



Volume 3



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Preface

Our Call to Holiness—What thoughts does the word “call” suggest? First of all, we are reminded that salvation begins with action and interest on God's part. Jesus said—

“No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him” (Jn. 6:44).

God has called us—invited us to fellowship—offered us a position of honor and power and glory and responsibility higher than anything mankind has ever dreamed of—asked us to set aside all less-important, passing things, and diligently prepare ourselves for intimate, eternal association with Him.

To what extent do we really realize the implications of the call? If we really did fully realize its magnitude—would not our minds ALWAYS be filled with the thrill and expectation and wonder of it?

Would we not ALWAYS be zealously engaged in intensive preparation, impatient of anything that distracted or diverted our attention from these efforts?

How real is our professed zeal? How deep is our professed faith? How strong is our professed hope? How true and undivided is our professed love?

Surely it would seem that if we really possessed these things in their fullness, our characters and our activities would be so much different from what they are!—and so much more different from all the rest of natural, animal humanity!

Where is the pure, gentle, gracious transformation to a heavenly, Christlike holiness of which the Scriptures constantly speak as the ONLY way of life—the being “changed into the same divine image from glory to glory”?

* * *

The only true Christadelphian—the bride of Christ—is the one whose whole life and interest revolves wholly and exclusively around God, who is always about the Father's business. There are no half-measures. If we have the Truth in truth, this is what it will inevitably do to us. It will transform us. It will eat us up. It will grow and grow stronger and stronger in our lives. It will be a fire in our bones.

—G. V. Growcott

Several years have now passed since volumes 1 and 2 of “*Be Ye Transformed*” appeared. In the mercy of the Father, this third collection of exhortations from *The Berean Christadelphian*,

will be of further assistance in strengthening us in our most Holy Faith, and will be of great benefit to all who are truly seeking acceptance at the Master's return. And as can be seen from bro. Growcott's writings, the way to acceptance is through giving all for the purpose of God. Just drifting into the Kingdom is an impossibility. Only those who labour and agonize, moment by moment in the One Way, will be blessed with eternal life, and even then, only in the mercy of God.

The forthrightness of bro. Growcott's words is self evident in the preface above, directing and admonishing us to ponder "our call to holiness" and to be "zealously engaged" in intensive preparation for Christ's return. This is the only way to the Kingdom—there is no other. It is wisdom indeed for us to follow this narrow path, remembering—

"Strait is the gate and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life and few there be that find it" (Matt. 7:14).

—K. D. Clubb

The Fleeting Cross and the Eternal Crown

*The Commandments of Christ the present
rule of life for his followers.*

Our public proclamation of the Truth is predominantly doctrinal. This is necessary and right, for doctrine is greatly belittled and neglected in Christendom today, and, while true knowledge and belief must be the starting point for organizing the life in a godly pattern, we find conduct called in quickly to carry on the chain of development toward eternal life. True doctrine and conduct are inseparable.

It is Paul who says, *"I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us, therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule"* (Phil. 3:14-16).

The principle here is clear—God reveals so much at a time. He does not lay all the treasures of His wisdom before the beginner. He presents sufficient to carry conviction and provide a starting point. If an individual sincerely conforms his life to what divine knowledge he has he will be given more.

A practical application is necessary to bring full and mature conviction of doctrine. As the Psalmist says, *"O taste and see that the Lord is good"* (Psa. 34:8). Jesus plainly declared, *"If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God"* (Jn. 7:17). The knowledge of God is a progressive chain reaction: doctrine to conduct to doctrine, and so forth, and in this active, progressive experimental knowledge of God alone is life eternal. Many, as the Scriptures show, who start the race never reached the goal because they fail to move continually forward and upward in knowledge and godliness (Jn. 17:3).

