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## THE YEAR BEFORE US

World and local events, the turmoil of the past six months in particular have been unexpected and unprecedented. The world comes to the close of one year and the opening of another in a climate of uncertainty and apprehensiveness. How then should Christians face the New Year?

As a starting point, we can be sure that our Heavenly Father Himself has not changed. Scripture assures us that with Him there "is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" that our dear Saviour Jesus Christ is "the same yesterday, and today, and forever" and that "all the promises of God in Him (Jesus Christ) are yea, and in Him amen, unto the glory of God by us." So we can rest assured that the divine care that has over-shadowed us so far will remain our portion in the future, whatever the outward circumstances.

The Christian cannot be oblivious to the turmoil, upheaval and fear of our world, and may well ponder how these line up with Biblical prophecy. But on the other hand, he or she should not dwell unduly on such unfolding events but rather press on as before in the same narrow way, resting and rejoicing in the Lord, ready to offer help and words of comfort and encouragement to those who may not have the same grounds of assurance as we, if so be that they may also come to know something of the peace of God.

In that spirit, we do well to meditate on our Lord's dealings with us individually and as assemblies of His people over the past year. There may have been setbacks, failures, sorrows and so on, but there will have been evidences of our Father's over-ruling care, the abiding consolation of His Word and the love and fellowship of His people. Perhaps, we need to undertake some personal examination as we reflect on the year soon to be behind us.

Are all our experiences, painful or pleasant, drawing us closer to our Heavenly Father, more totally reliant upon Him, more appreciative of His goodness, more conscious of His far greater wisdom? All the experiences which He allows are for our learning and development, with a view to afterward yielding "the peaceable fruit of righteousness."

Are we finding among the Lord's people a deeper fellowship and a deeper mutual love for all who love the same precious Saviour as we and who are seeking to walk in His steps of love and obedience? It is our Master's will that we love one another as He has loved us, that we be ready to bear one another's burdens and that we be one in spirit as He and the Father are one.

And what of the year ahead? Many people make "new year resolutions" and these can be of help and a stimulus.. The Christian, however, has already one over-riding resolution in his or her vow of consecration, to follow, by grace, in the steps of the Master even unto death. In times of weakness or of doubt, we have the provision - "let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

Elsewhere in this issue, there is an article by a long time brother in Christ, titled, "God is our Refuge" and based on Psalm 46, which surely must have been composed specifically for our time. How blest we are to know that soon earth's clouds of trouble will part and the great Sun of Righteousness will arise with healing in His beams for all long-suffering mankind. At that time, the glory of God will shine forth to all peoples and nations and tongues and His promise be fulfilled - "I will make the place of my feet glorious!"

May the new year, whatever it may bring, find each one of us more and more praising God for the light of His glory so far received, more and more rejoicing and trusting in His Word of truth, more and more seeking to be changed into the likeness of His dear Son and more and more seeking to show forth the praises of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. Whatever our experience, may we 'count it all joy' as He continues His work in us to will and to do of His good pleasure. Amen.

### THE YEAR BEFORE US

*For the year before us, O what rich supplies!  
For the poor and needy living streams shall rise;  
For the sad and sinful shall His grace abound;  
For the faint and feeble perfect strength be found.  
Onward then, and fear not, children of the Day!  
For His word shall never, never pass away!*

(FRH)

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# God Is Our Refuge

(Psalm 46)

David, the writer of very many of the Psalms, is said to have been "a man after God's own heart" and yet he knew what it was to be in trouble. Some of this had been caused by his own weakness and imperfections, and some by his enemies. David had learned, however, that even though the trouble was due to his own sin, he could depend on the Lord to help him as soon as he confessed and sought forgiveness. He had learned too that no matter how powerful or numerous his enemies were, God was an "ever present help" and would never forsake him. Thus David, the beloved of God, was well equipped because of his own experiences to testify to the Lord's abounding grace and his watchcare over His faithful people.

But the Psalms are much more than the personal testimony of a great man of God, they are prophetic. As a prophet of the Lord, David was inspired to write vitally important truths concerning Jesus Christ and the Church of this gospel age, including the manner in which God would deal with them and the experiences through which they would pass. David himself was also typical of the Church during the gospel age, which would also experience troubles. Sometimes these come through our own weaknesses and imperfections, others come to us also through the enemies of God and in various other ways. These all go to test the faith of the Christian, just as with David.

Psalm 46, in particular, has evident special reference to the end of the Gospel Age and should be a great help to the Lord's people, giving them strength and encouragement down at this time. **Verses 2 and 3** of the psalm read – *"Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof."* All the prophetic testimony of scripture agrees that the "removal" of the earth is at the end of the gospel age,

The apostle Peter speaks of this time – *"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."* (2 Peter 3:10) It is of course the symbolic earth that is referred to and it is clear to us that this has been in progress for some considerable time. The "mountains" are indeed being carried into the depths of the "sea". One after another the mountains (or kingdoms) are being brought down into the hands of the people. It is not that these kingdoms are being wholly dissolved as yet, but rather the reins of government of these nations are rapidly fal-

ling into the hands of a radical discontented faction which is slowly destroying the old order of earthly governments.

The ever-running tide of discontent which comes from selfishness and the increase of knowledge in this time called in scripture "the time of the end" are evident pointers to the inevitable downfall of the present social order and today we see the hearts of many people are filled with fear. Jesus Himself said that this would be so at the end of the age –

*"There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars, and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of heaven shall be shaken."* (Luke 21:25,26)

It would seem that these very conditions exist in the world today. This is evident from the daily newspapers. (This article was written some years ago and the nations' leaders were concerned then over the potential of atomic warfare to wipe out mankind. Today other more dramatic and devastating weapons and philosophies are current and the same personal forebodings and national fears still prevail.) But the Psalmist says that even in those circumstances – *"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble, therefore will not we fear."*

The world of mankind indeed fear when they see the removal of everything in which their hopes and security centred. This is because they do not see or know of the glorious new day that is to follow the great time of trouble. For there is hope for the world as well as the Church. The exhortation to us, as our Lord Himself said, is – *"When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads, for your deliverance draweth nigh."* (Luke 21:28)

It is evident then that these words apply to the conditions in the world today and it is also true that it applies to the Lord's people today. God has not promised to spare His people from all troubles, but to be with them as a present help in the increasing darkness of the night time that is now settling down upon the world. If our faith is lacking, it is possible that we may only look to Him in the bright and happy experiences of life. But let us remember that God often speaks to us out of the darkness, that is, in our severest trials and testings there are valuable lessons that He wishes us to learn.

We must not expect Him necessarily to spare us but to

help us for God deals with each one of us individually and we all need His help in time of trouble. The present time is a time of stress which taxes our powers of endurance. The tension and excitement of this age, of the rushing to and fro, cannot but have its effect on our nervous systems and tend to take away our peace and rest of heart. So we have special need of the Lord's sustaining grace. May our rest of faith in Him be then so complete at all times that no matter what conditions of excitement and turmoil may develop around us, we will still be able to rejoice in the blessed assurance that He knows and cares.

**Verse 4** reads – *“There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High.”* This gives us a picture of the blessings of life and happiness that will flow to all people through the administration of the Messianic Kingdom. This would surely be the same river of water of life that is spoken of in Rev 22:1,2 – *“And He showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bore twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month, and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.”*

As yet, this river of life has not begun to flow, but it serves to remind us of the great objective of God's plan, which is the blessing of all the families of the earth. Psalm 46 is firstly a message of encouragement to the Lord's people, especially down at the end of the age, but He would not have us forget that His blessings upon us are preparatory and for the blessing of all mankind. Despite the ever present threats and dangers of our time, we have the assurance that there will in due time be an opportunity for life for all mankind. Therefore we will **not** fear.

**Verse 5** continues – *“God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God shall help her, and that right early.”* The marginal reading of the last portion of the verse is – *“when the morning cometh”*, or in other versions – *“in the dawning of her morning”*. There is a contrast here, the Psalmist sees a picture of trouble affecting the whole world, a time of upheaval such that the social order is about to disappear and men's hearts failing them for fear. Yet he sees something that is not moved – God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved.

This would seem to point to the Church of this present time, who are not moved as others because of their faith in and reliance upon God's promises. The apostle Paul gives a similar blessed assurance in Heb 12:27,28 – *“This word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God*

*acceptably with reverence and godly fear.”*

“God shall help her and that right early”. It seems that this may refer to the glorification of the final members of the Church. God has promised His help and strength all along the way and He has also given us assurance of His help in the final deliverance of the Church when it is complete. The apostle's words in Eph 1:19,20 tell us – *“(that ye may know) what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places.”*

So then, we have the assurance of divine help not only in present troubles but right through until our deliverance in the first resurrection, promised to all His faithful children. We do not know just how much longer it will be before the last members of the Church are gathered home beyond the veil, it is better that we do not know. God has apparently purposely withheld that knowledge from us in order that our consecration may be something not made dependent upon time limits but wholehearted and made even unto death, leaving it to our Father to determine when and how it will be consummated.

May the words of the Psalmist help us to appreciate God's special provision for His people in these last days, for truly – *“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble”* and our Lord's words for such times as these – *“When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads, for your deliverance draweth nigh!”*

(From an address by our late Bro Joe Hiam first presented Christmas Day 1953)

***GOD is the refuge of His saints  
When storms of sharp distress invade;  
Ere we can offer our complaints,  
Behold Him present with His aid.***

***There is a stream, whose gentle flow  
Supplies the city of our God  
With peace, and joy and blessing now,  
E'en in our narrow trial road.***

***That sacred stream, Thy holy Word,  
Our grief allays, our fear controls;  
Sweet peace Thy promises afford,  
And give new strength to fainting souls.***

*Bible Students Hymnal*

## WHAT IS MAN THAT THOU HONoureTH HIM THUS?

*"And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron". (Heb 5:4)*

This verse is speaking of our Great High Priest the Lord Jesus, Aaron's antitype, nevertheless the Scriptures clearly show that the same principle applies to each of us. Christ's body members also do not take this honour unto themselves, as Jesus said in John 15:16 – *"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 shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you."*

### The Calling

The Heavenly Father calls Christ's Bride, He draws them and gives them to Christ as we read in John 6:44 – *"No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day"* and again in John 17:6 – *"I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world; thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word."*

This great work of our Heavenly Father has been in progress throughout the entire Gospel Age and still continues on, as we see by the words of Peter in Acts 2:39 – *"For 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"*.

Our Heavenly Father had countless legions of mighty angels to choose from but He chose for His purposes from Adam's descendants - lowly fallen mankind. So we might well ask the question "what is man that Thou honourest him thus?" What is this great honour that we have been called to and why is God making His selection from fallen mankind?

The calling is indeed unique, something very special, we could say priceless. Let us look at Paul's words in Phil. 3:14 – *"I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."* (A.V.) We are being told two things here, firstly that our calling is a high calling and secondly that there is a prize to the winners; these winners are the overcomers. The word translated "high" basically means above or upward and the commentator Albert Barnes says: "it is a call from Heaven and to Heaven".. Today's English Version reads, *"So I run straight towards the goal in order to win the prize, which is God's call through Christ Jesus to the life above"*

The word mark (A.V.) means goal, the goal is the thing that we aim for. To win the prize of the high calling is our goal in life, we have recognised its great value, something of surpassing worth, so that we are prepared to give up our earthly life rights in order to obtain it. It is certainly a high calling in the sense of its great worth, though the meaning of the word high would have more the thought of a heavenly calling as mentioned in Heb.3:1 – *"Wherefore Holy Brethren partakers of the Heavenly calling...."*

In Isa 64:4, we read – *For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath*

*the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him.* The Apostle Paul quotes this verse in 1 Cor. 2:9, but not word for word. – *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.* Then in verse 10 he goes on to say – *But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.*

The words of 2 Peter 1:4 link in well with this verse – *Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.* When we fully understand what our gracious Heavenly Father has in store for us we realise that they are indeed great and precious promises, Jesus describes the prize of the High Calling as being like treasure or a pearl of great price in Mat 13:44-46 – *Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.*

Jesus spoke these parables to illustrate the very great value of that which the Heavenly Father was offering; the value was so great that the merchant man was prepared to sell all that he had in order to obtain it. This Parable is a good illustration of our Master's words in Luke 14:33 – *So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.* The man in these parables could represent both Jesus and the Church. Our Master literally gave up all that He had. We must give up all our earthly hopes, aims, ambitions and desires and put the Kingdom of Heaven first in our lives, as Paul said in Col 3:1-3 – *Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth, for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.*

Our Master's words in Matt. 6:19-21 fit in very well with this passage, and also with the thought of treasure – *Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.* How beautifully the Scriptures link together and harmonise with each other!

### The Honour

Earlier the question was raised as to what this great honour is that we have been called to, or in other words, what is the purpose of our call, and why is God making His selection from fallen man? One of the purposes of the call is to assist in the great restitution work, as the Apostle Paul says in Romans 8:19 – *the Creation is waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God.* The sons of God are firstly Jesus and also the Church. The world is unknowingly waiting for this time,

they are all waiting for a better time to come. The coming Kingdom under the guidance of the sons of God will fulfil their desire, as we see in Haggai 2:7 - *And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts.*

The Lord's people are looked upon as firstborn sons of God and Hebrews 12:23 refers to the Church of the firstborn. The rest of God's family will be born in the resurrection during the next age.

The word Church is a translation of the Greek word *ekklesia* which appears 115 times (in the Greek mss). It is translated Church 112 times, and Assembly 3 times. The basic meaning of the word is "that which is called out". While the word Church appears so many times, only this once in Hebrews is it styled Church of the Firstborn. God has only one true Church on earth whose members are known to Him, so wherever in the Scriptures we see the word Church it refers to this same Church of the Firstborn. The book of Hebrews was of course written to the Jewish converts out of the nation of Israel, this could perhaps be part of the reason why the term Firstborn is used here. When we understand their customs under the patriarchal arrangements and certain features of their law we realise that this term could have a great deal of meaning to the Jewish Brethren (at that day) and, when we fully understand it, great significance to us also. Under the patriarchal arrangements the firstborn son of a family held a very privileged position, he was the principle heir, it was to him that the birthright belonged.

The words of a Bible scholar on the subject of the birthright read - "It is the right that naturally belonged to the father's firstborn son. Under the Patriarchal system the oldest son became the head of the family upon the death of the father with authority over the others as long as they were in the household; he was responsible to care for members of his father's household, he also succeeded to the father's position in representing the family before God; the firstborn generally received the father's special blessing, moreover he was entitled to two parts of the family estate, that is he received twice as much as each of his brethren. Under the Mosaic law a man with more than one wife could not take the birthright from the oldest son and give it to the son of a specially loved wife (see Deut. 21:15-17.)"

This surely is a beautiful illustration of the Church of the Firstborn in the next age. What a lovely thought that the firstborn son was responsible to care for members of his father's household. This is what our calling is all about - for the first 1000 years of our life with Christ, we are to have the responsibility of caring for members of our Heavenly Father's household in His earthly family; We note that in Israel they were cared for while they remained in the household, the thought could be that when they became mature and moved out they no longer required this care. Just so it may well be with God's earthly family, by the end of the Millennium they will be mature and will have learnt righteousness and the rewards it brings.

### The Choice

The other question earlier asked was:- "Why did God make His selection from members of the fallen race rather than from members of the angelic hosts?" The Scriptures answer this question so far as Jesus is concerned, the same answer

would be applicable for His body members. Why did He have to spend three and a half years on earth? He could have come down from Heaven, provided the Ransom and returned straight to Heaven. We read in Hebrews 2:16-18 - *For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.* And in Hebrews 4:15 we read - *For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.*

In John 5:27, Jesus said that the Father had given Him authority to execute judgment also because He is the Son of Man - it was because He was the Son of man that He was given this authority. It was His going through all the experiences common to mankind and His partaking of their suffering, that fitted Him for the exalted position that He was to hold and made Him a merciful High Priest. Does not that explain the reason why our Heavenly Father has selected from fallen mankind for Christ's Bride, to be the underpriests? They are also to share in the judging work of the next age, so they too must become merciful underpriests like their great High Priest, the Lord Jesus. We often hear someone who has been through a very difficult or trying experience say "you just would not understand unless you had been through it for yourself". So we must go through it for ourselves so that we can have understanding and compassion in our work in the coming age for our Heavenly Father's earthly family.

We have now seen the main purpose of our calling for the first thousand years of our life with Christ. But 1000 years is a mere drop in the great ocean of eternity that will lie before us. So we can realise that God has other purposes in selecting the Church as well as the work of the first 1000 years. Indeed, He is selecting a special family to live on His own plane of existence, to be like their elder Brother Jesus and to see Him as He is in His glorious spiritual body, to put on immortality, to be partakers of the Divine Nature, God's Nature. (1 John 3:2, 1 Cor. 15:53, 2 Peter 1:4.)

If we are to fully appreciate the magnitude and greatness of that which our loving Heavenly Father is offering us, we need to understand the meaning of immortality and the difference between it and simply everlasting life. Let us read 1 Timothy 6:16 - *Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.* Originally Almighty God was the only being to possess immortality but this He shared with His only begotten Son the Lord Jesus, as Jesus said in John 5:26, *"As the Father hath life in Himself so He gives to the Son to have life in Himself"*

Jesus in His prehuman existence as the Logos possessed everlasting life as did all the angels, He would have had the same nature as they. Jesus is saying here that His Heavenly Father was now going to give Him the same nature that He possessed, that is inherent life in Himself, a life that needed no outside influence to sustain it, His resurrection was to the

Immortal Divine Nature, He then became the first being other than the Heavenly Father to partake of this nature. We have all been called in the one hope of our calling. We are all running in the same race for the same prize, as Paul said in Eph. 4:4 - *There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling.*

### The Prize

This hope is of becoming members of our Heavenly Father's family for all eternity, this is the hope before us if faithful unto death, as Jesus said in Rev. 2:10, reading in part - "*Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life*". The original Greek text as in literal translations is more specific - it reads "*the crown of the life*". The life would be that special immortal life that has been promised to the over-comers. When we realise that only the Heavenly Father and His Son possess immortality, we can fully appreciate the greatness of that which we have been promised.

We have sometimes heard it said that we should not be thinking about the reward that we are to receive, the prize that is waiting at the end of the way, rather we should be serving without thought of a reward. It is true that we should be serving because we have been taken into our Heavenly Father's confidence and shown His glorious Plan, a Plan that centres in Jesus Christ and displays the great love of Father and Son; For this very reason, we wish to serve because we love them in return and we love that wonderful Plan of Salvation because it offers the opportunity of life eternal to all the human race and we desire to have a small part in completing that great work.

But at the same time it would be a wrong thought to suggest that we should not be thinking about or talking about the great reward that has been offered to us. To give an illustration, let us suppose a son had a birthday coming up and his father offered him a very expensive and special present for when his birthday came along and told his son all about it. Let us suppose that the son never ever thought about the present, never ever spoke to his father about it. How do you suppose the Father would feel, what thoughts would go through his mind? He surely would wonder if the boy really appreciated the gift, did he really want it. It would be a very disappointing situation for the father, perhaps he might change his mind and not give the gift after all.

Just so with our Heavenly Father, He wants us to show that we really appreciate all that He is offering us, that we really do want it. We think of Moses and how he appreciated the reward that God had in store for him. Let us look at Heb. 11:26 - *Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.* We also should have very great respect for the priceless gift that has been offered to us. We are to be part of God's Family, sons of God, living on His own plane of existence. God has many sons, the angels are described as sons of God, Adam is referred to as a son of God; at the end of the millennium all the obedient of mankind will be Sons of God. But we are special sons, begotten of God, begotten at the present time and eventually born on the Divine plane in the first resurrection. While God will ultimately have a large family of many sons, only the "little flock" will share His nature.

As we saw before, 1 John 3:2 says, "now are we sons of God", (that is, begotten of God), Romans 8:23 speaks of the time when we receive our change, saying in part, that we are waiting for the adoption, to wit the redemption of our body. Phillip's translation renders the last part of this verse; "*we wait for the redemption of our bodies which will mean that we have realised our full Sonship in Him*". This of course will be the other side of the veil. We might prefer the word - Sonship, which some other translations give, instead of adoption. (AV) Young's Concordance gives the meaning of the Greek as "placing as a son". Adoption perhaps gives the thought of not a true son, as is the case with human adoptions, but no such thought is intended here, as we have seen, we are sons in the highest sense.

### The Criteria

Who is God calling, what criteria does He use in making His selection? Looking at it from the worldly point of view, we might think that He would choose from the very cream of society as it were, those who were as near perfect as possible, those who had never put a foot wrong. But of course we know that is not the case, as we see in 1 Cor. 1:26-29, *For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called, but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are, that no flesh should glory in his presence.* In 1 Cor. 6:9,10, the Apostle Paul lists some of the worst sins and crimes, then in verse 11 he says; "and such were some of you." Of course, there had to be a change after they came into Christ but we see that frequently God calls those who humanly speaking appear quite poor material.

Some have suggested that God is making a random selection for no particular reason, but this does not seem logical. There are very many good and lovely people in the world who cannot understand the Plan of God, suggesting that they have not been called. While our Heavenly Father is selecting what seems to human eyes quite unpromising material, only He can read the hearts and see that He can make something out of them. They could be pliable clay and be prepared to yield themselves in the hands of the Master Potter, God cannot use those who are stubborn and self-willed, those who want to "do their own thing" If we should start to develop pride and think that we are something, we become unsuitable material.

The words of the hymn describe very well what our attitude should be, "O! to be nothing, nothing, only to lie at His feet, a broken and emptied vessel, for the Master's use made meet. Emptied that He might fill me, as forth to His service I go, broken that so unhindered His life through me might flow." Note the apostle's words in 1 Peter 5:6 - *Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt you in due time.*

May we all remain yielding and pliable clay in the Master Potter's hands, that we may in due time be granted a place in our Heavenly Father's house above, that place which Jesus is preparing for us. Amen.



## THE WHOLE ARMOUR OF GOD (Eph 6:11 – 18)

The text is taken from part of Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus. Paul realised that the Christians at Ephesus had come a long way from when they first heard the message of the gospel and acknowledges this in his letter. Paul is about to finish his letter when he turns his attention to the greatness of the struggle that lay before them, they were now in danger of being snared by the schemes of the devil. We read in Eph 6:11. "*Put on the (whole) full armour of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil*" NAS.

This message certainly is as true today at the end of the Gospel Age as it was when Paul first wrote to the brethren at Ephesus. The devil's schemes are just as treacherous now as they were 2000 years ago, maybe even more so. Satan's attacks on the Church members at this time are even more subtle, often involving our families, work or people that we may consider as brethren. These can undermine our resolve to follow Christ and the will of Our Heavenly Father. We have the example in Matt 16:21-23 when our Lord introduced the disciples to the fact he was to "be killed, and be raised up on the third day". Peter, no doubt with good intentions said "God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to you." Jesus had to rebuke Peter for trying to sway him from following his Father's will. "He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's." (NAS) People with good intentions that are contrary to God's will for us can sway us from the Narrow Way.

Paul wrote the Epistle to the Ephesians from his prison cell in Rome. He would have had a Roman soldier guarding his room and possibly even had the guard chained to him. This is indicated later in Eph 6:20 "for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak". (NAS). Paul was literally an envoy in chains; this experience gave him the picture to draw for us on what we require to be on our guard. Paul noted the protective armour of his Roman guard in great detail. He noted that each piece of armour had been designed for a particular purpose and he was able to relate these to the different pieces of armour that our Heavenly Father provides for us.

