:25. If these words of the apostle were so important in his day, how much more so now, when all the signs about us speak of the near and fast approach of that day. This assembling is a two-way matter, for each of us has something to give and something to receive from that gathering of ourselves together. In each case, this is of the Lord, who promised—"I am with you always, even to the end of the age," but by God's grace He can use anyone of His people to be a channel of His blessing.

In another lovely picture, the apostle represents the individual members of the church as parts of the one body, dependent on each other, but each under the headship of one, even Jesus Christ. "For by the one Spirit are we all baptised into one body and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member but many

and whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it, or if one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ and members in particular.” 1 Cor. 12:12-27.

In such an intimate relationship, the fellowship of shared experience will be a further bonding agent. The apostle Paul in all his ministry for his Lord was eager and thankful for the fellowship of the brethren far and near, for their prayers, for their material support, for their constant remembrance of him. How precious is this privilege and joy of all God’s people—to bear one another up before the throne of grace, to give the word of encouragement or gratitude, to extend the helping hand in time of need! Yet it is possible to neglect or overlook the privileges of this aspect of our fellowship in Christ. In Phil. 1:5, the apostle thanks the brethren for their “fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now” and still today we also can support those who labour for the Lord in the gospel. Like the Philippian of old who shared with Paul in the work of the gospel, and to whom therefore we also owe some debt, we can be partners, albeit in a small way, with those whom the Lord calls and enables to help spread the wonderful message of the gospel of the kingdom.

In 1 Pet. 4:13-16, we read further of the privilege of the fellowship in sufferings with Christ. “Rejoice, in as much as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye, for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you..... if any suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed but let him glorify God on this behalf.” Here again, the individual believer’s fellowship, his participation or sharing in sufferings is first and foremost with Christ, for His name and His cause. But this is also a shared experience with all the Lord’s people and in the preceding verse, the apostle has had to remind his readers—“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.” In some form or other, this fellowship of suffering is the common lot of every Christian. We may not always know just what fiery troubles others are going through, but all have the assurance of Rom. 8:17—“if children, then heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together.”

Nor can we always appreciate what chastisings, what afflictions, the Father may be allowing others to endure for their character development and faithfulness, nor can they ours, but we know that every true child of God must receive some share. We know also that it is in love and not in anger that all His chastenings will come. So we all have the opportunity to seek and strengthen and support and comfort one another in the fellowship of trial and difficult experience. James tells us to “count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations, knowing that the trial of your faith worketh patience.” Jas. 1:2,3. But he also stresses the need for practical expression of concern for the welfare of other brethren and Paul in writing to the Galatians urges them—“as we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.” Gal. 6:10.

The fellowship of the Lord’s people provides scope for practical help as well as the ministry of comfort and of prayer. Furthermore, because of diversity of background, personal qualities and temperament, it provides a school in which we may learn and perfect the graces of kindness, long-suffering, forbearance, forgiveness and, above all, love—the bond of perfectness. Col. 3:12-14.

Then there is the ultimate glorious fellowship which all the faithful saints of the gospel age will enjoy together with Him whose prayer for them was—“Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory.” John 17:24. “We know that when He (Jesus) shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.” 1 John 3:2. What perfect fellowship will then be ours, first and foremost with our dear Saviour and with our loving Father in heaven, but also with each one of the Lord’s people! How important it is then that our present fellowship with all those who name the name of Christ in sincerity and truth be characterised by that selfless love which our Master commanded of us! How necessary it is that we remember that our real “citizenship is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our lowly body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body.” Phil. 3:20,21.

This glorious hope, these grand expectations, are the heritage of all the Lord’s people; how they should cheer and encourage us on as members of that one great communion of Christ’s brethren. By our words, by our actions, by the witness of our lives, we can help each other along the way. This is our privilege, indeed it is our duty, to be gladly and lovingly accepted by every child of God. He can bless this ministry of service through every passing year for each one of us, as long as we maintain that close fellowship with the Father and His dear Son, and walk in the light as He is in the light. This alone is the context, the climate, in which true fellowship can develop and bring mutual blessing to each one.

In summary, we might say that our fellowship one with another entails:

1. a fellowship in common loyalty—in allegiance to and loving communion with the one gracious Heavenly Father and His Son, our Saviour.
2. a fellowship in the same walk in light—in single-minded desire to think and speak and act as children of light, seeking only that which is true and pure and will stand the searching test of light.
3. a fellowship in mutual love—in willing obedience to our Lord's command and in recognition of His life manifest in each of His people.
4. a fellowship in shared experience—in readiness to accept from God's hand whatever He sees best for the honour of His name and for our growth and fruitfulness.
5. a fellowship in Christ's sufferings—in determination to follow Him whatever the cost, laying aside every weight and looking to Him.
6. a fellowship in the one hope and calling—rejoicing together in confident trust that what God has promised He can and will richly fulfil in and for us.
7. a fellowship in Christ's glory—seen only yet in prospect and experienced only in foretaste, but finally to be realised in all its fullness. "I go to prepare a place for you that where I am, there ye may be also."

“In Remembrance of Me.”

The Scriptures contain no request by our Lord that his followers should observe His birth but He made special request that all who would be His consecrated disciples should truly celebrate His death. As our Lord's sacrifice as “the Lamb of God” took the place of the annual Jewish Passover ceremony, it is reasonable that the observance of the Memorial of Christ's death be celebrated yearly also, on the anniversary of the institution of this observance “on the night in which he was betrayed.”

The Apostle Peter presents the matter of our Lord's sacrifice as our Redeemer beautifully in 1 Pet. 1:18-20—“Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conduct received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot; who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you.” The perfection of Christ as the Man Christ Jesus is clearly indicated in this passage, and it is just as clear that the Passover lamb which the people of Israel were instructed to sacrifice each year was a type of Christ, our Passover Lamb.

The sprinkled blood of the Passover Lamb was the means of saving Israel's firstborns from death in Egypt, as well as being the means of delivering all Israel out of Egyptian bondage on that special Passover night so long ago. That was a wonderful deliverance! What shall we think and say, however, about the saving of the spiritual firstborns unto God of this Gospel Age, and the ultimate deliverance of all the human race from the bondage of sin and death, because of the sacrifice of the antitypical Lamb of God, even Jesus Christ? Truly this wonderful prospect fills us with joy and thankfulness beyond description!

From Matthew's account of the Memorial, we read in chapter 26:26—“And as they were eating”—finishing the Jewish Passover supper—“Jesus took bread”—the unleavened bread of the Jewish supper, picturing His own perfect humanity—“and blessed it”—gave thanks to God for this fitting symbol—“and brake it”—picturing the breaking of His own body—“and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.” In other words, appropriate His perfect humanity, thus gaining justification by faith in the perfect sacrifice of Jesus. As expressed by Paul in Rom. 5:1—“Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The following verse, Matt. 26:27, reads—“And he took the cup”—the cup of the fruit of the vine—“and gave thanks”—thanked God for this symbol of His own blood—“and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it.” Again, Jesus was saying, appropriate my blood, my life, my perfect humanity, thus also gaining justification by faith in the sight of God. It is the justified human life that true believers in Christ have the privilege of laying down in the steps of the Master.

A secondary and deeper meaning of our Lord's Memorial the Apostle Paul was used of God to explain so beautifully in 1 Cor 10:16,17—"The cup of blessing which we bless is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? for we being many are one bread, and one body for we are all partakers of that one bread." Here we see the oneness of Christ and His members beautifully revealed. So, in observing our Lord's Memorial we not only do so "in remembrance of Christ," but we also signify our own willingness to be broken with Him, and have our life poured out in sacrifice with Him.

"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death, if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as thought I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus"—Phil. 3:10-14.

As we meet each year at the Memorial of our Lord's death, it is required that we do so with pure hearts, having sought forgiveness for all shortcomings through the merit of Christ, and thus acceptable in the sight of God. 1 Cor. 5:7,8—"Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover (Lamb) is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast...with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

A Purchased People

The Apostle Peter (1 Pet 2:9) speaks of the I consecrated followers of the Master as being a peculiar people. The Greek word used by him has the thought of a "purchased" people, or a people acquired by purchase. The thought is essentially the same as that outlined by Paul in Titus 2:14. This people is purchased at a great cost, even by Jesus' laying down His life for them. Acquired at so great a sacrifice they are precious in His sight, a very special treasure.

A Chosen Generation

Peter mentions other characteristics of these peculiar people. He says, for example, that they are a "chosen generation." In 1 Peter 1:2 we are told that these people are "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience." Paul explains the manner in which God's foreknowledge operates in connection with this elect people, saying, "Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son."—Rom. 8:29.

Here again we are reminded of the condition requisite to being the peculiar people of God, that condition being zeal for good works. God has predestinated that each one of this class must be conformed to the image of Christ. The zeal of God's house consumed the Master, and if we are like Him, then the same zeal will consume us. The Master's zeal was for the good work, of God, and our zeal must also be for God's work. It will not do merely to be zealous. Our zeal must be controlled by the will of God, then it will result in blessings to others and to the glory of the Lord.

God wants us to "give diligence to make our calling and election sure," and if we do, we will become more and more conformed to the likeness of His beloved Son. (2 Pet. 1:10.) To be like Jesus we need to get acquainted with Him. We can do this through the Word. As we note the details of His consecrated life we are at once impressed with the full extent to which he sought to know and to do His Father's will at all times and under all circumstances. In the most trying moment of His earthly career He lifted up His heart to God and said, "not My will, but Thine, be done."—Luke 22:42.

Jesus was faithful in prayer, and could say to His Father, "I knew that Thou hearest Me always." (John 11:42.) Jesus let His light shine so faithfully that it finally cost Him His life. Jesus was ever on the alert to bless others, even the little children. Such is the portrait of the Master and God has predestinated that if we are to be a part of the "chosen generation" of this age, we must be conformed to the Master's image.

A Royal Priesthood

"Ye are a royal priesthood," the apostle asserts. Here again the language God employed to describe his typical people is applied to spiritual Israel. Israel was designated "a kingdom of priests," but in order to make good that

title continued zeal for the doing of God's will was necessary. (Exod. 19:5,6.) This zeal was lacking, and now the title is transferred "to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof."—Matt. 21:43.

The priests of Israel represented God among the people. Their work was twofold. They offered sacrifice, and they dispensed the blessings of God to the people vouchsafed by the sacrifices. All Israel was to be a nation of priests in representing God before the rest of the world, but failed to actually attain this high position of divine favor. Now the title and privilege goes to God's peculiar people of the Gospel age. In 1 Peter 2:5 the apostle explains that the consecrated are "an holy priesthood" to "offer up sacrifices." Peter also says that we are built up a "spiritual house." This is a reference to the symbolism of the temple as the meeting place between God and Israel. The people came to the temple to receive God's blessings. So God's peculiar people are to be the channel of divine blessings to the whole world when the work of sacrifice is complete. What wondrous grace is thus bestowed upon those who are "zealous of good works."

A Holy Nation

To be holy means to be pure, unadulterated, and God expects that His peculiar people will be undivided in their devotion to Him. He does not want us to be "double minded." There may be little danger today that we will worship Moloch or other heathen deities, but there are, nevertheless, many "idols" which our wayward hearts may set up, and through the worship of which we would become unholy in our devotion to God. There is the god of pleasure; the god of wealth; the god of ease; the god of pride and ambition; and there is the "self" god. To qualify as a part of God's holy nation of today the divine will must reign supreme in our hearts and lives.

God wants us to be "obedient children, not fashioning ourselves according to the former lusts. "But as He which hath called you is holy," says the apostle, "so be ye holy in all manner of conversation." Then the apostle quotes from the Old Testament, "Be ye holy; for I am holy." (1 Pet. 1:14-16; Lev. 11:45.) The entire text in Leviticus from which Peter quoted, reads, "For I am the Lord that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt, *to be your God*; ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy."

God is there reminding Israel that He was exclusively their God. Later, through Amos, God declared, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth." (Amos 3:2.) God is pure and sinless from whatever standpoint we may view Him, but in these passages he seems to be emphasising the point that He had not been a God to any other nation except Israel. It is upon the basis of this holiness toward them, that He asks them to be holy toward Him. He had no other people; they were to have no other gods.

The same thing is true today. God loves all nations, and has provided blessings for them but He considers the "holy nation" only as being His peculiar people. To these he becomes Father, Helper, and Friend. He engraves them upon the palms of His hands; they are as dear to Him as the apple of His eye. His name is written in their foreheads. He provides for all their needs; gives them strength when they are weak; comforts when they are sorrowful. In the end, He will exalt them to His own nature and glory. They are a peculiar treasure unto Him, and no good thing will he withhold from them.

God's Praises

After applying these various symbolically descriptive titles to the followers of the Master the apostle explains the practical significance of what they all imply, saying, "that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light." (1 Peter 2:9.) This, after all, is the objective of the "good works" for which God's peculiar people should be zealous. All that is done by them, both in this age and in the next, shows forth the praises of God.

The Millennial age work of healing the sick and raising the dead will certainly show forth God's praises. When the knowledge of God's glory fills the earth as the waters cover the sea, all mankind will praise the Lord. Then every creature in heaven and in earth will be praising Him that sitteth upon the throne, and will also give glory to the Lamb that was slain. (Rev. 5:13.) But those who are privileged to share in that future work of filling the earth with the glory of God will be those only who previously have zealously sacrificed all their earthly interests in showing forth the praises of the Lord in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation among whom—now this side of the veil—they shine as lights.

The extent to which the light of the Gospel penetrates the darkness of this world is not the responsibility of the

Christian; but we are responsible for letting the light shine. Whether men hear or not does not affect the responsibility imposed upon us by divine grace to show forth the praises of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvellous light. We are a royal priesthood to this end; we are a holy nation for this purpose; we are a chosen generation to be the light of the world. A consuming zeal for carrying on this good work as God directs in His Word, and recognition of the fact that it is all by grace that the privilege is extended to us, will mean that God will continue to encircle us with His love as His peculiar people.

This does not mean that we can earn our way into the Kingdom. It does not mean that salvation is of works, and not of grace. It *does* mean that we will be demonstrating our faith by our works; and that, realizing we have been bought with a price, we do not belong to ourselves, but to Him, and are to be His servants forever. It means that we qualify to be God's peculiar treasure by showing our appreciation of what He has done for us. If we really appreciate His love, we will want to tell it and live it out, and by doing this, to show forth His praises.

Matthew the Publican

"I am not come to call the righteous but sinners. "Luke 5:32.

It has been truly said that "the story of Matthew X is an emphatic witness to the truth that the Gospel is no respecter of persons, and that even in the selection of His more immediate followers Jesus thought not of anything in their outward surroundings, but simply and solely of their spiritual fitness for their new task." Surely the Saviour made no mistake in calling Matthew to be one of twelve Apostles. His life subsequent to his call gives evidence of having been most fruitful, and to him was assigned the honor of giving to the followers of Christ a most inspiring account of the life and ministry of our blessed Redeemer.

It was in or near the city of Capernaum that Matthew received the call from the Master. This city where our Lord had been teaching and healing, was situated on the sea of Galilee. It was a city of considerable commercial importance, and undoubtedly the lake-shore in that vicinity was quite populous. The tense of the Greek would seem to indicate that our Lord kept going by the sea-shore, stopping here and there to discourse to the people, multitudes of whom flocked to hear Him. It was during this journey that He passed Matthew, formerly known as Levi, a custom-house agent of the Roman government — a revenue collector, who was attending to his business, and whom our Lord addressed, saying, "Follow Me," and who obeyed the call to discipleship.

Many get a false thought from the brevity of the narrative, and infer that Levi (Matthew) had never heard of Jesus before, and that our Lord, as He passed him, cast upon him some kind of a spell which led him to instantly drop his business. On the contrary, the Lord and His disciples were well known in that vicinity and probably Matthew had not only knowledge of our Lord, but also faith in Him, as the Messiah. Not until then, however, had Jesus invited him to become one of His immediate disciples; not until then, therefore, could Matthew essay to become such. There evidently were many who heard the Lord discourse time and again, and who were to be reckoned as amongst His friends, but who were by no means invited to become special followers, companions and associates in the ministry of the Gospel, as were the Twelve.

Nor are we to suppose that Matthew left his money-drawer open, and his accounts with the Roman government unsettled, to immediately follow the Master. Rather, we may assume that it may have taken days, or possibly weeks, to straighten his affairs and to enable him to respond to the Lord's call to apostleship. We should remember that the history of several years, and many discourses, conversations and incidents, are crowded in the gospel narrative into very brief space.

Publicans Despised

The office of a publican offered many opportunities for dishonesty and extortion, bribery, etc., but we cannot suppose that Levi was one of these dishonest publicans, for had he been so we may be sure he would not have been called to the apostleship and would not have responded to the call, for we are not to forget that it is written, "No man can come to Me except the Father which sent Me draw him."—John 6:44.

Quoting Peloubet's Notes as to the general character of the publicans: "To become a publican in Palestine nineteen centuries ago a man had first of all to sell his country. The publican was the embodiment and representative of the foreign government. And to become a publican, in the second place, a man had to sell his conscience. The publican's trade was a dishonest trade. Taxes today are fixed by responsible and representative bodies, and the tax-gatherer, as a result, can never exact more than is due. But taxes long ago were 'farmed'. The taxes of a town or

district or province would be sold to the highest bidder, and that highest bidder would then be allowed to squeeze out of the people of his district what money he could. It was a system that encouraged corruption and extortion.

Matthew was a man of influence, and as soon as he accepted the Lord's call, and responded by consecrating himself and his all, he set about to use his influence in drawing others to the Savior. He would announce his own devotion to the cause in such a manner and under such favorable circumstances as if possible would win some. To these ends he arranged a banquet for the Lord and His disciples at his house, and invited many of his friends and business associates. These are called "Many publicans and sinners."

We have seen why the publicans were ostracized by the scribes and Pharisees—not always because they were wicked, but because their business was disesteemed: and being thus cut off socially from the ultra-religious, the publicans were forced to have most of their social intercourse with the non-religious, by way of contrast called "sinners." By the term sinners we are not necessarily to understand vile persons and evil-doers, but rather persons who did not profess nor attempt the holiness claimed by the Pharisees—persons who did not claim to be absolute keepers of the Divine Law—who did not profess to make the outside of the cup or platter absolutely clean, though perhaps in many instances the inside was as clean or more clean than were the hearts of the Pharisees, who professed perfect holiness.

Matthew Ready

The words of Dean Farrar are well in place at this point: "But He who came to seek and save the lost—He who could evoke Christian holiness out of the midst of heathen corruption—could make even out of a Jewish publican, the Apostle and the first Evangelist of a new and living Faith. His choice of apostles was dictated by a spirit far different from that of calculating policy or conventional prudence. He rejected the dignified scribe (Matt. 8:19); He chose the despised and hated tax-gatherer. It was the glorious unworldliness of a Divine insight and a perfect charity, and Matthew more than justified it by turning his knowledge of writing to a sacred use, and becoming the biographer of his Savior and his Lord.

"No doubt Matthew had heard some of the discourses, has seen some of the miracles of Christ. His heart had been touched, and to the eyes of Him who despised none and despaired of none, the publican, even as he sat at 'the receipt of custom', was ready for the call. One word was enough. The 'Follow Me' which showed to Matthew that his Lord loved him, and was ready to use him as a chosen instrument in spreading the good tidings of the kingdom of God, was sufficient to break the temptations of avarice and the routine of a daily calling, and 'he left all, rose up, and followed Him,' touched into noblest transformation by a forgiving and redeeming love."

A Consecrated Home

Matthew's endeavour to bring his friends and associates into contact with the Master and His teaching is certainly commendable, and is a good illustration of what each one who enters the Lord's flock should do. Each should seek to exert his influence where it is greatest, amongst those with whom he is acquainted and who are acquainted with him, and upon whom either his past honesty and good character should have an influence, or else those to whom his radical change of life would be the most manifest.

Another lesson for us is the propriety of using hospitality as a channel for the advancement of the truth—the homes of those who have consecrated themselves to the Lord should be consecrated homes, in which the first consideration should be the service of the Master; and its influence should be to draw out friends to the Lord, that they might be taught of Him. Too frequently the consecration of the home is overlooked and antagonistic influences are permitted to dominate, with the result that neither the Lord nor the Lord's people are entertained, nor His Cause served in them. Such a house and home loses a great blessing.

Spiritual Food

It would seem from other narratives of this same banquet (which was probably several weeks after Matthew's call) that a large number of people were gathered at Matthew's house aside from those who partook of the banquet (Luke 5:29), and from the connection of the narrative it is supposed that it was on one of the regular fast days of the Pharisees. These facts led to the question:

Why does your Teacher associate with these people, who do not profess sanctification? The objection was not

because our Lord taught the publicans and sinners, but because He ate with them, which implied a social equality, and the Pharisees evidently recognized that our Lord and His apostles were professing and living lives of entire consecration to God.

In answer to this query our Lord said, “They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick”—the implication being that the physician had a right to go to and mingle with those whom he sought to relieve, and might mingle with them in whatever manner he saw to be expedient for their cure. This language does not imply that the Pharisees were not sick, and that they did not need our Lord’s ministry, though the fact was that not admitting that they were sin-sick they were not disposed to receive his good medicine of doctrine.