In order to free our minds from the deadly bias of human ideas in considering Christ's commands, we must first clearly grasp one basic principle. Jesus states, *"That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God"* (Lk. 16:15). Unless we get this clear at the outset, we shall have constant trouble with the commands of Christ and finally end in confusion and failure. Paul strongly emphasizes the same thing in writing to the Corinthians, *"Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?"* (1 Cor. 1:20). And again, *"God hath*

chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things to confound the mighty" (1 Cor. 1:27). And the reason he gives is short and to the point. *"That no flesh should glory"* (v. 29). Not only are man's ideas vain, they are also profitless. We must put aside all that man has told us before we can listen intelligently to God. This is the first lesson and it's thorough appreciation is vital. *"The whole world lieth in wickedness"* (1 Jn. 5:19)—that is ungodliness, alienation from the mind and viewpoint of God.

Arising directly from this principle—the diametric divergence between the mind of the flesh and the mind of God—is the first command of Christ; first, that is, in the sense of elementary basicness. Thus separation from the world becomes a primary necessity. This command underlies and precedes all the more specific ones.

In the brief, solemn period of exalted communion between God, Christ and His small band of followers just before the crucifixion, the broad, deep gulf between the world and the believers is sharply defined. To this little group He said, *"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"* (Jn. 15:19). And in His prayer emphasizes the sense of separation, *"I have manifested Thy name to the men which Thou gavest me out of the world"* (Jn. 17:6). *"I pray for them: I pray not for the world"* (v. 4). *"They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world"* (v. 14).

Each New Testament writer in turn presents this basic theme. Defining the fundamentals of true religion the Apostle says, *"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world"* (Jam. 1:27). Also, *"Ye adulterers and adulteresses (this is the term the Scriptures use for those who mix the things of God and the things of the world), know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God"* (Jam. 4:4).

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For ALL that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world" (1 Jn. 2:15, 16).

Paul is emphatic on the line of demarcation.

“What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? . . . Wherefore come ye out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord” (2 Cor. 6:14, 17).

Can we doubt its importance when the Scriptures stress it so strongly and solemnly? This then is the second step in comprehending the commands of Christ. It does not mean hermitage or seclusion any more than Christ or Paul were hermits. There can be no fraternity with the world in its enterprises, ambitions, politics or pleasures.

The world, as such, is the enemy of God and the Truth. It is one huge, organized, hypocritical embodiment of sin and ungodliness. This includes all forms and beliefs of religion invented by it and catering to public sentiments and popular desires. True religion, as defined by God through Christ, could never be popular, for it is a denunciation of all the world stands for and loves, and a command to be separate from it. It tells man that his natural course of life, whoever he may be, is evil and ungodly, and commands him to humbly submit and change his whole nature. It is not seclusion in a monkery that is demanded, but a clear distinction in every aspect of our lives.

At the beginning of his ministry Jesus outlined the basic principles of his teaching in what is commonly known as the “Sermon on the Mount.” The principles were not new. They underlie all Scripture. But Christ carried them far deeper than ever before, and applied them specifically to the dispensation He was about to inaugurate. He enunciated them as fundamental principles of life.

The first seven commands in the Sermon define the character that is necessary to be acceptable with God. The first one is the deepest and most inclusive. It goes right to the heart of the matter, completely reversing the world’s viewpoint. *“Blessed are the poor in spirit” (Matt. 5:3).*

The word here translated poor—*ptochos*—is a very strong word. We are told by the lexicons that it was always used in a bad sense before Christ chose it as the badge of His followers. It means utterly destitute, mean, beggarly, abased, completely lacking in possession, position or self-assertion. It is the extreme opposite of high-spirited. It is the character and state the world most despises.

But God says, *“To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word” (Isa. 66:2).*

And our great Teacher and example said, "*Learn of me for I am meek and lowly in heart*" (Matt. 11:29).