If we are not totally equipped with our divine armour, like the Roman soldier we are at great risk of having our defences penetrated by the Adversary. This happens when we rely on our own defences instead of relying on our Lord and our Heavenly Father. Rom 13:12 urges us to "put on the armour of light". We have to remember that the armour is not a useless weight that we are required to wear, but that each and every piece is necessary for us in the battles that lie ahead.

### The Adversary

That we may "be able to stand" is the thought of the Christian firstly being able to hold out against the schemes of the Devil, and then with experience and prayer to overcome the schemes of the devil, so that from our experiences we may

grow and also be able to help others to grow. We not only have to reach the mark, we have to stand firm, not be moved.

The word in our text translated schemes or wiles is only used twice in the bible, the other place being Eph 4:14 "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they **lie in wait** to deceive." Paul appropriately uses this word in these contexts, The Greek has the meaning of cunning devices, arts, attempts to delude or destroy. Satan uses various arts and stratagems (military manoeuvres designed to deceive or surprise an enemy), which he employs to drag us down. It is much easier for us to recognise and defend ourselves when the attack is direct and out in the open.

Satan does not carry on an open warfare against us; he does not meet Christian soldiers face to face, this would be easier for us. He advances covertly, he uses the cover of darkness, (when we are low and discouraged), employing cunning rather than power, he seeks to delude and betray rather than to take us by mere force. Sometimes he uses lures of the world, pleasures that seem harmless at first that can lead to our indulgence at the expense of our Christian development.

We have the example of our Lord in Matt 4:1-3 "Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry. And the tempter came and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." (NAS). Satan waited until our Lord was weak from fasting before he approached and tried to tempt him. In each case Jesus used scripture, "the true word of God" to rebut him.

In Verse 12, Paul tells us that we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against a much greater power, the rulers of darkness of this world, spiritual wickedness in high places. Paul seems to use the example of wrestling taken from the ancient games in Greece. The Greek word translated wrestling has the thought of a struggle, fight or combat. It does not mean that as Christians we will have no enemies amongst men, there will be those that oppose us and those that persecute us but these are nowhere near the danger that Satan presents to the new creature.

Paul told the church at Corinth in 2 Cor 10:3-4 "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses." (NAS) Paul is confirming to us the great disadvantage that we have in this contest. We are fighting against a much greater power than ourselves, the adversary. If we are to stand against the evil day, if we are to be overcomers, we require the Whole Armour of God, not part of it, so as to leave ourselves open to attack, but every piece that God provides is necessary for our protection. It is provided freely for us, but we have to accept the gift from God

## The Armour

Let us take each piece of this armour and glean the lessons that Paul had for the Christians at Ephesus and how they apply to us nearly 2000 years after they were first written. We note at the beginning of verse 14 that we are "to stand". Paul tells us that the armour is for defence, for our protection, not for attacking. This role is left to God as Paul explains to the Romans in Rom 12:17-19. "Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord". (NAS) Therefore each piece of the armour will be looked at for its defensive role in protecting the Christian

The first part of the armour mentioned in verse 14 is "*having girded your loins with truth*". The clothing at the time consisted of loose, flowing robes. It was necessary to gird them up to stop them getting in the way for the journey or task at hand. Isaiah when describing Our Lord said, "righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins" Isa 11:5. We are told to gird our loins with truth, the sustaining strength that we derive from an understanding of God's plan. Peter gives us more insight in to this girding up or bracing and strengthening ourselves. 1 Pet 1:13 "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ"; (KJV)

The girdle is used to keep other parts of the garment in place, so we need a strong basis for the truth that we all hold so dear, so as to give consistency and firmness to our conduct. Jesus just before his death prayed to his Heavenly Father saying in John 17:15-17 "I do not ask Thee to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; Thy word is truth". (NAS) The truth is in the spirit of the word, -- its meaning, its intention, its real essence. This does not come from just reading the Bible; it comes from studying the Bible, not only by ourselves, but also with other like-minded people, to gain from their experiences. We also need to pray to our Heavenly Father to give us the right heart condition to accept the guiding of the Holy Spirit that we need to understand what we read. Prov 2:6 says "For the Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding". (NAS)

This thought is expanded on by Paul in 1 Cor 2:9-12 "but just as it is written, Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him. For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God", So we can see the importance of having our loins girded with the Truth, we need a sound grounding in the word of God and this can only come by us taking the time to improve our understanding of the deeper meanings contained in the bible,

so that we are not easily swayed by the adversary.

The next part of the Armour is "*the breastplate of righteousness*", Vines tells us that the Greek word is thorax, primarily, "the breast," but in our verse denotes "a breastplate or corselet," consisting of two parts and protecting the body on both sides, from the neck to the middle. It consists of two parts, front and back, which formed the coat of mail (an alternative term for the word in the NT sense). It was made of rings, or in the forms of scales or of plates, often of brass, which were fastened together in such a way as to be flexible and yet guard the vital organs from attack. It is interesting to note that Goliath's coat of mail weighed approx 73 kilograms..

The righteousness in our verse does not refer to our own righteousness; this is unattainable as we are unable to keep God's law or to have any merit of our own. This meaning of the Greek word dikaiosune is "right action", and is frequently used by Paul. The word was originally *rightwiseness*. Paul tells us that it is a gracious gift of God to men whereby all who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ are brought into right relationship with God. This righteousness is only obtainable through faith in Christ.... The man who trusts in Christ becomes 'the righteousness of God in Him,' (2 Cor. 5:21), and Paul further expands this thought in Phil 3:9 "(that I) may be found in Him (Christ), not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith," We become in Christ all that God requires us to be, all that we could never be in ourselves. Abraham accepted the Word of God, making it his own by that act of the mind and spirit which is called faith, and, as the sequel showed, submitted himself to its control, therefore God accepted him as one who fulfilled the whole of His requirements, Rom 4:3 "For what does the Scripture say? "And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness." (NAS)

The righteousness of Christ implanted in us is our breastplate to fortify the heart against the attacks which Satan makes against us. The apostle expands the thought of the breastplate in 1 Thes. 5:8, "Putting on the breastplate of faith and love". Faith and love include all Christian graces; for by faith we are united to Christ and his righteousness and by love to our brethren. This means that we have to be diligent in observance of our duty to our Heavenly Father, and have an honest behaviour towards men, in all the offices of justice, truth, and love.

As imperfect vessels we have to remember not only to put on our breastplate, but to make sure that it is fitted correctly. Ahab the King of Israel, when Elijah was the prophet, was killed even though he had on his breastplate as we are told in 1 King 22:34 "Now a certain man drew his bow at random and struck the king of Israel in a joint of the armour." The wound was fatal; Ahab had turned away from God and followed other gods. We have to make sure that we do not have some defect of character, some point that is unguarded, because that will be the point of attack by the adversary.

We have other examples in the Bible, which show the need for the breastplate to fit correctly. Judas through his greed



and dishonesty of character allowed Satan to enter and to lead him to betray our Lord. Peter through his impulsiveness denied Christ three times, though he was later restored by Jesus. Sometimes the attacks that we let through our armour only wound us and like Peter we can learn from them, but some like the wound in Judas are fatal. So we can see that we need righteousness of heart, of will or intent, so that we are in the right condition to accept the imputation of Christ's righteousness, to make us perfectly protected from all the arrows of our foe.

The next instruction that Paul gives us is in verse 15 *"having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace"*. (NAS). The words "having shod your feet" in the Greek are literally "having under bound the feet", or the binding on of sandals. The protection of the feet and ankles consisted of two parts. Firstly the sandals to cover the feet and these were often fitted with spikes to help the soldier to stand firm and secondly greaves fitted around the legs to deflect weapons. We are told that Goliath wore these in 1 Sam 17:6 "He also had bronze greaves on his legs" when he went into battle against Israel. These are used to defend against the gall-traps, and sharp sticks, which were traps (snares) set on the paths to obstruct the marching of the enemy; those who fell upon them were unfit to march and became a burden to the other soldiers.

The word rendered preparation has the meaning of readiness, fitness for, or eagerness. This means we have to be ready, properly equipped to preach the gospel, the gospel of peace. We need the right frame of heart, to adhere to the gospel and abide by it, which enables us to walk with a steady pace on the narrow way, notwithstanding the difficulties and dangers that may be on it. It is styled the gospel of peace because it brings peace, peace with God, peace within, and peace with one another. Paul writing to the Romans in 10:15, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things!" taking the words originally spoken by Isaiah. Paul further expands the thought of the gospel of peace in 2 Cor 5:18-21 "Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." (NAS)

We have to be ready for the combat, being shod with the gospel of peace. We have to endeavour also to spread the Gospel of peace, having quietness of mind. We have to be careful not to be easily provoked, or prone to quarrelling. We have to show all gentleness and all long-suffering to all those to whom we introduce the gospel. If we take this approach it will help to preserve us from many temptations and persecutions, as did the shoes of brass the soldiers from gall traps, etc.

The next part of the armour provided by our Heavenly Father is *the shield of faith*. Paul tells us in vs16 "in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be

able to extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil one" The words (NAS) "in addition to" give a better understanding to what Paul meant than the (KJV) words "above all". The thought is not that the shield is more important or valuable than the other armour, but that it is in addition to the other armour. Its advantage to the soldier is that it is mobile, able to be moved from side to side, plus it is held away from the body to deflect darts.

This shield is not the small shield used for attacking and hand to hand combat; Paul was very specific in his choice of words. Vines tells us the word *thureos* first of all had the meaning of "a stone for closing the entrance of a cave"; but then the meaning of the word changed to, "a shield, a large and oblong shape, protecting every part of the soldier".. It was made sometimes of willow branches twisted together, sometimes of other wood, covered with ox hides several folds thick which were frequently oiled, so that the arrows or darts would glance off or rebound. The modern version of the shield would be like the riot shield that we see police forces using today.

The word is used metaphorically of faith, Eph. 6:16, which the believer is to use in addition to all the other armour, i. e., as affecting the whole of his activities. Faith is all in all to us in the hour of temptation. The breastplate secures the vitals; but with the shield we turn every way. John in his first epistle 5:4 tells us "For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world-- our faith". (NAS) We are to be fully persuaded of the truth of all God's promises, as Paul tells us in Heb 11:1 "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen". (NAS)

Faith is like a shield, a sort of universal defence against the adversary who tries to lead us away from God. His temptations have the same characteristics as darts; they are swift and have uncertain flight paths. They were also fiery darts, so as to inflict the maximum damage to the intended victim. The darts were made from slender pieces of cane filled with combustible material; a favourite weapon used for ambushes. In Num 21:6-8 we read "And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died. So the people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned, because we have spoken against the Lord and you; intercede with the Lord, that He may remove the serpents from us." And Moses interceded for the people. Then the Lord said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a standard; and it shall come about, that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, he shall live." (NAS) Faith is our shield with which we must quench the fiery darts, with which Satan tries to ambush us, that is, faith, acting upon the word of God and applying it in our every day lives, quenches the darts of temptation.

The next verse tells us to "take *the helmet of salvation*". The word translated "take" has more the meaning of "heartiness in taking". So we are to whole-heartedly take the helmet of salvation that is, hope, which has salvation as its object; as we are told in 1 Thes. 5:8: The helmet was a cap made from thick leather or brass to guard the head from attack. It secured the head, a vital part. It is interesting that soldiers will not stand their ground unless there is a hope of

victory. As followers of Christ we could not stand if it were not for the "living hope" which we have "through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead". Not only a lively hope, but the hope of "an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you", a good hope of salvation, well founded and well built, which will both purify us and keep us from being led astray by Satan. (1 Pet 1:3-4) He could tempt us to despair; without this lively hope of salvation, but if we keep trusting in God, and rejoicing in him, we can take comfort in the words of David in Ps 18:2-3 "The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. I call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised, and I am saved from my enemies". (NAS)

The last piece of the armour Paul mentioned is "*the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God*". The sword mentioned here was "a short sword or dagger" which is distinct from "a sword of large size and length." It is of interest to note that our Lord is said to wield the much larger sword as an instrument of anguish, as in Luke 2:35 or of judgment, as in Rev. 1:16; 2:12,16; 19:15,21. The sword was an essential part of the soldier's armour. Without the sword no soldier would have regarded himself as well armed. So to the Christian the word of God is very necessary, without it he cannot maintain the spiritual warfare, he can have no success without it. It is called the sword of the Spirit, because our weapons are not carnal but spiritual as we are told in 2 Cor 10:3-5: "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ." (NAS) We cannot rely on our own reason or wisdom. Often a single text of scripture is what we need to fight off temptation more than all wisdom that natural man can muster. We have to remember that the adversary is also acquainted with scripture and can reason and reason plausibly, as in his tempting of our Lord in the wilderness. (Matt 4)

Our greatest defence against the adversary is the same as our Lord's - "It is written" as he cannot resist a direct and positive command of the Almighty. We like David need to say "With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments. Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee. Blessed art thou, O Lord: teach me thy statutes". Ps 119:10-12 KJV Often we are discouraged when we use the word of God in our defence., it appears to have achieved nothing, even to have made the problem worse. When we are thinking that God's word is ineffective, we need to remember Isaiah's words in Isa 55:11 "So shall My word be which goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it". (NAS) The words may not have accomplished what we wanted but God assures us that they will achieve his will in due time.

We also have the promise to the Hebrews in Heb 4:12 "For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any

two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart". One of the problems that we can all face is finding the appropriate words for the situation that we find ourselves in. Jesus gave the following words of comfort in Matt 10:17-20 "Beware of men; for they will deliver you up to the courts, and scourge you in their synagogues; and you shall even be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, do not become anxious about how or what you will speak; for it shall be given you in that hour what you are to speak, for it is not you who speak, but it is the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you. (NAS)

### Prayer

This completes the armour that God has provided. However just as soldiers in battle, who are without instructions from their Headquarters, are ineffective and at risk of being overrun by the enemy, so we too have to be in constant contact with our Heavenly Father through our Lord Jesus Christ. Prayer buckles all the other parts of our Christian armour. We must join prayer with all these graces mentioned in the armour of God, as our defence against spiritual enemies, imploring our Heavenly Father for help and assistance, as the case requires. We must pray in the Spirit; we must be on watch, endeavouring to keep our hearts in the right condition for the duties that Our Heavenly Father may give us. We must pray always, but the thought is not of continual praying for there are other duties such as study and praise and we also have our respective obligations in the world that have to be met in their place and season; but we should keep up constant times of prayer, and be consistent with them. We must pray upon all occasions, and as often as our own and others' necessities require it of us. We must keep up prayer, and should intermix prayers with our other duties. We must pray with all prayer and supplication, with all kinds of prayer: public, private, and secret, petition for mercy, and thanksgivings, for favours received. When God says, Seek my face, our hearts must comply, (Ps. 27:8). We must abide by the duty of prayer, whatever change there may be in our outward circumstances; and we must continue in it as long as we live in the world. We must pray with supplication. not for ourselves only, but for all saints; for we are members one of another.

Prayer crowns all our lawful efforts with success and gives a victory even against seemingly impossible odds, for as we are told in Rom 8:31 "If God is for us, who is against us?" (NAS)

*And if to warfare He calls me forth,  
He buckles my armour on,  
He greets me with smiles and a word of cheer  
For battles His Sword hath won;  
He wipes my brow, as I droop and faint,  
He blesses my hand to toil;  
Faithful is He as He washes my feet  
From the trace of each earthly soil.*

## FAITH AND GRATITUDE

*"Many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet, and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian." Luke 4:27*

The Bible recounts the story of a certain Syrian who had an incurable illness. We all feel sympathy toward close friends who are going through some kind of physical disability and especially so towards any who fall victims to incurable illnesses. In these days, the media inform us about new, incurable, previously unknown illnesses and diseases all too often. One such disease, which is mentioned in both the Old and New Testaments, is leprosy. The Old Testament set out the ways of treating lepers and leprosy in Israel, while in the New Testament we read about people suffering from this disease and how they sought a cure from our Lord Jesus.

Our story, however, relates to an Old Testament case of this disease, and it is recorded in 2 Kings 5:1-18. During the reign of the Assyrian king, Shalmaneser II, in about the 8th Century B.C., Israel and Syria had agreed to permit a mutual exchange between their countries, but Israel's allies had certain reservations about its Syrian neighbours. This was due to frequent raids by small groups of Syrian bandits, so it was only natural that Jehoram, the reigning king in Israel, also did not fully trust his neighbours.

We are told that Naaman, the captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man, honourable, highly respected, a mighty man of valour, but he had fallen victim to the dreadful disease of leprosy. This was an incurable skin disease and in that respect as dreadful a sickness as cancer. The organs of the body are attacked by leprosy and disintegrate, the illness progresses and affects further parts of the body as well. In the early stages there is no pain but the final stages are extremely painful. The historian Josephus writes that "lepers were officially treated as diseased and considered as dead."

In the case of Naaman the leper, we are not told how far his leprosy had progressed, but we are told that he continued to fulfil a very important and responsible role for the Syrian army. So we can only deduce that his leprosy was in the comparatively early stages of development, though the signs and symptoms of it were evident to all the people around him. In time, a little Israelite maiden noticed it. She was a humble housemaid to Naaman's wife, but she was so full of sympathy for her master that she suggested a way in which he might seek a cure for his illness. Her kind nature could not look indifferently at the sufferings of another human being. She was a God-fearing Israelite girl and believed in the power of God's prophet Elisha to heal her master, Naaman, whom she respected and considered worthy of being healed.

Naaman was a man of high military standing in the Syrian army, yet he accepted the maiden's modest suggestion, the suggestion of a humble servant who was often in the presence of her lord. Naaman's reaction was positive. When God offers His divine help, He uses godly people who have the character of a quiet, humble and modest disposition, and this can be a lesson for us. How often do we accept the good suggestions and opinions of our brothers and sisters in Christ? Do we consider their advice willingly, or with joy? Or do we go on our

guard with a reflex action of rejection, even with a certain amount of anger, a negative reaction? Our brethren in Christ, our family, and those with whom we have daily interaction well know our characters and often only too well what advice we have need of. Do we always listen to and appreciate their suggestions?

When we, on our part, are giving advice and suggestions to others, do we always do so in a godly spirit, with quietness and humbleness? The offering of advice has to be always in the proper spirit, in the proper way, also at the appropriate time, at the right place and to the right person. It is always a delicate undertaking and difficult to carry through satisfactorily, but by the careful study of God's word and in a spirit of love and humility, we can come to the right way of giving others advice and reminders. *"A man hath joy in the answer of his mouth; and a word in season, how good is it!" Prov.15:23.*

Returning to the story of Naaman's leprosy, we find that the intervention of the king of Syria did not bring about the expected results. The king of Israel did not agree to receive the Syrian general, suspecting that in Naaman's case there was some kind of political provocation or even some trap that would possibly lead to war. At that time, the prophet in Israel was the renowned prophet Elisha, and when he learnt of Naaman's case, he offered his help. However, we are told that, when Naaman the leper stood in Elisha's doorway, the prophet did not receive him personally but instead greeted him through a messenger, who gave directions that would rid Naaman of his leprosy. Naaman was not impressed with the welcome he received in Israel, when neither the king nor even the prophet personally received him. He had expectations of a grand welcome with a feast and full honours, a royal performance! Yet here he was met with what sounded to him to be ridiculous advice of very doubtful value.

After these surprising events, Naaman became very angry and, turning away in a rage, prepared his belongings as well as his escort for the return journey to Syria. His servants desperately tried to persuade him to reconsider his rash decision - evidently the Syrian general was sympathetic towards his servants and received respect from them, for they all wished that he be cured of his disease. He must have been approachable and good towards his servants, as they were not afraid to question his decision and were eventually able to change his mind. It is rather remarkable, indeed, that a man of such high standing, having a responsible position and authority, could still humbly yield to the suggestions and advice of his servants.

In accordance with Elisha's advice, Naaman therefore went and dipped himself in the river Jordan. After the first dip, there was no change; when he dipped a second time, again there was no change. The third and fourth dips likewise brought no improvement. After the fifth and sixth dips, there was still no improvement. But after he had dipped himself the seventh time in Jordan, the body of Naaman the leper was cleansed! It was faith that had led to his being healed; after the seventh dipping of his body in Jordan, Naaman was the recipient of a great blessing, the blessing of being restored to health! Seven in the Bible symbolises or represents perfection, and we can find for ourselves a valuable lesson from this story of Naaman.

If we desire the promises and blessings of God, our faith in them must always be perfect and complete as well. Our obedience to God, our baptism into death with Jesus Christ, must also be wholehearted, they must be perfect and complete.

The example of Naaman's faith was mentioned by Jesus in His sermon to the dwellers in Nazareth, and we read in Luke 4:27 - *"and there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian."* The dwellers in Nazareth, from where our Saviour came, did not receive Jesus properly. They knew Him from His birth as the son of Joseph and Mary; they had observed Him growing up in the power of God; and they had also heard that He performed many miracles in neighbouring Capernaum. But when our Lord Jesus came to where He had previously lived, they rejected Him, even planning to destroy Him.

Maybe this event should lead us to examine our own behaviour. Have we become indifferent to our consecration, in that it now lacks excitement and has become commonplace? Perhaps our elder or maturer brethren no longer enjoy the appreciation they previously received from us? Are their voices the same as they were, or has even the tone now become rather monotonous to us? We have many talks on tape on many topics, are we tempted to stay at home and listen to one of these rather than take the effort to prepare ourselves and to join in the mutual fellowship of the Lord's people. *"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)

Many of us have been "in the truth" for 10 or more years, others 20, 30, 40 or 50 years. Maybe we are proud of our achievement, born and raised in a Christian home, next to the Bible. But maybe we have become used to and complacent about our fellowship meetings. Maybe we are coming just to satisfy or please others, to fulfil the requests of our parents, or maybe even God? whom we cannot possibly deceive for He knows our heart's condition only too well. Dear brethren, let us treasure the precious truth which we have been so privileged to receive. Let us refresh ourselves every day with the Divine promises for it is only so that we can become partakers of the divine nature. Let us respect our elder, wiser brethren, and how much of their lives they have sacrificed in order to provide us with necessary spiritual food.

In Israel there were many lepers, and these were classified as unclean. 2 Kings 7:3 mentions four leprous men at the entrance of the gate of the city; but the prophet did not heal these, as they did not possess faith. From Luke's gospel, we learn of another ten lepers, who came to Jesus requesting that their leprosy be cured. (Luke 12:17-19) With a miracle, Jesus cured them all, but only one came back to Jesus to offer his thanks for being given back his health. Amazingly, he was not a Hebrew but a Samaritan, yet he was so full of gratitude to our Lord. His behaviour reminds us of that of Naaman the leper, for he did not depart immediately to his home after being cured but, instead, returned to the prophet Elisha and offered a gift of high value.

*"And he(Naaman) returned to the man of God (Elisha); he and all his company, and came and stood before him, and he said, Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel: now therefore, I pray thee, take a blessing of thy servant. But he said, As the Lord liveth, before whom I stand, I*

*will receive none. And he urged him to take it, but he refused."* 2 Kings 5:15,16. Naaman's actions could be a wonderful example for us to follow, both in respect of his gratitude towards Elisha as well as his adoration of the God of Israel. Let us reflect for a moment, how much we should be grateful to our Heavenly Father, who has healed us from the "leprosy" of sin and forgiven us all our transgressions. For through faith in the precious blood of our Lord Jesus, we have received forgiveness for all our transgressions, we have been washed clean from the "leprosy" of our sins. The apostle Paul reminds us of the gratitude we owe to God and of our fitting response to His divine goodness in Romans 12:1 - *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service."*

After analysing the story of Naaman the leper as regards Naaman and his character, let us now turn our attention to Elisha. His was a noble character, it did not permit him to accept any reward from the rich general, who was fully prepared to reward him well. Acceptance of Naaman's offer would represent Elisha as selling God's power, symbolically speaking, it would indicate that God's power was a marketable commodity. The prophet Elisha knew well that the gifts of God are not for sale and this aspect of his character should be a trait of our characters also, as we impart to others spiritual services. *"Freely you have received, freely give!"* Matt. 10:8.