The same thought is otherwise expressed by our Lord in the same connection, saying, “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” Any one who considered himself to be righteous would be beyond the call of repentance. His first lesson would be to learn that he was not righteous, not perfect; hence our Lord went chiefly to those who admitted that they were not righteous, and whose hearts therefore were better soil for the truth than others. Our Lord intimated this in His parable of the publican’s and the Pharisee’s prayers, assuring us that in God’s sight the publican had the better standing, because of his acknowledgment of imperfections and his petition for mercy.

To all who feel their need, who hunger and thirst after righteousness, the Lord is gracious. Such a one of nobler spirit must Matthew have been, whom our Lord knew and called to His service.

(from the “Herald”)



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Think on These Things (Phil. 4:8)

(Convention Address)

What things should we be thinking about? What should be the character of our thoughts? Thoughts are the beginning of all things — the creation of the universe began with a thought.

Thoughts are the seeds which are planted to make our characters grow. Each person is like a farm; Paul wrote to the Corinthian church: "Ye are God's husbandry." The thought is—you are God's farm. As with natural farms, there is great diversity. Sometimes we come to a farm where everything looks nice—rows of corn appear lush and everything is green and thriving. There are no weeds, indicating good cultivation. It is refreshing to see a farm like that. However, we may then see another farm where the rows are crooked, the crops do not look well, weeds are thriving and there is evidence of neglect. It is so with the individual. One has a character like a nicely cultivated farm—patience, love, zeal, godliness, earnestness and other grand qualities are growing in his or her character. Another whose character is like the farm overgrown with weeds is growing envy, jealousy, malice, strife and all kinds of evil fruitage. Just as a farmer plants seed to raise crops, so something is needed to raise or grow a character. The little seed which the farmer plants corresponds with the little thought which we plant. The seed is very small yet it produces a large plant. A thought also is a very small thing, yet how much will grow from it.

"Be not deceived, God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, but he that soweth to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting." (Gal. 6:7,8) When Paul says "he that sows to the flesh" he refers to those who think thoughts out of harmony with God's will—thoughts in keeping with the spirit of the flesh. If we entertain such thoughts, we are sowing to the flesh. When we read "whatever he sows, that shall he reap," we tend to think of this more along the lines of actions. But why do we do what we do? We begin by thinking—our thoughts determine where we go, what we do, how we spend our money, what words we speak. Everything starts with a thought. The same apostle further states: "I have sown, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase." Here again he refers to thoughts; when Paul came among them he planted certain thoughts in their minds which they never had before. Apollos encouraged these thoughts and finally God brought them to fruition.

If we are trying to serve the Lord, and a wrong thought comes to mind, then if we plant that thought we are sowing corruption and we will reap corruption. We may not be lost on that account, but we are making it harder for ourselves and if we get into the kingdom, we will have a lower place because we were willing to retain these wrong thoughts. If you or I entertain the thought that God may desert us, we are entertaining an untrue thought and as we do so, it will begin to develop the weeds of doubt. If we go on to harbour these, we may lose our faith. When a thought of this kind comes to our mind, let us reason that it is impossible for God to forget His promises, it is impossible for Him to go back on His word, it is impossible for Him to desert His child. "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

The two words—thought and think—can have different meanings:

THOUGHT — idea, notion

THINK — deliberate, meditate, reflect, contemplate

We are not to blame for our thoughts, but we are to blame for what we think. We are not necessarily to be commended for our good thoughts, nor blamed for our bad thoughts. But if we entertain them, that is a different matter.

“As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.” Let us take for our guidance in this matter the apostle Paul’s final admonition to the Philippian church, as recorded in Ch. 4:8. In this chapter, Paul is giving instructions to the church as to how they should build themselves up in the most holy faith. Preceding the text scripture, he gives the following thought: “Therefore my brethren whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord my beloved. Rejoice in the Lord always, again I say rejoice. Let all men know your forbearance. The Lord is at hand. Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God which passes all understanding will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 4:1, 4-7 RSV)

Then in the text scripture, Paul imparts to us very detailed instructions on what to think about: “Finally brethren whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.” (Phil. 4:8 KJV); and continuing on into the next verse: “What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, do, and the God of peace will be with you.” They should have heard and seen that these good thoughts had brought the peace of God to Paul. In verses 7 and 9, we see that they also can bring us this peace which passes all understanding. If we have this peace, we can then rejoice in the Lord, have no anxiety about anything and let our requests be known to God.

The Manna Comment for April 27 says, in part: “To have the mind of Christ is indeed the one requirement of lawful striving.... a mind which humbly and faithfully submits itself to the will of God, as expressed in His great plan of the ages, and which devotes all energy to the accomplishment of His will, because of an intelligent appreciation of the end He has in view.” All know what a great influence the mind has over the body. The more we think on good things, the better we will be; and just the opposite, the more we think on evil things, the more evil we will become. If a thing has none of the qualities of the text scripture, then we should not think on it at all. But if we think on those things which have the wisdom and depth which comes from God alone, then a wonderful change of character is effected. We must desire to be led by God and to conform our thoughts to His. Thoughts can be controlled, just as words and actions can be controlled.

“My son, be attentive to my words; incline thine ear to my sayings. Let them not escape from your sight; keep them within your heart. For they are life to him who finds them, and healing to all his flesh. Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life. Put away from you crooked speech and put devious talk far from you. Let your eyes look directly forward and your gaze be straight before you. Take heed to the path of your feet, then all your ways will be straight.” (Prov. 4:20-26 RSV) “Out of the heart flow the springs of life.” The heart is the governing power of mankind and represents the will and intention. It must be kept true and centred in God. But the will is subject to many influences and if our thoughts are impure, unjust or unholy, the power of the will becomes weaker. The thoughts of those who are striving to make their calling and election sure must not be permitted to dwell on evil things, but must be disciplined to dwell on the deeper things of the word of God. The new heart is to be kept loyal to God, to the principles of righteousness and to His covenant, to be active in love and helpfulness and in the cultivation of thoughts in accord with the divine.

The Criteria

Turning to the text scripture (Phil. 4:8), the first test quality for our thinking is: “Is it TRUE?” This is the first consideration in any matter. Webster defines true as—reliable, certain, in accordance with fact, agreeing with reality, not false. We know that the word of God is true, and that He will be true to His word, as we read in Psa. 119:160—“The sum of Thy words is truth, and everyone of Thy righteous ordinances endures for ever.” We know that He is the only true God (Jer. 10:10) and that His ways are true (Rev. 15:3). And no person was truer than Jesus—He was the True Light, the True Vine, His word was true and He was the True and Faithful Witness.

But does our text mean to think on anything that is true? There are hundreds of branches of science, each based upon profound truths. Are we to seek to master these, to think upon these things? And beside these, there are many unwholesome, scandalous and trivial things which are also true. Are we to fill our minds with these? Of course not! The apostle’s words require some qualification, a right dividing of the word of truth. (2 Tim. 2:15)

When Paul directs us to think on whatsoever things are true, he is speaking of the Truth, as the Lord’s people use and understand His precious words, a knowledge of the great divine plan of ages, the only way in which the scriptures are seen to be both beautiful and harmonious. As we contemplate and meditate on the truth, let us thank God for

1. the plan of salvation, revealing God to be a God of love, compassion and mercy,
2. the philosophy of the ransom, whereby Christ died for all—that God will have all to be saved and come

to a knowledge of the truth, the times of restitution of all things, which God has spoken by all His holy prophets since the world began, the great mystery of Christ, the Head, and the church, His body—"Christ in you, the hope of glory."

3. the exceeding great and precious promises of God,
4. the special care of God over the church, leading them in the narrow way, and
5. His divine plan of ages, and our part in it, whereby if we are faithful, we may be actually God's instruments in bringing these things to pass, and thus the blessing of the whole world.

"Make me to know Thy ways, O Lord; teach me Thy paths. Lead me in Thy truth and teach me, for Thou art the God of my salvation; for Thee I wait all the day long." (Psa. 25:4,5 RSV) Love for truth lies at the foundation of a righteous life. If we want to be the precious treasure of the Lord, if we want Him to claim us as His own, we must establish habits of thought which will keep the truth fresh, lively and inspiring to us. Whatsoever things are true, of the truth, think on these things.

But the truth of a thing is only one of the tests we should apply. Another is—"Is it HONEST?" Honest means trustworthy, honorable, genuine, real, respectable, showing fairness and sincerity. There are many things that are true, but dishonorable and not worthy of our thought. Honesty is a basic quality; we cannot even start our Christian walk without it. When the apostles chose seven helpers, they chose men who were of honest report, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom. "Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles, that whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation." (1 Pet. 2:12 KJV) We should be honorable in all our affairs, confessing to being children of God and walking in the footsteps of Jesus. All should see to it that they are honest in treatment of neighbours, in treatment of the brethren, and above all in their confessions respecting their God and their faith. All of us desire honesty in ourselves, as well as in others. "Repay no one evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all." (Rom. 12:17 RSV)

We should dismiss all thoughts that are dishonorable and unworthy. Rom. 13:13 admonishes us to walk honestly, as in the day. That day points us to the millennial day, when all will have to walk honestly, if they are to receive the earthly blessings of that age. As new creatures, we have a much higher calling and should voluntarily give the same meticulous attention to our conduct now, as in that day. We know that God is honorable and that He should be honored, along with our Redeemer. Any dishonorable act of ours will bring dishonor on God's name. We desire to bring honor and glory to His name, so whatsoever things are honest or honorable, let us think on these things.

Things that are JUST—here is another test quality we should look for. Justice should be the rule of our lives. Webster gives just as - lawful, right, fair, proper, righteous, upright. We know that God and His dear Son Jesus are just, as we read:

"There is no God beside me, a just God and a Saviour, there is none beside me." (Isa. 45:21 KJV)

"By myself I can do nothing. As I hear from God, I judge and my judgment is true, because I do not live to please myself, but to do the will of God who sent me." (John 5:30 JBP)

That which is just is that which is right; justice and righteousness are synonymous terms. The golden rule—"Do unto others as you would have others do unto you"—is the rule of justice.

We have no right to expect more than justice; whatever we receive more than justice is love or favour. God will be pleased with nothing less than our continued opposition to every form of unrighteousness. Many claiming to be Christians are blind to justice and righteousness in the affairs of life. They have too much mercy on their own shortcomings and not enough on the shortcomings of others. The October 14 Manna comment reads: "We are to grow in love and love is the principal thing, but before we can make much development in the cultivation of love, we must learn to be just, right, righteous. It is a proper presentation of the matter that is given in the proverb that a man should be just before he is generous. All love that is founded upon injustice, or wrong ideas of righteousness, is delusive, is not the love which the Lord will require as the test of discipleship."

We are to learn to apply this test of justice to our every thought, word and act, at the same time learning to view the conduct of others, so far as reason will permit, from the standpoint of mercy, pity, forgiveness, helpfulness. We cannot be too careful of how we criticise, of every thought we entertain, of every plan we nurture, so that the lines of justice shall in no way be infringed willingly by us. We should think not only of the good things, the higher things, but the blessed things to come, and thus have our minds busy thinking on whatsoever things are just. Once it becomes a habit, it will be a constant delight.

Whatsoever things are PURE—this is the next test quality. To be pure means to be free from anything that adulterates, free from defects, perfect, faultless, free from sin and guilt. Our thoughts should avoid anything that while not impure in itself might have the effect of arousing impurity in another. The heart that is corrupt expects and looks for corruption in others. But the pure avoids evil surmisings. “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” (Matt. 5:8 KJV) The heart refers to intention or will. Purity of mind and conduct must be developed insofar as is possible. This must command our best efforts; we are to love and cultivate that which is pure to such an extent that what is impure will become painful to us and distressing, and we shall desire to drop it from memory. This will be accomplished only by continually thinking upon those things that are pure. To think on the purest of things, we must of necessity lift our mental vision to as high a point as possible. Peter said that we are to purify our lives by obedience to the truth and sincere love for the brethren. (1 Peter 1:22)

The scriptures speak to us of the pure doctrine and the pure messages of truth given by the Lord for our enlightenment: “The promises of the Lord are promises that are pure, silver refined in a furnace, on the ground, purified seven times.” (Psa. 12:6 RSV) “Thy promise is well tried and Thy servant loves it.” (Psa. 119:140 RSV) “The wisdom that comes from above is pure.” (Jas. 3:17 JBP)

The early church had the pure truth; the apostles kept them straight in doctrine. “For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.” (Acts 20:27) But when the apostles died, the light began to fade and perverse, impure doctrines were introduced. (See Acts 20:29,30) During the Dark Ages, the truth all but disappeared, but the Lord determined to restore the truth to the household of faith at His second presence and did so by the hand of a faithful and wise servant. “Contend for the faith, which was once for all delivered to the saints.” (Jude 3) These pure truths are worth thinking about, fighting for and holding on to.

Think on those things that are LOVELY. This calls our attention to the need not to allow our minds to dwell upon things that are not lovely—we might permit our business to so fill our thoughts that we think continually on that particular thing. Constant thought on these lines is not profitable to the new creature. We must endeavour to bring our thoughts into subjection and train them along the lines that will transform us into the glorious character-likeness of our Lord. The dictionary defines lovely as—beautiful, exquisite, morally or spiritually attractive, having those qualities that inspire love, affection or admiration. How wonderful if our minds were filled only with lovely thoughts! These relate to the things of character, such as the fruits of the Spirit outlined in Gal. 5:22,23—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. If we cultivate these in our hearts, we become more and more God-like, but if we fail to do so, the works of the flesh and the devil will be developed.

There are so many lovely things that we can think about:

1. The divine plan of ages is lovely,
2. God the author of the divine plan is most worthy of love,
3. An object of great loveliness is Jesus—we never tire of thinking of Him, the author and finisher of faith,
4. Our opportunity to reign with Him, if faithful, is also a lovely prospect.

So let us think upon whatsoever things are lovely.

If things are of GOOD REPORT, then they are reputable, well thought of, respectable, not sub-standard, but gracious (as translated in RSV). Two references to this great quality are:

“But Thou Lord art a God merciful and gracious.” (Psa. 86:15 RSV)

“And He began to say to them, Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing. And all spoke well of Him, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth.” (Luke 4:21,22 RSV)

The word used includes the thought of being reputable (Diag.), that which would be well thought of by reputable people, or those of good repute. It would not mean that it was necessarily well spoken of by the world. Jesus was of good report but was reviled by the world, which said all manner of things against Him falsely. We need to be so careful in our daily lives, that the only thing which we would suffer for would be that we are Christians.

Just as good report can build one up, so evil report can injure one's reputation. Fallen human nature is inclined towards evil, and a human trait is to believe evil more readily than good of a person. This is bad enough, but worse, the good things we know about anyone are often forgotten, but the evil things we think we know are repeated and circulated, often with relish. This could have terrible results and seriously hamper usefulness in the Lord's service. It makes no difference whether the evil thing is true or not; just because it may be true is in itself no reason for telling it. Our thoughts must be gracious, reputable and of good repute if we are to be faithful and give our will to God. Whatsoever things are of good report, think on these things.

If there be any VIRTUE, or as Webster defines it, excellence in general, moral excellence, good quality, goodness of character; things that are in any degree noble...noble words, noble deeds, noble sentiments of anyone—if we meditate on these, we will find ourselves growing towards those ideals and upon these, our mind—the new nature feeds. Peter tells us:

“His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us to His own glory and excellence. For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge.” (2 Peter 1:3,5 RSV) We need to listen carefully to his following words (verse 8):

“For if these things are yours and abound, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Thinking on these things will keep us fruitful in the knowledge of God. The people of God who follow the instructions of the divine word become noble people, helpful people, possessed of the spirit of a sound mind. These will also extol the virtues of God Himself, understand more of His glorious character, see that His every act is motivated by love and that He loves us, particularly and individually. If there be any virtue, think on these things.

The last of the eight great qualities is PRAISE. Praise is defined as a simple, basic word implying an expression of approval, esteem, commendation or of lauding the glory of God. We should not even think about praising ourselves, and yet we should try to make our actions praiseworthy. We are to think mainly about the praise of God. Praise to God is an acceptable act of worship. Many psalms speak of praise, such as:

“Praise the Lord. I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart, in the company of the upright, in the congregation.” (Psa. 111:1 RSV) “Praise the Lord! O give thanks to the Lord, for He is good.” (Psa. 106:1 RSV)

Can we imagine any more sincere or enthusiastic occasion of praise than that of the man lame from birth who was healed by Peter and entered the temple, walking and leaping and praising God?

In Acts 16:23-26 we read that Paul and Silas had been brutally beaten in Philippi and were put in chains. At midnight they sang and praised God and the other prisoners heard. Suddenly there was a great earthquake, all the doors were opened and everyone's bonds were loosed. Do we want doors opened, bonds loosed or problems solved? Let us praise God, extol His virtues, name and recount every wonderful thing we can remember about Him—His personal attributes, His marvellous works of creation, His divine plan so just and yet so merciful, the precious gift of His Son, His incredible provision that we might be associated with Jesus in His kingdom, His providences in our lives, His exceeding great and precious promises, and there are still many more things for which we may praise Him. Let us think indeed about praising God from whom all blessings flow.

These are then the eight scriptural qualities which things must have, before we think upon them. They are to be:

1. True - 2. Honest (honorable) - 3. Just - 4. Pure - 5. Lovely - 6. Of good report (gracious) - 7. Virtuous (excellent) - 8. Praise-worthy

And we need further to remember:

“As a man thinketh, so he is.” (Prov. 23:7) “Whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.” (Gal. 6:7)

Every thought should therefore be challenged because it affects our words and our conduct and extends to others. We should desire to have in our hearts and minds things that are positively good, beneficial and uplifting. Desires for earthly things have a natural attraction for all mankind, but if we want to keep ourselves in the love of God, we must put our affections on heavenly things and continually keep on weeding out earthly desires and attractions. We can hardly over-estimate the importance of right thinking, because of the great influence of the mind over the body. Let us take pleasure in the cultivation of the fruits and graces of the Holy Spirit. Thus we shall become transformed by the renewing of our minds and come nearer to the glorious likeness of our Master, being changed inch by inch, step by step, little by little during this present life.

Let thoughts of the blessedness of our future work in co-operation with Christ, of the magnitude and benevolence of the divine plan, and of the glory and blessedness of our gathering together into Christ, when the work of the present age is finished, fill our minds and inspire our hearts. And further, let us also receive the additional comfort and blessing of personal communion and fellowship with God through prayer, the study of His word and the assembling of ourselves together for worship and praise. Those who are thinking on the true and lovely and good and beautiful things will speak to each other of these things, hence the importance of having our hearts filled with good things, in order that out of the abundance of our hearts, our mouths may speak continually that which the Lord would approve and that would bring blessing to all who hear. (A.A. 9/91)

THINK ON THESE THINGS!

A New Year Prayer

Another year is dawning;
Dear Master, let it be,
In working or in waiting,
Another year with Thee.

Another year of mercies,
Of faithfulness and grace;
Another year of gladness,
In the shining of Thy face.

Another year of progress,
Another year of praise,
Another year of proving
Thy presence all the days.

Another year of service,
Of witness for Thy love;
Another year of training
For holier work above.

Another year is dawning;
Dear Master, let it be,
In working or in waiting,
Another year for Thee.
(ER.H.)

Precious Promises

(Convention Address)

“May favour and peace be multiplied to you by a knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; even as His divine power has granted to us all things relating to life and piety, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue; on account of which very great and precious promises have been bestowed on us, so that through these you might become partakers of the divine nature, having fled away from the corruption that is in the world through lust.” (2 Peter 1: 2-4 — Diaglott)

For whom do these words apply? Were these instructions given to sinners? Is this the way sinners approach God? No, these instructions are addressed to those justified through faith in the blood of Christ, as shown in Verse 1: “to those who have obtained an equally precious faith with us, by the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ.” To become a believer in Jesus Christ, a justified and consecrated believer, is not enough. There has to be a progress while in these earthly bodies; if we are faithful, this will be completed in the first resurrection. The apostle’s thought is that of continuous progress.

Many might think of additions and subtractions of grace and peace, finding and losing, but Peter speaks of multiplication. “May favour and peace be MULTIPLIED to you.” Many again lack a knowledge of the things necessary to preserve to them the favour and peace found in Christ as their Redeemer, and lack sufficient understanding to multiply their favour and peace. These are mentioned in 1 Cor. 3:1; “And I, brethren, was not able to speak to you as to spiritual, but as to fleshly persons, as to babes in Christ.”

The true foundation upon which to build is faith in the righteousness of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, faith that His sacrifice for sin was once for all, a full and complete ransom price for Adam and all his posterity, so that all may be brought to a knowledge of Christ in due time. It is those who build upon this foundation who may hope to multiply their grace and peace. But how? Peter answers: “through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.” To some it may seem that we come to know God and to know that there is a Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, but a knowledge of God is much more than this. It means an intimate acquaintance with the Father and with the Son, a knowledge of the mind of Christ, which itself is a full and clear representation of the mind of the Father.