We must thoroughly realize the utter insignificance and helplessness of man. Abject lowliness and dependency is the only reasonable and sensible attitude when the true picture is perceived. God will not for a moment consider any who boldly and obstinately ignore these facts and regard themselves or mankind as of any consequence. The Spirit, through Isaiah, gives the evaluation of man in the sight of God, "*Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance . . . All nations before Him are as nothing, and they are counted to Him as less than nothing and vanity*" (Isa. 40:15, 17). The insignificance of man is established by Scripture. "*Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie—laid in the balance, they are altogether lighter than a breath*" (Psa. 62:9). It is clear that Christ's way and viewpoint of life is not a formula for worldly success. This fact must be accepted at the outset. It is impossible to have both, although tremendous contortions are executed in a vain effort to get around this divinely stated principle.

Jesus' next words are—

"Blessed are they that mourn" (Matt. 5:4).

The earth, created for God's glory and man's happiness, is the scene of ever increasing vice, misery and ungodliness. Greed, pride, rivalry, hate and destruction are the basic characteristics of the structure man has erected.

A few, perceiving things in this true light, stand aside from all the giddy, thoughtless emptiness that veneers this dismal picture and mourn in the godly sense commanded by Christ. He is still dealing with the believer's attitude toward the world; He advances to details later. The details come easily once the main principles are comprehended.

"Blessed are the meek" (Matt. 5:5).

This answers a natural question that arises. If these things be so—the great majesty and supremacy of God flouted, the utter insignificance of man denied and derided, and the whole world filled with violence and sin and enmity toward God—what is to be our attitude toward it? Shall we call down fire from heaven? Are we expected to ride forth like Jehu, condemning and destroying in our zeal for the Lord? Can we live at peace among them while God's heritage is desolated, His love rejected and His law despised?

"Blessed are the meek, for they SHALL inherit the earth" (Matt. 5:5). **"My kingdom is not of THIS order of things, else would my servants fight"** (Jn. 18:36), said Jesus. And again, **"I am come to save men, not to destroy them"** (Lk. 9:56). **"In meekness instructing them that oppose themselves,"** (2 Tim. 2:25)—is the apostolic instruction. Witnessing and instructing in meekness is the believer's duty now. The inheriting and purifying of the earth will come in God's good time to those who keep separate now, and discipline themselves in meekness.

Hungering and thirsting after righteousness is next commanded. Hunger and thirst are basic, ever-present and overpowering urges. The believer's desire to be pleasing in the sight of God must dominate his consciousness and direct all his actions.

Mercifulness is next for consideration. Perceiving the slippery deceptiveness of human nature, we see this is mentioned in just the right order. The trend of the foregoing would lead the flesh, if unchecked, to assert itself in harshness and uncharitableness. But mercy, let us remember, means waiving our OWN advantages and interests out of consideration for others. In the words of Paul, **"it suffereth long and is kind . . . seeketh not her OWN . . . endureth all things"** (1 Cor. 13:4, 5, 7). It does not mean the much easier and more flesh-pleasing course of compromising God's truth for the sake of peace or sentiment or popularity.

Now purity of heart commands our attention. Here too is a necessary warning. We are dealing with subtle and evil influences within ourselves which cling tenaciously and parade as every form of virtue to avoid being exposed and cast out. Those who accept Christ's teaching must get right to the bottom of things or the end will be worse with them than the beginning. Sincerity, consistency, and freedom from hypocrisy are essential. The only assurance is constant self-examination, study and prayer.

The question of peace now comes before us. **"I came not to bring peace, but a sword"** (Matt. 10:34), said Christ. But peace only on a sound basis must be the believer's constant aim, and he must labor tirelessly for it. There can never be peace except on God's own prescribed terms. Strife is always destructive. All personal desires, and everything that does not jeopardize the faith that God commands us to defend, must be freely yielded for the sake of peace. All unessentials that trouble the peace of

others must be graciously and ungrudgingly given up for the same reason. Obedience to this command, in the bonds of love, would eliminate almost all the sad and destructive friction among believers.