In 2 Kings 5:20-27, in contrast, we learn what happened after Naaman had been cured. Elisha's servant Gehazi had a different heart and mind from that of Elisha; earthly things and material benefits occupied an important place in his heart and for material gain he twice allowed himself to lie. We recall what happened - the leprosy of Naaman came upon Elisha's servant as a result of his sin. Gehazi had been exposed to Elisha's work every day yet in all the time he had not learnt anything, he did not appreciate the prophet's gift, the gift of the power of God. In 2 Cor. 6:1, Paul warns us with the words - *"And working together with Him, we entreat also that you receive not the grace of God in vain."*

Finally, let us recall the noble and full of gratitude behaviour of the cured Syrian general. After being cleansed of his leprosy, Naaman made a request that he be allowed to take away a little of the soil of Israel. This soil he planned to keep somewhere close to him, so that on it, on holy ground, he could bend his knees before the true God who had restored his life. It seems certain that, to the end of his life, this man was constantly filled with gratitude to God for the grace he had received. *"Praise ye the Lord O give thanks, unto the Lord, for He is good; for hIs mercy endureth for ever."* Psa 107:1.

*"Heal me, O Jehovah, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved; for Thou art my praise."* Jer. 17:14. (TZ:96)

#### PEOPLES PAPER

#### AND HERALD OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM

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## THE BREAD AND THE CUP

Matthew 26:26-30

Our Lord Jesus instituted a new Memorial upon the old foundation of the Jewish Passover, when he said, "Do this in remembrance of Me."

We recall the circumstances of the first Memorial--just before our Lord's trial and crucifixion, in the upper room with the eleven disciples who had remained faithful to him. We read of the blessing of the Bread and of the Cup, the fruit of the vine; and our Lord's declaration that these represented His broken body and shed blood. Which was sacrificed to pay the ransom price for all of mankind. The price, a perfect human being, was required to pay the debt for Adam's sin and the subsequent death sentence that came upon all mankind.

Let us take time to look at the significance of the emblems, the bread and the wine that our Lord used to remind us of his great love towards us in presenting himself as a living sacrifice to his Heavenly Father.

### The Bread:

The bread we remember was part of the food used for the Passover. It had special significance in that it was unleavened bread (leaven was a symbol of sin under the Law, and the Jews were commanded to remove all leaven from their homes during the Passover season). The unleavened bread (pure, unfermented) represents to us our Lord's sinless flesh which He gave for us.

We are told in Hebrews 7:26 that our Lord Jesus was "holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners"--i.e. without any contamination from Father Adam, and hence free from sin. This enabled Him to become

the Redeemer of Adam and his race, this permitted Him to give His life "a ransom for all, to be testified in due time."--1 Timothy 2:3-6.

Our Lord earlier in his ministry alluded to the bread representing his body in John 6:48 "I am that bread of life." Later in the chapter (50-51) He tells us "This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread also which I shall give for the life of the world is My flesh." (NAS)

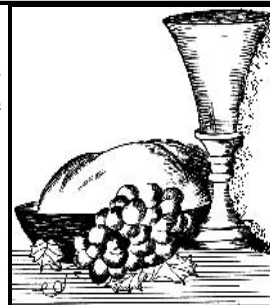
The disciples and those around our Lord would not have understood the significance of his statement. It was not until after his death and resurrection, and the bestowing of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost that the disciples would understand the meaning of His words.

The partaking of the unleavened bread at the Memorial season, means to us the appropriation to ourselves, by faith, of justification to life --a human life--with all its privileges, which our Lord at His own cost procured for us.

The Apostle Paul, through direct revelation, (not being present at the first Memorial), explains our special relationship to the bread in 1 Cor 10:16-17 "...Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ? Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread." (NAS)

### The Cup

This cup held the wine that was at the feast of the Passover, . Our Lord took the cup of wine and gave it a new meaning. The fruit of the vine symbolizes the blood that our Saviour's shed for us, His human life, His being, poured out unto death on our behalf.



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The grapes must submit to the pressure that will extract all their juices, they must be crushed and lose their identity as grapes, if they would become wine. Our Lord had to give up his will and was crushed, shedding his blood for us before he could become the Redeemer, not only for us but for all the world that was condemned in Adam.

Apostle Paul tells us in 1 Cor 10:16 "Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ?..." We therefore have the privilege of sharing in Christ's sacrifice, not through our own merit, but through Christ's merit. We have the privilege of sacrificing our all, however poor or insignificant it may be, to the glory of our Heavenly Father.

### **Our Commitment**

In the next chapter he adds "For as often as you eat

this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes" 1 Cor 11:26 (NAS). This request to remember our Lord's great sacrifice was made without the threat of penalty for the Apostle knew that all that trusted and appreciated the great sacrifice of Christ, placing faith in his Ransom would gladly celebrate the Memorial each year.

### **Concluding thought**

"He blessed it" These words set apart the loaf and the cup from the rest of the Passover for a new purpose by prayer and thanksgiving. We do not find any set form of words of prayer used by our Lord upon this occasion. No doubt Matthew could have included the words of the prayers in his Gospel. By leaving them out, we as individuals have to take time to reflect on their significance before we approach our Heavenly Father in prayer on this special occasion.

## **ENTERED INTO REST**

Brethren were previously advised of the passing of our dear Brother in Christ, Malcolm Price on 24 November 2001. Further personal details have now been provided by Bro Greig Tosh who officiated at his funeral service.

"Malcolm was born in 1947 to Brother Wilf and Sister Rae (Rachel) Price, thus benefiting from the warmth of a Christian home. Malcolm attended his first Bible Study class in 1989 and was baptized in 1991 (in Western Australia), which delighted his father but was an event which he regretted that his by then deceased mother could not witness. His father gave him a good foundation in the basic fundamental truth doctrines and this proved a blessing to the Nambour class which he joined in 1995.

The Nambour class also benefited greatly from his musical abilities and was introduced to a variety of new hymns. Bro Malcolm served as chairman of studies and with addresses which he gave at Conventions until ill health reduced his opportunities of service. The diagnosis of cancer and inability to work gave him the opportunity to review the priorities of his life and he came to the decision to close his workshop for good in order to serve the Heavenly Father only.

While there was still a glimmer of hope for recovery, he planned various possibilities for publishing the precious "Good News". Meantime, Bro Malcolm listened to taped addresses from American and local brethren and this sustained and nourished his spiritual life until his concentration failed and his sustenance was reduced to the "Manna" text in the morning, a "Precious Promise" at noon and a later "Song in the Night" as

well as hymns. He was ready to go home, peacefully falling asleep on the 24<sup>th</sup> of November at 12 noon, after a "precious promise" was read to him. He was aged 54.

Bro Malcolm Price had a great reverence for the Lord God and thus was zealous over not mingling the holy with the common, of which his parents and particularly his mother Sister Rae were examples. He will be greatly missed"

(Bro Greig's funeral address outlined the plan of God for His present people and for all mankind and included the lovely words of Rev 21:3,4 and portions of BSH hymns 232 and 391.)

**MANY sleep, but not for ever;  
There will be a glorious dawn;  
We shall meet to part, no, never,  
On the resurrection morn.  
From the deepest caves of ocean,  
From the desert and the plain,  
From the valley and the mountain,  
Countless throngs shall rise again.**

**BSH 232**

**There' s no place where earthly sorrows  
Are more felt than up in Heaven;  
There' s no place where earthly failings  
Have such kindly judgment given.  
Search the Scriptures, search and see,  
God in mercy judgeth thee.**

**BSH 391**



## REFLECTING OUR LORD'S IMAGE

Think of us embarking on our course along the narrow way. We're running for the high calling in Christ Jesus. And what a calling that is - an opportunity to be on the throne with our dear Lord and Master up in the heavens to share in his inheritance. The thought of sharing that kind of position of immortal life is, I think, simply mind-boggling to all of us. What an honour to have been called to run for such a position. We can appreciate that it's going to require the utmost testing through consecration. The Creator of the universe has deigned to call each of us to come. Can we accept the thought that the grand Creator of this universe will look down upon a small corner of the galaxy, one tiny little planet, one speck of the enormity of space and select one small creature, fallen, mis-shapen and broken as we are, and say, Would you like to become a son of the Creator of the universe and share His very nature? Could we ever accept the concept and believe it without the assurance provided through the scriptures and, of course, enormity of faith?

It takes great faith to accept the course that is laid before us. We have sacrificed our earthly life-rights and through consecration received the robe of Christ's righteousness, and our failings, our faults, and our shortcomings have been covered. Through that lens of Jesus we're observed by the very Creator of the universe as though we're actually perfect. What a thought to have the faith that it takes to really accept this. As we look at our many problems, the problems that beset every one of us, we tend to concentrate so much on our failures and not on our successes. If we're overcome by our failures, perhaps we aren't letting our faith in Jesus have its full effect. We won't be whole unless we take hold upon that which our dear Lord provided for us. Our eyes have been touched and according to our faith we see things the rest of the world only dream of. What we have, the whole world is still looking for, and we've got it! We should surely appreciate it.

### **"To you it is given"**

Matt.13:16-17: *"Blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them."* The religious leaders of Jesus' day should surely have turned to the Lord and said 'This wonderful man of miracles can teach us much' but in spite of what they saw they said he cast out devils through the prince of devils. They shut the door on their own opportunity. Imagine to see the dead raised in the name of God and

not believe that here was one that had much greater power than any of them, and declare that the Son of man and of God did it through the power of the devil. That's a terrible indictment.

In Matt.13 we have the parable of the sower who spread forth seed on certain types of ground and verse 8 says: *'But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.'* Our ears have been unstopped so that we can hear and see as no others have ever been able to see that revelation of the divine messenger. And having seen it, what are we motivated to do? To grow, to bring forth fruit, the fruits of the Spirit, in order that we might be profitable servants of our dear Lord. We should see ourselves grow in grace and truth and understanding. This should motivate us to be more pleasing to our Heavenly Father day after day.

We recall how the disciples came to Jesus and said to him: *"Why speakest thou unto them in parables? And he answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven but to them it is not given"* (Matt.13:10,11). Have you ever thought that what you have is truly a very rare privilege. It isn't a common thing at all. We're almost like being members of an exclusive world society. We can be active in proclaiming God's plans to everyone but it seems that very few understand or appreciate it except a very few of the present society. So it's indeed a rare privilege to have been drawn by God himself to understand His divine plan and run in the race for the high calling. It is certainly an opportunity that we must take full advantage of.

In Matt.13:12, it says: *"For whosoever hath, to him shall be given and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath."* This is rather an odd way of saying it. Normally you would think that if a person doesn't have very much, he would be the one you would want to give more to, or if a person has a lot you wouldn't want to give him more. But that simply isn't the arrangement of God. Here we have the truth, we have His blessings, and are we taking full advantage of them? Are we proving our worthiness and our loyalty as God's people? If we don't, perhaps it will be taken away from us. They are too precious, too grand, too wonderful, to be lightly thought of.

In the next verse, our Lord said: *"Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing hear not, neither do they understand."* That's

really the way it is generally with the world. They will hear us and perhaps some even appreciate the truth to some measure, but unless they have the hearing ear and the Lord has touched their minds to see these things, they will not see them. That's really a miracle, isn't it? That is proof to you that you have been touched by the very mind and heart of God himself because you share these inmost secrets, because it is given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. God is really so generous in the things He has provided for us. It is really beyond comprehension. We surely must, in some measure, be worthy of it, therefore we must strive constantly to pay attention to the Lord's overruling, His leadings in our lives, to be sensitive to all that He would have us do.

In Col.2:1-3, we read those words of Paul: "*For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh; that their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God and of the Father, and of Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*" We have not seen Paul's face but we fully appreciate his admonitions and we are really knit together in love. The one common bond is love for the truth and love for the Lord, without which we would probably not be together. We've received an understanding of God's plans and purposes, the mystery of God, the opportunity to be a part of Christ's body. Teaching every man in all wisdom was Paul's concern. Wisdom is the right use of knowledge and Paul wanted to present every believer perfect in Christ Jesus.

### "So walk ye in Him"

The Apostle achieved complete maturity in Christ Jesus and he presents some very important considerations in this letter to the Colossians.

- ◇ *Encouragement*, that their hearts might be comforted. Our English word 'encourage' means 'with heart'. To encourage people is to give them new heart. Shallow sympathy makes others feel worse, but true spiritual encouragement makes them feel better.
- ◇ *Endearment*, being knit together in love. The mature Christian loves the brethren and seeks to be a peacemaker and not a troublemaker. He is part of the spiritual unity of the church. The immature person is selfish and causes division.
- ◇ *Enlightenment* means full assurance of understanding. The mature child of God has assurance in his heart that he is indeed a child of God. The spiritual knowledge that he has acquired constantly enlightens him and directs him daily.

- ◇ God wants His children to have *understanding, wisdom and knowledge*. The word that Paul uses in the 3<sup>rd</sup> verse translated 'understanding' literally means 'to be placed together'. It's the ability to assess things. Wisdom implies the ability to defend what we understand. Knowledge suggests the ability to grasp truth.

"As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus as Lord, so walk ye in him." (Col.2:6) And how can we do that? How can anybody follow in the footsteps, in those very perfect footsteps? Only through faith in His sacrificing merit, confidence in our Lord's help, will we ever be able to follow in his footsteps. Col.2:7 says: "*Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.*" When you are really rooted as one of God's people, the winds may blow, even break a branch or two, and do all superficial injury, but if those roots go deep they will feed the trunk no matter what the damage. They will grow and continue abounding with thanksgiving. We should always be thankful for what the Lord has provided for us. How much of God's plan would we know without those studies in the scriptures? I think it would be very little. And I think it is the way the Lord has arranged for us at this end of the Age, the way that He has seen for us to receive spiritual instruction.

In 1 John 3:14 we have a very important scripture that we should always keep in mind: "*We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.*" Think of the impact that scripture should have on us. Here it is said to be so important that we know we have passed from death unto life because we love them; that if we don't love our brethren we are still dead, we are abiding in death. If we love the brethren we would do all that we can on their behalf and demonstrate that God's love has come into our hearts because we're able to pass it on to others, that we indeed love our brethren. If we're busily engaged in helping our brethren, the very action of doing so will cause us to ignore many of our own problems. We might find that our own problems are not so important after all as we are so intent on helping our brethren.

Jesus Christ is the standard of love for Christians. "*A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another*" (John 13:34). Then he repeats, "*This is my commandment, That ye love one another as I have loved you.*" (John 15:12). We are not to measure our Christian love against the love of some other Christians and actually pick someone whose love is more of an excuse than an example, but against the love of Jesus Christ, our Lord. The old commandment becomes new as we see it fulfilled in Christ. In 1 John 2:9-11 we have these very important words of the Apostle of love: "*He that saith he is in the light and hateth his brother is in darkness*

*even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness and walketh in darkness and knoweth not whither he goeth because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.*" Here we have an illustration of light and darkness. If a Christian walks in the light and is in fellowship with God, he will also be in fellowship with others of God's family. Love and life go together, just as hatred and darkness go together. It is very easy to talk about love for the brethren but it's so much more difficult to practise it. For one of God's people to say or sing that he loves the brethren while he actually hates another believer, it is for him a lie. With this sobering thought, it is impossible to be in fellowship with the Father and out of fellowship with another Christian at the same time. This is the reason that God established the church and the fellowship of believers. You can't be a Christian alone. A person cannot live a complete and developing Christian life unless he is in fellowship with God's people.

What we say should be an expression of our character. We should not need extra words to fortify what we say. Our yes should mean yes and our no should mean no. So if we say we are in the light, we will prove it by loving the brethren. Many of God's people need to be encouraged, loved and accepted. When we practise Christian love we find life getting much brighter. Hatred is what darkens life. When true Christian love flows out of our hearts, we will have greater understanding and greater perception of spiritual things. I think this is suggested by Apostle Paul in Phil.1:9-10: *"And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ."* I think these verses have much greater impact from the amplified version: *"And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more and extend to its fullest development in knowledge and in all keen insight that your love may display itself with greater acquaintance and more comprehensive discernment so that you may surely learn to sense what is vital and approved, what is excellent and of real value, recognising the highest and best, distinguishing the moral differences that you may be untainted, pure and blameless so that your hearts may be sincere and certain and unsullied so that you may approach the day of Christ, not stumbling or causing others to stumble."*

#### **"In His Steps"**

In 1 Peter 2:21 it says that Christ has left us an example that you should follow in his steps. I like the modern translation that says: *"He left you an example that you must be following in his footsteps."* And if we follow in the footsteps of another, we will always arrive at the same destination. So if we follow in the footsteps of Christ, we can't go astray, we will never be lost, we will always be with the Lord – here, now and hereafter in that heavenly kingdom. It is recorded in John 12:26

that: *"If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour."* What an honour to contemplate for each one of us that divine nature, glory, honour and immortality. When the Master called the disciples to follow him, he meant that they should follow his precepts, his commandments, his example of faithfulness to His Father.

The first step the man Christ Jesus was advocating was consecration. We have given up our own will, as Jesus did, and we substituted for it the will of our heavenly Father. We have given up all earthly treasures and ambitions and presented our bodies as *"a living sacrifice, that we may be holy and acceptable to God, which is our reasonable service."* (Rom.12:1). It was a reasonable service for Jesus then, and it certainly is for us now. It would be unreasonable to accept God's marvellous favour and then neglect to live up to the conditions attached to it. We should always seek to know and to do the things which constitute a reasonable service. The constant study and appreciation of God's word is vitally necessary. When Jesus had taken that first step of consecration, He received the Holy Spirit. Do you have evidence that you have received the Holy Spirit? Don't be too quick to say No. Consider these factors: Do you understand the deep things of God's plan? Do you understand the significance of the fall, the ransom, the coming restitution of all things? Do you appreciate the high calling and your participation in the sin offering and in the blessings of all the families of the earth? If you do, then you have the strongest evidence of the Holy Spirit.

1 Cor.2:10,11 says: *"But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God."* Of course, there are other evidences of the Holy Spirit such as the fruits of the Spirit given to us by the Apostle Paul in Gal.5:22-24: *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law, And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts."* The possession and development of these qualities is certainly an evidence of the Holy Spirit. We must constantly review our daily actions to see if we are making progress in the development of these growth factors. Our lives pass by very quickly, just a speck of time in God's timetable. We must take full advantage of every waking moment to conscientiously develop these graces.

I like the thoughts presented to us by Peter in 1 Peter 2:5: *"Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."* As consecrated children of God we are living, small stones, rough by nature and out of harmony to a large extent

with that chief cornerstone, that top stone laid in heaven. We must be chiselled and polished to prepare us to be duly united with all these in one grand glorious temple, the temple of God beyond the veil. We must fully co-operate with the Lord in our own development which includes these graces of the Spirit. It is so easy for us to react in a negative manner to the development of these growth factors under the pressures of various experiences of our lives. God lays great stress on loyal, loving obedience on the part of all of His children. In Rev.3:12 we read: *“Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.”* This is really a description of the consummation of our hopes. The temple of which we are living stones is shown complete. We want to be a part of that new Jerusalem that will rule and bless all the world of mankind in the name of Christ.

Rev.3:21 gives us this promise: *“To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father in his throne.”* If Christ sits on the throne of God and we are granted to sit on Christ’s throne, we will surely have rulership of all things. And I think this is confirmed in Rev.21:7: *“He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God and he shall be my son.”* What a fantastic reward is held out for the overcomers! This isn’t really the only reason we want to be overcomers. We want to be overcomers because we know it pleases God, because Christ, our example, has overcome and we want to follow in his footsteps. We want to be with Him, we want to be where He is. In Rom.8:17 it says: *“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.”* And in Phil.1:29 Paul wrote: *“For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.”* From our studies in the life of Jesus and the apostles we realise that they endured much in the way of physical suffering in the service of God and also a great deal of persecution.

### **“To suffer for His sake”**

A study of our lives reveals a dissimilarity. Why should this bother us? Are our lives to be just the same as Jesus and the apostles? Does the expression ‘suffering for Christ’ mean only direct persecution in God’s service? The sufferings of Christ have a very broad meaning far beyond physical suffering and direct persecution in God’s service. Pastor Russell suggested any sufferings we have because of our membership in His body are a part of the sufferings of Christ. Whatever it has cost you to give up your own will, to keep your own will submissive to God, to be faithful to the principles for which Christ stands, are all a part of the sufferings of Christ.

That’s a quotation from the 1915 Question Book, page 679. After quoting 1 Peter 5:10 Pastor Russell made this remark: *“We think that the suffering takes in all of present life’s experiences”* (Reprint 4750). He therefore suggests that the meaning is endurance of all hardship and difficulty necessary in maintaining our standing as new creatures and our standing for the truth. As to what this would mean would vary according to each individual circumstance.

The original meaning of the word ‘suffering’ is very important. From Strong we find that the definition is ‘something undergone that is hardship or pain’. That would be hardship of any kind endured for the sake of the truth, for God’s service, for the sake of ourselves as new creatures. I’m sure that over the years we have heard brethren in the truth use the expression ‘We’re not of the world’. That’s taken from John 15:19. *“If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.”* Our Lord said to the Jews recorded in John 8:23 *“Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world.”* Jesus said to Pilate just before His crucifixion: *“My kingdom is not of this world.”* (John 18:36) and in a sense we are identified with outer space. Our Lord said in John 6:38 and in several other places: *“I came down from heaven”* so we who are in Christ are of a different world. And what a fantastic thought! What a position we’re in! We are in effect a separate nation living in the midst of the people of this world. We’re a peaceful nation. We keep their laws except where there is a violation of conscience involved.

We’re told in Rom.13:1 to be subject to the powers that be, and the Apostle Paul said in Titus 3:1: *“And remind them to be submissive to Governments and Authorities, to obey rulers, and to be ready for every good work.”* We realise that the Lord has permitted these governments to keep a measure of order in the world and we can be thankful that for the most part we have been protected by the police powers of the world’s governmental bodies. We have seen the drastic results where governmental control has been abused or lost. Government control has made it possible for us to carry on the harvest work. We have been able to proclaim the gospel message for the most part without hindrance. Let us not fail in our determination to overcome the world, the flesh and the devil and let us go about enthusiastically despite all the obstacles and all the opposition we encounter. It can be done. Our Lord said in John 16:33: *“In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”* He showed us the way. Let us follow in his footsteps. Let us reflect His image

(Convention Address E L)

## “AS YE SEE THE DAY APPROACHING”

On 11<sup>th</sup> September in the year which we have known as 2001 the sense of security of the western world was shattered by the greatest act of terrorism the world has ever known. As you know, on that day airline aircraft were hijacked. Two of them were flown into the twin towers of the World Trade Centre in New York City, one in the north tower and the other in the south tower. A third aircraft was flown into the Pentagon, the headquarters of the US defence network. A fourth aircraft crashed in the countryside of Pennsylvania, apparently after a struggle on the flight deck. In all, several thousand people were killed. The events of that day were so dramatic that several world leaders have said the world will never be the same again. The world will never be the same again. What a momentous statement!