We grow in this knowledge by study of the Word of God and by ascertaining how divine justice, wisdom, love and power operate. These are progressive studies. Peter shows us that, through this knowledge of God, there are imparted to us all things related to life and piety or godliness. To know God, as Peter here explains, means an intimate knowledge and it is only when we see the beauties of His character that we can become intimately acquainted with Him. The influence of this knowledge and fellowship reacts upon our hearts and has a cleansing and sanctifying effect. "But we all beholding the glory of the Lord in a face unveiled, are transformed into the same likeness, as from the Lord, the Spirit." 2 Cor. 3:18.

The apostle Paul prays that believers may grow in the knowledge of God, as in Eph. 3:14-19: "For this cause I bend my knees to the Father, from whom the whole family in the heavens and on earth is named, that He may give you according to His glorious wealth, to be powerfully strengthened through His spirit in the inner man; that the Anointed One, through the faith, may dwell in your hearts; that, being rooted in love and well-established, you may be fully able to understand with all the saints, what is the breadth and length, and depth and height, to know even that which surpasses knowledge—the love of the Anointed One; so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."

The world in general does not know God, and it is evident also that many professing Christians know little about Him. Paul explains to us that Satan is particularly interested in hindering any from obtaining the light of truth. He declares in 2 Cor. 4:4: "the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." Here we see the constant conflict of darkness against light; the darkness hates the light for all who see and rejoice in the light are the children of the light. After the image of the Lord has been impressed upon their hearts, they become light-bearers, reflecting to others the light shining on them from the divine source.

On account of this call of God, great and precious promises have been given to His people. These are so many and so precious that it is difficult to know which to rank first. But perhaps the first of all is the precious promise that, although what we shall be like has not yet been made known, "when He our Lord shall appear, we shall be LIKE HIM, for we shall see Him as He is." "If I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself." "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I overcame and am set down with my Father on His throne." "They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels." (my treasured possessions).

"For these light afflictions do work out in us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." "Then we will be heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in His sufferings, that we may also share in His glory." "To him that overcometh I will give authority over the nations, just as I received authority from my Father." (1 John 3:2, John 14:3, Rev. 3:21, Mal. 3:17, 2 Cor. 4:17, Rom. 8:17, Rev. 2:26,27)

These are only a few of all His exceeding great and precious promises; they are summed up by Peter, who says that it is God's will and purpose that through these we might become partakers of the divine nature. Who could have thought of such a thing? Our earthly minds might have thought to reach human perfection, or even to go to heaven as an angel, but though the angelic nature is higher than the human, that is not what God has promised. No, He has promised the overcoming church, the little flock, that they shall share the divine nature of her Lord, as well as share in His heavenly kingdom. We cannot really comprehend why the great Creator should exalt to His own nature, but we accept that the lengths and breadths of His grand designs surpass all human knowledge. Having been privileged to see something of His glorious character, shall we not want to attain to all He might be pleased to reveal to us? to be partakers of His likeness, more and more acceptable? and finally to be actually and everlastingly accepted in our beloved Lord? This will indeed be the full realisation of the blessings and promises God has given us.

Such promises and such knowledge should inspire our hearts to love and sacrifice, as the apostle John tells us in 1 John 3:3: "Everyone having this hope in him purifies himself, as He is pure." May the exceeding great and precious promises of God continue to sustain us in the narrow way. (D.O.)

A Peculiar People

"Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." —Titus 2:14.

A Special Treasure

The Greek word translated “peculiar” in our text, according to Prof. Strong, means that which is special, or beyond the usual. The apostle’s thought evidently is that this people whom Christ purifies unto Himself are esteemed by Him and by the Heavenly Father as a special treasure. Similar language is used by God concerning natural Israel. We read, “Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is Mine. And ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.”—Ex. 19:5,6.

High indeed was the possibility of Israel’s relationship toward God, but it was dependent upon continued faithfulness in obeying His voice and keeping His commandments. As a nation Israel failed all along the line; and finally, when the nation rejected Jesus, was cast off from all hope of enjoying the chief place of favor in the divine arrangement. Concerning this Paul explains: “Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded.”—Romans 11:7.

The apostle explains, however, that a remnant of individuals from among Israel qualified for the chief blessing. This agrees with the statement concerning Jesus which says that “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not; but as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God.” (John 1:11,12). But there were not sufficient who received the Master to make up the foreordained number of the special people, so the remaining ones were called from among the Gentiles. Explaining this Paul says that the Gentile branches were grafted into the Jewish olive tree to take the places of the natural branches that were broken off because of unbelief. (Rom. 11:17-30). This is a “graft” which is “contrary to nature,” because usually it is tame branches that are grafted into a wild root; and the nature of the branches determines the kind and quality of the fruit. But not so with the Gentiles grafted into the Jewish tree.

Zeal For God’s Will

Israel’s standing as God’s peculiar treasure continued only as long as the nation was zealous for hearing and obeying the voice of God. So we, who have come into this favored position as spiritual Israelites can hope to be reckoned among God’s choice treasure only if we are “zealous for good works”. “Take heed,” the apostle warns, for if God spared not the natural branches He will certainly not spare us if we become unfaithful. Evidently the one characteristic above all others which commends an individual to God is that of zeal for doing His will. Without this zeal no one can hope to be a part of God’s peculiar people.

The example of zeal which we should endeavour to emulate is that which was displayed by Jesus. The zeal of God’s house consumed Him; and we are called to follow in His steps. Jesus’ zeal was manifested in the sacrifice of His earthly life on behalf of the church and the world. We are invited to lay down our lives for the brethren, and also to be baptized for the dead. Jesus’ sacrifice constitutes the basis of redemption for both the church and the world, and we are invited to share with Him in administering the benefits of the ransom. No matter how much zeal we might display, our sacrifice would not be acceptable apart from the Master’s; but because we serve in His name we have the assurance of being “holy and acceptable.”

Redeemed and Purified

In our text the apostle tells us that Christ “gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity.” As members of the condemned and fallen race we were contaminated with sin, because “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” (Rom. 3:23). Jesus’ redemptive work makes it possible for us to be made free from “the law of sin and death,” and acceptable unto God by Him. But the mere fact that we accept this provision of divine grace is not sufficient to constitute us a part of God’s peculiar people. In addition to this we must be “purified.”

This purification is effected by our obedience to the truth—the “washing of water by the Word.” This is a cleansing from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit. It is the washing away of selfishness and self-will so that the divine will may reign supreme in our hearts. This cleansing must be thorough if we are to be God’s peculiar people. It must be more than a mere passive submission to His will. It must be a consuming zeal for the accomplishment of the divine will irrespective of what the cost to us may be. To thus be purified will mean that we are, indeed, a people “zealous of good works.”

These “good works” for which we will be zealous are God’s works. It was so in Jesus’ case. He came, not to do His own will and work, but the will and work of His Father. In a prayer to His Father, Jesus said, “As Thou has sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them in to the world.” (John 17:18). This is a wondrous partnership in which we are invited to share. We can add nothing of value to the partnership, and the only way by which we can commend ourselves to the Lord is through our zeal for the work that is being done. As “workers together with Him” are we endeavouring to set everything else aside in order that we may zealously engage in that which



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“SPOKEN BY ALL GOD’S HOLY PROPHETS”

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

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

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

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

WHAT IS RESTITUTION?

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

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

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

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

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

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

WHAT IS TO BE RESTORED?

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

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

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

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

LEARNING RIGHTEOUSNESS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MANKIND'S LOST DOMINION

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

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

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

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

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

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

RESTITUTION FORESHADOWED

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

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

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

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

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

“Keep the Door of my Lips”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Divine Word

Dearer with every passing hour

Is God's sweet Word to me,

To its blest truths as to a tower,

In troubled times I flee!

For while the heavens and earth shall last

Its promises are sure

Yes! when they both are with the past

Its glories shall endure.

The word of Him who cannot lie,

Who by His own will stand.

When the swift whirlwind sweepeth by,

And in the desert land,

Who sendeth out his angel guard

Above his loved ones' way,

And turneth, by his rod of power,

Their darkness into day.

Whose blessings, promised to the meek,

About their pathway rise,

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

Predestination (Part 2)

FOREKNOWLEDGE

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

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

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

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

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

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

Complete foreknowledge an attribute of God

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

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

multiplied.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

FOREKNOWLEDGE: INDIVIDUAL

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

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

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

Revelation 13:8 KJV

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

Revelation 13:8 NIV

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

And that he even sees into the mind

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

FOREKNOWLEDGE: THE BALANCE

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

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

In Romans 9:11-15 we read:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

FOREKNOWLEDGE: DESPISING THE BIRTHRIGHT

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

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

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

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

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

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

PREDESTINATION

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

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

Romans 8:29,30

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

Ephesians 1:5, 11

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PREDESTINATION: ELECT CLASS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PREDESTINATION: ONE CALL

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

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

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

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

CONCLUSION

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

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

BE THOU FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH...

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

Entered into Rest

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

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

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

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

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

Two favourite hymns were sung at the memorial service:

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

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

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

Faith Encouraged

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

This is the Way

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“With a Pure Heart Fervently

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

condemnation, and a fearful looking for of judgment.

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

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

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

consecrate their lives to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Whenever we make any important decision, there are always many questions we need to answer. For a moment imagine embarking on a business venture. You and your business partners will sit down and try to work out every conceivable detail of the project, such as

1. what are the objectives
2. what should be the plan of action
3. when is the best time to commence the project
4. what benefits should you expect from it
5. how secure is the project
6. what are your liabilities should something go wrong

The project will also involve some considerable costs, and you hope to have sufficient resources to cover them, so the next thing to do is to sit down with a sheet of paper and make a vertical line down the middle. On one side you write down all the things that will need to be paid for, your risks and liabilities and your best estimate of how much they are likely to cost you. On the other side of the line you list all the assets you have at your disposal, including any credit that you perhaps have been given. Then you add up each of the two columns and the relationship between the totals will indicate either the likely success or failure of the entire project.

Our Lord Jesus Christ encourages us to prepare a similar balance sheet when we are considering following in His footsteps, so let us turn to our key text — Luke 14:28-30: “Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.” (N.I.V.)

We read in this chapter (Luke 14) that there were large crowds following Jesus. Many of them had different reasons for doing so, no doubt some wanted to listen to His teaching, some because Jesus would feed them when they became hungry (see John 6:26), while others hoped to catch Him saying or doing something that would be unlawful. But to all those who truly want to become His disciples, He has a word of caution: “Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me, and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.” Matt. 10:37,38.

Our Lord does not wish to deliberately turn anyone away, He just does not wish us to be misled into thinking that being His disciple is going to be without any personal sacrifices. Other records of His words confirm this:

(a) Matt. 7:13,14 “Enter through the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.”

(b) Matt. 10:22,24,25 “All men will hate you because of me. A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master... if the head of the house has been called Beelzebub, how much more the members of his household.”

(c) John 16:1-3 “All this I have told you so that you will not go astray. They will put you out of the synagogue, in fact a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is doing a service to God. They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me.”

It is difficult for younger Christians to imagine this kind of persecution, especially in so-called civilised countries, but only our Heavenly Father knows to what kind of tests each one as an individual may be put in the future. In Luke 21, Jesus speaks of the times of the end: “Before all this, they will lay hands on you and persecute you. They will deliver you to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name... and they will put some of you to death. All men will hate you because of me. (vv.12,16,17)

The apostle Peter in his first letter also mentions suffering: “Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the suffering of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when His glory is revealed”. 1 Peter 4:12,13. How skilfully he counterbalances the suffering and pain of trials and the glory and honour which are to follow. In 1 Peter 1:6,7 we read further: “though now for a little time you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials, these have come so that your faith — of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire — may be proven genuine and may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed.”

The importance of weighing up carefully the costs of following Jesus before such a serious step is taken is shown by His words in Luke 9:62, “No one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.” To turn back after once being fully enlightened by God will result in very great loss. For our occasional human mistakes and failures, however, full provision has been made, “if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness... if anybody does sin, we have One who speaks to the Father in our defence — Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.” 1 John 1:9, 2:1.

Returning to our key text, which is about estimating costs, we note that it does not just end with adding up costs. Jesus tells us to do this, but then to compare the costs with the resources we have. Considering these will be far more encouraging; for a start let us turn to a favourite verse — John 3:16: “For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.” There is nothing new to tell about Christ’s great atoning sacrifice; it is indeed the great resource that we should use on our balance sheet. Without this resource, no further work could commence, no sacrifice of our own could be accepted.

Jesus invites us: “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me. For I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” Matt. 11:28-30. Further He assures us: “Whoever comes to me I will never drive him away.” John 6:37, and “In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.” John 14:2,3. These are truly wonderful promises; they may sound simple, but it is such promises that give courage and strength to go on.

In John 1:12 we are told: “Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God.” and in Romans 8:16,17: “The Spirit testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs, heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in His sufferings in order that we may also share in His glory.” Do we ever imagine what it would be like to be born into some prominent, perhaps royal family? There is surely no comparison between being born of God, being called God’s children, and being born into even the wealthiest, most prestigious family on earth!

Let us look at what else we are promised, in Jesus’ own words:

(a) John 8:12: “I am the Light of the world, whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

(b) John 6:35: “I am the Bread of life, he who comes to me will never go hungry.”

(c) John 4:14: “Whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst, indeed the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

We are also assured that for any sacrifices we make, we will receive a far greater reward. Speaking to the disciples and then to all believers, our Lord said: “I tell you the truth; at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on His glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And **everyone** who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. Matt. 19:28,29.

We are also encouraged to pray and ask for our needs. “I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.” John 16:23. When Jesus says to “ask in my name” He means to “use my name as a reference, as a guarantee that you are asking in the same way, in the same spirit, as I would ask.” By comparison, we read in James 4:3 how not to ask: “When you ask you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on pleasures.”

Jesus also says: “If you love me, you will obey what I command, and I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counsellor to be with you forever — the Spirit of Truth — I will not leave you as orphans” John 14:15-18. Then in verse 26: “But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”

We also have a strong support in our Christian family members — Jesus once said that those who do God’s will are to Him His brothers and sisters and mother. In Romans 12:5, the Lord’s people are compared to members of one body, where each member belongs to the other. In Galatians 6:2 we are told to carry one another’s burdens, and in this way to fulfill the law of Christ. We have each other to share in joys and sorrows, in our victories and falls, and we can count on each other’s love, support and prayers.

We could find still more examples of positive influences on our consecrated lives, but these should suffice to inspire us to look deeper into the costs of discipleship. As we weigh up costs and resources, may we each find a healthy surplus on the credit side and resolve to follow Jesus.

“Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say I find no pleasure in them.” Eccl. 12:1. N.I.V. (RJ: 1991)

Timothy, A Good Minister of Jesus Christ

(continued from previous issue)

“Stir Up The Gift” (2 Tim.1:3-8)

Paul’s reflections on the trials likely to come upon Timothy would no doubt have had much to do with the Apostle’s prayers for Timothy “night and day”; and he now writes with a view to strengthening him along these lines, reminding him of the genuine faith and piety which he had inherited both from his mother and his grandmother, and assuring him that he believed that this had laid a deep foundation of true piety and faith in Timothy’s own heart. We notice the fact everywhere kept prominent in the Scriptures that according to the Divine arrangement not only are the sins of the parents visited upon the children for several generations, but also that the faith and godliness of the parents, when rightly based on the Word of God and the true promises of that Word, lay the foundation of character in their children, upon which there is the greater hope that a life of godliness and usefulness may be built.

Not only does the Apostle strengthen Timothy’s mind by a remembrance of the goodly heritage of faith and piety received from his mother and grandmother, but in addition he reminds him of the grace of God specially conferred upon him (Timothy) at that certain time when he made a full consecration of himself to the Lord, to be God’s servant; when the Apostle, exercising his power as an Apostle, and as was common in those days, communicated to Timothy by supernatural power an outward gift or token of the Holy Spirit, through the laying on of his hands. The Apostle had evidently either heard or surmised that Timothy was allowing the fervor of his zeal for God to die out, and hence here he urges him to “stir up the gift of God which is in thee.” The Greek word here rendered “stir up” has the significance of *re-ignite*: as though the Apostle said, Re-ignite your gift by renewed energy.

The next verse enforces this view, implying that the Apostle thought that Timothy was in danger of being overcome by *fear*, so as to allow his zeal to abate. Hence he reminds him that the spirit of the Lord imparted to His people is not a spirit of fear, but on the contrary a spirit of power, energy, zeal awakened by love; loving devotion to God, and a desire to please and serve Him; loving devotion to the truth, and a loving devotion to God’s people and a desire to build them up in holy things, and to do good unto all men as we have opportunity. Yet, lest Timothy should get the thought that the spirit of God led only to a zeal of energy — that might at times be unwise in its exercise and do more harm than good — the Apostle adds that the spirit of God which He bestows upon those who are begotten as His sons is a spirit of a “sound mind” — a mind that is fortified and strengthened by the Word of the Lord on every subject, and hence, while thoroughly fearless of man, is wise in judging of times, seasons, and methods for using the energy of love which burns as a fire within the consecrated heart. Would that all of God’s children might appreciate, and more and more obtain, the spirit of a sound mind, by which all of their talents might be used, not only fearlessly but wisely, in the Master’s service.

“Wise Unto Salvation”

Continuing his exhortation’ (3:14,15) the Apostle impresses upon Timothy two things (1) that he had been taught of God, and (2) that this teaching of God had come to him through the Scriptures, which he assures him are sufficient to bring him all the way to the complete realization (in the resurrection) of that salvation which God has provided through faith in Christ Jesus. It will be well for us all to remember that all the graces of the spirit, all the progress in the knowledge of Divine things to which we already have attained, that may have really helped us nearer to God and to holiness, have come to us through the Scriptures of the Old Testament and through the words of our Lord and His inspired Apostles: nor will it ever be necessary to go to other channels for the true wisdom which would prepare us for the salvation promised.

Proceeding, the Apostle shows (Ver. 16,17) that the Scriptures which God inspired are profitable in every direction, and quite sufficient for the man of God, needing no supplements of visions or dreams, either his own or other. They are profitable for doctrine, containing the full statement of the Divine Plan; and no human authority is competent to add thereto. Who hath known the mind of the Lord? Who hath been His counselor? They are useful also for reproof toward others. No words that we can use in correcting the errors of others either in word



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Looking Unto Jesus

(Convention Address)

At one time, people used to think in terms of lasting values, but in the fast-changing world of today, it would be difficult to say just what is a lasting value. Wherever we look, everything is in a state of flux and change.

In such conditions, each Christian can be grateful to our Heavenly Father for His wonderful love and unmerited favour. A scripture verse which we all might apply to ourselves, to our own previous condition and to our own development, is Eph. 2:12. There the apostle says: "at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world."

How thankful each of us can be to our Heavenly Father, how we can praise Him in the presence of His people with all sincerity, confessing that while we in no way deserved His favour toward us, yet we greatly treasure it and praise the Lord for His wonderful love and mercy in that "now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." Eph. 2:19.

How true are the apostle's words in Eph. 5:14 "wherefore He saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." For many years, as His people, we have enjoyed the Lord's marvellous light, His leading and His care, and His wonderful provisions for us. Even His great sacrifice on Calvary is the precious provision of our Heavenly Father, for there is no other way of salvation. No wonder the apostle could say: "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." 1 Cor. 2:2.

All the Lord's people are seeking to walk in the light of our Lord, we are looking to Him in all circumstances of our lives, happy or unhappy. In times of gladness, we thank Him, even though we realise that earthly joy is of a transient nature — it is here today and gone tomorrow. In times of sadness, we look to Him for consolation, for His over-ruling and his strength to overcome such experiences. Indeed, whatever we do, we look to our Lord Jesus.

For every Christian, the purpose of the knowledge and acknowledgment of the Lord is to look to Him and to grow in His likeness. "Speaking the truth in love (we) may grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, even Christ." Eph. 4:15. Our looking unto Christ in all situations of life does not depend on our own wisdom, our education or ability, for as Jesus said to His disciples while He was with them during His earthly ministry: "The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house of Beelzebub, how much more them of his household." Mat. 10:24,25.

Every disciple of Christ has gone through practical experiences of privation, difficulties and persecutions; this has been so from the beginning even till now. But we realise that the Divine wisdom and the Divine mercy are revealed to babes, not to the wise of this world, nor to the powerful who can manage and change many things. Our Lord said: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father; and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him." Mat. 11:25-27.

Then come our Lord's words of invitation: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will

give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” Mat. 11:28-30. How often we think of these words of our Lord and apply them to ourselves in the many problems and difficulties of this life, realising how much we need the attitude of meekness of our Lord, to come and take His yoke upon ourselves, to be meek and lowly of heart ourselves, and so to find His rest to our souls. We know that Christians throughout the Gospel Age have experienced persecution and troubles, to greater or less extent, but that this is part of normal Christian development.

When we consider our Lord, did He live His life and was His earthly ministry peaceful and restful, with everything plain sailing? No, He continued to endure the contradiction of sinners against Himself and had to carry on His work in the face of persecution and difficulty. But our Lord revealed that wonderful truth of Divine love when He declared: “God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” John 3:16. His preceding words tell how this was to be accomplished: “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:14,15.