Now comes an assertion—startling. *“Ye are the salt of the earth”* (Matt. 5:13). The command is that we maintain our sharp, fresh saltness. It is the believer’s duty to exhale purity in a world of corruption; a sharp invigorating influence in a mass of sickly insipidity. For that reason we must realize Christ’s next dictum. *“Ye are the light of the world”* (Matt. 5:14). *“Let your light so shine that men may see your good works and glorify God”* (v. 16). Your allegiance to God, once you take it on, must be open and obvious. Jesus said: *“Whosoever confesseth me before men, him will I confess before my Father: whosoever is ashamed of me, of him will I be ashamed”* (Matt. 10:32; Mk. 8:38). Your conduct must be outstandingly noticeable and must reflect glory to God. Your disposition must attract others to seek the reason of your graciousness and peace.

Now let us view the all-important matter of self control. *“Whosoever shall say, thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire”* (Matt. 5:22). Even angels, we are told—*“dare not bring a railing accusation, but say, the Lord rebuke thee”* (Jude 9). Christ’s injunctions call for the bridling of the tongue. We are no good for God’s use until we learn to control ourselves. *“The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God”* (Jam. 1:20). It is the key to self-discipline. *“Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift”* (Matt. 5:23, 24). A constant, active seeking for reconciliation in all things. A tireless effort to strengthen and heal and unite, with no thought of self-justification. How opposed to the proud, selfish, inconsiderate spirit of the world!

So next we read: *“Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing”* (vs. 25, 26). Illustrating the force and significance of the commands to mercy and peacemaking. If God, the great Judge of all, stood on His rights, all flesh would perish—all would pay the uttermost farthing of eternal destruction. Man

has no rights. He is commanded to yield what he considers his rights in any dispute (not involving the integrity of the Truth), in the faith that God will treat him likewise and make it all up to him, and in the humble knowledge that he needs it to a far greater degree.

In verse 28 is brought out the principle that sin is not limited to action, but reaches right back to intention and unresisted desire. The commands of Christ are no surface righteousness, but search unsparingly to the uttermost depths of the heart. Consider how far the world has strayed from God's conception of marriage, "*Whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery*" (v. 32). The daily flaunting of this solemn injunction is an honored and accepted thing in all walks of life that blasphemously brand themselves as "Christian."

Christ forbids oaths or swearing of any kind. James is equally emphatic and unqualified. "*Above all things, swear NOT AT ALL*" (Jam. 5:12). This is to sweep away all the complicated and meaningless fabric that man has erected in a vain fig-leaf effort to deal with his own natural deceptiveness and untruthfulness.

All the oaths and adjurations that are meant to bolster truth only cheapen and weaken it. Disease cannot be destroyed by merely building a fence around it—it must be stamped out at the root. Jesus goes to the heart of the evil, and lays the simple, all-sufficient basis of rigid truth in every word that is uttered—no falsehood, no foolishness (Rev. 22:15; 1 Jn. 2:21; Eph. 5:4). "*God hath no pleasure in fools.*"

Now comes the very heart of the Christ message, "*Ye have heard that it hath been said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, that ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also*" (Matt. 5:38, 39). Here we reach the acid-test of the godly character. No words in Scripture are clearer than these, but how universally the so-called "Christian" world looks coldly on them, and then passes by on the other side! Consider their endless struggles for position, possession and power in every sphere—personal, national and international.

"And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee, turn not thou away. Ye have heard that it hath been said, thou shalt love thy neighbour, and

hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you" (Matt. 5:40-44).

Utterly impractical . . . utterly impossible—except for the fact that God is underwriting the success of these commands. It is all a matter of faith and dependence upon the promise and power of God. These commandments are the key to the gospel of Christ. We can go no deeper than this. The issue between serving God and serving the world reaches its climax at this point. Here is the faith that overcomes the world. Choose ye this day whom ye will serve and in whom ye will put your trust.