Those events raised questions in the minds of Bible Students worldwide. If indeed the Bible is the Word of God, if indeed the Bible contains God's plan for mankind, then what does the Bible say about the events of 11<sup>th</sup> September? Surely events which world leaders recognise have changed the face of the world forever, surely those events would be mentioned somewhere in the Scriptures. I know that many of you have done your research, and I have done mine. Well, I can't find anything which can in any way be construed to mean that the events of 11<sup>th</sup> September are prophesied in the Bible. That fact raises another question. What then did Jesus mean when He exhorted His disciples to watch? We are watching. World leaders are watching. We have seen events so dramatic that the world will never be the same again, and yet we can't find anything in the Scriptures which directly relates to those events.

What then did Jesus mean when he urged His disciples to watch? His exhortation has even greater moment when we realise it was not just a passing comment. It wasn't just a remark. No, he devoted a whole parable to His disciples exhorting them to watch. We often refer to it as 'the parable of the wise and foolish virgins'. I know we sometimes try to read into the parable symbolism but whatever symbolism you wish to read into the parable, to my way of thinking the primary purpose of the parable is contained in the last verse. In Matt.25:13 He says: *'Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour.'* And so I thought perhaps at that time, in view of the events of the last twelve months and 11<sup>th</sup> September in particular, it would be profitable for us to refresh our minds regarding a couple of aspects of our watching.

### God's Timing

The first aspect we should refresh our minds about is the speed with which God moves. We all know that

God moves slowly, at least in human terms. In my correspondence with some brethren overseas, one of the texts which we all know well indicating that God moves slowly is in Hab.2:2,3 which reads: *'And the Lord answered me and said, Write the vision and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.'* And so those verses clearly indicate that there is going to be a time of waiting. Though it seem to tarry, wait for it. That's all very well, but what does it mean to us? Will it tarry a day, a week, a month, a year, ten years, twenty years? What does it really mean that it will tarry? Do we have anything that we can use as some sort of time stick, a time measure, as to what it means to tarry?

I would like to suggest to you that we do have a passage of Scripture which shows us quite clearly what it means for the vision to tarry. It's a vision with which you are all very familiar, and that is Nebuchadnezzar's dream recorded for us in Daniel chapter 2. Let us take a few moments to note a couple of points from the record of this dream. We all know the story, how he had this dream and couldn't recall what the dream was about. It was revealed to Daniel what the dream was and also the interpretation of the dream. He saw the image of this great man - head of gold, breast and arms of silver, thighs and belly of brass, legs of iron and feet of iron and clay. And he beheld until there was a stone, cut out without hands, that struck the image on the feet and the image collapsed, and the stone then grew to fill the whole earth. In order to help us appreciate what it means for the vision to tarry, let us think about the timeframe included in that vision.

We have the starting point of the vision because in Daniel 2:38 it was revealed to Daniel that Nebuchadnezzar was that head of gold. So we have the starting point. We know that the Babylonian empire was superseded by the Medo-Persian and so, in Daniel 5:28, once again the breast and arms of silver are identified for us by name, the Medes and Persians. No question! We further know about the belly of brass. That was the Greek empire, and that is told to us very clearly in Dan.8:20,21. The fourth empire is not named, however I think it is a very reasonable assumption that the fourth empire was the Roman empire. Let us just think about the timeframe between Nebuchadnezzar and the end of the Roman empire. What happens then? The stone cut out without hands strikes the image on the feet, and all parts of it crumble together. In verse 35: *'Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away,*

*that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.'*

If you think of the timeframe between Nebuchadnezzar's day and the end of the Roman empire, that gives us how many years? I leave you to come to your own conclusion about how many years. Considering the time for that part of the vision to be fulfilled, how many years will it take for the stone to grow and fill the whole earth? That vision conveys to me some meaning to the thought that the vision will tarry. Yes, God is outside time, and one day with the Lord is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day.

### **"Watch Therefore"**

But Jesus' exhortation was to watch, *'Watch, therefore'*. Do we have any other signposts along the way? We have Daniel's prophecy and we can wait for the stone to grow and fill the whole earth. But do we have any other signpost to tell us just where we are on the stream of time? We know that no man knows the day nor the hour, and so my comments from now on are not meant to infer that we do know the day and the hour, because we don't. Nevertheless I want to suggest to you that we do have some signposts to tell us where we are on the stream of time, perhaps in more detail than the dream recorded in Daniel 2. One of the signposts which I wish to suggest to you is the time of Jacob's trouble recorded for us in Jer.30. A second signpost would be the vision of the valley of dry bones recorded for us in Eze.37. A third signpost would be the vision of the valley of Jehosephat in Joel 3, and a fourth one the time of trouble given to us in Matt.24. So, Jacob's trouble in Jer.30, the valley of dry bones in Eze.37, the valley of Jehosephat in Joel 3, and the time of trouble in Matt.24. I suggest to you that those four prophecies can be signposts to us.

Now just a couple of comments about using signposts. There are two very important points when we come to read a signpost. First of all we have to know what we are looking for. If you don't know that you are looking for Smith Street or Church Street, the Freeway or the city, you could easily pass the signpost without knowing that you have passed it. So with any signpost we have to know what we are looking for. Do the Scriptures indicate that we should know what we are looking for? Yes, they do. Let's look at Jesus' words in Luke 21:25-28 where Jesus said: *'There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud, with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.'* That infers to me very clearly that Jesus intended that His followers

would know what they were looking for *'when these things come to pass, then look up'*. In other words, we should see them. They have been prophesied, so that when they do come we realise that they are beginning to come to pass. Yes, we should know what we are looking for.

For the sake of time I would like to pick out just one more verse which to me clearly indicates that we should know what we are looking for. That verse is Heb.10:25: *'Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.'* How do we know that it is the day that is approaching unless we know what constitutes the day? I suggest to you that we do need to know, and we are told we will know, and we are able to know the signs of the coming of the day. That is not to say we know the day or the hour but we do know the signs.

The second important point about using signposts is to keep ahead of the game. If you are using a street directory and you are looking for Smith Street or Church Street and it's already passed, and you are concentrating on looking forward to the sign which is already behind you, would you see it? No, you won't. Also, you might very well miss other signs which are there for you to see but because you have been concentrating on the sign that has passed, you in fact overlook the sign that is just coming up. In aviation there's a very tragic story of an accident that occurred in the Gibson Desert where an aircraft returning to base flew past the actual destination but the pilot didn't realise it. So they flew on and kept looking out for what they thought was their destination, but the destination was well behind them. There were other signs in the desert which indicated to them that they had passed their destination but because they were so far from their destination they didn't realise the later signs. The aircraft flew on, ran out of fuel, crashed in the desert and the whole five crew perished. The same thing applies to us. We need to keep ahead of the game.

### **Four Signposts**

So then, try to keep ahead of the game. What about these four signposts – Jacob's trouble, the valley of dry bones, Jehosephat and the time of trouble. The question is, has any of them come to pass at this point of time or should we still be looking for them to come? This is a very good question. I want to suggest to you that maybe some of the events have passed. I would like to suggest that maybe even Jacob's trouble is past. I cannot give you all of the reasons for my suggestion in the time allowed but what we can do is have a quick look at Jeremiah Chapter 30 and take just four verses there which I will leave you to think about because these verses seem to me to describe the outcome of Jacob's trouble.

Beginning in Jer.30:3 we read: *'For, lo, the days come,*



*saith the Lord, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the Lord: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.* That was the promise. And in verses 4-6: *'These are the words which the Lord spake concerning Israel and concerning Judah. For thus, saith the Lord, we have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child. Wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness.'* I suggest to you there is considerable meaning in the fact that a man was travailing with child and not a woman, although we haven't time to discuss it today. Then in verse 7: *'Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.'* Then verse 10: *'Therefore fear thou not, O my servant Jacob, saith the Lord; neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid.'* The question is, do we see evidence today of Jacob having returned? Even the beginning of Jacob having returned? Certainly we cannot say that he is yet in rest and in quiet. No, God takes time to work out His purposes, but that is the consequence of Jacob's trouble. Verse 11: *'For I am with thee, saith the Lord, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished.'* Yes, He will make a full end of all nations whither He has scattered them, not yet fulfilled. Is 11<sup>th</sup> September part of that?

I now want to refer to the time of trouble referred to in Matt.24. I know that the time of trouble described in Matt.24:21-22 has always been projected into the future. I understand there is substantial justification for that point of view, but let us just stand back again and have another look at this. In Matt.24:21,22 it says: *'For then shall be great tribulation such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.'* Frankly, I have always had trouble with that, *'For the elect's sake those days shall be shortened'*. I had trouble with that because hitherto I have always regarded that to refer to the church and these days of tribulation would be shortened because of the church. But I have to ask myself two questions: first of all, why would God shorten those days for the sake of the church? And secondly, who really are 'the elect'? You see, in Matt.24:24 we read: *'For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.'*

I'm well aware that in the past I have felt quite comfortable about making a distinction between 'the elect' and

'the very elect'. With all respect to the King James Version, the later translations don't justify the use of the word 'very' there. Strong's Concordance does not say that the use of the word 'very' there is substantiated. The NIV uses the words 'even the elect'. And so it may be that 'the elect' of verse 22 and 'the very elect' of verse 24 are one and the same. I believe we have to test everything, test all things, hold fast that which is good. But who are these elect? Let's just look at the translation in Mark 13:20. The same passage there has a point which comes out: *'And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days.'* Now who has God chosen? There is no question that He has called and chosen the members of the church. No question about that at all! But when you read Isa.45:4 and chapter 43, we see that Israel was in fact God's elect. Let us just read the verses in Isa.45:4: *'For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou has not known me: My suggestion is that the elect of Matt.24 could well be the nation of Israel and not the church. If that's the case (each one to his own thinking), have we not seen in history a period of time when the extermination of the nation of Israel would seem to be an absolute certainty, but the days were cut short? The Third Reich! And what happened shortly after the days were cut short? We have Israel regathered to its own land. I suggest to you that that might be another signpost to realise where we are on the stream of time.'*

### **"Knowing the Time"**

We haven't got time now to go into the valley of dry bones and the vision of the valley of Jehosephat, but if you have time pursue the significance of Jehosephat. 2 Chron.20 is a good starting point, but we haven't got time to discuss it today. What I'm saying to you today is really nothing more than what the Apostle Paul wrote to the Romans. In Rom.13:11-12 he said: *'And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.'* I ask the question, is it possible that the night is further spent and the day is nearer at hand than we perhaps realise.

Let us then take to heart the exhortation to the Hebrews: *'Let us not forsake the assembling of ourselves together ... and so much more as ye see the day approaching.'* (GS)



## THE PEACE OF GOD

*'The peace of God which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.'* (Phil.4:7)

The word 'peace' in the New Testament is from Strong's 1515 and means 'quietness, rest, to set at one' again'. In the Old Testament it is from Strong's 7965 and has the meaning of 'safe, well, happy, to be at peace' and from 7999 'to be safe in mind, body and state, to make complete, make restitution, restore'. Peace is here then defined as a state of quiet and tranquility, freedom from disturbance or agitation, calmness, repose. Such a state of mind in the text quoted is affirmed of God, it is a mind tranquil, calm, undisturbed, never agitated nor even wearied or perplexed by any of the cares of His vast dominions. As the Creator of all things and the Originator of all law, our Heavenly Father comprehends all causes and concerns with precision and all effects, and consequently knows the end from the beginning.

As it says in Deut.32:3-4: *'I will proclaim the name of the Lord, and praise the greatness of our God. He is the Rock, his work is perfect; and all his ways are just; a faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he.'* God's peace is based upon man obeying His commandments. We go back to when He created Adam and Eve and placed them in the Garden of Eden. The tranquility and beauty in perfect surroundings would have filled their hearts with awe towards their Creator. Our Heavenly Father had provided for Adam and Eve everything they would ever need. God as a father shows that he has a father's love for all his intelligent creatures, the whole family in heaven and in earth, and that for His pleasure they were and are created. He created them in His own likeness, with the same mental and moral aptitudes, that they might have communion and fellowship with Him as children and they with Him as a father. Thus, in mutual fellowship and communion the Creator and the creature might find pleasure, happiness and delight.

God, in His infinite wisdom, knew that the first parents also needed to be tested if they would be worthy of this paradise and peace that He had provided for them. In Gen.2:16,17 we read: *'And the Lord God commanded the man, You are free to eat from any tree in the garden but you must not eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. When you eat of this you will surely die.'* Then came the temptation of Satan through the serpent and Eve ate of the fruit, and then Adam did. They had disobeyed God's commandment, and therefore the penalty was given for their disobedience.

ence.

In Gen.3:9 we read: *'By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.'* Adam and Eve were cast out of the garden and were estranged from God. If we could for a moment put ourselves in their place and imagine the heart-wrench they must have felt and the longing to be back in the garden to be once again in harmony with God, enjoying His peace. From this standpoint we can realise that man has desired peace but because of sin has not been able to obtain it. We see Satan as the foe against mankind. Our Heavenly Father gives us in Gen.3:15 the key to his destruction. We read: *'And I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and hers; he will crush your head and you will strike his heel.'*

Since Adam, God has overruled lives of righteous men. Because of Abraham's faithfulness and obedience to God, he was given this promise in Gen.22:17: *'I will surely bless you and make your descendents as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore; your seed will possess the gate of his enemy, and through your seed all the nations of the world will be blessed because you have obeyed me.'* From Abraham came the nation of Israel and they were also to be given blessings if they would observe and do all of God's commandments when coming into the promised possession of the land of Israel. In Deut.28:12 we read *'The Lord will open the heavens, the storehouse of his bounty, to send rain on your land in season and bless all the works of your hand'* and in Psalms 29:11: *'The Lord will give strength to his people; God will bless his people with peace'*. But because of their sin, the desired peace was not given to the nation of Israel. We remember our Lord's words in Luke 19:42 when He wept over Jerusalem, saying: *'If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace, but now it is hidden from your eyes.'*

### **"Peace with God"**

So we can see that there can be no peace to man except in the re-establishment of the relationship between himself and God. Since this relationship of sons can only be re-established through Christ, there is no peace to anyone out of Christ. *'There is no peace, says the Lord, to the wicked'* (Isa.48:25) and *'the whole world is under the control of the evil one'* (1 John 5:19). To have the peace of God then, we need to be at peace with God through justification. Rom.5:8-11 reads: *'But God demonstrates his own*

*love for us in this, while we were still sinners Christ died for us. 'Since we have been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him; for if when we were God's enemies we were reconciled to him through the death of his son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life. Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ through whom we have now received reconciliation.'* And in Rom.5:1: *'Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.'*

To these justified children of God, sons and heirs of this Age, God has not only granted His recognition but also His special favour in offering to them exceeding great and precious promises. Our Heavenly Father has drawn us with a heavenly calling and invited us to be part of the body of Christ, His Bride, and to be joint heirs with Jesus in His Kingdom, and all the gracious work of that Kingdom. It is to these new creatures begotten and led by the Spirit of God that are promised peace and mercy. Mercy because our best efforts to walk after the leading of the Holy Spirit will be imperfect but God, who judges our hearts, desires and efforts, is merciful and will not expect from us more than we are able to perform. He gives His blessed peace to these begotten ones who are led by His spirit.

## MORNING PRAYER

Lord, in the quiet of this morning hour  
 I come to Thee for peace, for wisdom, power  
 To view the world today through love-filled eyes,  
 Be patient, understanding, gentle, wise;  
 To see beyond what seems to be, and know  
 Thy children as Thou knowest them and so  
 Naught but the good in anyone behold.  
 Make deaf my ears to slander that is told,  
 Silence my tongue to aught that is unkind,  
 Let only thoughts that bless dwell in my mind,  
 Let me so kindly be, so full of cheer,  
 That all I meet may feel Thy presence near.  
 O clothe me in Thy beauty, this I pray,  
 Let me reveal Thee, Lord, through all the day.  
 (Ella S Schenck)

Rom.8:6 declares: *'For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace.'* Our Lord, on the last night of His earthly life, bestowed on His beloved disciples His parting blessing, His legacy of peace. *'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your heart be troubled and do not be afraid.'* (John 14:27) The promise was for that rest and peace of mind which Jesus himself possessed, the peace of God. It was the same peace which the Father has always had. Jehovah's peace comes from within Himself because He has all power and wisdom, and knows the end from the beginning. The peace of Christ came through His faith in God, faith in His wisdom and power and grace. So, also, if we would have the peace of God, the peace of Christ, it must be centred in God by faith.

### Peace that endures

The peace promised is not the short-lived peace of the world, which is sometimes enjoyed for a little while, but it is the peace of God which Christ by faith enjoyed. Although He was rich, for our sakes He became poor. He lost friend after friend, and in His last hour was forsaken by all the friends who remained. His was the peace that endured through loss, persecution, scorn and contempt, and even amidst the agonies of the Cross. If we would know the foundation and security of this abiding peace which is able to survive the heaviest storms of life, we can see it in the teaching and example of the life of our Lord and the Apostles.

We have many instances recorded in the Book of Acts of the sufferings of the Apostles and followers of Christ. Because of the jealousy of the priests and Sadducees they were put in jail and beaten but when released they rejoiced because they had been accounted worthy of suffering disgrace for the name of Jesus. And we have the account of Stephen, who although falsely accused, gave a courageous witness to his faith, and when being stoned fell on his knees and prayed, *'Lord, do not hold this sin against them'*. Herod had the Apostle James put to death by the sword, and the Apostle Peter arrested and put in prison, but the people of the church prayed earnestly for him and the Lord sent an angel to rescue him. The Apostle Paul, in defending his ministry, in 2 Cor.11 speaks of his experience saying: *'Five times I received from the Jews forty lashes minus one, three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea. I have been constantly on the move; I have been in danger from rivers, dangers from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles, in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea, and in danger from false brothers. I have laboured and toiled and often gone without sleep. I have known hunger and thirst, and of-*

*ten gone without food. I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressures of my concern for the churches.'*

What was it that held them so firmly and gave them such rest of mind while they suffered? It was their faith, their faith in the love, power and wisdom of God. They believed that what God had promised he was able also to do, that His righteous and benevolent plan would know no failure. Isa.46:9-11 says: *'Remember the former things of old, for I am God and there is none like me, 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: .... Yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it.'* In Jehovah their faith was anchored and on His assurances they rested. So the Apostle Paul was able to say in Rom.8: *'If God is for us, who can be against us? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble, or hardship, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or dangers? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us, for I am convinced that neither death, nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers from the height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'* It is only through steady, unwavering faith that the peace of God, the peace of Christ, will abide with His people.

1 John 5:4 says: *'This is the victory which overcomes the world, even our faith'*. The blessed peace that comes from the knowledge of the fact that God accepts us as joint-heirs with Jesus Christ if we continue to faithfully follow in His footsteps is the basis of our peace. No matter how heavily the storms of life may assail us, we must never let go our anchor. Always remember that the foundation of God stands sure. His truth is our shield and buckler, that what He has promised he is able to perform, and covering our human imperfections we have the imputed righteousness of Christ. Jesus' peace is in true reconciliation with God, purchased with His death. It is the supreme remedy for all fears and the legacy left for his heirs. Even as we see the sad state of affairs in the world today, we can have peace knowing that He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

We look forward to and pray for the establishment of the Kingdom when the beautiful Old Testament promises of Psalms 37:11 have their fulfillment: *'The meek shall inherit the earth and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.'* and in Isa.32: *'Behold, a King shall reign in righteousness and princes shall*

*rule in judgment.... and the fruit of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever. And my people shall dwell in thee in peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places.'* So, in conclusion, *'When He gives quietness who then can make trouble?'* and *'You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee.'* Who but He, the God of all comfort, can give quietness in the midst of trouble when we can come to our loving Heavenly Father in prayer, not asking for all disturbances to be removed, because it is not always the divine will to bring peace in that way, but asking for a loving, trustful submission to the will of God. (BL)

**'May Thy will, not mine, be done;  
May Thy will and mine be one.  
Peace I ask, but peace must be,  
Lord, in being one with Thee.'**

## THE BLESSED SECRET

"Be all at rest, my soul!" O blessed secret  
Of the true life that glorifies thy Lord;  
Not always doth the busiest soul best serve Him,  
But he who resteth on His faithful word.

"Be all at rest!" for rest is highest service,  
To the still heart God doth His secrets tell;  
Thus shalt thou learn to wait, and watch, and labour,  
Strengthened to bear, since Christ in thee doth dwell.

"Be all at rest!" for rest alone becometh  
The soul that casts on Him its every care;  
"Be all at rest!" so shall thy life proclaim Him  
A God who worketh and who heareth prayer.

"Be all at rest!" so shall thou be an answer  
To those who question, "Who is God, and where?"  
For God is rest, and where He dwells is stillness,  
And they who dwell in Him that rest shall share.

(Freda H Allen)

### PEOPLES PAPER

#### AND HERALD OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM

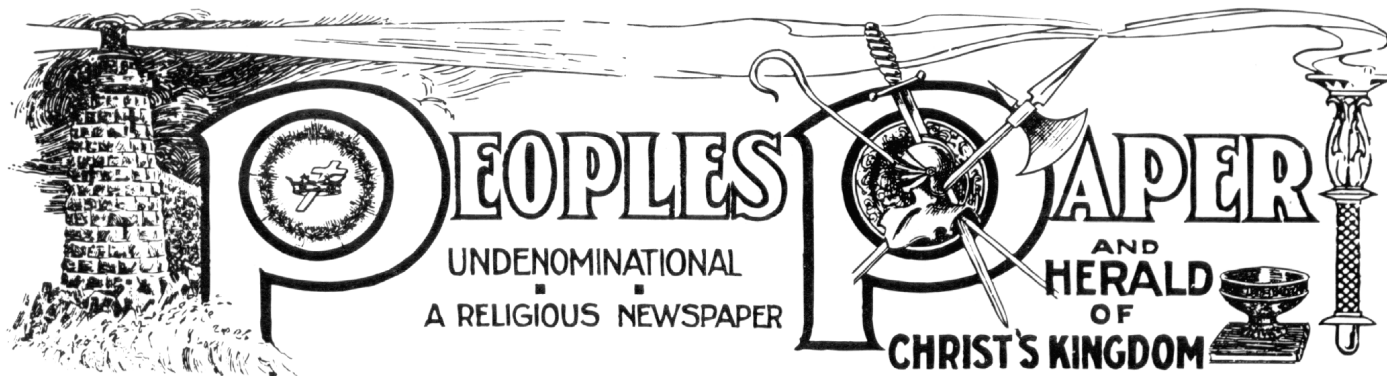
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## “THE RESTITUTION OF ALL THINGS”

Acts 3:21-26

*“(Jesus Christ) 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”.*

### Restitution

Restitution refers to the restoration of all that was lost through Adamic sin with the benefit of having meantime gained a knowledge of good and evil. Restitution is a biblical concept that despite the actual word being referred to directly only once in the Authorized Version, stands as a centre stage teaching, giving great insight into and appreciation of God’s plan of the ages.

The word *restitution* itself is used only once in the New Testament in the Authorized Version. It is a translation of the Greek word *apokatastasis*. This Greek word is also only used once in the New Testament. Vines Dictionary tells us that *apokatastasis* is derived from *apo*•back, again, and *Kathistemi*•to set in order, ie literally meaning “*to set in order again*”. Other translations use the words *restore* and *restoration*; and these therefore appear to be good translations. And so the words *restitution* and *restoration* are very similar in meaning in this context.