We are all familiar with the experiences of Israel during the forty years of wanderings in the wilderness after they left Egypt. Very often their’s was quite a difficult situation and we read in Num. 21:5-9: “the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread (the manna). And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died. Therefore the people came to Moses and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee; pray unto the Lord, that He take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole, and it shall come to pass, that everyone that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.”

What an amazing story! It was as if a look at that serpent of brass (or copper) in itself contained some kind of anti-venene, to counter the venom of those serpents; these it seems were Egyptian cobras, very deadly snakes. It was just a look at that serpent on the pole which was sufficient for the person to recover and feel no ill-effects. In itself, this was a miracle, but again consider how it happened. A man or a woman was suddenly bitten by a snake; unless they believed Moses’ words, they would just lie down and die. But on the other hand, whoever believed Moses and the instructions of the Lord, lifted their heads in faith and looked to that snake on the pole — these did not suffer any ill-effects and recovered.

And so our Lord compared Himself to that brazen serpent, saying: “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up.” With the brazen serpent, it was a Divine ordinance, God ruled it that way. And so it is with our Lord — if we have faith enough, we look to be the Lord. We look to Him for forgiveness of our sins, for that covering robe of His righteousness. By virtue of His blood shed on Calvary for us, He is our wisdom, He is our justification, for we know that it is only through acceptance of our Lord as our personal Saviour that we have a right to life. So we look to Jesus in all the affairs of our lives, for encouragement, for strength, for everything. For us, He has become our “all in all.”

It is the Divine ordinance that only through faith in Christ as our Saviour can we have life. Similarly, those Jewish people of old, those Israelites, had to lift up their heads and look toward that pole where the serpent of brass was glistening in the sun and that alone saved their lives. Speaking of God’s provision for us, the apostle John writes: “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” 1 John 4:9,10.

The Christmas season is the generally accepted time of our Saviour’s coming into the world as the Babe of Bethlehem. He came as a little child, but with what rejoicing! The shepherds there in the fields were told to go and see Him and they went and they saw Him, just a new-born child but how they rejoiced. The angels too rejoiced and praised God. Only a small beginning but what a wonderful thing. Thirty years later, when our Lord at His baptism became the Messiah in His full authority and began His ministry, it reached out first to those that heard and believed in Him. That was the time when Divine mercy and Divine forgiveness was turned to the people. Before that, there was no way out, the Jews were under the Law of Moses but were in bondage to the law, because none could keep it perfectly; even if 99 per cent of it were kept, failure in one point resulted in the law condemning that one to death.

So the apostle John writes: “The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” John 1:17. That is the grace extended to and accepted by us, when we first looked towards our Lord. He is our Saviour, in

due time we accepted Him and we became reconciled to God, who is now able to overlook all our imperfections because He looks to us through the merit of the sacrifice of Jesus. Nothing of this is of ourselves, though we are trying to do our best, are trying to look to our Lord and grow into His likeness, and surely enough are being transformed by the Spirit of God dwelling within us. But still we are imperfect and it is only through the merit of Christ's sacrifice on Calvary that we are acceptable to God and have right to life.

The same apostle puts the situation simply and positively "He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." 1 John 5:12. In other words, the person who does not accept Jesus is still under condemnation. The apostle Paul writing to the Corinthian brethren points to the Divine grace revealed to us as part of His plan of salvation. "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation." 2 Cor. 5:18. This ministry is first for the believers of this gospel age; we are reconciled to God by faith in our Lord and in His great sacrifice.

The ministry of reconciliation has only a small beginning however in this gospel age; during the millennium when the kingdom of God is established, uncounted billions of people will come back from the grave and will be restored. To them too will that gospel be preached — that ministry of reconciliation will reach them too and they will have the possibility of being saved and living forever. But it will still need to be by faith, for that is what God desires. For as the apostle writes under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit: "without faith it is impossible to please Him; for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." Heb. 11:6.

In the same chapter, the apostle goes on to describe, as it were, a gallery of the great victors of faith, beginning with the first martyr, Abel, then going on to Enoch, Noah, and so on. Finally he says that time would fail him to tell of everyone who pleased God, not through keeping of the Mosaic law but by faith. Then to conclude the chapter he writes: "these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise, God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." Heb. 11:32,39,40.

Then as if to show supreme faith and the pinnacle of faithfulness and loyalty, he exhorts us to be "looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin." Heb. 12:2,3. What an encouragement we have — to look to our Lord, to look to Him for everything. We look to Him for wisdom, for our salvation, for redemption and for the great reward He promised when he said: "I go to prepare a place for you and... I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." John 14:2,3. Where the Master is, there will be His servants!

So let us look unto Jesus, our confidence and trust in Him will bring great reward in our own lives here and now and in the work of restoration of all mankind in the age to come. Especially in these insecure times, when there is no such thing as a lasting value or a secure tenure, our Lord is the best and indeed only security. He is our Leader, He is our elder Brother and we can depend on Him for all things. (SS:1991)

Justification, Sanctification, Redemption

These are the three steps by which we are to reach "the prize of our high calling"—glory, honor and immortality. Not one of these steps can be omitted by those who win the great prize, nor can they be taken in any way but their order as directed in the Scriptures.

Justification

Justification comes first as a necessity, because, all the human race being sinners, as such God could not either sanctify or glorify them; therefore, by some means, they must be "made free from sin" (brought to a condition of sin-less-ness) in order that they might "have their fruit unto holiness" (sanctification), and eventually receive "the end thereof—eternal life" (redemption). Rom. 6:22.

As sinners, men "are not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can, they be." (Rom. 8: 7). We are "made free from sin" by faith; that is, we are told of God that a ransom has been given for our sin, and that if we by faith accept the ransom, He no longer regards or treats us as sinners, but as perfect and sinless beings. This cleansing from sin is a complete work. You are justified — reckoned of God just and perfect, but it cannot be seen with the natural eye. You cannot realise that physically you are any more perfect than before you believed yourself justified. It is entirely by the eye of faith that you know yourself now as a being, justified freely from all things. God's word declares it and you believe Him.

We need not fear that our justification is incomplete, for Jehovah Himself is the justifier, as we read, God is "just

and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (Rom. 3: 26); and again, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? it is God that justifieth.”

Upon what grounds does God reckon human sinners as justified or righteous persons? Because the ransom for our sins has been paid by Jesus, who “Himself bare our sins in His own body on the tree.” (1 Pet. 2:24). For “Christ suffered, the just for the unjust (sinners), that He might bring us to God” (1 Pet. 3:18) as justified beings. Jesus was treated as a sinner on our behalf, and we are now treated as just persons on His behalf. As we read again, “Ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus.” (1 Cor. 6:11). And again, “Being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.” (Rom. 5:9). But *only believers are justified* during this Gospel age. They who do not believe that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He rose again the third day for our justification (1 Cor. 15: 14; Rom. 4: 25), are not justified: “Ye are yet in your sins.” So we read, God, “is the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” Again, “All that believe are justified from all things” (Acts 13:39), and “A man is justified by faith.” (Gal. 2: 16 and 3:24).

When we believe the “good news” of our justification, it causes us joy and peace to realise that we may now come to God; and we no longer dread but now love God, because we see His goodness and love, for “herein is the love of God manifested.” (1 John 4:9).

We are thus brought into fellowship with God as justified human beings—“Being justified by faith, we have peace with God.” (Rom. 5:1). Few, very few, lay hold upon justification fully; few believe God that they “are justified from all things” and are in God’s sight clothed in the spotlessness of Jesus, in whom was no sin; consequently very few have the joy and peace which spring from believing. And it is no uncommon thing to hear, in church meetings of all denominations, men and women tell God that they know themselves to be “miserable sinners.” No wonder they agonize and daily ask the forgiveness of those sins which God’s word declares *are* forgiven. 2 Pet. 1:9. They know not that they partake of the justification by believing. If they would only believe God, they would have the realization of forgiveness, and consequently joy and peace. “For without faith it is impossible to please God.” Beyond this point of rejoicing in a consciousness of forgiveness of sins, and acceptableness in God’s sight, few Christians go.

Did you ever think why God has made known to us our justification now, but keeps it hidden from the great mass of the race until the millennial age, though the ransom price is eventually to release all mankind from sin and its penalty, and bring them to the same condition of acceptance—sinlessness—perfection which we now enjoy by faith! It is because God has a plan which he is working out according to the counsel of His own will, and a part of that plan is that He will select from among mankind a number who will eventually be transferred from the earthly conditions and human nature to spiritual conditions and the “divine nature” to be “heirs of God, joint heirs with Jesus Christ our Lord.”

God’s object in the development of this “little flock” is two-fold: first, He will make them everlasting monuments of His goodness, to be known and read of angels and men. As Paul expresses it (Eph. 2:7), God’s plan in the development of the Gospel church of overcomers, is, “that in the ages to come, He might show the exceeding riches of His grace, in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.” The second part of God’s plan, in which we are directly associated, is that he purposes to use us during the next Millennial—age as kings (rulers) and priests (teachers), when we shall reign with Christ a thousand years. (Rev. 5: 10, 20:6). Thus shall the “seed,” of which Jesus is the Head, bless all the families of the earth. (Gal. 3:29).

No sinners are called to have part in this “high calling, which is of God in Christ Jesus.” True, Jesus called “sinners to repentance”—so does the word of God, and all His children seek to bring men to repentance and faith in Christ and consequent justification. But only the justified ones are called to be “kings and priests unto God, and to reign on the earth. ‘ It is worse than useless to present the grand prize for which we run to the attention of sinners—the unjustified. For the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned—they are foolishness unto him. Therefore, “cast not your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.”

This being true, that none are called to the high calling except the justified ones, the fact that you know of your justification may be the proof to you that you are one of those whom God has “called” to spiritual life and joint-heirship with Jesus. What a blessed privilege to be called with such a high calling. Now do you realise that you are called to be a member of the bride of Christ? Then remember who called you—God; and that “Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it.” (1 Thess. 5: 24). Our Father mocks none with a call which they cannot attain to. His grace is sufficient for us.

All who are called may take the second step—

Sanctification

To sanctify is to set apart or separate to a special purpose or use. God's will is that all justified ones should be sanctified or set apart to His service as we read: "This is the will of God even your (believers) sanctification." (1 Thes. 4:3). There are two parts to sanctification—first ours, secondly God's part. As we have seen, God provides for our justification as men and then calls us to set apart-sanctify-or consecrate to him, that justified humanity. When we thus consecrate or give up our will, our time, talent, life and all we have and are to God, and ask Him to take our little all and use it as seemeth to Him good, and agree to let the will of God dwell in us richly—when we have done this we have done all that we can do; and here God, who accepts of every such sacrifice, begins His part of the sanctification work. He begins to use this will resigned to His care and "to work in you both to will and to do" in harmony with His will. From that moment it is no longer you (the human) but "Christ in you." Even the earthly (human) body, under the new controlling will (God's) is used in God's service and is thereby made holy.

From this moment when we give—consecrate—ourselves, we are reckoned dead, as human beings; for the human will should be buried from that moment forward; and when the will of God—the mind of Christ—the Holy Spirit takes possession of us so that it becomes our will and our mind, we are called "new creatures"—we are thus begotten to newness of life. This new creature is only an embryo being. It is not complete; but it grows and develops as "we all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Cor. 3:18.) Thus as new spiritual creatures we grow in His likeness during the time we abide in this earthly condition. As the spiritual nature grows stronger the human nature grows weaker and is the easier to keep dead, for I must not only give up my will to God, but keep it in a surrendered condition, "keep my body under"—under God's will.

As the new spiritual nature grows, it longs for its perfection when it will no longer be trammelled and fettered by human conditions, but be "like unto Christ's glorious body." This is promised us—we have been begotten, and by and by shall be born of the Spirit—spiritual bodies, for "that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit," just as truly as "that which was born of the flesh was flesh." Our begetting we have and our spiritual life is begun. It is to be completed, perfected, when this corruptible and mortal condition shall give place to the incorruptible, immortal conditions of the spiritual body. This is at the moment of resurrection to those who sleep in Jesus—raised spiritual bodies; and it will be at the moment of change to the living (from the fleshly body to their own spiritual bodies—theirs as new creatures.) Thus, "we which are alive and remain shall be changed in a moment." 1 Cor. 15:52.

This change of residence or condition, from the earthly body to the spiritual body is the third step of our development, viz:

Redemption

This redemption from the present earthly conditions finishes and completes our salvation and the glory and power will follow.

Toward this, the end of the race, we are looking with longing eyes, "Ourselves, that have the first fruits (begetting) of the Spirit, even we groan within ourselves waiting for sonship—the redemption of our body" (the body of which Jesus is the Head and all overcomers are members.) Rom. 8:23.

Let us recall to mind the steps: First, justification of the human nature; second, consecration or sacrifice of that human nature to God, its consequent death and the beginning of our existence as a spiritual new creature in the human body during the present life; third, the completion of our new, divine nature by the power of God, when we will be made like unto Christ's glorious body—who is the express image of the Father's person. What a glorious, high calling it is to which we are called!

How can each one of us make this glorious calling sure? Surely by continuing to maintain daily our consecration vows, giving over all things to our Heavenly Father for Him to use as He sees best. For the apostle assures us: "If ye do these things ye shall never fall; for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." 2 Peter 1:10,11. God will assuredly keep His part of the agreement for "He is faithful who promised." Heb. 10:23.

*"All for Jesus! All for Jesus!
All my being's ransomed powers;
All my thoughts and words and doings,
All my days and all my hours."*

Provoking To Love

“Let us consider one another, to provoke unto love, and to good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more as ye see the day drawing on.” — Heb. 10: 24-25.

“The word “provoke” signifies to arouse or I incite, or stimulate to activity. It is generally used in an evil sense, but is applicable, as in our text, to describe an incitement to good works, good thoughts, etc. The tendency of fallen human nature is toward things that are mean and selfish, and the natural bent is to incite or provoke or encourage similarly mean and unworthy thoughts, actions and words in others, and it has become a proverb that “Evil communications corrupt good manners.” Everyone of experience knows this general tendency of evil to beget evil, and to corrupt and to pollute what is nobler and purer than itself; hence we have the Scriptural pronouncement, “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.” Those who neglect this counsel need not be surprised if they are continually falling into temptation, and if the influence upon their own lives results in a measure at least of ungodliness and sin, and disfellowship from those things which are noble and true and pure.

But the “New Creature in Christ Jesus” is one in whom the transforming influences of the Lord’s Spirit have already begun — one who has a new heart, a new will, a new disposition. With such “old things have passed away and all things have become new,” they have been begotten again, i.e., re-begotten, to new hopes, new wishes, new ideas of propriety. Instead of the earthly wisdom and way, with its “bitter envying and strife,” which “descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish,” they have now the wisdom that is from above, and a heart (a disposition) to appreciate and pursue its counsels, which are, first purity, then peaceableness, gentleness, meekness, mercy, good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the disposition of this class, in proportion to their attainment of this heavenly wisdom and new nature, will be to “provoke” or incite or encourage one another, and all with whom they come in contact, to similar goodness of thought and word and act, in harmony with the heavenly wisdom which is guiding their own course.

The New Nature

This is laid down in the Scriptures as an unvarying rule; “A bitter fountain cannot send forth sweet water, and a good fountain cannot send forth brackish water.” A thistle cannot bear grapes, and a grape-vine cannot bear thistles. It is the Master Himself who says: “By their fruits ye shall know them.” If, therefore, we desire to prove ourselves, and to judge respecting our progress in mortifying (putting to death) the old nature, and our growth in the new nature, we will judge ourselves by this standard, answering to ourselves the question, Is my own spirit (disposition) one which delights in sin in its various forms (not necessarily in its grosser forms of murder, theft, etc., but in its more refined forms, falsity, envy, strife, vainglory, slander, evil-speaking, evil surmises, etc.), or is my delight increasingly in righteousness, truth, goodness, gentleness, meekness, patience, love? If the former, we are yet, either wholly or partially, in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity, and have need to go at once to the Great Physician, and to submit ourselves to His radical treatment — the cutting off of sin, the mortifying of such fleshly desires, etc. If the latter be our condition of heart, we have cause for rejoicing, yet no cause for pride or boastfulness; for we can say no more than that we only have done our duty, having merely learned, and that imperfectly, the lessons set before us by our great Teacher.

The Apostle is addressing the Church, the consecrated New Creatures in Christ Jesus. This is shown in the text, for he classes himself with these, using the word “us”; it is also shown by the context. He calls the attention of the consecrated to the influence which goes out from each to each, and the consequent importance that the influence shall always be stimulating, or provocative of that which is good. No doubt the Apostle found in his day, as we find now, that many who are consecrated at heart fail to see clearly how this consecration should associate itself with and mark itself upon our every act and word.

Consider One Another

We are not to be reckless of each other’s interests. In our contact with each other, whether a personal contact or a contact by mail, we are to “consider one another”. We are to consider what would be helps, and what would be hindrances, what would be encouragements, and what would be stumbling blocks; and we are to do all in our power to assist one another to run with patience the race for the heavenly prize. If we are truly consecrated to the Lord, we can do nothing “against the truth, but (every effort must be) for the truth” (2. Cor. 13: 8). What a burning and shining light every Christian would be if their every act were considered and shaped for the benefit of those with whom they come in contact! What a blessing it would be in the home! What a blessing it would be in the church! This loving consideration is what the Apostle is urging upon us: Consider one another to provoke (incite, encourage), to love and to good works.” Avoid every word and every act, so far as possible, that might incite to

hatred, envy, strife, bitterness (and bad works, corresponding to these feelings), all of which are “of the flesh and of the devil.”

The Apostle links this advice with the exhortation to forget not the assembling of ourselves together, as the Lord’s people. None of us is so strong in the new nature that we can disregard the fellowship of kindred minds. But even if we did feel sufficiently strong for ourselves, the spirit of love in us should so control that we would delight to meet with “the brethren” for their sakes. We are more or less like coals of fire, which, if separated, will tend to cool rapidly, but which, if brought together, will tend to increase in fervency the entire mass. Our Lord has encouraged His people to seek each other’s fellowship for companionship in the study of His word, and in prayer. He indeed has pronounced special blessings upon the meeting together of His people even if they be only two or three.

Our Privilege

The “provoking” of one another to love and good works, the extending of true Christian fellowship and the exhortation and encouragement of each other in the Narrow Way are very real and precious privileges of all God’s people. They are ministries which all are invited to take up, as they have talent and opportunity, remembering the apostle’s words:

“God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shown toward His name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.” (Heb. 6:10)

Timothy, A Good Minister Of Jesus Christ

“Very little can be known of Timothy outside of the New Testament records. His birthplace was that of either Derbe or Lystra, though it is not certainly known which. From the account given in Acts 16:1 it is stated that the Apostle Paul found him in those places and it appears that he had not been acquainted with Timothy before. His mother Eunice was a Jewess and evidently a woman of unusual piety as was also Timothy’s grandmother, Lois. Though his father was a Greek, he was evidently not unfriendly to the Jewish religion, for Timothy had been carefully instructed in the Scriptures.

It is claimed that it was about A.D. 51 or 52 when the Apostle Paul came to Derbe and Lystra and became acquainted with Timothy; and though there is no way of ascertaining the exact age of Timothy at that time, it is reasonably presumed that he was then a youth. (1 Tim. 4:12.) From what is said concerning him he was undoubtedly a young man of unusual hope and promise and there were some special indications that he would rise to a place of influence and power as a religious man and would fill an important position in the ministry of the Gospel. - 1 Tim. 1:18.

The records indicate that Timothy was already a disciple, a Christian convert when the Apostle Paul first met him, but the means by which he became converted are not known. His mother too had been converted to the Christian faith before (Acts 16:1), so that they seemed well known to the Christians of the neighboring towns of Lystra and Iconium. It was some six or seven years before Paul met with Timothy that he and Barnabas had preached the Gospel in Iconium, Derbe, and Lystra and it is not improbable that Timothy had been converted in the meantime.

Introduction To The Ministry

Barnes in a very interesting way observes several things that “appear to have combined to induce the Apostle to introduce him [Timothy] into the ministry and to make him a travelling companion. His youth; his acquaintance with the Holy Scriptures; the ‘prophecies which went before on him,’ his talents; his general reputation in the church; and, it would seem also, his amiableness of manners, fitting him to be an agreeable companion, attracted the attention of the Apostle, and led him to desire that he might be a fellow-laborer with him. To satisfy the prejudices of the Jews, and to prevent any possible objection which might be made against his qualifications for the ministerial office, Paul circumcised him (Acts 16:3), and he was ordained to the office of the ministry by ‘the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.’ (1 Tim. 4:14.) *When* this ordination occurred is not known, but it is most probable that it was before he went on his travels with Paul, as it is known that Paul was present on the occasion, and took a leading part in the transaction. - 2 Tim 1:6.”