And what is the purpose of these commands? Is it not—*"that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven."*

Nothing could be added to make these commands clearer. They are simple and specific. The basic principle is to pursue a fixed, consistent course of active benefit to everyone, utterly regardless of any antagonism, injury or unworthiness on their part, without concern for self-protection or self-preservation, and unrestricted by any consideration of consequences or expediency. The mind must rise far above all bitterness and resentment and thought of self. It is a gloriously free, exalted, revolutionary doctrine. It makes the narrow, natural, selfish way of living utterly contemptible by comparison. It is living like God in a world of petty little men.

Jesus himself is the only perfect example, but the early believers, filled with the unearthly joy of the Spirit, followed cheerfully in his footsteps. Paul bears witness, *"Ye took joyfully"*—note particularly the word *"joyfully"*—that is the whole life and spirit of the matter. *"Ye took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance"* (Heb. 10:34). And to the Corinthians he had to say, *"Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? Why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?"* (1 Cor. 6:7).

Continuing, we may next read, *"Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven"* (Matt. 6:1). How well he fathomed human nature and discerned its weakness! Nothing to be done for show or appearances, for verily such self-glorifiers have their reward, and what a pitiful, empty reward it is! *"But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand*

know what thy right hand doeth: that thine alms may be in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret Himself shall reward thee openly" (Matt. 6:3, 4). Not just avoidance of show, but every effort to be made for secrecy. Some have affected to see a contradiction between this and the command to let your light shine that men may see your good works, but the mind of wisdom will have no difficulty in perceiving that as much as possible can be done secretly and still the whole life be one of light and good works that cannot be hid.

Prayer and fasting are cited as further examples of worshipping God secretly and sincerely and with avoidance of all show. Outward show always goes with inward emptiness and shallowness. Simple, secret service is just the reverse.

Forgiveness by God will depend on forgiveness toward men. This principle is applied to many things: as ye forgive, so shall ye be forgiven; as ye judge, so shall ye be judged; as ye give, so shall ye receive; as ye minister, so shall ye be ministered to; as ye confess Christ, so shall ye be confessed; as ye are ashamed of Him and conceal your relationship to Him, so shall he do to you. It is indeed as a man soweth so shall he reap. Thus in all things it is direct cause and effect. There is no magic or mystery, but clear, simple divine law. Each man, each day, is determining his final reward or lack of reward. It is all perfectly just and perfectly reasonable.

The Master says, "*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*" (Matt. 6:19, 20). The divine unearthliness and unworldliness of Jesus' teaching is nowhere more apparent than here, and how clear the reason he gives, "*For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also*" (v. 21). If your treasure is on earth, your heart is set on earthly things, but if your treasure is in heavenly things, your heart will be with God and Christ, and where your heart is centered will determine your whole character and destiny.

Jesus' deep insight, by the Spirit, is revealed in Matthew 6:21. He has presented two kinds of treasure. The flesh will of course say, "Why not have both?" But reason and Scripture answer, No. The reasoning is very plain. If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light; but if thine eye be not single, but evil, or double, thy body shall be full of darkness. This principle is extended into the next command. "*No man can serve two masters. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon*" (v. 24).

A true allegiance cannot be divided, though greed will tempt us to try. "A double-minded man," James says, "is unstable in all his ways. Let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord" (Jam. 1:7, 8). If we seek both we lose all!

So greed is ruled out. "Therefore I say unto you, take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?" (Matt. 6:25).

"For after all these things do the Gentiles seek: for your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God: and all these things shall be added unto you" (vs. 32, 33). What a wonderful assurance! Seek God and obey Him, and let Him look after your wants and cares. Sometimes, in the success of strength and pride, this may seem like a poor and unattractive bargain, but time and wisdom will teach its value and infinite desirability. "Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you" (1 Pet. 5:7).

Christ does not teach slothfulness. His is pre-eminently a gospel of hard and persistent labor, but labor of the right kind and to the right end.