### Restoration

This link is further emphasized in Matthew 17:11 “He answering, said, “Elijah indeed comes, and will **restore all things**” (Diaglott). John the Baptist was the minor fulfillment of this spirit of Elijah as Jesus makes clear in the following verses. This thought is made even clearer in Luke 1:16,17 (speaking of John the Baptist) “*And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord*”. The major fulfillment of the picture of Elijah is of course the glorified church, the completed Abra-

hamic seed of blessing; which shall indeed “restore all things”, in its ultimate and fullest sense.

The word translated *restore* in Matthew 17:11 is the Greek word *apokathistemi*; it is used 8 times in the Authorized Version and according to Strong’s Dictionary means to “***restore to its former state***” Another verse that uses *apokathistemi*, is Matthew 12:10-13 “*And, behold, there was a man which had his hand withered. And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days? that they might accuse him...13 Then saith he to the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it forth; and it was **restored** whole, like as the other.*” Here it is well illustrated that *apokathistemi* (translated *restored*) means ***a return to an original state***. In this case a normally developed hand became withered or shriveled and was then returned to its original normal state by way of regeneration.

### Regeneration

This idea of regeneration is used in Matthew 19:28 “And Jesus said unto them, Verily 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”. The word *regeneration* is translated from the Greek word *paligenesia* meaning literally ***new birth or rebirth***. This suggests how the restitution and restoration will occur, viz by the infusion of new life; this is one reason Jesus is referred to as the everlasting father, since the essence of fatherhood is the giving of life.

Restitution therefore means ***a return to an original state***; this implies that the present state is a change from the original and that the changed state is a corruption of the original; otherwise there would be no desire to return to the original state. Since we are in the corrupted Adamic state we can only obtain an idea of what the future state will be like by looking backwards at what the original state was and identifying what was lost and paying heed to the scriptural descriptions of the future state due to restitution

### What has been Lost?

**Earthly Life** First and foremost death entered into the world through the sin of one man; we read in Romans 5:12 “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned”. We are all familiar with this fundamental part of that which was lost. Just as clearly, we are told that this mandatory Adamic death will be lifted through

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the ransom or corresponding sacrifice of Jesus. We should note that this will come upon **all** members of the human race; this is as sure as death came upon all through sin. We read in 1 Cor 15:21,22 *"For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive"*.

What may not be so obvious is that this reinstated life is human or earthly life; viz of the same nature (Greek = *phusis*) that Adam had. Since we were in the loins of Adam our nature could be no different once the curse has been lifted. This is the end result once the ransom value is applied to all. Those called of God during the present Gospel age have the opportunity to sacrifice this earthly nature in order to inherit eternal life according to a spiritual nature. The world in general will have the opportunity to inherit eternal life according to this earthly nature during this period of restitution in the next age.

We also note that the above verse does not say that all humans **will** have eternal life. It specifically refers to the lifting of the mandatory death sentence as a result of sin that came upon all through Adam. The right to eternal life occurs as a result of individual testing once that Adamic sentence has been lifted. No such opportunity could exist prior to it being lifted. Then there will be no impediment to a person being able to obtain life in its fullest sense viz life eternal. *"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely"*. Revelation 22:17 and in Isaiah 35:1-6 *"Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. 6 Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing..."*

In these familiar verses of Isaiah 35 we note that part of the restitution to earthly life will be victory not only over death but also over sickness; exemplified by the eyes of the blind being opened, the ears of the deaf unstopped and the lame leaping as an hart. The surrounding verses show that this is temporally associated with the restitution of the earth; and therefore places it in the millennium. And so, one of the most important things lost was this opportunity for eternal life according to the earthly nature that Adam and Eve possessed prior to the fall.

**Earthly Dominion** "Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, **inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world**'" Matthew 25:34 This scripture comes from the parable of the sheep and goats in Matthew 25. The beginning of the parable sets for us the time and age of the parable. We read: "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**:<sup>32</sup> And **before him shall be gathered all nations**: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth *his* sheep from the goats." This identifies the scene as the millennial reign of Christ when Jesus and his bride "judge the world". 1 Corinthians 6:2 *Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is judged by you, are you not competent to constitute the smallest law courts?"*

The sheep referred to in Matthew 25 therefore must represent those of the world that have had the spiritual law of God written in their hearts epitomised and exemplified by

"love thy neighbour as thyself". We note how important this "royal law" is, as James puts it in James 2:8 "If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well" Jesus refers to these sheep as "other sheep" in John 10:16 *"And I have **other sheep**, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they shall hear My voice; and they shall become one flock with one shepherd"*. These sheep therefore cannot refer to the sheep of the gospel age since their trial by this time is over and they are actively participating with Jesus in the judging. If therefore these "other sheep" are the tried and tested members of the world, this kingdom they inherit cannot be the spiritual rulership kingdom of God offered to the overcomers of the gospel age.

So what is this "kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world" referred to in Matthew 25:34? It seems the answer is given in Psalm 8 which is quoted in part by Paul in Heb 2:7 *"For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas"*. Psalm 8:5-8. Evidently this is an earthly dominion or kingdom. A dominion over the earthly works of God's hands. And these are in fact specified: viz all sheep, oxen, and other beasts of the field, fowl of the air and fish of the sea. Clearly, this is not a spiritual realm or kingdom; distinguishing it from that spiritual kingship promised to the overcomers of this age.

Paul tells us that this earthly dominion is to be granted to man in the future when he says in Hebrews 2: 8,9 "...But now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus..." It is this kingdom which was prepared at the foundation of the world, which will be inherited by the tried and tested members of the world. This is the earthly inheritance and belongs to perfect man having an earthy nature.

### Harmonious Environment

We have already seen that the inheritance for the obedient of the world is an earthly dominion; soon to be restored. We note that God initially gave this dominion to father Adam. This dominion does not just mean to rule over but also to tend and take care of. This implies total harmony with God's earthly creation. We only need to glance at the state of the natural world to see how far man is from harmony with the creation. Species become extinct every year as a result of the selfishness of man, also manifested in the continual degradation of the environment. The environment is gradually being polluted and global warming poses a fundamental threat to the stability of the world environment. Even in our country there is increasing degradation of good farming land through salt rising to the surface, leaving land unusable and devoid of any life; a veritable desert

*"The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing.....for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert"*{ Isaiah 35:1-6 These verses suggest that the environment will return to its original pristine condition. The deserts shall blossom and the water of life shall flow through them. This will be a



reversal of the curse that was placed on the ground as a result of the fall. "And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: **cursed is the ground for thy sake**; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life". Genesis 3:17 This restoration of the environment will of course be required to sustain those coming back from the grave. The restored earth will be a glorious thing; it will be enjoyed and appreciated by those who will live on the earth eternally; to the glory of God.

### Harmony with the Creator

Prior to the fall Adam enjoyed fellowship and direct communication with God. As a result of the fall this was lost. No longer was Adam perfect and therefore unable to enjoy the fellowship of God. Communication and fellowship can only occur as a result of restoration to righteousness or by way of a mediator. The faithful follower of Christ enjoys imputed righteousness at present. The world in general will require the mediation of Christ during the kingdom. Once all enemies have been subdued during the reign of Christ then the kingdom will be handed back to God in a perfect and righteous state, leading to a direct relationship with God once again. "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. 25 For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" 1 Corinthians 15:24-26

"In this new order (the new heavens and the new earth) righteousness shall abound. "Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" 2 Peter 3:13 In this state God will once again dwell with mankind and mankind will again be his people. Individually, this fellowship will allow each to be styled a son (of God). "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. <sup>2</sup>And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. <sup>3</sup>And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God...6...I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. <sup>7</sup>He that overcometh shall inherit all things; **and I will be his God, and he shall be my son**" Revelation 21:1-7 It is this harmony with the creator that Adam lost and is eventually to be re-established during the time of the "restitution of all things"

### The Restitution of All Things

The key verses in Acts 3 talk about the "restitution of all things" The question arises as to what these all things are. All things seems very comprehensive. From the above and also the context of the verses in Acts 3, viz that Jesus returns to the affairs of the earth after having gone away to his heavenly abode, it appears that "all things" pertains to the things lost on the earth and specifically as a result of the Adamic fall. Therefore, primarily this would have application to all nations since all have descended from Adam and upon whom the consequences of the fall had jurisdiction. It is possible however that "all things" has a wider application

and also encompasses two other falls, viz the fall of Israel and the fall of the heavenly host. (The latter item may be covered separately later)

### All Nations

The ransom has already been referred to. It has been noted that all men will reap the benefit of Jesus' atoning sacrifice allowing them to have a trial for life eternal with the benefit of having tasted of the tree of good and evil through Adam. "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 2:17 This benefit to all is a vital prerequisite for the blessing of all the nations of the earth as expressed in the Abrahamic promise. "And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice"

### The Kingdom of Israel

All nations necessarily include the nation of Israel. But Israel is dealt with slightly differently and at an earlier time because of God's holy name and his promises to their fathers; since the gifts and call of God are irrevocable. We know that the Jews at the time of Jesus were expecting a conquering messiah to restore their kingdom and independence and an end to the "times of the gentiles". Their kingdom had begun with the reign of Saul and reached its zenith under Solomon. This kingdom was finally lost during the reign of Judah's last king, Zedekiah at the hands of the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar. The wayward course of the kingdom of Israel which splintered into the dual kingdoms of Judah and Israel once Solomon had died is a recurring theme of the Old Testament. It was because of their disobedience that their kingdom was destroyed. Of Zedekiah it was written: "And thou, profane wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him". Ezekiel 21:25-27

Even the apostles were expecting the kingdom to be restored to Israel. In Acts 1:6-8 we read: "When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time **restore again** the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" Jesus response to the question of when the kingdom will be restored to Israel is illuminating. He affirms that this will occur by saying that the times or seasons for this are in his Fathers hands. The main fulfillment of this will be in the millennium when Jesus will sit on his throne, viz the anti-typical throne of David; which will fulfill the "sure mercies of David"

The sure mercies of David include that David's line or seed would endure forever and his throne (would endure) as the days of heaven. "Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established forever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven. Selah". Psalm 89:35-37 We note that Israel here refers to the

whole nation of Israel and not just the northern 10 tribe kingdom of Israel that was formed after Israel split in two following the death of Solomon (David's son) "And of all my sons, (for the LORD hath given me many sons,) he hath chosen Solomon my son to sit upon the throne of the kingdom of the LORD over Israel" 1 Chronicles 28:5

Jesus is the anti-typical David to whom these prophecies specifically apply. We read in Acts 13: 33-38. "God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, **I will give you the sure mercies of David.** Wherefore he saith also in another psalm, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption: But he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption. Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins" We read also in Isaiah 9: 6,7 "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. **Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever.** The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this."

It is also clear that Jesus' faithful followers, the "Israel of God" will share in his throne, these are the throne members of the body of Christ that together with Jesus make up the Abrahamic seed of blessing promised to Abraham so long ago. Gal 3:29 "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise". "It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: **If we suffer, we shall also reign with him:** if we deny him, he also will deny us:" 2 Timothy 2:11,12 "To him that overcometh will I grant to **sit with me in my throne**, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne" Revelation 3:21

We note that Israel will not be the only nation that will be judged and ruled over and that their restoration will be fulfilled in the wider context of the future reign of Jesus and his body members; who will rule over, judge and bless all the nations of the earth including the literal nation of Israel. However, as with many prophecies there appears to be a future more literal fulfilment as well as the spiritual. Firstly, Paul tells us that there are two seeds of Abraham; that which is according to the law (natural Israel) and that which is according to faith (Israel of God). "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all." Romans 4:16

The promises to the natural and the spiritual seeds are more or less intertwined. The earthly promises made to Abraham and his seed would necessarily have their fulfilment in a literal setting, viz they must have application to the natural

seed. An example is given in Genesis 13:14-16 "And the LORD said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: **For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.** And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered"

To what extent the natural seed will have a blessing role is unclear but scriptures such as Zechariah 8:21-23 and 14:16,17 suggest that it will be substantial "Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you". "And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain."

This blessing role presupposes the restoration of Israel as a nation, independent of Gentile powers. This has largely been fulfilled. The restoration of the polity of Israel was accelerated by the establishment of Palestine as the home for the Jews according to the Balfour Declaration in 1917 and marked the beginning of the end of the hegemony of gentile powers over the Jews. This culminated in the rebirth of the nation of Israel in 1948 as declared by the United Nations. And so the polity of Israel has been restored. Full restoration is still future and will require the experiences of Jacob's trouble and the New Covenant to have their effect. The historical events do however show and confirm that natural Israel will also be restored and therefore can be included in the restitution of all things.

## Conclusion

Restitution is a beautiful biblical teaching. It refers primarily to the return to an original perfect condition of the human Adamic race through the ransom sacrifice of Jesus. The phrase "restitution of all things" embraces all nations including literal Israel; for humanity. Life in its fullest sense will be restored, as will harmony with the creator and the earthly environment, including man's dominion over it.

*"God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away".*

*Rev 21:4*

## EXCEEDING GREAT AND PRECIOUS PROMISES

2 Peter 1:2-4

The promises of God are not only great but precious, the Apostle declares. Gifts may be regarded as precious for various reasons, some of which might be:-

**The giver:** Many of us treasure some small, probably not very valuable things, that is, not valuable in the eyes of others, but because they came to us from a parent, a loved one, a Christian friend, they are priceless to us. Our great and precious promises are the gift of God, our loving Father, who so loved us each one that He gave His beloved and only-begotten Son for our salvation.

**The price:** There is a wonderful story out of the life of David recorded in 2 Samuel 23:15-17, which reads: *"And David longed, and said, Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate! And the three mighty men brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem, that was by the gate, and took it, and brought it to David: nevertheless he would not drink thereof, but poured it out unto the Lord. And he said, Be it far from me, O Lord, that I should do this: is not this the blood of men that went in jeopardy of their lives? Therefore he would not drink it."*

The gift David received on that occasion was merely a portion of water, but was purchased at so great a price – the hazarding of three lives – that he could do nothing other than pour it out in offering to God, so precious was it in David's sight. Peter tells us in 1 Peter 1:18-19: *"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, ....but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without spot or blemish."* Like David, how can we do other than offer such dearly bought gifts back to Him in grateful service and obedience?

**The value:** It is sometimes said that *'beauty is in the eye of the beholder'* and so in the case of a gift its value may depend on the appreciation or otherwise of the recipient. We read in Hebrews 11:26 that Moses chose *'rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, esteeming the reproach of the Anointed greater riches than the treasures in Egypt, for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.'* This surely is also the viewpoint of the faithful followers of Jesus today: Of all such, it can be truly said *"unto you therefore which believe, he (Jesus) is precious"* (1 Peter 2:7). .

**The certainty:** Even the best-sounding promises are of no value unless there is absolute confidence in the sincerity and ability to perform of the giver. So as well as greatness and preciousness, the promises need to be certain of fulfillment, and here the Word of God thoroughly assures us: *"Let us hold fast the profession of our faith for He is faithful who promised."* (Heb 10:23) *"For all the promises of God in him (Jesus) are yea and in him amen, to the glory of God by us"* (2 Cor.1:20)

The nature of God himself, with whom is no variableness neither shadow of turning, and the finished work of Christ

are the Christian's ironclad guarantee of the fulfillment of all the divine promises. Each one of God's dear children has furthermore been sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, the earnest or pledge of the rich inheritance which God has promised.

**The scope:** In earlier times 'promise boxes' were fairly common among Christian people and these held perhaps 200 or so little scrolls with a Scripture promise which could be selected for daily reading and encouragement. The Word of God itself is the great storehouse of all His promises and these relate not only to the eternal life and joy and peace and glory which are laid up for all who are faithful unto death, but also the assurance of our Saviour's constant presence and of His grace and strength in every time of need and of His peace within our hearts.

**The prospect:** 1 John 3:2 reads - *"Beloved, now are we the sons of God and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."* What a prospect! Can we really comprehend it, to see Him as He is? And also in Rev.3:21: *"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."* What a privilege, what a prize, what a Saviour!

Further, we have present promises in Matt.28:20: *"Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the age"*, in Hebrews 13:5: *"I will never leave thee nor forsake thee"* and in 2 Cor.12:9: *"My grace is sufficient for thee."*

**The purpose:** Turning again to the Apostle's words in 2 Peter 1:3 and 4, we see that all of God's provisions including the gift of exceeding great and precious promises are all designed to guide Christians in the paths of new life and righteousness in Christ, to foster development of character and Christian graces so that ultimately they can be made partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

The full realisation of this share in the divine nature awaits the completion of the earthly course, but even now we can rejoice in what God has already revealed to us and in us of His love and mercy and goodness through His dear Son, our Saviour.

Our loving Heavenly Father is the great author of all the exceeding great and precious promises of His Word. In response let us continue in our personal resolve to –

- Daily take more and more to our hearts and savour the full riches of God's grace toward us
- Daily lay hold on all His precious promises, not only of future glory but of present help and strength along the narrow way.

***"Faithful is He who calleth you, who also will do it." 1 Thess 5:24 (Amen)***

## THE ROBE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS WITHOUT SPOT

'The Robe of Righteousness Without Spot' is not really the full title. It is 'The Robe of Righteousness Embroidered Without Spot'. There is embroidering to do. We have to work on it to keep it clean. Years ago I was interested in the phrase 'The robe of righteousness' and later was happy to learn that there's a scripture that has this expression in it. In fact it is in Isaiah 61, the beginning of which Jesus read in the Synagogue. From verse 1 it reads: *'The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek: he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.'* Then further on in this chapter is recorded 'the robe of righteousness' which is part of a larger description of righteousness as it is supplied by God. Isa.61:10,11 reads: *'I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels. For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.'* What lovely descriptions are listed here as illustrations of the Robe of Righteousness.

The Concordance says 'robe' is 'a mantle in the sense of a covering like a coat, cloak, an outer garment'. The sacrifice of Christ, who was undefiled, perfect, separate from sinners who gave himself a ransom for all, is now provided as a covering for justified consecrated believers who follow Him in the narrow way. Rom:4.25 reads: *'Who (that is Jesus) was delivered for our offences and was raised again for our justification.'* And in Rom.5:1 *'Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.'* And Rom.8:1 *'There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.'* Righteousness is justice, to be made right. Any can only be made right now through Christ by faith. From 1 Cor.1:29-31: *'That no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.'*

We read furthermore In Rom.4:3-7: *'For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven and whose sins are covered.'* Paul declares in Romans chapter 11 his heart's desire for Israel that they may be saved and how they were going about to establish their own righteousness by works of the

law. Rom.10:3-5 reads: *'For they being ignorant of God's righteousness and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them.'*

Seeing then that the true believer has this Robe of Righteousness imputed to him by faith, shall he keep it to himself in this state like the one-talent man who went and hid his talent in the earth and did not trade with it to gain extra talents? No, it has to be worked on, embroidered with fine needlework. In Young's Concordance it has for 'embroidered' *'to interweave'*. You know, it seems that interweaving makes it very strong, holding one to another, like a rope made of many strands joined together to make it very strong. There is an interesting verse, too, in the making of parts of the Tabernacle where God gave His Spirit to those willing to do his work. In Ex.35:35 we read: *'Them hath he filled with wisdom of heart, to work all manner of work, of the engraver, and of the cunning workman, and of the embroiderer, in blue, and in purple, in scarlet and in fine linen, and of the weaver, even of them that do any work, and of those that devise cunning work.'*

The true believer now, who is a Temple of God, (1 Cor.3:16) needs to do an embroidery work on his or her own character. There is a reference to this in Psalm 45:13,14: *'The king's daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework.'* This needlework seems to represent the finer aspects of character that need to be embroidered on this Robe of Righteousness which the believer is given. A list of these virtues is given in Gal.5:22, 23: *'The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.'* And in verse 25: *'If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.'*

It is a very exacting and delicate exercise to have all these aspects of character reigning together and each one may help the others to produce a strong fabric so that we may be able to rejoice even in tribulation. The apostle Peter lists a number of character traits that need to be applied to have an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. From 2 Pet.1:5, after saying in verse 4 that *'unto us are given exceeding great and precious promises that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust'* he says we need to give all diligence to add to our faith *'virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, And to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity (or, love). For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.'*

Peter also says in 1 Pet.1:7 that *'The trial of your faith is more precious than of gold that perisheth'* so we take many trials and many trying experiences for these virtues of character to be fastened into their proper place. Peter says also in 1 Pet.4:12,13: *'Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.'* Paul also said that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory that shall be revealed to the successful ones.

In Psalm 45, part of verse 9 reads: *'King's daughters (plural) were among thy honourable women'* and the latter part of Psalm 45:14 and verse 15 reads *'the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee. With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the king's palace.'* There seems to be a difference here between the virgins and the king's daughter of verses 10 and 11. *'Her clothing is of wrought gold and she shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework'* is how verses 13 and 14 describe her. Back in the latter part of verse 9 it reads: *'Upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of ophir'*. Gold seems to represent that which is very precious and probably represents immortality. In Mal.3:3 it reads: *'And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.'*

In 1 Cor.3:11 Paul says: *"For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.'* So we see how much each needs to take great care with this fine needlework as each thread of the golden character is embroidered onto the Robe of Righteousness which is now used as a covering.

Each one has this Robe of Righteousness and it is being carefully embroidered with fine needlework as the experiences and trials of life work into fine traits of character. But it needs to be kept clean all this time because Christ wants His church to be washed by the water of the word so that *'He might present it to himself a glorious church not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing: but that it should be holy and without blemish.'* (Eph.5:26,27). Each needs to be very particular that there are no spots, stains, splashes, damage, even dust of this world, remaining on their garment and its needlework. We know we cannot always do the things that we would like to do, as Paul says in Rom.7:15, but then we see we have an advocate in Jesus Christ and His righteousness, *'and He is the propitiation or covering for our sins'* (1 John 2:2)

In the Old Testament in Leviticus, chapter 13, there is some interesting reading on leprosy. The Concordance describes it as the 'freckles of leprosy' and that it represents sin. There is some later reference to Israel's offerings under the law in Numbers 19:2 *"Speak unto the children of Israel,*

*that they bring thee a red heifer without spot, wherein is no blemish"* and also in Num.28:11: *'And in the beginnings of your months ye shall offer a burnt offering unto the Lord; two young bullocks and one ram, seven lambs of the first year without spot.'* Peter tells us in 1 Pet 1 :18,19: *"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers, But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:"* And in Heb.9:14 there is a similar statement: *'How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot (the margin has 'fault') to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?'*

Christ was made perfect through the things that He suffered and *'became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him'* (Heb.5:8,9). What a great example has been set before us! It should increase our desire to walk in His footsteps. There is a good admonition that Paul gives to Timothy in 1 Tim.6:13,14: *'I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession: That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.'* Each needs to come out of the world and be separate from the unclean thing, and God will receive you and *'will be a Father unto you and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.'* (2 Cor.6:18) *'Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God'* (2 Cor.7:1) *'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.'* (Eph.4:29) .

There is also watching to be done, for siftings and testings will come to try the Lord's people. Paul warned about this in Acts 20:29-31: *'For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch.'* Peter and Jude also speak of these. 2 Peter, chapter 2, gives a vivid picture of false prophets and teachers and examples of what happened to other evil ones of the past, who at their end *'shall receive the reward of unrighteousness as they that count it pleasure to riot in the day time. Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you.'* (v.13).