Some account of Timothy’s travels and collaboration with Paul are given in Acts 16 to 18. It is clear from this and references in Paul’s epistles that Timothy enjoyed the apostle’s full trust and affection. Of Timothy’s later life, there is no dependable evidence. The belief that he was “bishop” of Ephesus rests mainly on the subscription to 2 Timothy—not any real authority.

“Timothy was long the companion and the friend of the Apostle Paul, and is often mentioned by him with affectionate interest. Indeed there seems to have been no one of his fellow-laborers to whom he was so warmly attached. See 1 Tim. 1:2,18, 2 Tim. 1:2, 2:1, 1 Cor. 4:17, where he calls him ‘his own son,’ and ‘his beloved son’; 2 Tim. 1:4 where he expresses his earnest desire to see him, and makes a reference to the tears which Timothy shed at parting from him; 1 Cor. 16:10, 11, where he bespeaks for him a kind reception among the Corinthians; 1 Cor. 16:10, Rom. 16:21, 1 Thess. 3:2, and especially Phil. 2:19, 20, where he speaks of his fidelity, of his usefulness to him in his labors, and of the interest which he took in the churches which the Apostle had established.” (Barnes).

Advice For All Christians

Paul’s letters to Timothy are amongst the most valuable of the New Testament writings. Indeed they contain sound advice to all Christians, especially to such as are young in the truth, and particularly if they have consecrated their lives to the Lord and His service, and are seeking to be useful according to their consecration as His ministers or servants—whether in a public or in a private service, according to their talents and opportunities.

Paul introduces himself not by calling attention to his personal qualities as a logician, nor by boasting of any service which he had performed as the Lord’s servant and minister of the Truth; but, properly, by reminding Timothy of his apostleship, specially commissioned by the Lord to introduce His Gospel, and specially prepared for the work by being made a witness of the Lord’s resurrection, having been granted a glimpse of His glorious person on his way to Damascus and commissioned to declare the conditions for the fulfilment to men of God’s promise of life, provided in Christ Jesus.

Although the Apostle had no natural children of his own, his tender address to Timothy as his “dearly beloved son,” and his invocation upon him of a Divine blessing, shows that he lacked none of those fine, noble and endearing sentiments, which belong to a true parent. Indeed, the very fact that he had no natural children seems to have broadened the Apostle’s sentiments to such an extent that figuratively he took into his affections, as his own children, all who accepted the Gospel. We remember that he frequently used this figure of speech, “Although ye have many teachers, ye have not many fathers in the Gospel”—“I have begotten you in my bonds.” On another occasion he represents his efforts for a development of a fully consecrated Christian life amongst the believers under the figure of a mother travailing for her children. This being true of the Apostle’s general sentiment toward the household of faith, it would be much more true in the case of Timothy who had so nobly and truly filled the part of a son to him.

We note the Apostle’s care over this younger brother in the Truth, in whom he sees such great promise of present and future service. He realizes, perhaps better than Timothy does, the snares of the Adversary, by which one placed in so prominent a position is likely to be assailed. Would he become heady and high minded?—Would he lose his faith in the cross of Christ?—Would he fall into the snare of some of the philosophies, falsely so-called?—Would he become vainly puffed up by a fleshly mind, and get to feeling himself to be a “somebody?”—Or, would he, on the contrary, be a faithful soldier of the cross, meek, humble, gentle toward all, an example both in faith and practice to those with whom he came in contact?

And withal, would he hold fast to the Scriptures and be apt to teach others to look to this Divine source of information? He remembered that heretofore Timothy had been so close to himself in the work that he had been measurably shielded from many trials to which he would now be exposed; and yet, no doubt he realized that, if Timothy would be prepared to take the work of a general minister, which Paul the prisoner and growing old must shortly lay aside, it was time that he was learning how to stand, complete in the strength which God supplies through His Word, without leaning so particularly, as heretofore, upon any earthly prop.

To be Continued.



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Hope

(Convention Address)

“And now abideth Faith, Hope, Love, these three, but the greatest of these is Love.” 1. Cor. 13:13.

The apostle in these words highlights the supremacy of love, but it is also clear from them that faith and hope are also great qualities. So how would we define the second of these —Hope? Dictionaries and other sources are in general agreement on the meaning of hope, for instance:

- (a) Strong — anticipation, usually with pleasure.
- (b) Vine — favourable and confident expectation.
- (c) Reader’s Digest (in a Note) — enjoyment of the future in advance.

A reporter in a daily paper, in a search for the meaning of hope, referred to it as an “eternal generator” — the hope of attaining something drives men and women to the extreme of endurance to attain the goal desired. This accords with what the apostle Paul states in Phil. 3: 8-11. “I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.... that I may know Him (Jesus), and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death, if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.” If by ANY means I might ATTAIN unto the resurrection — this was indeed Paul’s great hope.

A Lively Hope

The apostle Peter describes the Christian’s hope as a lively or living hope. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.” 1 Pet. 1:3,4.

True faith and living hope must be based on the sure promises of the word of God. This contrasts with the empty hope of many. Some hope that they may win a lottery, believing that wealth will bring them happiness. With very many, their hope is never realised, while some, After they have perhaps gained some wealth, find that it can only provide temporary realisation of their hope and often merely creates a desire for more.

The hope set out in the Scriptures for the Lord’s people, however, is based on that which we can be absolutely sure will be fully realised, provided only that we remain faithful to our Lord and do not let that hope become dimmed, for “He is faithful who promised”. Heb. 10:23.

We learn from Heb. 11:1 that faith is the substance or basis of things hoped for. The greater our faith, the greater will the hope shine out before us. This is well brought out in Rom. 5: 1-5. “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” (vv 1,2) These two verses show the progression of the Christian from the time he or she is drawn by the Father to have faith in Jesus. Faith-justification means we have peace with God, then we have access into His grace or favour, in which we stand. This favoured position of consecration, this “fa-

your upon favour” (John 1:16) we have received, leads to our rejoicing in the great hope of the glory of God.

The following three verses (vv 3-5) show how our hope increases. The Amplified Version brings out well the thought. “Moreover, let us be full of joy now! Let us exult and triumph in our troubles and rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that pressure and affliction and hardship produce unswerving endurance; and endurance (fortitude) develops maturity of character — that is, approved faith and tried integrity; and character (of this sort) produces (the habit of) joyful and confident hope of eternal salvation. Such hope never disappoints or eludes or shames us, for God’s love has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given unto us”.

Patience of Hope

To wait patiently for something indicates that we are hoping for it. An example of this is brought out in 1 Thes. 1: 3, where Paul writes — “Remembering without ceasing your work of faith and labour of love and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God, our Father.” The church at Thessalonica was a persecuted church and the apostle commends them for their faith and love and hope. Patience under persecution had only sharpened their faith and hope in the promises that were to be fulfilled in Jesus.

There are other scriptures which tell of the importance of patient, cheerful endurance in hope, such as Heb. 10: 3 5-3 7. “Cast not away therefore your confidence which has great recompense of reward. For you have need of patience, that after you have done the will of God, you might receive the promise. For yet a little while and He that shall come will come and will not tarry.” This clearly implies that after one makes a vow to do the will of God, there is a testing time before that one realises his or her hope.

Luke 8: 5-8 recounts the parable of the sower. Jesus speaks of the seed of truth falling on four different kinds of soil — by the wayside, upon rocks, among thorns and upon good ground. He went on, on this occasion, to tell the meaning of the parable in Verses 11-15. “Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. Those by the wayside are they that hear, then cometh the devil and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. They on the rocks are they who when they hear, receive the word with joy, and these have no root, who for a while believe and in time of temptation fall away. They which fell among thorns are they, which when they have heard, go forth and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life and bring no fruit to perfection.—But they on the good ground are they, which, in an honest and good heart having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.”

This parable describes the various ways in which Christians may be turned away from the realisation of their hope. Only they who bring forth fruit with patience will realise their hope. The first three classes described in the parable are those who make a start along the narrow way but then allow hindrances to prevent them from fulfilling their consecration.

Various hindrances can indeed arise to prevent one from carrying out his or her commitment to the Lord, probably more so than ever before. The rush and tear of life that surround us today can allow weeds to grow unchecked and to choke the growth of the Christian. The apostle Paul admonishes — “See that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise; redeeming the time because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be ye filled with the Spirit.” Eph. 5: 15.

Victory for Christians can be gained only if they continue faithful with hope undimmed. In Matt. 24: 13, Jesus told His disciples — “He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved.” Heb. 6: 10,11 tells us further — “For God is not unrighteous to forget your labour of love which you have showed toward His name in that you have ministered to the saints and do minister. And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end.”

Assurance of Hope

Note here the reference to the full assurance of hope. Later in the passage the apostle links this up with the hope set before us. “That you be not slothful but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” Here again the point is made that faith and patience are needed to ensure the hope is realised. “For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no greater, He swore by Himself, saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And so after he had patiently endured, he obtained

the promise.” Heb. 6: 12-15.

The apostle then brings the lesson home to the Lord’s people of this age. “For men verily swear by the greater and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us, which hope we have as an anchor to the soul, both sure and steadfast and which entereth into that within the vail, whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made a high priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec.” Heb. 6: 16-20.

Hope is here likened to an anchor. A ship in a storm drops its anchor to hold it from drifting, possibly on to dangerous rocks. Most importantly, the anchor needs a strong line or cable to hold the ship. So in the picture, the anchor represents our hope the cable represents our faith. If we lose faith and let go of our hope, it will be like the ship breaking loose from its anchor, to drift possibly into grave danger and to be damaged or lost.

Hope — An Anchor

So our hope is the anchor to our spiritual life. If our love for our Lord is strong and our faith remains firm, our hope will hold fast “within the vail”, that is to say, to those precious things promised to us beyond this life. There Jesus has already entered, as our forerunner, a high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. The apostle John enlarges on this — “Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the children of God ...beloved, now are we the children of God and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone that hath this hope purifieth himself as He is pure.” 1 John 3: 1-3.

Thus we can understand what this great hope has done for us. Above all, it has given direction to our lives and a confident expectation for the future. It is a force operating in our minds and lives to urge us onward to the ultimate goal, that of being fitted for usefulness to our Heavenly Father and our Lord Jesus, in a small way now but more so in the age to come. But beyond the hope of the church of this gospel age, we know and rejoice that there is hope for all mankind. This in God’s due time will include the blessing of all who will be willing to accept the conditions of salvation in the new age.

One reason why the truth of the plan of God means so much to us is that we have learned that His love embraces not only a hope for His people of this age but a hope for all the families of the earth in God’s due time. Such thoughts are old but ever new and have been an anchor to the hope of the church all down the age. The gospel age church has assuredly a favourable and confident hope for the future, which in anticipation it can already enjoy in some measure.

Such hope can indeed be said to be an “eternal generator” urging those who possess it to the extreme of endurance to attain the goal set before them. Paul said of our Lord that “for the joy set before Him, He endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” Heb. 12: 2. So too may our hope sustain us day by day, as we seek to run with patience the race set before us. (JBH: 1991)

Parting of the Red Sea

(News Item)

Two expert oceanographers have developed 1 what they say is a plausible explanation for the parting of the waters which enabled the Israelites under Moses to escape from the Egyptians. They have calculated that strong winds blowing along the narrow, shallow Gulf of Suez, a northern extension of the Red Sea and the likely site of the crossing, could account for the phenomenon.

Their report adds: “whether this theory explains the crossing or not, (we) believe it should not affect the religious aspects of the Exodus.... Some may even find our proposed mechanism to be a supportive argument for the original Biblical description of this event.” (*From the New York Times, published in The Age, Melbourne*)

NOTE: The Bible Study Monthly (Mar/Apr 1992) carries a review of a book — “Look for the Ancient Paths” 11 Beresford King-Smith. (92 pages, 16 maps, 16 illustrations.) This presents the results of an investigation of the

route of the Exodus based on the premise that the events as related are historically true and the reviewer considers that overall it should be useful to students of the period.

It is available direct from Bethany Enterprises, Moorwood Lane, Nuneaton, Warks CV10 OQH, England at £UK.4.95, incl. postage, or through the Institute at \$A 11.00.

PEOPLES PAPER
AND HERALD OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM

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

The Whole Armour

(Convention Address)

In nearly all ancient civilisations, armour was used for the protection of fighting men. It was usually made of metal, sometimes of leather. Websters Dictionary defines Armour as protective covering for the body in battle. The word "Armour" appears 24 times in the Bible, and Strong's Concordance defines the Greek word as full armour or whole armour, or as one hymn puts it — the "panoply" of God.

In Eph 6: 10 & 11 we read "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the Adversary". Note that the apostle is very specific that we need the whole armour because the conflict will be with the prince of darkness himself, and that God is the supplier of this armour. The apostle then presents us with a sequence of 7 individual pieces of the soldier's armour, that when put on together form the whole armour of God.

What is to be protected by the armour? Paul writes in (2 Cor. 5: 17), "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." The Christian is a new creature in the sense that he, as an individual, has a new mental outlook on life. He is under the influence of the Holy Spirit of Truth.

The Christian through these influences, and a willingness of mind, has the viewpoint of Christ, who said "Not my will, but Thine, be done." (Luke 22: 42). As Christ looked upon life from the standpoint of God's plan as revealed in His Holy Word, so does the Christian. Therefore, the armour of God is for the protection of his mental state, the new mind, the viewpoint of Christ, which the Christian has adopted as his own. Let us examine each piece of armour, and as we do so, we shall find that the use for each piece has a purpose and a protective power.

We have to go back some 2000 years and visualise what a soldier looked like in the ancient world when he went out to battle. i.e. a Roman Soldier. The FIRST piece of armour is the girdle of Truth (verse 14). In olden times, a girdle was used to bind up the garments while work was performed. Therefore a girdle could be a fitting symbol of work or service. The girdle of truth could signify that the Christian is a servant of the Truth. We find this clearly taught in the Bible — that a Christian is an ambassador for Christ holding forth the word of reconciliation. (2 Cor 5: 18-20 Phil 2: 16).

How is the girdle of truth a protecting power? The piece of armour called the girdle of Truth protects the mind against all teachings or tendencies which draw the Christian away from being a servant of the Truth. The girdle of Truth, therefore, is really the definite teaching of the word of God. If the Christian understands this teaching, and brings his heart into harmony with the spirit and intent of it, he has set up in his mind a barrier to all hostile or intruding teachings, Thus the Christian is protected against the world and the Adversary.

The SECOND piece of armour is stated as "the breastplate of righteousness" (v 14). The fact that it is spoken of as a "breastplate" covering the vital organs of the body (including the heart) suggests that it is extremely important. There are two very prominent teachings in the Bible covering the thought of righteousness.

The first one relates to the righteousness that is in the perfect human sacrifice, the man Christ Jesus. In Heb 7:26 we read he was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." He gave himself a ransom sacrifice for Adam and his race. We, being sinners, can approach God only through faith in the perfect sacrifice of Jesus. We recognise that only as we are covered by the merit of our Lord Jesus, do we have a standing in God's presence. Christ is spoken of as our Advocate in 1 John 2: 1, and an advocate is one who "stands beside" as an attorney pleading one's cause. This is an important teaching, and protects us from all ideas which would provoke in us a

feeling of actual personal perfection. “The breastplate of righteousness” accomplishes this proper state of mind, and keeps us humble and thankful.

The second prominent teaching, covering the thought of righteousness, is the one that teaches us that we must be righteous, just, honest in thought and motive. The Christian is to “love righteousness and hate iniquity,” (Heb 1: 9) even as our Lord did. This teaching will protect one when temptations present themselves to the mind. Many temptations may prompt us to be a little dishonest or unjust for selfish reasons. If one has on the “breastplate of righteousness”, he will resist these temptations and thus be protected from them.

The THIRD piece of armour is for the feet — “And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.” (v. 15) The word preparation is translated from a Greek word, the root of which is to prepare, make ready. Therefore the meaning would be that this piece of armour prepares one to walk in the Narrow Christian Way. The explanation is beautiful and simple. The gospel of peace is really the good news of the Kingdom of God. It is good news to know that a literal kingdom is to be established here upon earth when God’s will shall be done here upon earth as it is done in heaven (Matt 6:10). Then all wars and troubles and death will cease. In due time those who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake under new conditions, when the Son of God shall be king. (Dan 12:2).

The Christian has been convinced of the truthfulness of this good news. He has accepted it. He has done more — he has responded to the invitation to walk in the footsteps of the Redeemer, which means that he stands for the same ideals and purposes as Jesus did. The Christian lays down his own life as a willing sacrifice in the service of God, which is the service of the Truth and on behalf of the Lord’s people. In connection with all this are certain precious promises of God’s watchcare and affection. The precious promises also include a rich reward at the end of the Christian way, of “glory, honour and immortality.” (Rom 2:7).

The good news of the coming kingdom of God, the invitation to walk in the footsteps of the Redeemer, and the precious promises bring to the Christian a state of mind called the “peace of God” (Phil 4: 7) In the midst of the difficulties of life and the troubles in this world, and even while he walks in the “valley of the shadow of death,” (Psalm 23: 4) the Christian has peace of mind. No wonder the third piece of armour is spoken of as sandals protecting the feet. Without the “peace of God” the Christian would not be prepared to go through such difficulties. God in a very simple way protects the Christian against discouragement, and provides him with joy, peace and hope.

In still another way the Christian is protected by the sandals of the preparation of the gospel of peace. The Christian is taught to use his faculty of readiness to resist the tendencies of the old will to be selfish and self-reliant. He must be a fighter in the good “fight of faith.” (1 Tim 6:12). He must endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. (2 Tim 2:3) However, he must not use his fighting qualities against his fellow man, but only against evil in himself, and in defence of the Truth. Therefore he is taught to be a peacemaker — “blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God” (Math 5: 9).

The Christian is taught to prefer peace to uncontrolled aggression. Thus the Christian is protected against any natural tendencies he might have to argue or fight just for the sake of opposing something. When the Christian understands that the ultimate object of discussion or resistance is to establish peace upon proper grounds, how it helps him to be self-controlled and kind! Even when the Christian finds it his duty to speak sharply he is protected against bitterness and unrighteous anger by the sandals of peace.

The FOURTH piece of armour is the “shield of faith.” (V. 16) “Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.” The words “above all”, suggests that the shield is extremely important. How true! If one does not have the faith, or confident belief in the teachings of the Bible, he is not a Christian, neither can he stand the assaults of the adversary. Faith is increased and strengthened in at least 3 ways:

1. By the knowledge of the attributes of God as revealed in His plan of loving kindness;
2. By a consideration of fulfilled prophecy;
3. By the witness of the Spirit.

In the first way, how it increases our faith to understand that our Creator is loving and kind, even in permitting the reign of evil for a time! How our gratitude goes out to Him when we are assured that eventually this earth will be

made a paradise, man's eternal home, and that the dead will be awakened from the tomb to live forever, if obedient to the laws of righteousness; the wicked only shall be destroyed! How it increases our faith to know that God's special reward to the church — joint heirship with His Son — is an evidence of His infinite wisdom, and generous love.

In the second way, how it increases our faith to understand prophecy and to be able to appreciate the significance of world events! More than 2,500 years ago, Daniel prophesied (Dan 12: 4) that in the time of the end there would be a "running to and fro, and an increase of knowledge, and a time of trouble such as never was upon the earth." And now the Christian can see the actual fulfilment of these events in the modern contraptions enabling man to "run to and fro" in cars, aeroplanes, rockets, etc.; in the increase of man's knowledge; and in the distress of nations, which is indeed the greatest "time of trouble" (Dan 12: 1) the world has ever known.

In the third way, how it increases the Christian's faith to be able to detect in his life the witness of the Spirit! If he can trace in his life the fulfilment of the Spirit, the intention, the purpose of God (as revealed in the New Testament), then he has reason to rejoice and be full of confidence and trust. God has written us a letter, by His Holy Book. A letter is one's mind or purpose expressed in words. If our minds (spirits) witness or show a fulfilment of God's purpose in us, then our spirit witnesses with God's Spirit that we are God's children.

In this turbulent and changing world there is much to challenge faith, unless faith is founded upon something sound and understandable! Increase of knowledge has stimulated the minds of all to think. As a result, religious beliefs have suffered. The Bible has suffered too, because many had the erroneous thought that the Bible encouraged ignorance. In this time when knowledge has increased, the Christian has his portion of knowledge to enable him to exercise a strong faith in a reasonable and proved Bible beyond any doubt.

The FIFTH piece of armour is the "helmet of salvation" (v. 17) As with the other pieces of armour, so with this one, the position gives us a clue as to its function in protecting the Christian. "The "helmet" being worn upon the head suggests a protection in the form of knowledge, intelligence, information. Christians all down through the Gospel age have had knowledge from God's Holy Word. This knowledge has been an explanation of God's plan of salvation, enabling them to grasp His will concerning them.

It has been suggested that in the end of the age, the Christian is provided with a much larger helmet than was provided for God's people in the past. We are living in a very different time. Daniel said that in the time of the end, knowledge would be increased. This is true. The disciple of Christ has need of a larger helmet to enable him to stand in an intellectual world. The increase of knowledge has discredited many former beliefs that were not well founded in Scripture. Just at the right time the Christian has been provided with concordances, Bible dictionaries and numerous translations of the Scriptures.