What He does command, and that most emphatically, is this: "Having food and raiment, **BE THEREWITH CONTENT**" (1 Tim. 6:8). Christ's followers are told not to be concerned beyond the needs of the present, and not to accumulate beyond the necessities of life. **NO VICE IS MORE STRONGLY CONDEMNED IN SCRIPTURE THAN GREED**—the fleshly lust to have more than is needed. This is said to be the root of all evil (1 Tim. 6:10).

Stewardship and bondservice is the description Jesus gives of the lives of his followers. They are simply stewards for Him as to their time, energies and any goods they possess, and they will have to give a strict account of their stewardship when He returns. "Ye are not your own," He says to them through Paul (1 Cor. 6:19, 20), "ye are bought with a price." There is a great reckoning to come. This solemn obligation is illustrated in a parable he spoke, "For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his servants and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey" (Matt. 25:14, 15). Some faithfully used the talents in their master's service, some did not. Then, "After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them" (Matt. 25:19). Let us ponder this well, for the day of judgment is already decreed.

Lastly, Christ gives the reward of the faithful. *"Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord"* (v. 21). Conversely is the punishment of the unfaithful, *"And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth"* (Matt. 25:30).

This is emphasized in Luke 16:9— *"I say unto you, make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness (that is, put it to the use commanded so that it will become treasure in heaven); that when it (Revised Version) fails, they may receive you into everlasting habitations."*

"If ye therefore have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon (that is, if you have used it for yourself instead of for God), who will commit to your trust the true riches?" (v. 11).

And we note particularly that (Lk. 16:14)—*"the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him."* Above all things, let us not be in that class!

Such are the commands of Christ, and the ministry for Him to which we are invited. These commands reduce the faithful to the simple necessities of life, and involve constant effort and labor until they die or the Master returns. Jesus describes this ministry as the bearing of a cross, and such it truly is for the flesh, for the flesh must be crucified (Rom. 8:12-14). It is the fleeting cross, but the eternal crown.

It will cause us to be unpopular and despised, as Jesus foretold, and will put us at a continual disadvantage in temporal things. The Pharisees, who are covetous, will deride us, for they will feel the pinch of our example.

All this and far more, the Apostle Paul himself constantly endured, and still he joyfully exclaimed, *"Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory"* (2 Cor. 4:17).

It is the only life that provides real, substantial satisfaction, contentment and peace; the power and communion of God is promised without measure for its successful accomplishment, and finally it will eventuate in glorious eternity in an assembly of the best and noblest characters of all ages, when all pettiness, selfishness and meanness will have been swept forever away.

If We Would Judge Ourselves

We have come here this morning to learn. Our salvation depends on learning. We must learn what is wrong with ourselves—wherein we do not correspond with the pattern that God requires in those He will alone accept.

Every factory has a place of final inspection. Those products that conform to the required pattern are accepted; those that do not are rejected. God has given us a very clear pattern. He has told us just what to do; just what flaws to watch for, and how to correct them.

CAST ASIDE AT THE LAST

Suppose a piece of steel slips through without passing through the purifying, tempering and hardening process—what happens when it reaches the inspector? It *looks* the same as the rest: it is the *same basic material*—but *what a difference* when the keen and searching inspection tests are applied! It turns out to be just the raw, natural, original material—weak, impure and faulty; totally unfit for the purpose intended, so—*it is cast aside.*

In connection with our purpose of assembly this morning—the memorial supper—the apostle says, by the inspiration of the Spirit (1 Cor. 11:28)—

“Let a man EXAMINE HIMSELF,” and v. 31, *“If we would JUDGE OURSELVES, we should not be judged.”*

If we would have the wisdom to inspect ourselves and correct what is wrong, we should not fail in the final inspection. And how CAN we inspect ourselves? David asked this question—and answered it—

“Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereunto ACCORDING TO THY WORD” (Psa. 119:9).