Jude also says that we should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints and he has many warnings in his short epistle. In verse 12 he says *'These evil ones are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you: clouds without water, carried about of winds: trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots.'* This word 'spot' in Jude 12 is 'spilos' . In the Diaglott it has: *'These are hidden rocks in your love-feasts, feasting together without fear, feeding themselves; clouds without water, being swept along by winds; bare autumnal trees, unfruitful for two seasons, dead, rooted up.'* In verses 20 to 23 he gives encouragement and commends discernment: *'But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the*

love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And of some have compassion, making a difference: And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.' He is saying there is need to be discernment on the part of those in different situations and different actions taken.

As some words of the hymn say - we need to be washed. "I know this stained tablet must first be washed white and there Thy bright features be drawn....if I in Thy likeness, O Lord, may awake and shine a pure image of Thee." 'Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.' (2 Pet.3:14) In the Song of Solomon, chapter 4, verse 1, it states: *Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold thou art fair:* and in verse 7: *'Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee.'* Rev.19:7,8 reads: *'Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.'* That is from the King James Version, but many other versions have *'the righteous acts of the saints.'* Many commentators think this is the actual righteousness granted to the wife who has made herself ready in the resurrection. All then may enter in whose lamps are trimmed and burning and whose robes are white and clean.

The Manna text for December 31 fits nicely in here: *'What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord, now, in the presence of all His people'* (Psalm 116:12-14). (HG)

*'Now unto him that 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 for ever. Amen.'* (Jude 24,25)

## NONE BESIDE

Thou, Lord, art all Thy children need  
And there is none beside;  
From Thee the strings of blessedness proceed,  
In Thee the blest abide;  
Fountain of life and all-abounding grace!  
Our source, our centre and our dwelling place.  
(Mme Guyon)

## ENTER INTO REST

HEB 1:1-11

In a sense the title of this address doesn't quite describe my subject, which is more like **labour** to enter into rest. There is a contrast there between labouring and entering into rest, an apparent contradiction. We have heard much at the Christmas season of the year about the message of joy and peace which was to come from the birth of a child. We are reminded, too, about the angel's message when he visited Mary and told her of her favoured position. The angel also visited Joseph, Mary's husband, to announce that the son that was to be born to Mary was to be called Jesus because he would save his people from their sins.

When our Lord began His ministry to tell the Jews the good news about their salvation available through Him, the message that He delivered also included that passage in Matt.11:28-30: *'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.'* As a word of explanation from William Barclay's commentaries, it means that my yoke fits well. It is perhaps the only reference we have to the life of Jesus when he worked in his father's factory, you might say, as a carpenter, because it was the job of the carpenter to actually mold the yoke to fit the bullock that pulled the plough. The yokes of those days had no padding as you find these days in the halter that fits around the bull's neck so it was a matter of carving that yoke to fit neatly around the particular animal that pulled the plough. And so, the yoke that Jesus

offers has no pressure point there to cause sores and distress. In that sense, His yoke is easy and His burden, although there is a burden to be borne, compared to other ploughs you might have to pull, is light.

This perhaps illustrates the two points that I want to bring out with that message of salvation which to me appeals somewhat to the mind of a person. It is something we know that we need because we see so much death, sorrow, and the results of that. The other part of that message of Jesus is to find rest, which I think appeals to the heart. It is something that even now we can experience and enter into. The concept of rest also appears in other parts of scripture, although that word is not necessarily used. I'm thinking of Peter's second sermon to the people in Jerusalem in Acts 3:19 where he says to the people: *'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.'* There the message, the words that he uses, are 'times of refreshing' rather than having rest. In Genesis, after God finished His works of creation, the expression used is that God rests on the seventh day and this also has a context of rest for the believer, and I would like to develop that later on.

For the moment I would like to concentrate on the idea of refreshment and rest from work, although it's not really a reflection of rest **from** work, but rather a rest in work, because that is what God has done on His seventh, Sabbath day. He is now resting in His work. There are also times in



scripture where passages would seem to have only a local or immediate interpretation, but from a comment or prophetic utterance we see that it has a greater or another understanding as well. As an example text, beginning at Heb.3:7 we read from the Revised Standard: *‘Wherefore, as the Holy Spirit says, Today when you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion on the day of testing in the wilderness when your fathers put me to the test and saw my works of forty years, then I was provoked with that generation and said they always go astray in their hearts and have not known my ways. As I swore in my wrath, they shall never enter my rest. Take care, brethren, lest there be any of you in evil, unbelieving hearts, leading you to fall away from the living God. Exhort one another every day as long as it is called Today, that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, for we share in Christ if only we would hold our first confidence firm to the end while it is said Today, when you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.’*

Who were they who were rebellious? Was it not all those who left Egypt under the leadership of Moses? And with whom was He provoked for 40 years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? And to whom did he swear that they should never enter into His rest but to those who were disobedient? So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.

Therefore, while the promise of entering His rest remains, let us fear that any of you be judged to have failed to reach it for good news came to us just as to them but the message that they heard did not benefit them because it did not meet with faith in the hearers. We who have believed enter that rest. As He has said *‘as I swore in my wrath that **they** shall never enter my rest’*, although his works were finished from the foundation of the world.

The particular verse of Heb.3:7: *‘Today when you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness’* is a quotation from the Psalm 95:7, and it indicates to me the fact that, even in the Psalms, David is saying in his day, ‘Today, when you hear his voice.’ So not only did the lesson have to be learnt referring back to the lesson that had to be learnt by Israel and they rejected it, even in David’s day the ‘Today’ applied to him, and here the writer of Hebrews is also appealing to those he is writing to saying, Today there is a warning not to harden your hearts because there is a rest from the message to believe. The words in the Revised Version put the quotation from the Psalms as a question, and in Hebrews it seems the writer there is appealing to those to whom he is writing. Weymouth has it: *‘Today, if you hear his voice’* as if it is a rhetorical question that if you have this message spoken to you, and the message comes in the verses that follow, the warning that was given and the consequences of their failure.

If we look at the Psalms, there is a slight difference in the reading when we come to the quotation in Hebrews, because in the Psalms it has their rebellion at Meribah as in the day of Massah in the wilderness, whereas in Hebrews it translates that and gives the meanings of those words in the sense that God was grieved with those people. And so we

have urgings and appeals throughout this whole passage. To them was issued the warning, those that died in the wilderness, *‘they shall never enter my rest.’* In fact these words are almost a comment to Heb.3:10, *‘Therefore I was provoked with that generation and said, They always go astray in their hearts.’* Weymouth is even stronger, using some very strong words. He says: *‘I was greatly grieved with that generation’*. Some translations suggest *‘I greatly loathed that generation’*.

We do, of course, realise that Joshua in a sense led that next generation of people into the promised land and to them it is recorded that He gave them rest in the land. It may be asked what kind of rest was it that was given when they entered into the land?

- First of all, they did not have to build houses or dig wells. This is recorded in Deut.6:10. So it would indicate the rest they were offered did not, for a start, include hard physical labour.
- Secondly, it was a place of bounty, as quoted in Ex.3:8: *‘And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites.’* So there was a place flowing with milk and honey.
- Thirdly, it was a place over which they would triumph.
- Fourthly, it was the fulfillment of God’s promise to His people of an inheritance in the land promised to the fathers. We are well aware that when Abraham entered the land he was told to look over the land and God promised that all that he could see would be his.
- Fifthly, it was a gift of grace. Joshua 1:2,3 reads: *‘Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan thou, and all his people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that I have given unto you as I said unto Moses.’* Now it was a promise and it was a fulfillment of that.
- Sixthly, it then required an act of divine intervention when God dried up the waters of the Jordan so that the people could walk across dry shod.
- Seventhly, but not least perhaps, it was a place of conflict. There were wars to be fought with the people being dispossessed.

So I see in this, the people entering into their promised land a picture for the believer. There are many blessed promises given to us, and no doubt we have our favourite ones. Ephesians speaks many times (nine, I believe) of being blessed in heavenly places. The word ‘places’ is supplied, so we are really blessed with ‘the heavenly’.

1. We see that vision of heaven. It is a place abounding for us. Think of all the blessings that God has given us. *‘Eye has not seen nor ear heard of the things God has prepared for them that love Him’*.

2. It is a place for the Christian to triumph. We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.
3. It is in fulfillment of God's promises. He promised the church that He has dedicated them for a particular purpose.
4. It is by the gift of grace. *'By grace are ye saved'*
5. It requires an act of divine intervention. God had to send His son to redeem us from the curse of the law.
6. It is not without conflict. We have to take up our cross and follow Him to dispossess the enemy.

Coming back to my text passage, Hebrew Ch.4, after the writer has quoted from the Psalms, he deals with the example of Israel, of that generation which fell in the wilderness. We have the lessons to be learned. *'Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest remains, let us take care, lest you be judged to have failed the test'*. The sense of failing the test would be that we have not played the game properly, it is as if the judge has found we did not obey the rules, we have been found out, that there is something where we have taken an unfair advantage.

So 'the rest' I see as being applied to us because it says while a promise to enter into His rest remains (Heb.4: 1), there is a promise remaining to be fulfilled. Also in verse 2, that message came to us as well as to them. I know the writer is perhaps addressing those Christian believers a long time ago, as we read these words and understand them the message is coming to us. And in verse 8 and 9, *'If Joshua (Jesus) had given them rest then would he not afterward have spoken of another day. There remaineth therefore a (Sabbath) rest for the people of God.'* Again relating back to the creative work of God in that He rested from His work on the seventh or Sabbath day, and so to the believer the rest that he enters into is a Sabbath rest.

It is important perhaps to look at the appeal that Joshua made to the people just before they entered, at the end of his life. There is an address by Joshua in Joshua 23 and another in chapter 24. Joshua 24:15 ends with that well-known verse: *'If you are unwilling to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your father served in the region beyond the river or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.'* Then the people replied in verse 16: *'Far be it from us that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods, for it is the Lord our God who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt out of the house of bondage and who did great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way in that we went, and all the people through whom we passed. The Lord drove out from before us all the people, the Amorites who lived in the land; therefore we will serve the Lord for he is our God.'* Whether Joshua saw some insincerity in that or no indication that the people actually meant what they said or hadn't put away their idols, we can't be quite sure, but Joshua comes back to them and says in verse 19: *'You cannot serve the Lord for he is a holy God: he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins. If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods, then he will turn and do you harm and consume you, after having done you good.'* The people protested again, *Nay, but we will serve the Lord'*. Joshua's reply to that is: *'You are witnesses against yourselves for you have chosen the Lord to serve. They replied, We are*

*witnesses.'* And to show that they were true to their profession, Joshua told them to put away their foreign gods.

Now, maybe Joshua at that stage was told by the Spirit that the people were not fully for God. The Psalmist seemed to say that because he said that if Joshua had given them rest then there would not have been another day mentioned for that 'Today' period. And it is, of course, a very sad commentary if we look at the judgment. It was only a comparatively short time after death of Joshua that the people began to serve other gods. The lesson, of course, that we learn from this and the people's rebellion in the wilderness, is not to harden our hearts. I suppose the idea of hardening our hearts is saying, Well, we won't do what God want us to do. We like to do our own thing. We will serve Him in the way we want to. God's care and love demands obedience. The children of Israel were pushing it to see how far they could go before they had sinned enough for God to punish them. It is indeed a tragic scene of the whole generation that had to die because God was angry with them.

In Hebrews, chapter 3, there is a whole series of words that seem to build up the rejection of them, from verse 16, some when they had heard were rebellious and God was provoked by them. They sinned and finally they were disobedient, and it was to them was the prophecy that they would not enter the land. In chapter 4 we have an indication that it was a lack of faith that prevented them from entering the land. It says that the good news came to us as it came to them, but with them it was not met with faith. Maybe the faith in believing that God had appointed Moses to be their leader and a willingness to follow him. So we need to see what God's message is for us to follow those instructions in the leadership of those who look after our spiritual welfare.

The nature for the believer now of the rest promised is different from that given to the children as they entered the land of Canaan. It is mentioned in verse 9. It is a Sabbath rest. It reminds us, indeed, of God's creative work and that on the seventh day God rested. It doesn't indicate that God took His ease. We can't imagine God at the present time taking His ease, but at the present time He has entered into experiencing the results of that work. There is a need for us to have a constant faithful watchfulness if we are also to enter into this rest. There are many allurements and attractions to sin. In verse chapter 3: 13 it mentions that, and personifies sin as having allurements and attractions, but those attractions are fraudulent. Sin conceals its true intent. As indicated, when Israel entered that land, first of all they did not have a life of ease. They had to go in and possess the land. There were those conflicts to be won and the enemy dispossessed. Faithfulness to God requires constant watchfulness. The promise for us is to enter that spiritual Canaan. We are offered entrance to the heavenlies. Even now we see that vision of God of restoration of all things.

So my purpose in this talk is just to remind you that by giving you the example of Israel, how they failed and the extent they went to in testing God. They found God was faithful. He did as He promised. So, my prayer is to be faithful as long as it is called Today. (CG)

## WHAT GREAT THINGS HE HAS DONE

***“Fear the Lord and serve him in truth and with all your heart, for consider what great things he hath done for you” (1 Sam.12:24)***

These were the words of Samuel the prophet to the people of Israel. The nation had been kept and controlled in the hands of judges for a considerable period of time, but the time came when the people wanted a change of government. They wanted a king to rule over them in place of judges. Samuel had pointed out to them that God had cared for them very well when judges had control of their welfare, indicating to them that they would not benefit by the rule of a king.

But Israel, seeing other countries around them being ruled by kings, insisted that they also have a king to rule their country. This is clearly shown in the chapters previous to Chapter 12. Samuel had repeatedly told them of their lack of appreciation of God’s goodness towards them and the text verse is a final appeal to them not to turn away from the Lord but to *“serve him in truth and with all your heart, for consider what great things he hath done for you.”* Seeing that God had done many wonderful things for Israel, Samuel used it as a reason why they should show their appreciation to God by being faithful to His law.

The same principle is true with us today. God has richly blessed us in many ways. He has called us out of darkness into His marvellous light and this light has given us much to consider. There are indeed many admonitions in the Scriptures encouraging God’s people to consider, to reflect, to study, to ponder. The truth of God’s word is reasonable, all embracing and in harmony with what we would expect of a God of love, of mercy, of justice and wisdom, so that it always does us good to consider the many aspects of the plan of God, especially His consideration for the church He is calling during this present time. Looking over the Scriptures we find that there are various places where we are advised that we can consider certain things with profit.

Jesus told us in Matt.6:28-29 that we can profit by considering the lilies of the field. Jesus said: *“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.”* All flowers have their special beauty and when one examines their delicate form and colour, we certainly see the hand of the Creator in them. But the lesson Jesus wanted us here to consider was not particularly from the standpoint of their beauty but with a view to learning the lesson of God’s care over His creative works, especially His people. The fact that the growth and beauty of the lily come to it without its toiling and spinning shows us that God is abundantly able to provide for His people, not in a miraculous way as He does for the lily, but if we seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, the material things will be provided also.

David was one who found it profitable and received a great

blessing from a study of the marvellous creative works of God. In Psalm 8:1,3,4 we read: *“O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! Who hast set thy glory above the heavens. 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? And the son of man, that they visitest him?”* David must have often taken note of God’s marvellous creative works including the beauty and glory of the heavens at night. In Psalm 19:1-3 he says not only the heavens show forth his glory but the *“firmament showeth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard.”* There is no need for words to express the marvels of God’s creation and His care, His wisdom, over all that He has made.

There is no doubt that David got a great blessing from considering these things and it helped him to appreciate God’s care for him. It will do the same for us. The Lord’s people who are called during this present time are His new creation. How much more will He care for us? *“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 thee, O ye of little faith.”* (Matt.6:30). If we properly consider the material things from which we can learn lessons of God’s care and then note how these lessons apply to us even in the little affairs of our Christian lives, they should help us to realise that God’s over-ruling providence is over us and providing for the more important needs of our spiritual lives.

There are many assurances from God’s word that He will never leave nor forsake any of His people provided their faith is firmly fixed on Him and His promises to them. David was greatly blessed by his consideration of the greatness of God and all His marvellous works and this helped him to bring his life into harmony with the commandments and laws of God. As David himself said: *“O how I love thy law, it is my meditation all the day”* (Psa.119:97). The Lord’s people are even more blessed because they have been given to understand the special call of the gospel age and the spiritual phase of the plan of God.

Going back to the text in 1 Sam.12:24, the great things Samuel had in mind which God had done for Israel would have included the marvellous way in which He provided for them in the exodus from Egypt and afterwards. In Psalm 105 David remembers God’s providence to Israel. He brought them forth with silver and gold and there was not one feeble person among their tribes. Egypt was glad when they departed for the fear of them fell upon them. He spread a cloud for a covering and a fire to give them light in the night. The people asked and He brought quails and satisfied them with the bread from heaven. He opened the rock and water gushed out that ran in the dry places like a river. He remembered His holy promise and Abraham, His servant. He brought forth His people with joy and His chosen with gladness.

In Acts 7:34-37 Stephen gives a similar account, reading from verse 36: *"He brought them out after that He had showed signs and wonders in the land of Egypt and in the Red Sea and in the wilderness 40 years. This is that Moses which said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren like unto me; him shall ye hear"* This prophet, as we understand, is Jesus, as we see by referring to Hebrews 3:1 which reads: *"Wherefore holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and high priest of our profession, Christ Jesus, who was faithful to Him that appointed him as also Moses was faithful in all his house"*

What the Apostle Paul is telling us here is that Jesus is the high priest who is the great one worthy of our consideration because of his faithfulness to his appointment, not as a servant as was Moses, but as a Son. Also verse 6 says: *"Moses verily was faithful in all his house as a servant for a testimony of those things which were spoken after, but Christ as a son over his own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end."* So we see that we who have been called now are not under the typical Jewish arrangement with an earthly high priest but we have Jesus as our High Priest who is now elevated to the heavenly realm because of His faithfulness.

In Hebrews 2:9 the Apostle has shown to us the character of Jesus, including his willingness to leave the spirit realm and become a man. He says: *"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."* During his earthly life He proved obedient to His Heavenly Father under the most trying experience anyone could go through. Further to this, some of those for whom Jesus tasted death are to be given the opportunity of becoming his brethren, as verse 10 says: *"For it became Him for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through suffering."*

This is something we should continually keep before our minds, how God has condescended to take some of these fallen sinful human beings and lift them up to a condition and position to be partakers with Jesus of the heavenly calling, Peter says in 1 Peter 2:5: *"Ye also as living stones are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."* It is because our High Priest has actually experienced the exceeding sinfulness of sin as we see in Hebrews 2:17 that we can benefit by His life and His example: *"Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted."* This is something we can well consider, this great thing the Lord has done for us.

"All of these experiences through which the Heavenly Father caused His beloved Son to pass before exalting Him to His own right hand of majesty and committing to His charge the great work of blessing all the families of the earth were not merely tests of fidelity of the only begotten

of the Father. The Scriptures assure us that they were necessary also to fit our Lord to sympathise with those whom He thus redeemed that He might be able to sympathise and succour such as would return to full fellowship with God through Him – the Church during this age and the world during the Millennial Age. *"That he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God", one who can have compassion on the ignorant and them that are out of the way; for that he himself also was compassed with infirmities.*" (Vol.5, page 129)

The Apostle Paul again exhorts us to consider Jesus in Hebrews 12:3: *"Consider him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds."* There is much for us to consider here but the main point would be the example of Jesus in enduring the very, very difficult experiences of His whole life. As we have it in 2 Timothy 2:3, we should endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ and thus develop a likeness to the character of Jesus. Looking back over all our many blessings, let us ever be grateful to our Heavenly Father for His many provisions for us, remembering that our temporal as well as our spiritual needs are indeed great things the Lord has done for us through Jesus our Saviour. (JH)

### "YOUR FATHER KNOWETH"

Matt. 6:8

Our Father knows what things we need  
Each step along the way,  
His eye of love doth never sleep,-  
He watches night and day.

He knows sometimes, like ripening grain  
We need the sunshine bright,  
Again He sends the peace that comes  
With shadows of the night.

Sometimes our pride would fain unfurl  
Ambition's flaunting sail,-  
Ah! then He knows we need to walk  
Humiliation's vale.

Sometimes He takes our eager hands  
And folds them on our breast,  
He gently lays our work aside,-  
He knows we need to rest.

Sometimes we need companionship,  
Sometimes, "the wilderness,"-  
How sweet to feel He'll know and give  
The state that most will bless!

Then let us leave it all with Him,  
Assured that, come what may,  
Our Father knows just what we need  
Upon our pilgrim-way.

### PEOPLES PAPER AND HERALD OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM

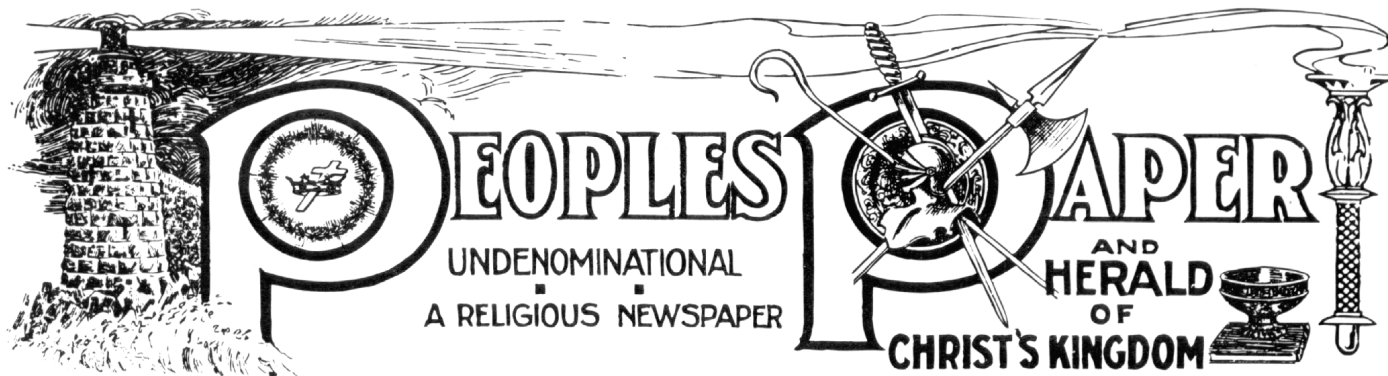
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## “A SAVIOUR – CHRIST THE LORD” (God’s Unspeakable Gift)

Christmas is a special time for exchange of gifts for many people. For the Lord’s people, it is more importantly a reminder of the greatest gift of all, God’s unspeakable gift of His beloved Son to be the Saviour of the world. So it is fitting at this season of the year, along with many around the world, to turn our hearts and thoughts once more to His coming into our world 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 Elizabeth and Zacharias, “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 wonderful announcement of the angel to Mary, the one “highly favoured of the Lord”, and listen to her exultant song of praise to God. *“And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary, for thou hast 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 shall give unto Him the throne of His father David. (Luke 1:30-32)* Mary’s response follows in vv 46-55, beginning with the lovely words *“My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit doth rejoice in God my Saviour”*.

Following the account of His birth, Luke invites us out into the fields and with the shepherds we hear again the 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, which is Christ the Lord”*. (Luke 2:10,11) What a message, announced to a few simple shepherds but of importance 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 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, the prayerful, dutiful prophetess and hear her speak of Jesus and redemption in Jerusalem.