All of this is of tremendous importance to God's people, in view of the numerous appeals to the mind from all quarters and on every subject. Libraries and second hand book stores give evidence of the time in which we are living. There are thousands of books, each one possessing a power to affect the mind in some way. How bewildered the Christian would be if he were not provided with the helmet of proper knowledge of the Bible, the Word of God. His helmet proves that the Bible is true, shows what God's plan of loving kindness is, refutes arguments against the Bible, explains prophecy, and intercepts the significance of world events. Thus Christian belief is founded upon proper knowledge which cannot be refuted.

The SIXTH piece of armour is the "sword of the spirit, which is the Word of God." (v.17) This is the only offensive piece of the Christian's armour. Like all other weapons, it can be used properly or improperly. The sword of the spirit is not intended to be used to cut and wound others, but is intended to be used in defence of one's own position and for one's upbuilding. Our Lord Jesus gave us an illustration of its use in defence of His position in Matt. 4: 1-10, where we read how in three ways Satan tempted Him.

These temptations were suggestions to our Lord's mind by the Adversary. We know our minds are capable of forming pictures by our imagination. Such was the case with our Lord. He was not literally taken to a pinnacle of the temple, nor was He literally taken to a mountain top. Rather, his mind formed impressions suggested by the Adversary. It is important to observe the use our Lord made of the sword of the spirit in resisting the temptations. Not once did he bitterly accuse or threaten Satan. Instead, he countered the Adversary's argument with the well chosen and properly applied Scripture. In all three temptations He extinguished the Adversary's intent with "It is written", the sword of the spirit. Satan used the sword of the spirit too, in the second temptation; but he misap-

plied it in his attempt to invite our Lord into unrighteousness.

The sword of the spirit is also for the purpose of destroying everything contrary to the knowledge of God, so that every thought may be brought into full obedience to Christ. (2 Cor. 10: 3-5). So we can see the purpose of the sword of the spirit, according to this scripture, is to put aside all teachings and influences that are against the knowledge of God.

The SEVENTH and final piece of armour is described (v.18) as “praying always”. — The verse reads: “praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.” A good soldier of the Lord Jesus must keep in touch with headquarters; this he is privileged to do by coming daily to the throne of grace in prayer. We read in John 15:7 — “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you.”

One of Satan’s chief lines of attack is to cut off our communication with the Lord. In Mark 14:38, our Master warned, “Watch ye and pray lest ye enter into temptation.” By watching and praying always, besides having on the whole armour, we will progress. With all our armour, we need to cultivate and use the privilege of prayer.

It is a very great favour to be allowed to approach the supreme ruler of the universe and we should come therefore in a spirit of deep appreciation, earnestness, humility and reverence. The apostle adds the words “watching thereunto” — this calls for an attitude of mental alertness. We should also take heed as to the things for which we ask and be sure that we seek those things which we are promised and are entitled to ask for.

Our Lord frequently called attention to the fact that we should be persevering in prayer. Perseverance is an essential quality in the sight of God. It includes patience, carefulness and interest. Our praying should be in the spirit, in other words, from the heart. The very isolation of our Lord from all human help drew Him the nearer and more frequently to the Father in prayer and communion. As we grow in this character likeness, we will, like Him, “pray without ceasing”, rejoicing in the Lord and recognising Him as the centre of all our hopes.

When all the armour is properly worn, a state of mind is created, which is quite as important as the armour itself. Our Lord was 40 days and 40 nights in the wilderness, weak and exhausted physically, yet when He came forth He was strong in mind, strengthened by the word and the spirit of God. The Christian too must be moulded around the word and spirit of God; when this is fully grasped, then we know the means by which we are strong in the Lord and the power of His might.

So may each one of us put on and keep on the whole armour of God; by so doing we will be alert to danger signals and fully prepared, “able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.” (AK: 1991).

Out of the Abundance of the Heart

“Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by the words thou shalt be condemned.” (Mat. 12:34, 37).

The words of our Lord indicate that the heart and the mouth are under very special scrutiny, the former representing the individual character, and the latter being an index of the character.

It is in this same view of the matter that these words of wisdom were penned — “Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life. Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee.” (Prov. 4: 23, 24.) The indication is clear that a right condition of the heart is necessary to right words, for “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh,” as experience testifies to every man. It is therefore just that our words should be a criterion of judgment in the Lord’s estimation, as He tells us they are.

Our first concern, then, should be for the heart, that its affections and dispositions may be fully under the control of divine grace, that every principle of truth and righteousness may be enthroned there; that justice, mercy, brotherly kindness, faith, meekness, temperance and love may be firmly fixed as the governing principles of life. If these principles be fixed, established in the heart, then out of the good treasures of the heart, the mouth will speak forth words of truth, soberness, wisdom and grace. Of our Lord Jesus, whose heart was perfect, in whom was no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth, it was said, “Grace is poured into thy lips,” and again, “All bare him

witness and wondered at the gracious words that proceedeth out of his mouth.” (Psa. 45: 2; Luke 4: 22.)

So wise, just, and true were the Lord’s words, that though His enemies were continually seeking to find some fault, it is said, “They could not take hold of his words before the people; and they marvelled at his answers, and held their peace.” (Luke 20:26). And others said, “Never man spake like this man.” (John 7:46.) Thus our Lord left a worthy example to His people, which the Apostle urges all to follow, saying — “Let your speech be always with grace (with manifest love and kindness) seasoned with salt.” (Col. 4:6) And Peter adds, “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God,” — wisely and in accordance with the spirit and mind of the Lord. Again, it is written, “Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips that they speak no guile.” “Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles.” “The words of a wise man’s mouth are gracious words, but the lips of a fool will swallow up himself. The beginning of the words of his mouth is foolishness; and the end of his talk is mischievous madness.” “Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God, for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth; therefore let thy words be few.” (Psa. 34:13; Prov. 21: 23 Eccles. 10:12, 13; 5: 2.)

Job, in the midst of all his afflictions was very careful not to sin with his lips. He knew that his words would be taken by the Lord as an index of his heart, and he was careful to keep both the heart and his words right, saying “What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil (or troubles for disciplining). The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” (Job 2: 10; 1: 21.) There was no spirit of rebellion in a heart out of whose abundance came such words of loving submission, patience and faith under severe testings, and that, too, without a clear vision of the divine wisdom in permitting them.

The Psalmist puts into the mouths of God’s consecrated and tried people these words of firm resolution — “I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue; I will keep my mouth in a bridle, while the wicked is before me.” (Psa. 39:1). How necessary to the stability of Christian character is such a resolution, and the self control which develops under an adherence to it. The world, the flesh and the devil oppose our way; there are fightings within and storms without, and many are the arrows and darts aimed at the righteous, and the safe attitude of the Christian in the face of the opposition of the world is to be silent, and to allow the Lord to work all these trials for our good, for the servant is not above his Lord. As Jesus took the opposition of sinners against Himself with such humble patience, so we too should “go therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach;” as He said, “Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man’s sake.” So the Psalmist suggests, saying — “I was dumb with silence; I held my peace even from good” (or from doing what seemed good in my sight). Again it is written — “He that keepeth his mouth, keepeth his life, but he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction.” (Prov. 13: 3.)

So we see what importance the Lord attaches to our words, for if our words are rebellious, or disloyal, or frivolous, or flippant, or unkind, unthankful, unholy, or impure, the heart is judged accordingly on the principle that “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” Thus, our words in all the varied circumstances of our daily life are bearing testimony before God of the condition of our hearts, and the Psalmist puts this prayer into the lips of all the Lord’s people — “Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips. Permit not my heart to incline after any evil things. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer. My lips shall utter praise, when thou hast taught me thy statutes. My tongue shall speak of thy word; for all thy commandments are righteousness. Let thine hand help me; for I have chosen thy precepts. I have longed for thy salvation (and for the perfection and beauty of holiness), O Lord; and thy law is my delight.” (Psa. 141:3, 4; 19:14; 119:171-174).

In many things we are all faulty. If any one does not err in word he is a perfect man, able to control the whole body. (James 3:2.) But such a man does not exist; we all need to continually plead the merit of our Saviour and Advocate, while we strive daily to perfect holiness in the reverence of the Lord. Therefore, let our words be few; let them be thoughtful and wise, as uttered before God, and not rash, hasty and ill considered. Let our conversation be as becometh the Gospel of Christ. “Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.” (Phil. 4:8.) Thus, out of the good treasure of the heart, we shall be able to speak words of truth and soberness, and so honour and glorify Jesus and our loving Heavenly Father.

I Will Abide With Thee

I will abide, though night is drawing nigh,
Though clouds and darkness now obscure the sky.
I know thy sorrow, see thy falling tear —
Give Me thy hand, for I am very near.

The earthly joys are passing fast away;
Lean thou on Me and I will be thy stay.
My grace is all-sufficient, rich and free.
Have perfect faith—I will abide with thee.

My eyes are watching o'er thee, troubled child,
My arm shall guide thee, though the path be wild.
Midst storms and tempest, to My bosom flee,
Be not afraid—I will abide with thee.
A little while and then it will be light,
Thy faith shall be exchanged for perfect sight;
No fear to vex thee, nothing to molest,
For thou shall be with Me in perfect rest

When friends may fail thee, I will be thy friend,
My love shall last until thy journey's end.
And when heaven's golden gates thine eyes shall see,
I will eternally abide with thee.

(Inspired by the much-loved hymn “Abide with Me”)



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Fellowship One With Another

(Convention Address)

“ But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.” 1 John 1:7.

The first few verses of John’s epistle introduce us to two separate but closely related aspects of the Christian life. In verses 3 and 4, the apostle is explaining the purpose of his letter and indeed of his ministry. “That we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ. And these things we write unto you that your joy may be full.”

The basis of fellowship one with another is that joint fellowship which each one has with the Father and the Son. This basic fellowship or communion is intensely personal and individual, for each must come by faith to God through Christ to know His salvation. Even after each has personally confessed Him and committed his or her life to following the Saviour, there are still the personal experiences of life to be met up with.

We remember Jesus’ kindly words to Peter when he had just been told by Jesus what his lot would be in later life. Peter seeing John said to Jesus—“Lord and what shall this man do?” To this Jesus replied—“If I will that he tarry till I come what is that to thee? Follow thou me.” John 21:21,22. Jesus was not recommending a total lack of concern for the welfare of other followers, but gently teaching Peter the lesson of personal discipleship. For each individual Christian since Peter including ourselves at this end of the age are in constant fellowship with our loving Father and with His dear Son, so that even if we were deprived of all human association with others, we should still not be alone.

But the communion of each one with the Father and the Son should and surely does lead into that fellowship which the apostle John describes in our text. “If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another and the blood of His Son Jesus purifies from every sin.” (N.I.V.) This is certainly one of the greatest treasures and privileges of the Christian way, that fellowship one with another—the fellowship of kindred minds, like to that above. “That they all may be one, as Thou Father art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us.” John 17:21. This was our Master’s prayer and the bonding agent of this unity, this fellowship, is love.

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

What then is behind the thought of the fellowship that is so precious in Christian discipleship? The word so translated is elsewhere given as communion, contribution, communication, while related words are translated partaker, partner, companion. The basic thought in every case is of jointly sharing or jointly participating in some activity, experience or blessing. One commentator has written thus—“Fellowship is a specifically Christian word and denotes that common participation in the grace of God, the salvation of Christ and the indwelling of the Spirit which is the spiritual birthright of all Christian believers. It is their common possession of God which makes them one. Our fellowship with each other arises from and depends on our fellowship with God. This then is John’s objective—through proclamation of the message of life in Jesus Christ to bring each of his hearers and readers into relationship with the Father and hence to each other.”

It is not surprising therefore to find the New Testament writers encouraging believers of all ages to foster and develop the spirit of fellowship. This is best achieved by each one striving by God's grace and by faith to draw daily closer to the heavenly Father. For as we draw nearer to Him and become the more engrossed in His love and power and glory, then the human frailties from which none of us is free will fade and we will see more of God's workmanship and the likeness of our Saviour in each one instead.

Having seen that the basis of mutual fellowship is the personal relationship with God through Christ, we note that the apostle Paul in Eph. 4:46 lists those things which all true believers share and upon which real unity in the Spirit and productive fellowship rest. "There is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in you all." One body of His children, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one baptism, one loving Father—what a heritage is ours!

This oneness is particularly brought to our attention each time we remember our Saviour's death in the Memorial observance. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread." 1 Cor. 10:16,17. These rich verses remind us not only of the common basis of our acceptance with God and the source of our new life in Christ, but also of our privilege of sharing with our Master and with each other in all the experiences and sacrifices of the Christian way, that way which our Saviour has already trodden before us.

Let us consider some of the aspects of this fellowship with one another which should be the gladly accepted and cherished lot of every child of God. In Eph. 4 after referring to the one body, the apostle next mentions the one Spirit and it is surely by that one Spirit that each one is begotten into the family of God. "In whom (Jesus) also after ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." Eph. 1:13. "As many as are lead by the Spirit of God, they are the children of God." Rom. 8:14. Each one has been marked out as a child of God, a member of the one family, and the apostle writing to the Philippians challenges them and us to live out that family relationship.

"If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind." Phil. 2:1,2.

This fellowship in the Spirit should be productive in each one of love for those things that are best in God's sight, that edify and build up. This communion should be developing in us each a greater love for God's word and a delight in the precious truths and promises which it contains.

The privilege of sharing in such riches is beautifully portrayed in Mal. 3:16. "They that feared the Lord spake often one to another and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon His name." The promise follows in verse 17. "And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels." They that feared the Lord spake often one to another. We need not to be told what sort of things they spoke about, but we remember the much later record of the noble souls at Berea, who "received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether these things were so." Acts 17:11. The personal study of God's word is always important, but shared fellowship in its treasures is a rich experience which none should ever neglect. For just such reasons, the apostles and those who followed them set up, under God's leading, local churches—assemblies of believers, as soon as possible, wherever the gospel went. Today we are blessed that we can freely meet to praise God and meditate upon His word.

"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as ye see the day approaching." Heb. 10:25. If these words of the apostle were so important in his day, how much more so now, when all the signs about us speak of the near and fast approach of that day. This assembling is a two-way matter, for each of us has something to give and something to receive from that gathering of ourselves together. In each case, this is of the Lord, who promised—"I am with you always, even to the end of the age," but by God's grace He can use anyone of His people to be a channel of His blessing.

In another lovely picture, the apostle represents the individual members of the church as parts of the one body, dependent on each other, but each under the headship of one, even Jesus Christ. "For by the one Spirit are we all baptised into one body and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member but many

and whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it, or if one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ and members in particular.” 1 Cor. 12:12-27.

In such an intimate relationship, the fellowship of shared experience will be a further bonding agent. The apostle Paul in all his ministry for his Lord was eager and thankful for the fellowship of the brethren far and near, for their prayers, for their material support, for their constant remembrance of him. How precious is this privilege and joy of all God’s people—to bear one another up before the throne of grace, to give the word of encouragement or gratitude, to extend the helping hand in time of need! Yet it is possible to neglect or overlook the privileges of this aspect of our fellowship in Christ. In Phil. 1:5, the apostle thanks the brethren for their “fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now” and still today we also can support those who labour for the Lord in the gospel. Like the Philippian of old who shared with Paul in the work of the gospel, and to whom therefore we also owe some debt, we can be partners, albeit in a small way, with those whom the Lord calls and enables to help spread the wonderful message of the gospel of the kingdom.

In 1 Pet. 4:13-16, we read further of the privilege of the fellowship in sufferings with Christ. “Rejoice, in as much as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye, for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you..... if any suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed but let him glorify God on this behalf.” Here again, the individual believer’s fellowship, his participation or sharing in sufferings is first and foremost with Christ, for His name and His cause. But this is also a shared experience with all the Lord’s people and in the preceding verse, the apostle has had to remind his readers—“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.” In some form or other, this fellowship of suffering is the common lot of every Christian. We may not always know just what fiery troubles others are going through, but all have the assurance of Rom. 8:17—“if children, then heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together.”

Nor can we always appreciate what chastisings, what afflictions, the Father may be allowing others to endure for their character development and faithfulness, nor can they ours, but we know that every true child of God must receive some share. We know also that it is in love and not in anger that all His chastenings will come. So we all have the opportunity to seek and strengthen and support and comfort one another in the fellowship of trial and difficult experience. James tells us to “count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations, knowing that the trial of your faith worketh patience.” Jas. 1:2,3. But he also stresses the need for practical expression of concern for the welfare of other brethren and Paul in writing to the Galatians urges them—“as we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.” Gal. 6:10.

The fellowship of the Lord’s people provides scope for practical help as well as the ministry of comfort and of prayer. Furthermore, because of diversity of background, personal qualities and temperament, it provides a school in which we may learn and perfect the graces of kindness, long-suffering, forbearance, forgiveness and, above all, love—the bond of perfectness. Col. 3:12-14.

Then there is the ultimate glorious fellowship which all the faithful saints of the gospel age will enjoy together with Him whose prayer for them was—“Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory.” John 17:24. “We know that when He (Jesus) shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.” 1 John 3:2. What perfect fellowship will then be ours, first and foremost with our dear Saviour and with our loving Father in heaven, but also with each one of the Lord’s people! How important it is then that our present fellowship with all those who name the name of Christ in sincerity and truth be characterised by that selfless love which our Master commanded of us! How necessary it is that we remember that our real “citizenship is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our lowly body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body.” Phil. 3:20,21.

This glorious hope, these grand expectations, are the heritage of all the Lord’s people; how they should cheer and encourage us on as members of that one great communion of Christ’s brethren. By our words, by our actions, by the witness of our lives, we can help each other along the way. This is our privilege, indeed it is our duty, to be gladly and lovingly accepted by every child of God. He can bless this ministry of service through every passing year for each one of us, as long as we maintain that close fellowship with the Father and His dear Son, and walk in the light as He is in the light. This alone is the context, the climate, in which true fellowship can develop and bring mutual blessing to each one.

In summary, we might say that our fellowship one with another entails:

1. a fellowship in common loyalty—in allegiance to and loving communion with the one gracious Heavenly Father and His Son, our Saviour.
2. a fellowship in the same walk in light—in single-minded desire to think and speak and act as children of light, seeking only that which is true and pure and will stand the searching test of light.
3. a fellowship in mutual love—in willing obedience to our Lord's command and in recognition of His life manifest in each of His people.
4. a fellowship in shared experience—in readiness to accept from God's hand whatever He sees best for the honour of His name and for our growth and fruitfulness.
5. a fellowship in Christ's sufferings—in determination to follow Him whatever the cost, laying aside every weight and looking to Him.
6. a fellowship in the one hope and calling—rejoicing together in confident trust that what God has promised He can and will richly fulfil in and for us.
7. a fellowship in Christ's glory—seen only yet in prospect and experienced only in foretaste, but finally to be realised in all its fullness. "I go to prepare a place for you that where I am, there ye may be also."

“In Remembrance of Me.”

The Scriptures contain no request by our Lord that his followers should observe His birth but He made special request that all who would be His consecrated disciples should truly celebrate His death. As our Lord's sacrifice as “the Lamb of God” took the place of the annual Jewish Passover ceremony, it is reasonable that the observance of the Memorial of Christ's death be celebrated yearly also, on the anniversary of the institution of this observance “on the night in which he was betrayed.”

The Apostle Peter presents the matter of our Lord's sacrifice as our Redeemer beautifully in 1 Pet. 1:18-20—“Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conduct received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot; who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you.” The perfection of Christ as the Man Christ Jesus is clearly indicated in this passage, and it is just as clear that the Passover lamb which the people of Israel were instructed to sacrifice each year was a type of Christ, our Passover Lamb.

The sprinkled blood of the Passover Lamb was the means of saving Israel's firstborns from death in Egypt, as well as being the means of delivering all Israel out of Egyptian bondage on that special Passover night so long ago. That was a wonderful deliverance! What shall we think and say, however, about the saving of the spiritual firstborns unto God of this Gospel Age, and the ultimate deliverance of all the human race from the bondage of sin and death, because of the sacrifice of the antitypical Lamb of God, even Jesus Christ? Truly this wonderful prospect fills us with joy and thankfulness beyond description!

From Matthew's account of the Memorial, we read in chapter 26:26—“And as they were eating”—finishing the Jewish Passover supper—“Jesus took bread”—the unleavened bread of the Jewish supper, picturing His own perfect humanity—“and blessed it”—gave thanks to God for this fitting symbol—“and brake it”—picturing the breaking of His own body—“and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.” In other words, appropriate His perfect humanity, thus gaining justification by faith in the perfect sacrifice of Jesus. As expressed by Paul in Rom. 5:1—“Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The following verse, Matt. 26:27, reads—“And he took the cup”—the cup of the fruit of the vine—“and gave thanks”—thanked God for this symbol of His own blood—“and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it.” Again, Jesus was saying, appropriate my blood, my life, my perfect humanity, thus also gaining justification by faith in the sight of God. It is the justified human life that true believers in Christ have the privilege of laying down in the steps of the Master.

A secondary and deeper meaning of our Lord's Memorial the Apostle Paul was used of God to explain so beautifully in 1 Cor 10:16,17—"The cup of blessing which we bless is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? for we being many are one bread, and one body for we are all partakers of that one bread." Here we see the oneness of Christ and His members beautifully revealed. So, in observing our Lord's Memorial we not only do so "in remembrance of Christ," but we also signify our own willingness to be broken with Him, and have our life poured out in sacrifice with Him.

"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death, if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as thought I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus"—Phil. 3:10-14.

As we meet each year at the Memorial of our Lord's death, it is required that we do so with pure hearts, having sought forgiveness for all shortcomings through the merit of Christ, and thus acceptable in the sight of God. 1 Cor. 5:7,8—"Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover (Lamb) is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast...with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

A Purchased People

The Apostle Peter (1 Pet 2:9) speaks of the I consecrated followers of the Master as being a peculiar people. The Greek word used by him has the thought of a "purchased" people, or a people acquired by purchase. The thought is essentially the same as that outlined by Paul in Titus 2:14. This people is purchased at a great cost, even by Jesus' laying down His life for them. Acquired at so great a sacrifice they are precious in His sight, a very special treasure.

A Chosen Generation

Peter mentions other characteristics of these peculiar people. He says, for example, that they are a "chosen generation." In 1 Peter 1:2 we are told that these people are "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience." Paul explains the manner in which God's foreknowledge operates in connection with this elect people, saying, "Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son."—Rom. 8:29.

Here again we are reminded of the condition requisite to being the peculiar people of God, that condition being zeal for good works. God has predestinated that each one of this class must be conformed to the image of Christ. The zeal of God's house consumed the Master, and if we are like Him, then the same zeal will consume us. The Master's zeal was for the good work, of God, and our zeal must also be for God's work. It will not do merely to be zealous. Our zeal must be controlled by the will of God, then it will result in blessings to others and to the glory of the Lord.

God wants us to "give diligence to make our calling and election sure," and if we do, we will become more and more conformed to the likeness of His beloved Son. (2 Pet. 1:10.) To be like Jesus we need to get acquainted with Him. We can do this through the Word. As we note the details of His consecrated life we are at once impressed with the full extent to which he sought to know and to do His Father's will at all times and under all circumstances. In the most trying moment of His earthly career He lifted up His heart to God and said, "not My will, but Thine, be done."—Luke 22:42.

Jesus was faithful in prayer, and could say to His Father, "I knew that Thou hearest Me always." (John 11:42.) Jesus let His light shine so faithfully that it finally cost Him His life. Jesus was ever on the alert to bless others, even the little children. Such is the portrait of the Master and God has predestinated that if we are to be a part of the "chosen generation" of this age, we must be conformed to the Master's image.

A Royal Priesthood

"Ye are a royal priesthood," the apostle asserts. Here again the language God employed to describe his typical people is applied to spiritual Israel. Israel was designated "a kingdom of priests," but in order to make good that

title continued zeal for the doing of God's will was necessary. (Exod. 19:5,6.) This zeal was lacking, and now the title is transferred "to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof."—Matt. 21:43.

The priests of Israel represented God among the people. Their work was twofold. They offered sacrifice, and they dispensed the blessings of God to the people vouchsafed by the sacrifices. All Israel was to be a nation of priests in representing God before the rest of the world, but failed to actually attain this high position of divine favor. Now the title and privilege goes to God's peculiar people of the Gospel age. In 1 Peter 2:5 the apostle explains that the consecrated are "an holy priesthood" to "offer up sacrifices." Peter also says that we are built up a "spiritual house." This is a reference to the symbolism of the temple as the meeting place between God and Israel. The people came to the temple to receive God's blessings. So God's peculiar people are to be the channel of divine blessings to the whole world when the work of sacrifice is complete. What wondrous grace is thus bestowed upon those who are "zealous of good works."

A Holy Nation

To be holy means to be pure, unadulterated, and God expects that His peculiar people will be undivided in their devotion to Him. He does not want us to be "double minded." There may be little danger today that we will worship Moloch or other heathen deities, but there are, nevertheless, many "idols" which our wayward hearts may set up, and through the worship of which we would become unholy in our devotion to God. There is the god of pleasure; the god of wealth; the god of ease; the god of pride and ambition; and there is the "self" god. To qualify as a part of God's holy nation of today the divine will must reign supreme in our hearts and lives.

God wants us to be "obedient children, not fashioning ourselves according to the former lusts. "But as He which hath called you is holy," says the apostle, "so be ye holy in all manner of conversation." Then the apostle quotes from the Old Testament, "Be ye holy; for I am holy." (1 Pet. 1:14-16; Lev. 11:45.) The entire text in Leviticus from which Peter quoted, reads, "For I am the Lord that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt, *to be your God*; ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy."

God is there reminding Israel that He was exclusively their God. Later, through Amos, God declared, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth." (Amos 3:2.) God is pure and sinless from whatever standpoint we may view Him, but in these passages he seems to be emphasising the point that He had not been a God to any other nation except Israel. It is upon the basis of this holiness toward them, that He asks them to be holy toward Him. He had no other people; they were to have no other gods.

The same thing is true today. God loves all nations, and has provided blessings for them but He considers the "holy nation" only as being His peculiar people. To these he becomes Father, Helper, and Friend. He engraves them upon the palms of His hands; they are as dear to Him as the apple of His eye. His name is written in their foreheads. He provides for all their needs; gives them strength when they are weak; comforts when they are sorrowful. In the end, He will exalt them to His own nature and glory. They are a peculiar treasure unto Him, and no good thing will he withhold from them.

God's Praises

After applying these various symbolically descriptive titles to the followers of the Master the apostle explains the practical significance of what they all imply, saying, "that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light." (1 Peter 2:9.) This, after all, is the objective of the "good works" for which God's peculiar people should be zealous. All that is done by them, both in this age and in the next, shows forth the praises of God.

The Millennial age work of healing the sick and raising the dead will certainly show forth God's praises. When the knowledge of God's glory fills the earth as the waters cover the sea, all mankind will praise the Lord. Then every creature in heaven and in earth will be praising Him that sitteth upon the throne, and will also give glory to the Lamb that was slain. (Rev. 5:13.) But those who are privileged to share in that future work of filling the earth with the glory of God will be those only who previously have zealously sacrificed all their earthly interests in showing forth the praises of the Lord in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation among whom—now this side of the veil—they shine as lights.

The extent to which the light of the Gospel penetrates the darkness of this world is not the responsibility of the

Christian; but we are responsible for letting the light shine. Whether men hear or not does not affect the responsibility imposed upon us by divine grace to show forth the praises of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvellous light. We are a royal priesthood to this end; we are a holy nation for this purpose; we are a chosen generation to be the light of the world. A consuming zeal for carrying on this good work as God directs in His Word, and recognition of the fact that it is all by grace that the privilege is extended to us, will mean that God will continue to encircle us with His love as His peculiar people.

This does not mean that we can earn our way into the Kingdom. It does not mean that salvation is of works, and not of grace. It *does* mean that we will be demonstrating our faith by our works; and that, realizing we have been bought with a price, we do not belong to ourselves, but to Him, and are to be His servants forever. It means that we qualify to be God's peculiar treasure by showing our appreciation of what He has done for us. If we really appreciate His love, we will want to tell it and live it out, and by doing this, to show forth His praises.

Matthew the Publican

"I am not come to call the righteous but sinners. "Luke 5:32.

It has been truly said that "the story of Matthew X is an emphatic witness to the truth that the Gospel is no respecter of persons, and that even in the selection of His more immediate followers Jesus thought not of anything in their outward surroundings, but simply and solely of their spiritual fitness for their new task." Surely the Saviour made no mistake in calling Matthew to be one of twelve Apostles. His life subsequent to his call gives evidence of having been most fruitful, and to him was assigned the honor of giving to the followers of Christ a most inspiring account of the life and ministry of our blessed Redeemer.

It was in or near the city of Capernaum that Matthew received the call from the Master. This city where our Lord had been teaching and healing, was situated on the sea of Galilee. It was a city of considerable commercial importance, and undoubtedly the lake-shore in that vicinity was quite populous. The tense of the Greek would seem to indicate that our Lord kept going by the sea-shore, stopping here and there to discourse to the people, multitudes of whom flocked to hear Him. It was during this journey that He passed Matthew, formerly known as Levi, a custom-house agent of the Roman government — a revenue collector, who was attending to his business, and whom our Lord addressed, saying, "Follow Me," and who obeyed the call to discipleship.

Many get a false thought from the brevity of the narrative, and infer that Levi (Matthew) had never heard of Jesus before, and that our Lord, as He passed him, cast upon him some kind of a spell which led him to instantly drop his business. On the contrary, the Lord and His disciples were well known in that vicinity and probably Matthew had not only knowledge of our Lord, but also faith in Him, as the Messiah. Not until then, however, had Jesus invited him to become one of His immediate disciples; not until then, therefore, could Matthew essay to become such. There evidently were many who heard the Lord discourse time and again, and who were to be reckoned as amongst His friends, but who were by no means invited to become special followers, companions and associates in the ministry of the Gospel, as were the Twelve.

Nor are we to suppose that Matthew left his money-drawer open, and his accounts with the Roman government unsettled, to immediately follow the Master. Rather, we may assume that it may have taken days, or possibly weeks, to straighten his affairs and to enable him to respond to the Lord's call to apostleship. We should remember that the history of several years, and many discourses, conversations and incidents, are crowded in the gospel narrative into very brief space.

Publicans Despised

The office of a publican offered many opportunities for dishonesty and extortion, bribery, etc., but we cannot suppose that Levi was one of these dishonest publicans, for had he been so we may be sure he would not have been called to the apostleship and would not have responded to the call, for we are not to forget that it is written, "No man can come to Me except the Father which sent Me draw him."—John 6:44.

Quoting Peloubet's Notes as to the general character of the publicans: "To become a publican in Palestine nineteen centuries ago a man had first of all to sell his country. The publican was the embodiment and representative of the foreign government. And to become a publican, in the second place, a man had to sell his conscience. The publican's trade was a dishonest trade. Taxes today are fixed by responsible and representative bodies, and the tax-gatherer, as a result, can never exact more than is due. But taxes long ago were 'farmed'. The taxes of a town or

district or province would be sold to the highest bidder, and that highest bidder would then be allowed to squeeze out of the people of his district what money he could. It was a system that encouraged corruption and extortion.

Matthew was a man of influence, and as soon as he accepted the Lord's call, and responded by consecrating himself and his all, he set about to use his influence in drawing others to the Savior. He would announce his own devotion to the cause in such a manner and under such favorable circumstances as if possible would win some. To these ends he arranged a banquet for the Lord and His disciples at his house, and invited many of his friends and business associates. These are called "Many publicans and sinners."

We have seen why the publicans were ostracized by the scribes and Pharisees—not always because they were wicked, but because their business was disesteemed: and being thus cut off socially from the ultra-religious, the publicans were forced to have most of their social intercourse with the non-religious, by way of contrast called "sinners." By the term sinners we are not necessarily to understand vile persons and evil-doers, but rather persons who did not profess nor attempt the holiness claimed by the Pharisees—persons who did not claim to be absolute keepers of the Divine Law—who did not profess to make the outside of the cup or platter absolutely clean, though perhaps in many instances the inside was as clean or more clean than were the hearts of the Pharisees, who professed perfect holiness.

Matthew Ready

The words of Dean Farrar are well in place at this point: "But He who came to seek and save the lost—He who could evoke Christian holiness out of the midst of heathen corruption—could make even out of a Jewish publican, the Apostle and the first Evangelist of a new and living Faith. His choice of apostles was dictated by a spirit far different from that of calculating policy or conventional prudence. He rejected the dignified scribe (Matt. 8:19); He chose the despised and hated tax-gatherer. It was the glorious unworldliness of a Divine insight and a perfect charity, and Matthew more than justified it by turning his knowledge of writing to a sacred use, and becoming the biographer of his Savior and his Lord.

"No doubt Matthew had heard some of the discourses, has seen some of the miracles of Christ. His heart had been touched, and to the eyes of Him who despised none and despaired of none, the publican, even as he sat at 'the receipt of custom', was ready for the call. One word was enough. The 'Follow Me' which showed to Matthew that his Lord loved him, and was ready to use him as a chosen instrument in spreading the good tidings of the kingdom of God, was sufficient to break the temptations of avarice and the routine of a daily calling, and 'he left all, rose up, and followed Him,' touched into noblest transformation by a forgiving and redeeming love."

A Consecrated Home

Matthew's endeavour to bring his friends and associates into contact with the Master and His teaching is certainly commendable, and is a good illustration of what each one who enters the Lord's flock should do. Each should seek to exert his influence where it is greatest, amongst those with whom he is acquainted and who are acquainted with him, and upon whom either his past honesty and good character should have an influence, or else those to whom his radical change of life would be the most manifest.

Another lesson for us is the propriety of using hospitality as a channel for the advancement of the truth—the homes of those who have consecrated themselves to the Lord should be consecrated homes, in which the first consideration should be the service of the Master; and its influence should be to draw out friends to the Lord, that they might be taught of Him. Too frequently the consecration of the home is overlooked and antagonistic influences are permitted to dominate, with the result that neither the Lord nor the Lord's people are entertained, nor His Cause served in them. Such a house and home loses a great blessing.

Spiritual Food

It would seem from other narratives of this same banquet (which was probably several weeks after Matthew's call) that a large number of people were gathered at Matthew's house aside from those who partook of the banquet (Luke 5:29), and from the connection of the narrative it is supposed that it was on one of the regular fast days of the Pharisees. These facts led to the question:

Why does your Teacher associate with these people, who do not profess sanctification? The objection was not

because our Lord taught the publicans and sinners, but because He ate with them, which implied a social equality, and the Pharisees evidently recognized that our Lord and His apostles were professing and living lives of entire consecration to God.

In answer to this query our Lord said, “They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick”—the implication being that the physician had a right to go to and mingle with those whom he sought to relieve, and might mingle with them in whatever manner he saw to be expedient for their cure. This language does not imply that the Pharisees were not sick, and that they did not need our Lord’s ministry, though the fact was that not admitting that they were sin-sick they were not disposed to receive his good medicine of doctrine.

The same thought is otherwise expressed by our Lord in the same connection, saying, “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” Any one who considered himself to be righteous would be beyond the call of repentance. His first lesson would be to learn that he was not righteous, not perfect; hence our Lord went chiefly to those who admitted that they were not righteous, and whose hearts therefore were better soil for the truth than others. Our Lord intimated this in His parable of the publican’s and the Pharisee’s prayers, assuring us that in God’s sight the publican had the better standing, because of his acknowledgment of imperfections and his petition for mercy.

To all who feel their need, who hunger and thirst after righteousness, the Lord is gracious. Such a one of nobler spirit must Matthew have been, whom our Lord knew and called to His service.

(from the “Herald”)



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Think on These Things (Phil. 4:8)

(Convention Address)

What things should we be thinking about? What should be the character of our thoughts? Thoughts are the beginning of all things — the creation of the universe began with a thought.

Thoughts are the seeds which are planted to make our characters grow. Each person is like a farm; Paul wrote to the Corinthian church: "Ye are God's husbandry." The thought is—you are God's farm. As with natural farms, there is great diversity. Sometimes we come to a farm where everything looks nice—rows of corn appear lush and everything is green and thriving. There are no weeds, indicating good cultivation. It is refreshing to see a farm like that. However, we may then see another farm where the rows are crooked, the crops do not look well, weeds are thriving and there is evidence of neglect. It is so with the individual. One has a character like a nicely cultivated farm—patience, love, zeal, godliness, earnestness and other grand qualities are growing in his or her character. Another whose character is like the farm overgrown with weeds is growing envy, jealousy, malice, strife and all kinds of evil fruitage. Just as a farmer plants seed to raise crops, so something is needed to raise or grow a character. The little seed which the farmer plants corresponds with the little thought which we plant. The seed is very small yet it produces a large plant. A thought also is a very small thing, yet how much will grow from it.

"Be not deceived, God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, but he that soweth to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting." (Gal. 6:7,8) When Paul says "he that sows to the flesh" he refers to those who think thoughts out of harmony with God's will—thoughts in keeping with the spirit of the flesh. If we entertain such thoughts, we are sowing to the flesh. When we read "whatever he sows, that shall he reap," we tend to think of this more along the lines of actions. But why do we do what we do? We begin by thinking—our thoughts determine where we go, what we do, how we spend our money, what words we speak. Everything starts with a thought. The same apostle further states: "I have sown, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase." Here again he refers to thoughts; when Paul came among them he planted certain thoughts in their minds which they never had before. Apollos encouraged these thoughts and finally God brought them to fruition.

If we are trying to serve the Lord, and a wrong thought comes to mind, then if we plant that thought we are sowing corruption and we will reap corruption. We may not be lost on that account, but we are making it harder for ourselves and if we get into the kingdom, we will have a lower place because we were willing to retain these wrong thoughts. If you or I entertain the thought that God may desert us, we are entertaining an untrue thought and as we do so, it will begin to develop the weeds of doubt. If we go on to harbour these, we may lose our faith. When a thought of this kind comes to our mind, let us reason that it is impossible for God to forget His promises, it is impossible for Him to go back on His word, it is impossible for Him to desert His child. "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

The two words—thought and think—can have different meanings:

THOUGHT — idea, notion

THINK — deliberate, meditate, reflect, contemplate

We are not to blame for our thoughts, but we are to blame for what we think. We are not necessarily to be commended for our good thoughts, nor blamed for our bad thoughts. But if we entertain them, that is a different matter.

“As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.” Let us take for our guidance in this matter the apostle Paul’s final admonition to the Philippian church, as recorded in Ch. 4:8. In this chapter, Paul is giving instructions to the church as to how they should build themselves up in the most holy faith. Preceding the text scripture, he gives the following thought: “Therefore my brethren whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord my beloved. Rejoice in the Lord always, again I say rejoice. Let all men know your forbearance. The Lord is at hand. Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God which passes all understanding will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 4:1, 4-7 RSV)

Then in the text scripture, Paul imparts to us very detailed instructions on what to think about: “Finally brethren whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.” (Phil. 4:8 KJV); and continuing on into the next verse: “What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, do, and the God of peace will be with you.” They should have heard and seen that these good thoughts had brought the peace of God to Paul. In verses 7 and 9, we see that they also can bring us this peace which passes all understanding. If we have this peace, we can then rejoice in the Lord, have no anxiety about anything and let our requests be known to God.

The Manna Comment for April 27 says, in part: “To have the mind of Christ is indeed the one requirement of lawful striving.... a mind which humbly and faithfully submits itself to the will of God, as expressed in His great plan of the ages, and which devotes all energy to the accomplishment of His will, because of an intelligent appreciation of the end He has in view.” All know what a great influence the mind has over the body. The more we think on good things, the better we will be; and just the opposite, the more we think on evil things, the more evil we will become. If a thing has none of the qualities of the text scripture, then we should not think on it at all. But if we think on those things which have the wisdom and depth which comes from God alone, then a wonderful change of character is effected. We must desire to be led by God and to conform our thoughts to His. Thoughts can be controlled, just as words and actions can be controlled.

“My son, be attentive to my words; incline thine ear to my sayings. Let them not escape from your sight; keep them within your heart. For they are life to him who finds them, and healing to all his flesh. Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life. Put away from you crooked speech and put devious talk far from you. Let your eyes look directly forward and your gaze be straight before you. Take heed to the path of your feet, then all your ways will be straight.” (Prov. 4:20-26 RSV) “Out of the heart flow the springs of life.” The heart is the governing power of mankind and represents the will and intention. It must be kept true and centred in God. But the will is subject to many influences and if our thoughts are impure, unjust or unholy, the power of the will becomes weaker. The thoughts of those who are striving to make their calling and election sure must not be permitted to dwell on evil things, but must be disciplined to dwell on the deeper things of the word of God. The new heart is to be kept loyal to God, to the principles of righteousness and to His covenant, to be active in love and helpfulness and in the cultivation of thoughts in accord with the divine.

The Criteria

Turning to the text scripture (Phil. 4:8), the first test quality for our thinking is: “Is it TRUE?” This is the first consideration in any matter. Webster defines true as—reliable, certain, in accordance with fact, agreeing with reality, not false. We know that the word of God is true, and that He will be true to His word, as we read in Psa. 119:160—“The sum of Thy words is truth, and everyone of Thy righteous ordinances endures for ever.” We know that He is the only true God (Jer. 10:10) and that His ways are true (Rev. 15:3). And no person was truer than Jesus—He was the True Light, the True Vine, His word was true and He was the True and Faithful Witness.

But does our text mean to think on anything that is true? There are hundreds of branches of science, each based upon profound truths. Are we to seek to master these, to think upon these things? And beside these, there are many unwholesome, scandalous and trivial things which are also true. Are we to fill our minds with these? Of course not! The apostle’s words require some qualification, a right dividing of the word of truth. (2 Tim. 2:15)

When Paul directs us to think on whatsoever things are true, he is speaking of the Truth, as the Lord’s people use and understand His precious words, a knowledge of the great divine plan of ages, the only way in which the scriptures are seen to be both beautiful and harmonious. As we contemplate and meditate on the truth, let us thank God for

1. the plan of salvation, revealing God to be a God of love, compassion and mercy,
2. the philosophy of the ransom, whereby Christ died for all—that God will have all to be saved and come

to a knowledge of the truth, the times of restitution of all things, which God has spoken by all His holy prophets since the world began, the great mystery of Christ, the Head, and the church, His body—"Christ in you, the hope of glory."