In such circumstances, our dear Saviour came into our world. This, of course, was only the humble beginning and we read of His early life that He “increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man”, until at thirty

years of age, He began His ministry, that ministry which was to culminate in His death on the cross as the pure and spotless Lamb of God, and His triumphant resurrection. With the apostle Paul, we can see the wonderful outworking of the loving plan of God and wholeheartedly exclaim, “Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift!”

In every sense, the gift of His dear Son is God’s “unspeakable” gift and we find with the apostle Paul no language to convey an adequate description or evaluation of the worth of the gift and the richness of the blessings and benefits that have flowed to His people already and are still to flow out to them and all mankind. Nor can we comprehend fully the length and breadth and height and depth of the love which prompted our Heavenly Father to give His Son to be the Redeemer of the world. The word translated “unspeakable” occurs nowhere else in the New Testament and one commentator says that “the idea is that no words can properly express the greatness of the gift thus bestowed on man. It is higher than the mind can conceive, higher than language can express”.

We can come to understand something of the cost to our Heavenly Father when we consider the incident recorded in Genesis 22, where God instructed Abraham to take and sacrifice his son, Isaac, “the child of promise” and “the son thou lovest”. Here, Abraham would be a type of God and Isaac would picture Christ, for *“God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life”*. The remarkable faith of Abraham who was willing in obedience to God to give his own son as a sacrifice still however leaves us unable to comprehend fully the great love of God for His was a free gift, He was under no obligation to provide a Redeemer, other than the constraint of His own so great love.

Let us then at this season, meditate once more upon “God’s unspeakable gift” and in heartfelt gratitude and responsiveness review and renew our determination to follow ever more closely in the footsteps of His dear Son. Let us also look forward and pray for the coming of that day when the message to the shepherds so long ago will come fully into effect and the “good tidings of great joy” will reach and bless all mankind. Amen.

**“Thanks be unto God for His  
unspeakable gift!”**

# SANCTIFICATION

In 1 Thess.4:3 the Apostle Paul says: *'For this is the will of God, even your sanctification.'* The word 'sanctification' here is translated from the Greek word 'hagiasmos' and according to Young's Concordance it means 'separation, putting aside'. In Strong's the word is defined as 'purification, surety, holiness, sanctification'. The corresponding Hebrew word 'qadesh' reveals the identical thought and harmonises with Strong's definition that the very dominant idea of sanctification is separation from the secular and sinful world, setting ourselves apart for a sacred purpose or for divine purposes. By our covenant of consecration, we agree to devote ourselves to do the will of God, and as the truth becomes more meaningful to us and sinks into our minds and hearts through the Holy Spirit, we should be inclined to draw apart from this world and live more devoted lives.

There are really two parts to sanctification: the first is ours, the second belongs to God. *'Sanctify yourselves and I will sanctify you'*. We are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds that we might prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God. (Rom.12:2). We know from our Biblical studies that it was a great pleasure and joy for our Master to do His Father's will and so it should be for each one of us. Separation from sin carries the idea of purity and holiness. The setting of ourselves apart is done according to God's special purpose. The calling of the church, a little flock from this world, is accomplished with the intention that if we are associated with Christ and share in His sufferings, in His sacrificial death, then we share in His honour and His glory.

There is so much more to a Christian life than accepting Jesus. Peter says this in 2 Pet.1:5-11: *'And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for 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.'* We know that God has been preparing a little flock to take

part in that wonderful future work of rehabilitating this human race, that it is the purpose of the actual sanctification of the members of the body of Christ.

## CONSECRATION

There is a little difference between consecration and sanctification. Consecration is a precise act accomplished at a very specific time. It is a person's commitment to serve God without reservations and it is a total submission of our will, our all, all that we possess, to do God's service. We consecrated ourselves when we decided to serve God without limits. *'Behold, I come to do thy will, O God'*. There is nothing more important than a complete consecration to God. By comparison, sanctification is not accomplished in a single moment. It is a life-long process. It begins at consecration and continues with a constant struggle against the sin of this world, against the world, the flesh and the devil. It is a very gradual work, transforming our characters into the likeness of our Lord. It is a difficult task but how important it is for each one of us. It involves continual self-denial, plus humility, patience, perseverance, sufferings, faith, and love. And it will not end until our Heavenly Father says, That is enough, go higher now.

The Apostle Paul in 1 Cor.1:2 writes to the church that they are sanctified in Christ and called to be saints. The Apostle then shows that there are progressive steps in Christ. 1 Cor.1:30 reads: *'But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption'* and it seems that the degree to which we are sanctified might indicate the degree of our reward. If we are partially sanctified, we only have a partial reward. If we are fully sanctified, we are inclined to have a full reward. The Scriptures abound with this thought. We think of the more than overcomers who end up becoming the little flock compared to the overcomers who will probably be in the great company. 2 John 8 reads: *'Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.'*

The Old Testament shows us how sanctification is accomplished in God's dealings back then with the Israelites. The eighth chapter of Leviticus shows the separation of the priests of Levi for the work of the priesthood under the provisions of Moses given by God's direction. In Lev.8: 9-13 we read: *'And he put the mitre upon his head; also upon the mitre, even upon his forefront, did he put the golden plate, the holy crown; as the Lord commanded Moses. And Moses took the anointing oil, and anointed the tabernacle and all that was therein, and sanctified them. And he sprinkled thereof upon the altar seven times, and anointed the altar and all his vessels, both the laver and his foot, to sanctify them. And he poured of the anointing oil upon Aaron's head, and anointed him, to sanctify him.'* Here we have a picture of God's royal priesthood figured in Aaron as a separate class, separated because of a particular function that God set into motion to sanctify and separate that priesthood.

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## THE ANOINTING

Going to Lev.8:30 we read: *'And Moses took of the anointing oil, and of the blood which was upon the altar, and sprinkled it upon Aaron, and upon his garments, and upon his sons, and upon his sons' garments with him, and sanctified Aaron, and his garments, and his sons, and his sons' garments with him.'* That anointing oil typified the Holy Spirit of adoption. Our Lord Jesus, the head of the anointed body, received the anointing at baptism. We, His followers, by our consecration, are anointed for a priestly service, a priestly service of sacrifice, now at the present time. We recall how our Lord left that early church with the instruction that they should tarry at Jerusalem for the anointing of the Holy Spirit. We who have made a consecration have appropriated the merit of Jesus' blood, His ransom sacrifice, and we have received forgiveness for our sins. We have also received the Holy Spirit. This is part of the sanctification process for us. As Aaron and his sons way back there were separated from the children of Israel for service in the Tabernacle, so we are separated from the world for God's service.

Other Old Testament writings show how sanctification is accomplished in God's dealings with the Israelites. In Lev.20:7 we read: *'Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I am the Lord your God'*. Those Israelites had to sanctify themselves and be holy. However, in verse 8 it says: *'And ye shall keep my statutes, and do them: I am the Lord which sanctify you'*. From this verse we see that it was God who sanctified his typical people. We also find this thought in Ex.31:13 where God declares, talking to the Jews through Moses: *'Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you.'* These verses indicate that there are two parts to the sanctification process - the one performed by the people of God, and the other performed by God Himself. The Israelites were to separate themselves from other nations to do God's commandments and to live a holy life. God sanctified them by first telling them to separate themselves from those other nations and then by keeping them well apart as His peculiar people. For this purpose God gave them, and them only, His laws and His commandments. In this way they were the only people on earth who had the privilege to know the only true and living God and to worship, praise and serve Him.

We see today a similar process in the work of sanctification as it applies during this Gospel Age. We are also invited to separate from the world that we may constitute the true people of God, the little flock, the body of Christ, and become new creatures with a heavenly destiny. The invitation given to us is well expressed in Rom.12:1 where it says: *'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.'* Also in Prov.23:26 we have those wonderful words of invitation: *'My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways.'* We who have answered the call and who have consecrated ourselves to the Lord must be separate from the world and must continue to stay in God's way.

## THE WILL OF GOD

Our opening text is important on this subject. *'For this is the will of God, even your sanctification'* (1 Thess.4:3). Here the Apostle writes concerning the will of God and our work. Paul has in mind the class to whom he addressed his letter, that they were justified in Christ. They had accepted God's high calling and come into the Beloved. He was not ignoring the principle of justification, but now he says, Brethren, having made this initial step, let me tell you what the will of God is concerning you. The objective of your life now is to be fully sanctified. When we consider this thought, we realise that it is a great work in ourselves, subduing, conquering, and ruling self, and it requires heart loyalty all through our course of consecration. The acceptance of us by the Father is really only the beginning of the sanctification work. It is His will that we should continue to work, should continue to progress throughout the full completion of the development of our character until we fully develop. And this work should affect our minds, our eyes, our ears, our tongues - all that we have - that they be fully used of the Lord. It is walking after the Spirit that leads to everlasting life with our great Redeemer.

The apostle goes on in 1Thess.4 to outline some of the things they should not do in relationship to their natural lives that would be contrary to the work of sanctification. He continues in verses 3,4: *'Abstain from fornication (or 'immorality' as other translations suggest) that each should learn to master his own body, that no-one is to wrong or defraud his brother.'* Being separated by the anointing oil and the blood that we have received, we become separated from the world, and Paul goes on in verse 7 to say: *'For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.'* *'Be ye holy, for I am holy'* (1 Pet.1:16) Paul goes on in verse 8 to say (and this is how other translations put it): *'Therefore he that disregards this warning, disregards not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy spirit.'* In Eze.38:23 we find a statement that relates to holiness and sanctification together: *'I will magnify myself, and sanctify myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the Lord.'* Here God characterises Himself as being fully sanctified, fully set apart, and is to be made known to those to whom He would reveal Himself.

## OBEDIENCE

Now we might consider a Scripture that is very important for our development. This is in 1 Peter 1:2: *'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.'* Here our attention is drawn to the elect, the Beloved class, that are sanctified by the Holy Spirit. The indwelling of God's spirit in our hearts is one essential function in this process of sanctification, but to have this indwelling of the Holy Spirit requires obedience. We recall that it was a lack of obedience that caused Adam and his posterity to forfeit life. Adam forfeited his life through disobedience. Here the Apostle shows us that through the process of sanctification we may come into relationship whereby we may be obedient to the Lord God and that it is conditional upon three things - full consecration of the believer, implicit obedience to the divine teaching, and full reliance on the pre-



cious blood of Christ. The blood of the sprinkling would refer to the merit of Christ which we must receive by faith in order to cover our blemishes, our condemnation from Adam.

We might picture ourselves as actors on a stage, a stage of life, since consecration. We have a very vast audience. Our light is viewed by the brethren, by friends, relatives, neighbours – they all see the light that we display to them. In our relationship to the Lord, do they see us as having separated ourselves from the world? Do they see us in the actions of our life? This is quite a sobering thought, to consider how our life looks to others, and even more so is the thought that our audience is not confined or limited to this earth. We have heavenly beings as our audience. Those angels might be viewing our lives on this stage of life and observing what kind of sanctification is taking place in us. Above them, we have the Heavenly Father Himself and our dear Lord. These thoughts are suggested by the last part of 1 Cor.4:9: *‘For we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men.’*

We especially appreciate the wonderful words of our Master when He prayed to His Heavenly Father on behalf of His followers as recorded in that beautiful love chapter, John 17:13-19: *‘And now I come to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.’* As we view these verses it becomes clear that a good knowledge of truth is vital in the process of sanctification. We especially note the words of verse 17: *‘Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.’* Other translations say *‘consecrate them in the truth’*, *‘make them holy by the truth’*, *‘thy message is true’*. The only way to possess the full harmony and union of the spirit is by possessing a knowledge of truth. It is the channel of sanctification. Careful study of God’s word is necessary together with an honesty of heart that delights to know and to do God’s will. God gives us His word, His counsel, His admonition, and as these enter into the heart and impress themselves upon us, we are energized to work out in ourselves the peaceable fruits of righteousness and holiness. The spirit applies to our very reason and the word of God is used as its agent.

### THY WORD IS TRUTH

We have been called to be separate, and called to be sanctified. What separates us from the world and its many religions is doctrine, is the truth. The spirit coming from God enables us to understand the things that God has given to us. The Word of God lets us know the plan of God regarding mankind and the church. It reveals the very mind of God and we understand the character of God, His great attributes of wisdom, justice, love and power. It explains the meaning of Jesus’ death on the Cross at Golgatha. It reveals special promises reserved for those who walk in the footsteps of Jesus and that wonderful future that is in store for all mankind. It contains all the exhortation, counsel, encouragement and vital knowledge that we need in order to

be faithful to God. We are amazed at how it enlightens us across a vast span of time with prophecy of the past, present and future of mankind.

In the troubled times of our present age, the understanding of present truth keeps us in a condition of peace of mind and trust while those all around us in the world become more afraid of the future. It stimulates our faith, our praise and worship of God and it encourages us to be more holy in our individual walks of consecration. We think of the great concern that our dear Lord had for the development of the church. In Revelation the Apostle John speaks of the seven stars held in the right hand of the one likened to the Son of man, held in that right hand to suggest the importance of those messages by the seven stars – light bearers of the messengers of the Son of man for the purpose of reforming of the work of sanctification. We can be thankful that we have been living during the time, I believe, of our Lord’s return that has brought to us what we may call ‘meat in due season’. It has had a powerful, sanctifying influence on the church at this end of the age. We contrast our present time with those of the church that lived during those dark ages. We now have much light of truth to enable us to be sanctified and also to be able to assist others in this world.

In 2 Thess.2:13 Paul writes: *‘But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.’* We note two points here: sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth. The divine spirit is the sanctifier and the truth is the instrument. If we are in love with the truth, then the process of sanctification is working in us. Satan seeks to sidetrack the truth, he tries to generate confusion. About 100 years after Paul wrote those words to the Thessalonians, we find from the account concerning the church in Ephesus in Rev.2:4, which says: *‘thou has lost thy first love’*, the beauty of the truth which motivated those brethren at that time and the strength of the Apostle Paul were lost. We believe that it is over a hundred years since the return of our Lord and we have to guard against the same condition prevailing with us. We must see to it that the harvest message, the truth, is not set aside because it is the power of the truth, the divine plan, that satisfies the new creature.

### LOVE OF THE TRUTH

We like those words found in John 4:23,24: *‘But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.’* This means great reverence for the holy things, which is pleasing to God. It means a life in which, through the begetting of the spirit and the knowledge of the divine plan, the individual becomes so at one that it is the essence of his or her life to do the Father’s will. Such delight to serve Him at the cost of their earthly interests. Those to whom God wishes to grant eternal life are those who will gladly obey His laws and, through a knowledge of the truth, it is essential that we worship Him in spirit and in truth. We must guard the truth and defend it because it is a sustaining spiritual food that

we vitally need to progress along this narrow way.

A statement made by Br. Russell is recorded in reference to John 4. He states: *'Worship in spirit and truth does not apply simply to prayer and praise, supplication and thanksgiving. It goes deeper than all these and takes hold upon the affections of the heart and signifies not an act of worship but rather a life of worship, a life in which, through the begetting of the spirit and a knowledge of the divine plan, the individual becomes so at one with God, so in union with the law of God and all the features of the plan of God that it is, in the words of our Lord, his meat and drink to do the Father's will. This is worship in spirit and in truth.'*

When the Heavenly Father gave His summation of His son's life after three and a half years of His ministry, His sacrifice and His ascension, He seems to describe the most valuable objective His Son had reached with these words that are recorded in Psalms 45 and repeated by Paul in Hebrews 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.'* It was the love of the truth, the love of righteousness, its principles, that motivated our Lord's life. It was also an abhorrence of error and evil, and unless our objectives are directed likewise, we simply will not be fully sanctified. By the Holy Spirit which works through the truth we have been begotten to a new nature, a spirit nature. We have become new creatures in Christ.

The Apostle Paul explains in 2 Corinthians 5:17: *'If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new.'* As new creatures, we are **in** Christ, and to be in Christ means to be a part of the body, the church, the little flock. We no longer have a head of our own, no longer have a will of our own, but we hold our Lord as head. We seek to do the will of God as shown by Christ's behaviour, by His words and His deeds. So as God's will exhorts us let us look to Jesus, *'the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.'* (Hebrews 12:2,3).

As we try to follow His example in our lives, we will gradually grow towards His likeness. It is appropriate that we do so for God predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His son. We will grow and develop and increase the measure of our spirit, a spirit we have received, until we are filled with the Spirit as was our Lord, the Apostles and the disciples. Like Stephen, of whom it is said *'He was a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit'* (Acts 6:5). We will be gradually spiritually strengthened by divine power working and growing in us. This Spirit will help us face the various difficulties and trials along this narrow way. It will help us to overcome, to quench, the spirit of this world and the Adversary. The Holy Spirit is a comforting factor in all of our trials and difficulties. Indeed, it is called the Comforter by our Lord who declared before He left His disciples, in John 14:16: *'And I will pray the Father and He*

*shall give you another comforter that he may abide with you forever.'* The growing of the Holy Spirit in us will be accomplished by the development of the fruits and the grace of the Spirit. Paul in Galatians 5:22-24 said: *'But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.'*

### SUMMARY

In summary, the Spirit of God enables us to understand the things God has given us. It leads us in the truth, in the whole truth. It is truth that sanctifies us. Once again, we think of that wonderful Scripture: *'Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth'* (John 17:17). The truth contained in the Bible enables us to know the plan of God for mankind in general and the church in particular. It enables us to understand the mind and character of God, His great wisdom, justice, love and power. It explains the meaning of Jesus' death on the cross. It has revealed to us the special promises reserved only for those that walk in the footsteps of Jesus and the wonderful future that is in store for all mankind. It also contains all the exhortations, counsels, encouragement and knowledge that each one of us needs in order to be faithful to God. It is remarkable how the Bible enlightens us through the prophecies of the past, present and future. It gives us so many wonderful lessons and experiences in order to motivate us in this present fast-moving society. It is the understanding of God's plan that gives us peace in a very troubled world while all those around us become more afraid of the future. It stimulates our faith, our praise, our worship of God, and it encourages each one of us to purify ourselves. Through all this work, it sanctifies us and keeps us apart from the world, and it urges us on to greater holiness.

(E L)

## HAVING DONE ALL

Having done all O then let us stand.

"Quit you like men and be strong."

The prayer of your faith shall be mighty to save  
When the watching and waiting seems long.

Our Master is here, O let us rejoice

When we see all the tumult and strife.

He walks on the waves anti will quiet the storm,  
Bringing peace to those weary of life.

We can't be fainthearted with victory so near.

God has called us to herald the day.

Together let's stand in the faith that's of old,  
Trusting Him to the end of the way

# WATER OF LIFE

*"And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb" (Rev.22:1)*



Have you ever walked through the bush country and come across a stream of water running over a rocky bed and in looking down on the deep water you can see the bottom of the stream. The

water is clear as crystal. If you are thirsty a drink of this cool clear water is indeed refreshing. Such is the beautiful picture of the water of life.

The term 'living waters' is used in the Scriptures as descriptive of the word of God. This is a very apt description because everywhere we can see that the value of pure water is appreciated. While life is capable of being sustained without food for weeks, this is not possible without water. A few days at the most without water and death will result. Water, living water, pure water is then a wonderful symbol. Thirst is another symbol indicating a desire, a longing, a craving. Physical thirst is said to be much more painful than physical hunger. Hunger gradually loses its powers in weakness. Thirst continues and intensifies.

Water is that which quenches or satisfies the demand of nature and so there is soul-thirst and a water of life which alone can quench it. Every ambition and desire is a thirst. A man's greatness, his individuality, is measured by the amount of desire he may have, but it must be directed in the right way. The lesson to us as Christians then is not that we should be without desire but those desires (or ambitions) should be transformed from earthly carnal desires to righteous heavenly desires. Thus the followers of the Lord are to hunger and thirst after righteousness and are to be filled or satisfied not by losing their desires but by realising them. This can come only by partaking of the Word of God which these living waters symbolise.

By 'the word of God' we do not understand the paper and ink with which the Bible is printed, but the thoughts and purposes of God conveyed to our minds by these means. Take for instance the possibility that we had no Bible of our own. At our Lord's first advent there were many who could not read but heard the gospel preached by word of mouth only; it was nonetheless the power of God unto salvation to believers. It was just as much the water of life to thirsty souls as the word of God later on in this gospel age when it came to be expressed in printed form. God's word still has

the power to satisfy our longings as nothing else can do. His thoughts will not perish nor his purposes fail, as we read in Isaiah 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 thing whereto I sent it."*

When we speak of the Word of God and say that the term 'living water' aptly describes it, we have in mind the wonderful message of the gospel of God wherein is revealed His plans and purposes for our salvation. This message is based on the redemption work accomplished by Jesus, our Saviour. When this plan of God is understood and received into the heart of the Christian, the Holy Spirit of God reveals to us the character of God, and it is then that our desire to serve God and to lay hold on the promise of eternal life energises us. The expression 'living waters' or words of similar meaning occur in several places in the Scriptures. Let us read some of them.

## LIVING WATER

The first one is found in John 4:10-14. Here Jesus is speaking to the woman of Samaria: *"Jesus said to her, If thou knewest the gift of God and who it is that saith to thee Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him and he would have given thee living water. The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with and the well is deep, from whence then hast thou that living water. Art thou greater than our father Jacob which gave us this well, and drank thereof himself and his children and his cattle? Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."*

How wonderful this statement must have appeared to the woman; and how wonderful it appears to us, even more after we have learned its real depth and meaning. We are continually learning more and more from this water of life, appreciating it more and more each day we live, and finding still greater refreshment in it as we continue to partake of it. The whole world is seeking peace and happiness. The few who have truly found Jesus and have made a full consecration of their hearts to him have received this water of life. These have found the happiness which the world is seeking in other directions in vain. They have found satisfaction in their hearts which is able to offset trials, sorrows, difficulties and disappointments, and to rejoice in the realisation that their experiences are working to their eternal advantage, proving and preparing them for still greater riches by and by.

The Apostle Paul says in 1 Timothy 4:8: *"That godliness is profitable unto all things having promise of this life and of that which is to come."* In John 17:3 Jesus said: *"This is life eternal that they may know thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent"*. What is meant here is

that eternal life will be given to those who, having heard the gracious message brought to them concerning God's character and purposes, embrace its teachings and decide to follow the life of Jesus. We remember what Jesus said in John 6:68-69 when he asked the twelve disciples if they would leave him and cease to follow him any more, Peter replied: *"To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life and we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."* The 'words of eternal life' and the 'living water' have the same meaning.

Let us read Philippians 2:14-16 *"Do all things without murmurings and disputings, That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation among whom ye shine as lights in the world holding forth the word of life."* The indication is again that the Word of God, the "word of life" is 'living water' and In Peter 1:23-25 the Apostle speaks of the Lord's people as being begotten again, not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible by the 'Word of God' which liveth and abideth forever. Then he goes on to say: *"For all flesh is as grass and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth and the flower thereof passeth away, but the Word of the Lord endureth forever. This is the Word which by the gospel was preached unto you."*

Again in Hebrews 4:12 we read that: *"The word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart."* The Diaglott translates the first line as *'The word of God is living and energetic'*. This is because eternal life cannot come to any without the Word of God. In this passage also we are told that *'the Word of God is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart'*. This is a remarkable statement yet many have realised and felt the searching power of the Word of God in their lives..

We go to books to find what is in the mind of the author. We go to the Word of God to find what is in the mind of its Author and what is God's will for us. To anyone who reads it with only a little spiritual understanding, there comes the realisation that this book is God's Word and its author understands and knows all about us..It is like a mirror which reflects us exactly as we are. It detects our motives, discerns our needs and having truthfully revealed to us our real selves, it counsels, reproves, exhorts, guides and refreshes.

Like water to the parched lips, the Word of God is always refreshing to His people. It is not the purpose of the Word of God to expose and discourage by revealing to us our imperfections but its purpose is to refresh and encourage us to overcome them. No matter how many times we turn to the water of life, it is always the same. It does not lose its refreshing taste. How often we can turn to passages such as Psalm 23 and get refreshment: *"He leadeth me beside the still waters"*. Psalm 119:105: *"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path"*. And so we can always turn to appropriate scriptures to suit the occasion of our needs.

## PURE WATER

There is one thing we always have to be on guard against and that is water that is not pure. Instead of being clear as

crystal as one can see in mountain streams, water can be polluted with all sorts of foreign matter and so instead of being life giving it can be very detrimental to health. There is the danger of becoming sectarian. Nearly every church has created or accepted some false doctrine which has polluted the word of God. The Apostle Paul in 2 Thess.2:8 said in his day that the mystery of iniquity doth already work: *"For this cause God shall send them strong delusions that they should believe a lie"* and in verse 15 says: *"Therefore brethren stand fast in and hold the traditions which you have been taught whether by word or our epistle."*

The Word of God then is indeed 'living water' to the Christian just as much today as it ever was. Remember again our Lord's words to the woman at the well: *"But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into eternal life"*. So we can drink in all the beautiful truths that have been given to us in these last days. We understand God's purpose for his people during this gospel age as never before, and through His Word we can continually be refreshed. Whatever our needs be, we can go to the Word of God, the source of our new life, and receive our requirements. The Apostle Paul says in 2 Timothy 3:16-17- *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."*

In the great Millennial Age the living water will flow to all mankind; all will have the opportunity to drink of it. All may not accept the pure water but all will have access to it, as we read in our opening text. Listen also to Isaiah 55:1: *"Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters"*. Rev.22:17 is another prophecy of the Millennial Age: *"And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come, and let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely"*. So whether it is now or in the age to come, salvation can only come through partaking of the living water of whom Jehovah himself is the fountain. (JH)

## A LITTLE WORD

If any little word of ours  
Can make one life the brighter,  
If any little song of ours  
Can make one heart the lighter;  
God help us speak that little word,  
And take our bit of singing,  
And drop it in some lonely vale  
To set the echoes ringing

# The Restoration of the Fallen Heavenly Host

When we talk about restitution we usually talk about God's plan of restoration for the earthly creation. It is not often that we talk about God's wider plan to unite and bring into harmony not only his earthly creation but also his heavenly creation. God's plan of restoration as revealed in scripture is primarily concerned with the earthly creation. There are, however, scriptural references to a restorative process for certain spiritual beings. Some of these scriptural references are fairly oblique and this probably reflects God's aim in giving us an understanding of the restorative process as it relates to the earthly creation in the first instance.

This presentation is primarily concerned with this heavenly restorative process and there is a reasonably large body of scripture that relates to the fallen heavenly host and an opportunity for their restoration to divine favour in the future. There are a number of aims of this presentation. The first is to look at and explore these scriptures and thereby gain some understanding concerning the role the "called out" of God will play in regard to this opportunity. Another aim of this presentation is to look at and explore the possibility that the "restitution of all things" includes the restoration of the willing previously disobedient heavenly host. Another aim is to gain a greater understanding and appreciation of God's wider plan, viz as it relates to other sentient beings apart from mankind.

It is a subject that can be prone to speculation. This will be avoided as far as possible but where it is clear that speculation is occurring, the thoughts presented are put forward merely for consideration rather than as scriptural truth. The question can be asked, "why address this seemingly obscure and possibly unimportant subject?" The reasons for doing so are:

1. Scripture refers to this subject and therefore we were meant to have some understanding of it
2. Having some understanding of this part of God's plan, to some extent gives a greater understanding and appreciation of God character
3. We come to have a greater understanding of humanity's position in God's greater plan
4. We gain a greater understanding of the role of the body of Christ in the ages to come. This is particularly relevant to us since we are all aspiring to be members of the body of Christ.

## The Heavenly Host

We know and it is clear that our earth is only a part of the universe of God. When we survey the heavens we are in awe of the total creation of God. And in fact it is this heavenly creation which is an evidence of the existence and glory of our creator. We are told in the psalms: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork." (Psa 19:1) And also in Isaiah 40:26 "Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number; he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth."

We also know that the universe is not empty and that God has many dwelling places or places of abode in this universe. *John 14:1,2* "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are

many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you" *One must ask for whom or for what are these dwelling places. These dwelling places, we are told, were already in existence prior to Jesus leaving the earthly realm, since Jesus promised that he would prepare a place for his faithful followers; which was still future at the time that Jesus promised this. So it cannot be just the church for which they were created.*

We know that God is surrounded by the heavenly host. In 1 Kings 22:19 we read: "And he said, Hear thou therefore the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left." Since God dwells in the heavens these heavenly host must also be spiritual creatures. These make up the heavenly host. Usually when we think of the heavenly host, we recall the multitude of the heavenly host praising God at the time of the birth of Jesus. (Luke 2:11-14) So in this presentation, the **heavenly host is taken to mean the multitude of heavenly or spiritual beings.**

## The Nature of the Heavenly Host

We need to have some understanding of the nature of this heavenly host. Firstly what do we mean by nature? I will be using nature according to the meaning of phusis SG5449 meaning a genus or sort. The following verses illustrate the point:- 2 Peter 1:4 "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature (phusis) having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. "James 3:7 NIV "All **kinds (phusis)** of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man."

This sense of nature, as phusis conveys does not refer to character but to the inherent sort or genus. Hence 2 Peter 1:4 does not refer to a divine character in the sense of the mind or character of God but to the actual spiritual genus or plane of existence. This is intimately related to the type of body corresponding to that nature. For example man, beast, fish and birds are all flesh but have different natures. We are all familiar with these earthly natures; they are of the earth, constituted of the same elements as the earth. They are material and tangible.

Spiritual beings can be divided into two groups. "The angel of the Lord," "the angels of heaven" or "the angels of God" are phrases that distinguish the holy angels from the fallen angels, otherwise known as demons. Presumably, originally all of these spirit beings were in harmony with God. Those in harmony with the creator are frequently referred to as angels since they usually have a purpose or mission. The Greek word (*aggelos* = *angelos*) from which angel is translated simply means a messenger or envoy, suggesting a purpose or mission. The following verses bear this out – "The angel of the Lord encampeth round them that fear him and delivereth them." (Psa 34:7) "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" (Heb 1:14)

The scriptures also refer to different types of angels such as the seraphim and cherubim, which possibly have different functions. The scriptures talk further about at least two planes of spiritual beings, firstly the heavenly host which

are generally referred to as angels; these may be divided into those that are and are not in harmony with the creator at present, and secondly those possessing the divine nature which God and now Jesus have and which is promised to the Israel of God. (2 Peter 1:4)

The heavenly host or angels have spiritual bodies allowing them (if not constrained) to materialise, eat, and walk through material objects and so on. They are also able to inhabit and possess a human being as well as an animal. Their primary role and position imply a service role to the creator, which of course requires strict obedience to the creator.

### **The Fall and Punishment of the Heavenly Host**

Jude 6 makes clear that there are angelic beings out of harmony with the creator which are being kept in a subdued state until a time of judgement. These are the angelic beings, which kept not their former estate. "And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting (age lasting) chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day."

Jude tells us that these angels (whose implicit function was to serve God) left their designated habitation. Because of this they have been constrained and await judgment on the great day. From the temporal standpoint that Jude wrote this passage, the great day was still future. Peter tells us. "For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell (tartaroo), and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly." (2 Peter 2:4,5)

Peter uses the Greek tartaroo to describe this imprisoned state, a word used in Greek mythology as the name for a dark abyss or prison." By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.

Peter tells us explicitly that in leaving their habitation they disobeyed God and therefore are imprisoned (in a constrained state). In this way they are reserved unto the judgment of the great day (as Jude puts it) Genesis fills in the details of what happened, viz. that these angelic beings materialized and commingled with the daughters of men leading to a hybrid race that filled the earth with violence. It was on this account that the world that existed prior to the flood was destroyed.

### **Judgment of the Fallen Heavenly Host**

We note that in these days of Noah the earth was filled with violence as a result of the disobedient actions of these wicked angelic being. Interestingly, Jesus tells us that a sign of his presence will be a time similar to the days of Noah. "But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be, for as in the days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark." (Matt 24:37,38) Paul also tells us that the last days will be similar in terms of violence amongst other characteristics. "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, in-

continent, fierce, despisers of those that are good." (2 Tim 3:1-3)

We understand that we are now living in these last days, these days of violence. These days, as the days of Noah will be ended by God displaying his displeasure and wrath. Zephaniah calls this "the great day of the Lord's wrath. (Zeph 1:14-18) This "great day" marks the time that this age will end. Like the world or earthly order prior to the flood was destroyed, so will the present order prior to the establishment of God's kingdom, but this time by symbolic fire. "Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: **But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire** against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." (2 Peter 3:6,7)

Turning again to Jude's words - "And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto **the judgment of the great day.**" Could this be the same time? Jude suggests that their judgment would be associated with the removal of these chains of constraint, otherwise he would not have told us that the chains are age lasting. The violence in the world and the rise of spiritism suggests that this may already be occurring.

Since the Church is to take part in the judgment, it would of course require the completion of the church and their resurrection. This gathering together of the saints is another important during the presence of our Lord. "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we, which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. (1 Thes 4:15-17.

We read in Rev 20:2,3 - "And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season From this perspective, the judgment of the angelic host may occur during this last destructive phase of the Gospel age. Certainly, any evil influence will not be allowed during the millennial judgment day of the world. Satan will be bound for a thousand years so that the nations are deceived no more. Since this major evil influence will be stopped it seems reasonable to assume that no other adverse external influence will be allowed including that of the once disobedient heavenly host

It has been suggested that the judging of the angels will occur during the so-called great judgment day of the world. If this did occur it would have to occur after the time of restraint of Satan; possibly during the little season when Satan is allowed to test those upon the earth culminating in his destruction when thrown into the lake of fire. Another possible time for the pre-judging or trial of these angels is the present Gospel age. Or in other words that the angels are being judged by the experiences of Jesus and the Church. There is some scriptural evidence to support this. We know that Jesus preached to the imprisoned spirits. "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that

he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison (1 Peter 3:18,19)

One might ask how did Jesus preach to these spirits? It seems very unlikely that Jesus literally went and spoke to these spirits in their imprisoned state. It seems more logical to suggest that by his example of obedience, even unto death a better way was shown unto these once disobedient spirits. Paul puts this proper course in sharp focus for us in Philippians 2:7-9 when speaking of Jesus. The lesson would not be lost on these spirits since this example of Jesus would be seen as a sharp contrast to their disobedient actions. We know also that the apostles and the Church are made a "spectacle" unto angels. "For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made **a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men.**"

The word spectacle in the Greek means something to look at and inspect. This would fit with this learning phase of their trial or judgment. The above scripture also says that we are a spectacle not just to angels but also the world; and we know that the world is not on trial or judgment now. We know that the judgment of the world will occur in the next age. This means that the fact that angels are watching and learning now does not necessarily mean that they are on trial now (i.e. the entire Gospel age). Another scripture also tends to suggest that the time for the judging of the disobedient angels is also future to the Gospel age.

"Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we *shall* judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?" (1 Cor 6:2,3) *The tense in the Greek for verse 3 is future. Since Paul wrote at the beginning of the Gospel age it would suggest that it would not occur during it. Also the same tense is used for verse 2 in reference to the judging of the world which we definitely know is future to the Gospel age. So it seems we have at least 3 reasonable candidates in terms of the timing of the judgment of these angels.*

### **The Restitution of The Heavenly Host**

The word *restitution* is used only once in the New Testament of the Authorized Version. It is a translation of the Greek word *apokatastasis*. This Greek word is also only used once in the New Testament in Acts 3:21 and derives from apo, "back, again," kathistemi, "to set in order," translated RV, "restoration", KJV, "restitution" and these therefore appear to be good translations, the words restitution and restoration are very similar in meaning in this context.

This link is further emphasized in Matthew 17:11 He answering, said, "Elijah indeed comes, and will **restore all things**" (Diaglott). John the Baptist was the minor fulfillment of this spirit of Elijah as Jesus makes clear in the following verses. This thought is made even clearer in Luke 1:16,17 (speaking of John the Baptist) "*And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.*" The major fulfillment of the picture of Elijah is of course the glorified church, the completed Abrahamic seed of blessing; which shall indeed "restore all things"; in its ultimate and fullest sense.

The word translated restore in Matthew 17:11 is the Greek word *apokathistemi*; it is used 8 times in the Authorized Version and according to Strong's Dictionary means to "**restore to its former state**" Matthew 12:10-13 "*And, behold, there was a man which had his hand withered. And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days? that they might accuse him... Then saith he to the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it forth; and it was **restored** whole, like as the other.*" Here it is well illustrated that *apokathistemi* (translated restored) means **a return to an original state**. In regards to the heavenly host the original state was of coarse obedient harmony with the creator.

From 1 Cor 6:2,3, already quoted, it appears that Jesus and his body will be involved in their judgment as with the judgment of the world. Since this judgment of the world is a corrective period with a trial at the end, it stands to reason that some such corrective period and trial will occur in regards to these fallen heavenly host also. We have seen that the heavenly host learns from the struggles of the people of God, who are a spectacle to them (1 Cor 4:9) and that Jesus by his example "*preached*" to the imprisoned spirits (1 Peter 3:19,20)

There would be no need or purpose for any sort of spectacle or preaching for these imprisoned spirits if there was no hope for them. It therefore seems the heavens; the realm of these wayward spirits, will be put in order and that the fallen heavenly host is gaining valuable knowledge during their time of imprisonment during the Gospel age.

The world will have a period of opportunity to show its loyalty to God by demonstrating the lessons learned under the guidance of the seed of blessing. This will occur during the little season of testing at the end of the millennium when Satan will be loosed for a while. Analogously, the heavenly host would be expected to have an opportunity to demonstrate loyalty and obedience to God also. Whether this will occur during the great day of God's wrath or the little season or another time is not clear. We can be assured however, that as God has shown his love to us by sending his only begotten Son, so will he deal with the heavenly host.

Again Jesus, along with his helpers, will be the instrument for unifying all things in heaven, as in the earth." (*Jesus Christ*) *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 3:21) According to the meaning of the process of restitution outlined, this hope for the imprisoned spirits would qualify as being part of the restitution of all things. Paul may have also referred to this in Ephesians 1:10 – "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might **gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him.**"

In conclusion, we can see that God has a very wide plan indeed. This plan will lead not only to the restitution of the earth but also to the unification under Jesus of all things in heaven, including the fallen heavenly host. God again demonstrates to us his consistent mercy and loving kindness. This gives us great confidence to continue in our calling with greater zeal, unto the end. To know something of this wide plan is wonderful enough, let alone to potentially have a helping role in it.

May all glory be to our mighty God. Amen.



## “GOD WORKETH IN YOU”

**“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who worketh in you both to will and do of His good pleasure.” (Phil 2:12,13)**

The Scriptures clearly teach us that our Lord has paid the ransom price for all mankind, that He is the propitiation for our sins and those of the whole world and that there is salvation in no other. (1 Tim 2:6, 1 John 2:2 and Acts 4:12). We rejoice in the wideness of God’s mercy to be shown to all people in due time, but it is the present offer of salvation and its terms and prospects that we are immediately concerned with. Concerning this, the writer to the Hebrews says= “Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip, for.....how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them who heard Him.” (Heb 2:1-3)

This warning against neglect of what he terms **“so great salvation”** does not refer to failing to hear and obey the gospel call, which we realize from John 6:44 is not sent out to all people, “No one can come to me (Jesus), except the Father who hath sent me draw him.” From the counsel given later in Hebrews against falling away after once embracing the call, it is clear that it is the salvation that has already been received that is intended. So this is a stern warning, God’s gift is not to be downgraded or neglected but, under the mighty hand of God, is to be valued, nurtured and developed. In our text verse, Paul describes this as “working out our salvation with fear and trembling”.

But how is this salvation received or entered into? The Philippian gaoler asked this question long ago and Paul’s reply was direct and explicit, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.” (Acts 16:31) Elsewhere he assures us that “if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” (Rom 10:9,13) By the grace of God, salvation is the means by which the believer in Jesus Christ passes or is transferred from death unto life. “There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.” (Rom 8:1) Such he later urges to present their bodies living sacrifices in gratitude to God.

Salvation then begins with acceptance of Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, but the scriptures do not make this a finishing point, rather the starting point of an experience of salvation. Paul in Romans 13 counsels the brethren in fitting Christlike behaviour, adding, “and that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep, for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.” (Verse 11) Here he appears to speak of our salvation as still future but getting closer. Does this mean that we are not as yet saved, or is it referring to the final consummation of what we might term an experience of salvation, lasting a lifetime? Of one thing we can be sure, our Heavenly Father does not want His children to be in a constant state of uncertainty.

Peter also speaks prospectively, as it were, of our salvation, in the context of testings which the Christian may undergo along the way. “That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold, though it be tried by fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen ye love, in whom, though now ye see Him not, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.” (1 Pet 1:7-9) Vine tells us that the word “end” here points to the final issue or result of a state or process. This well represents the process of salvation in each Christian – first the call, then the outworking and finally the reward. What a privilege is ours, how important that we do nothing to hinder the outworking in our own lives.

### THE DAY OF SALVATION

Wise counsel is given also by Paul in writing to Corinth, “We then as workers together with Him (God), beseech you that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. (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.”) (2 Cor 6:1,2) For those who have heard the call of God, and are co-workers with Him, Paul stresses that now is the accepted time for their salvation. It is not yet the accepted time for the remainder of mankind, as yet He is not calling them. The message and instruction not to nullify His grace is for His children here and now, rather we need constantly to seek to grow in His grace.

For this task, our text verses – Phil 2:12,13 - provide the key. In verse 12, Paul urges the brethren and that includes you and me to “work out” our salvation, that gift of God already received, and that we do so with fear and trembling. At the outset, we note that there is no suggestion of working for our salvation but it needs to be worked **at** and worked out in our lives. It is of interest to note that different words are used for, firstly, the Christian’s out-working of his or her salvation and, secondly God’s in-working in the Christian. In the first case, Vine tells us that the word carries the thought of “working out, achieving, effecting by toil” and a firm and consistent approach is clearly called for. Would-be achievers in any enterprise know just how important is practice and still more practice, not just sporadically but consistently.

We note the qualification “with fear and trembling” and here again this highlights the need for singleness of purpose, as with an Olympic athlete in training, with perhaps an element of urgency of desire for only that which will please our Father in heaven. Christians should certainly not live in a constant fear of failure or of divine wrath but be ever mindful of the calling to which they have been called, seeking only the will of Him who has called them out of darkness into light. The writer to Hebrews adds, “Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.” To illustrate, he cites the case of the failure of Israel of old to attain to God’s promises because of unbelief.

A similar thought of working out salvation is given in Rom

5:3-5, "Not only so, but we glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us." This is how we are to view such experiences; under God's hand they are helping in the working out of our salvation and in the building up of character and Christlikeness. This is not to ignore that some experiences may well be grievous at the time but afterwards they yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness. (Heb 12:11) and that present light afflictions work out for our eternal glory.

### GOD'S WORKMANSHIP

But even with such thoughts in mind, we would be still concerned if the assurance of verse 13 did not immediately follow. How would we feel if we were left entirely on our own to work out our salvation? This next verse is surely one that we cannot read without a "hallelujah" or "amen"! "For it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." This is an assurance which we can and should take to ourselves personally; God Himself is at work in your life and in mine, not necessarily in the way that we might choose but according to what is pleasing to Him and in accordance with His perfect will. Would we really want it any other way?

How glad we all can and should be that the process of salvation in each one of us is under the management and direction of the great master-builder of the universe. The word "working in", according to Vine, has the idea of a person or power being active or operative, an influential force. The word is used firstly of God, but also of the Holy Spirit, the Word of God, of faith and endurance, all of which would represent channels of God's "working in" His people. It is used also of evil influences, but here the objective is clear – the good pleasure of the divine will for each child of God. It is in this context of God's over-ruling care that he or she is to steadfastly work out their salvation, as co-workers with God. In Eph 2:10, the apostle says, "ye are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

What does it mean to be His workmanship? The only other use of the same word in the New Testament refers to things of the physical creation ("things that are made" Rom 1:20) which also give potent evidence of God's eternal power and divine character. Even as our Heavenly Father made the heavens and earth out of what was without form and void, so He is able by His mighty power to create (anew) vessels suited to His purpose out of frail human flesh. The apostle further tells us that this is that same mighty power that He employed in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and set Him on His right hand on high. So it is by His Holy Spirit, by which we have already been begotten into God's family, that He is working in us. Surely this calls for our full submission, so that the precious task of making out of useless clay vessels beautiful and fit for service may go ahead, until finally conformed into the likeness of His Son.

What a lot more work we often feel needs to be done in us; how slowly the pattern seems to be emerging! But we can take comfort, assured that "He who hath begun a good work in us, will perform (complete) it until the day of Jesus Christ." and "faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it." (Phil 1:6, 1 Thes 5:24) Our Heavenly Father will not

half finish the work in us or, wearying of the task, abandon us. No., we can be sure that He who has commenced the work of grace in our hearts will not weary but will finish the work in due time to His own glory and our eternal blessing, so long as we remain faithful. Paul prayed for the Thessalonians that "God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of His goodness, and the work of faith with power." (2 Thes 1:11)

### THE LEARNING PROCESS

How then does He work in us? Certainly by the lessons and ongoing experiences of life as we daily learn to love and to trust and to obey Him. Often, it seems we are poor pupils and so we need the chastenings which He allows to come our way, but it is in love, like a merciful father, that He permits the fiery trial. "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous, nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them who are exercised thereby." (Heb 12:11) Our Heavenly Father works in us through His people, for it is the privilege of each one of us to build one another up in faith, of bearing one another up in prayer, of comforting one another in distress. He works in us furthermore as His Spirit illuminates the sacred page to our waiting hearts. In all these areas, we need the spirit of lowly teachableness, so that He may the more effectively and freely work in us His good pleasure.

What is His good pleasure for us? What is the desired outcome? It includes – "that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love", "that we might walk worthy of the Lord, fruitful in every good work and increasing in knowledge of God", "for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom". These all point forward to the carrying out of the divine purpose to bless all mankind in the age to come, for which God has called us, and is even now carrying out His preparatory work in us, as we yield to Him. All God's works are perfect, and His workmanship, the Church of this gospel age, will be no exception, but will be "a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but holy and without blemish." (Eph 5:27) Redeemed and cleansed in Christ's precious blood, and fashioned by the Father's hand, His peculiar people individually and collectively will finally be fully fitted for the future blessing and restoration of mankind.

The plan of God for human salvation is grand in its scope and depth, it is all-embracing and will surely satisfy the longings and aspirations of all mankind in due time. Within that plan, the present offer of salvation to those with ears to hear and hearts to respond, offers blessings now and in the future with that dear One whom yet unseen we love. Daily let us heed the apostle's words – "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." Is God working in us today? Yes, we can be sure that He is working in you and in me, while we remain His faithful children. Amen..

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