3. the exceeding great and precious promises of God,
4. the special care of God over the church, leading them in the narrow way, and
5. His divine plan of ages, and our part in it, whereby if we are faithful, we may be actually God's instruments in bringing these things to pass, and thus the blessing of the whole world.

"Make me to know Thy ways, O Lord; teach me Thy paths. Lead me in Thy truth and teach me, for Thou art the God of my salvation; for Thee I wait all the day long." (Psa. 25:4,5 RSV) Love for truth lies at the foundation of a righteous life. If we want to be the precious treasure of the Lord, if we want Him to claim us as His own, we must establish habits of thought which will keep the truth fresh, lively and inspiring to us. Whatsoever things are true, of the truth, think on these things.

But the truth of a thing is only one of the tests we should apply. Another is—"Is it HONEST?" Honest means trustworthy, honorable, genuine, real, respectable, showing fairness and sincerity. There are many things that are true, but dishonorable and not worthy of our thought. Honesty is a basic quality; we cannot even start our Christian walk without it. When the apostles chose seven helpers, they chose men who were of honest report, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom. "Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles, that whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation." (1 Pet. 2:12 KJV) We should be honorable in all our affairs, confessing to being children of God and walking in the footsteps of Jesus. All should see to it that they are honest in treatment of neighbours, in treatment of the brethren, and above all in their confessions respecting their God and their faith. All of us desire honesty in ourselves, as well as in others. "Repay no one evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all." (Rom. 12:17 RSV)

We should dismiss all thoughts that are dishonorable and unworthy. Rom. 13:13 admonishes us to walk honestly, as in the day. That day points us to the millennial day, when all will have to walk honestly, if they are to receive the earthly blessings of that age. As new creatures, we have a much higher calling and should voluntarily give the same meticulous attention to our conduct now, as in that day. We know that God is honorable and that He should be honored, along with our Redeemer. Any dishonorable act of ours will bring dishonor on God's name. We desire to bring honor and glory to His name, so whatsoever things are honest or honorable, let us think on these things.

Things that are JUST—here is another test quality we should look for. Justice should be the rule of our lives. Webster gives just as - lawful, right, fair, proper, righteous, upright. We know that God and His dear Son Jesus are just, as we read:

"There is no God beside me, a just God and a Saviour, there is none beside me." (Isa. 45:21 KJV)

"By myself I can do nothing. As I hear from God, I judge and my judgment is true, because I do not live to please myself, but to do the will of God who sent me." (John 5:30 JBP)

That which is just is that which is right; justice and righteousness are synonymous terms. The golden rule—"Do unto others as you would have others do unto you"—is the rule of justice.

We have no right to expect more than justice; whatever we receive more than justice is love or favour. God will be pleased with nothing less than our continued opposition to every form of unrighteousness. Many claiming to be Christians are blind to justice and righteousness in the affairs of life. They have too much mercy on their own shortcomings and not enough on the shortcomings of others. The October 14 Manna comment reads: "We are to grow in love and love is the principal thing, but before we can make much development in the cultivation of love, we must learn to be just, right, righteous. It is a proper presentation of the matter that is given in the proverb that a man should be just before he is generous. All love that is founded upon injustice, or wrong ideas of righteousness, is delusive, is not the love which the Lord will require as the test of discipleship."

We are to learn to apply this test of justice to our every thought, word and act, at the same time learning to view the conduct of others, so far as reason will permit, from the standpoint of mercy, pity, forgiveness, helpfulness. We cannot be too careful of how we criticise, of every thought we entertain, of every plan we nurture, so that the lines of justice shall in no way be infringed willingly by us. We should think not only of the good things, the higher things, but the blessed things to come, and thus have our minds busy thinking on whatsoever things are just. Once it becomes a habit, it will be a constant delight.

Whatsoever things are PURE—this is the next test quality. To be pure means to be free from anything that adulterates, free from defects, perfect, faultless, free from sin and guilt. Our thoughts should avoid anything that while not impure in itself might have the effect of arousing impurity in another. The heart that is corrupt expects and looks for corruption in others. But the pure avoids evil surmisings. “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” (Matt. 5:8 KJV) The heart refers to intention or will. Purity of mind and conduct must be developed insofar as is possible. This must command our best efforts; we are to love and cultivate that which is pure to such an extent that what is impure will become painful to us and distressing, and we shall desire to drop it from memory. This will be accomplished only by continually thinking upon those things that are pure. To think on the purest of things, we must of necessity lift our mental vision to as high a point as possible. Peter said that we are to purify our lives by obedience to the truth and sincere love for the brethren. (1 Peter 1:22)

The scriptures speak to us of the pure doctrine and the pure messages of truth given by the Lord for our enlightenment: “The promises of the Lord are promises that are pure, silver refined in a furnace, on the ground, purified seven times.” (Psa. 12:6 RSV) “Thy promise is well tried and Thy servant loves it.” (Psa. 119:140 RSV) “The wisdom that comes from above is pure.” (Jas. 3:17 JBP)

The early church had the pure truth; the apostles kept them straight in doctrine. “For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.” (Acts 20:27) But when the apostles died, the light began to fade and perverse, impure doctrines were introduced. (See Acts 20:29,30) During the Dark Ages, the truth all but disappeared, but the Lord determined to restore the truth to the household of faith at His second presence and did so by the hand of a faithful and wise servant. “Contend for the faith, which was once for all delivered to the saints.” (Jude 3) These pure truths are worth thinking about, fighting for and holding on to.

Think on those things that are LOVELY. This calls our attention to the need not to allow our minds to dwell upon things that are not lovely—we might permit our business to so fill our thoughts that we think continually on that particular thing. Constant thought on these lines is not profitable to the new creature. We must endeavour to bring our thoughts into subjection and train them along the lines that will transform us into the glorious character-likeness of our Lord. The dictionary defines lovely as—beautiful, exquisite, morally or spiritually attractive, having those qualities that inspire love, affection or admiration. How wonderful if our minds were filled only with lovely thoughts! These relate to the things of character, such as the fruits of the Spirit outlined in Gal. 5:22,23—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. If we cultivate these in our hearts, we become more and more God-like, but if we fail to do so, the works of the flesh and the devil will be developed.

There are so many lovely things that we can think about:

1. The divine plan of ages is lovely,
2. God the author of the divine plan is most worthy of love,
3. An object of great loveliness is Jesus—we never tire of thinking of Him, the author and finisher of faith,
4. Our opportunity to reign with Him, if faithful, is also a lovely prospect.

So let us think upon whatsoever things are lovely.

If things are of GOOD REPORT, then they are reputable, well thought of, respectable, not sub-standard, but gracious (as translated in RSV). Two references to this great quality are:

“But Thou Lord art a God merciful and gracious.” (Psa. 86:15 RSV)

“And He began to say to them, Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing. And all spoke well of Him, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth.” (Luke 4:21,22 RSV)

The word used includes the thought of being reputable (Diag.), that which would be well thought of by reputable people, or those of good repute. It would not mean that it was necessarily well spoken of by the world. Jesus was of good report but was reviled by the world, which said all manner of things against Him falsely. We need to be so careful in our daily lives, that the only thing which we would suffer for would be that we are Christians.

Just as good report can build one up, so evil report can injure one's reputation. Fallen human nature is inclined towards evil, and a human trait is to believe evil more readily than good of a person. This is bad enough, but worse, the good things we know about anyone are often forgotten, but the evil things we think we know are repeated and circulated, often with relish. This could have terrible results and seriously hamper usefulness in the Lord's service. It makes no difference whether the evil thing is true or not; just because it may be true is in itself no reason for telling it. Our thoughts must be gracious, reputable and of good repute if we are to be faithful and give our will to God. Whatsoever things are of good report, think on these things.

If there be any VIRTUE, or as Webster defines it, excellence in general, moral excellence, good quality, goodness of character; things that are in any degree noble...noble words, noble deeds, noble sentiments of anyone—if we meditate on these, we will find ourselves growing towards those ideals and upon these, our mind—the new nature feeds. Peter tells us:

“His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us to His own glory and excellence. For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge.” (2 Peter 1:3,5 RSV) We need to listen carefully to his following words (verse 8):

“For if these things are yours and abound, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Thinking on these things will keep us fruitful in the knowledge of God. The people of God who follow the instructions of the divine word become noble people, helpful people, possessed of the spirit of a sound mind. These will also extol the virtues of God Himself, understand more of His glorious character, see that His every act is motivated by love and that He loves us, particularly and individually. If there be any virtue, think on these things.

The last of the eight great qualities is PRAISE. Praise is defined as a simple, basic word implying an expression of approval, esteem, commendation or of lauding the glory of God. We should not even think about praising ourselves, and yet we should try to make our actions praiseworthy. We are to think mainly about the praise of God. Praise to God is an acceptable act of worship. Many psalms speak of praise, such as:

“Praise the Lord. I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart, in the company of the upright, in the congregation.” (Psa. 111:1 RSV) “Praise the Lord! O give thanks to the Lord, for He is good.” (Psa. 106:1 RSV)

Can we imagine any more sincere or enthusiastic occasion of praise than that of the man lame from birth who was healed by Peter and entered the temple, walking and leaping and praising God?

In Acts 16:23-26 we read that Paul and Silas had been brutally beaten in Philippi and were put in chains. At midnight they sang and praised God and the other prisoners heard. Suddenly there was a great earthquake, all the doors were opened and everyone's bonds were loosed. Do we want doors opened, bonds loosed or problems solved? Let us praise God, extol His virtues, name and recount every wonderful thing we can remember about Him—His personal attributes, His marvellous works of creation, His divine plan so just and yet so merciful, the precious gift of His Son, His incredible provision that we might be associated with Jesus in His kingdom, His providences in our lives, His exceeding great and precious promises, and there are still many more things for which we may praise Him. Let us think indeed about praising God from whom all blessings flow.

These are then the eight scriptural qualities which things must have, before we think upon them. They are to be:

1. True - 2. Honest (honorable) - 3. Just - 4. Pure - 5. Lovely - 6. Of good report (gracious) - 7. Virtuous (excellent) - 8. Praise-worthy

And we need further to remember:

“As a man thinketh, so he is.” (Prov. 23:7) “Whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.” (Gal. 6:7)

Every thought should therefore be challenged because it affects our words and our conduct and extends to others. We should desire to have in our hearts and minds things that are positively good, beneficial and uplifting. Desires for earthly things have a natural attraction for all mankind, but if we want to keep ourselves in the love of God, we must put our affections on heavenly things and continually keep on weeding out earthly desires and attractions. We can hardly over-estimate the importance of right thinking, because of the great influence of the mind over the body. Let us take pleasure in the cultivation of the fruits and graces of the Holy Spirit. Thus we shall become transformed by the renewing of our minds and come nearer to the glorious likeness of our Master, being changed inch by inch, step by step, little by little during this present life.

Let thoughts of the blessedness of our future work in co-operation with Christ, of the magnitude and benevolence of the divine plan, and of the glory and blessedness of our gathering together into Christ, when the work of the present age is finished, fill our minds and inspire our hearts. And further, let us also receive the additional comfort and blessing of personal communion and fellowship with God through prayer, the study of His word and the assembling of ourselves together for worship and praise. Those who are thinking on the true and lovely and good and beautiful things will speak to each other of these things, hence the importance of having our hearts filled with good things, in order that out of the abundance of our hearts, our mouths may speak continually that which the Lord would approve and that would bring blessing to all who hear. (A.A. 9/91)

THINK ON THESE THINGS!

A New Year Prayer

Another year is dawning;
Dear Master, let it be,
In working or in waiting,
Another year with Thee.

Another year of mercies,
Of faithfulness and grace;
Another year of gladness,
In the shining of Thy face.

Another year of progress,
Another year of praise,
Another year of proving
Thy presence all the days.

Another year of service,
Of witness for Thy love;
Another year of training
For holier work above.

Another year is dawning;
Dear Master, let it be,
In working or in waiting,
Another year for Thee.
(ER.H.)

Precious Promises

(Convention Address)

“May favour and peace be multiplied to you by a knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; even as His divine power has granted to us all things relating to life and piety, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue; on account of which very great and precious promises have been bestowed on us, so that through these you might become partakers of the divine nature, having fled away from the corruption that is in the world through lust.” (2 Peter 1: 2-4 — Diaglott)

For whom do these words apply? Were these instructions given to sinners? Is this the way sinners approach God? No, these instructions are addressed to those justified through faith in the blood of Christ, as shown in Verse 1: “to those who have obtained an equally precious faith with us, by the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ.” To become a believer in Jesus Christ, a justified and consecrated believer, is not enough. There has to be a progress while in these earthly bodies; if we are faithful, this will be completed in the first resurrection. The apostle’s thought is that of continuous progress.

Many might think of additions and subtractions of grace and peace, finding and losing, but Peter speaks of multiplication. “May favour and peace be MULTIPLIED to you.” Many again lack a knowledge of the things necessary to preserve to them the favour and peace found in Christ as their Redeemer, and lack sufficient understanding to multiply their favour and peace. These are mentioned in 1 Cor. 3:1; “And I, brethren, was not able to speak to you as to spiritual, but as to fleshly persons, as to babes in Christ.”

The true foundation upon which to build is faith in the righteousness of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, faith that His sacrifice for sin was once for all, a full and complete ransom price for Adam and all his posterity, so that all may be brought to a knowledge of Christ in due time. It is those who build upon this foundation who may hope to multiply their grace and peace. But how? Peter answers: “through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.” To some it may seem that we come to know God and to know that there is a Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, but a knowledge of God is much more than this. It means an intimate acquaintance with the Father and with the Son, a knowledge of the mind of Christ, which itself is a full and clear representation of the mind of the Father.

We grow in this knowledge by study of the Word of God and by ascertaining how divine justice, wisdom, love and power operate. These are progressive studies. Peter shows us that, through this knowledge of God, there are imparted to us all things related to life and piety or godliness. To know God, as Peter here explains, means an intimate knowledge and it is only when we see the beauties of His character that we can become intimately acquainted with Him. The influence of this knowledge and fellowship reacts upon our hearts and has a cleansing and sanctifying effect. "But we all beholding the glory of the Lord in a face unveiled, are transformed into the same likeness, as from the Lord, the Spirit." 2 Cor. 3:18.

The apostle Paul prays that believers may grow in the knowledge of God, as in Eph. 3:14-19: "For this cause I bend my knees to the Father, from whom the whole family in the heavens and on earth is named, that He may give you according to His glorious wealth, to be powerfully strengthened through His spirit in the inner man; that the Anointed One, through the faith, may dwell in your hearts; that, being rooted in love and well-established, you may be fully able to understand with all the saints, what is the breadth and length, and depth and height, to know even that which surpasses knowledge—the love of the Anointed One; so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."

The world in general does not know God, and it is evident also that many professing Christians know little about Him. Paul explains to us that Satan is particularly interested in hindering any from obtaining the light of truth. He declares in 2 Cor. 4:4: "the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." Here we see the constant conflict of darkness against light; the darkness hates the light for all who see and rejoice in the light are the children of the light. After the image of the Lord has been impressed upon their hearts, they become light-bearers, reflecting to others the light shining on them from the divine source.

On account of this call of God, great and precious promises have been given to His people. These are so many and so precious that it is difficult to know which to rank first. But perhaps the first of all is the precious promise that, although what we shall be like has not yet been made known, "when He our Lord shall appear, we shall be LIKE HIM, for we shall see Him as He is." "If I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself." "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I overcame and am set down with my Father on His throne." "They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels." (my treasured possessions).

"For these light afflictions do work out in us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." "Then we will be heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in His sufferings, that we may also share in His glory." "To him that overcometh I will give authority over the nations, just as I received authority from my Father." (1 John 3:2, John 14:3, Rev. 3:21, Mal. 3:17, 2 Cor. 4:17, Rom. 8:17, Rev. 2:26,27)

These are only a few of all His exceeding great and precious promises; they are summed up by Peter, who says that it is God's will and purpose that through these we might become partakers of the divine nature. Who could have thought of such a thing? Our earthly minds might have thought to reach human perfection, or even to go to heaven as an angel, but though the angelic nature is higher than the human, that is not what God has promised. No, He has promised the overcoming church, the little flock, that they shall share the divine nature of her Lord, as well as share in His heavenly kingdom. We cannot really comprehend why the great Creator should exalt to His own nature, but we accept that the lengths and breadths of His grand designs surpass all human knowledge. Having been privileged to see something of His glorious character, shall we not want to attain to all He might be pleased to reveal to us? to be partakers of His likeness, more and more acceptable? and finally to be actually and everlastingly accepted in our beloved Lord? This will indeed be the full realisation of the blessings and promises God has given us.

Such promises and such knowledge should inspire our hearts to love and sacrifice, as the apostle John tells us in 1 John 3:3: "Everyone having this hope in him purifies himself, as He is pure." May the exceeding great and precious promises of God continue to sustain us in the narrow way. (D.O.)

A Peculiar People

"Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." —Titus 2:14.

A Special Treasure

The Greek word translated “peculiar” in our text, according to Prof. Strong, means that which is special, or beyond the usual. The apostle’s thought evidently is that this people whom Christ purifies unto Himself are esteemed by Him and by the Heavenly Father as a special treasure. Similar language is used by God concerning natural Israel. We read, “Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is Mine. And ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.”—Ex. 19:5,6.

High indeed was the possibility of Israel’s relationship toward God, but it was dependent upon continued faithfulness in obeying His voice and keeping His commandments. As a nation Israel failed all along the line; and finally, when the nation rejected Jesus, was cast off from all hope of enjoying the chief place of favor in the divine arrangement. Concerning this Paul explains: “Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded.”—Romans 11:7.

The apostle explains, however, that a remnant of individuals from among Israel qualified for the chief blessing. This agrees with the statement concerning Jesus which says that “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not; but as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God.” (John 1:11,12). But there were not sufficient who received the Master to make up the foreordained number of the special people, so the remaining ones were called from among the Gentiles. Explaining this Paul says that the Gentile branches were grafted into the Jewish olive tree to take the places of the natural branches that were broken off because of unbelief. (Rom. 11:17-30). This is a “graft” which is “contrary to nature,” because usually it is tame branches that are grafted into a wild root; and the nature of the branches determines the kind and quality of the fruit. But not so with the Gentiles grafted into the Jewish tree.

Zeal For God’s Will

Israel’s standing as God’s peculiar treasure continued only as long as the nation was zealous for hearing and obeying the voice of God. So we, who have come into this favored position as spiritual Israelites can hope to be reckoned among God’s choice treasure only if we are “zealous for good works”. “Take heed,” the apostle warns, for if God spared not the natural branches He will certainly not spare us if we become unfaithful. Evidently the one characteristic above all others which commends an individual to God is that of zeal for doing His will. Without this zeal no one can hope to be a part of God’s peculiar people.

The example of zeal which we should endeavour to emulate is that which was displayed by Jesus. The zeal of God’s house consumed Him; and we are called to follow in His steps. Jesus’ zeal was manifested in the sacrifice of His earthly life on behalf of the church and the world. We are invited to lay down our lives for the brethren, and also to be baptized for the dead. Jesus’ sacrifice constitutes the basis of redemption for both the church and the world, and we are invited to share with Him in administering the benefits of the ransom. No matter how much zeal we might display, our sacrifice would not be acceptable apart from the Master’s; but because we serve in His name we have the assurance of being “holy and acceptable.”

Redeemed and Purified

In our text the apostle tells us that Christ “gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity.” As members of the condemned and fallen race we were contaminated with sin, because “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” (Rom. 3:23). Jesus’ redemptive work makes it possible for us to be made free from “the law of sin and death,” and acceptable unto God by Him. But the mere fact that we accept this provision of divine grace is not sufficient to constitute us a part of God’s peculiar people. In addition to this we must be “purified.”

This purification is effected by our obedience to the truth—the “washing of water by the Word.” This is a cleansing from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit. It is the washing away of selfishness and self-will so that the divine will may reign supreme in our hearts. This cleansing must be thorough if we are to be God’s peculiar people. It must be more than a mere passive submission to His will. It must be a consuming zeal for the accomplishment of the divine will irrespective of what the cost to us may be. To thus be purified will mean that we are, indeed, a people “zealous of good works.”

These “good works” for which we will be zealous are God’s works. It was so in Jesus’ case. He came, not to do His own will and work, but the will and work of His Father. In a prayer to His Father, Jesus said, “As Thou has sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them in to the world.” (John 17:18). This is a wondrous partnership in which we are invited to share. We can add nothing of value to the partnership, and the only way by which we can commend ourselves to the Lord is through our zeal for the work that is being done. As “workers together with Him” are we endeavouring to set everything else aside in order that we may zealously engage in that which