That *last part* is the important part. There are thousands of sources of information that tell you how to improve in various ways. Many devote endless precious hours to study for temporal self-improvement that will perish with the using, but there is only ONE place that tells how to get ready for eternal life—how to develop and train ourselves so we will be accepted as useful and valuable in the final inspection.

A WORK TO DO, AND TIME GROWS SHORT

We must take heed to ourselves *according to God's Word*. We must study that Word, and compare ourselves with the pattern it gives. In all points where we fail to measure up to the pattern,

and there are thousands of them, we have a job to do, and the period allowed us to do it is getting shorter all the time.

The portion of God's word laid out to assist us in our self-examination today is Psalms 41-43. Beginning that portion, we read—

"Blessed is he that considereth the poor."

The word here translated "consider" is usually translated "understand" or "behave wisely", and we note in the margin that for "poor" is also given "weak" or "sick". So there is a lot more meaning in this verse than just giving something to those in poverty.

God says here that those are blessed in His sight who concern themselves about the problems of others—those who seek to understand and act wisely for the benefit of those who are poor, weak or sick, whether this condition be physical or spiritual. The spirit's instruction is to—

"Bear ye one another's burdens" (Gal. 6:2).

This is described as "fulfilling the law of Christ." We have noted that the real meaning of this word "consider" is to "act wisely". This should ever be borne in mind. It is easy to be well-meaning but to act very UNwisely in this matter, making helpfulness an unconscious pretext for officiousness and self-gratification. What is intended is—instead of seeking our OWN pleasure and amusement and advantage—to devote our time and efforts to intelligently considering where help and comfort are really needed, and to apply ourselves to supplying them in an acceptable manner. As to the acceptable manner, a good guide is that of Jesus—*"Do to others as ye would that they should do to you."*

DO WE MEET THE TEST?

In examining ourselves, therefore, as we meet around this table, how do we measure up to this clear requirement of God? DO we love our neighbors as ourselves, devoting ourselves to their welfare, and carefully avoiding all that might offend them, or are we so busy with our own affairs that we cannot be bothered to think of helping to carry the burden and solve the problem of others?

Paul said, writing from his prison cell—and it portrays a sad state of affairs—

"I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's" (Phil. 2:20, 21).

It meant nothing to them that he had lost everything, even his liberty. All were so tied up with their own plans for benefiting themselves and getting ahead in this life that they had no time to devote to the benefit of the brotherhood and the Truth. "Of course", said they, "We'd LOVE to help. But we are SO busy. We're sure you'll understand." Paul understood, *only too well*. He said—

"Love seeketh not her own" (1 Cor. 13:5).

This is one of the many tests of value and usefulness that WILL BE APPLIED in the final day of inspection. He said again, earlier in the same epistle—

"We (the apostles) are fools for Christ's sake, but ye (the Corinthians) are wise, ye are rich, ye are full: we hunger and thirst and are naked and buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place". . . "Be ye followers of me" . . . "Love seeketh not her own" (1 Cor. 4:10).

And now a thought from the first verse of Psalm 42—

"As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?"

How do we fit THIS pattern? This is a description of the ONLY type of person God will approve in the day of final inspection. But some will say, "How can I help it if I do not feel that intense longing? Can I MAKE myself feel that way?" *Yes, you can—and you must*. The Scriptures explain how to begin. We must clearly recognize that this IS what God expects, that is the only really intelligent and reasonable frame of mind, and that it MUST be achieved. What stands between us and it is either natural ignorance or the deceitfulness of other things. Jesus said—

"Lay not up treasure on earth: lay up treasure in heaven, for where your treasure is, there will your heart be" (Matt. 6:19-21).

Here is first, a plain COMMAND; second, the REASON for that command; third, the assured RESULT of obeying that command. It has two parts—one thing to carefully avoid, one thing to carefully perform. If all our treasure is invested in an enterprise, then we shall be very much concerned about the progress and interests of that enterprise. Here then is clear instruction on how to develop a thirst for God—just arrange your life like Paul so that all your material advantage and interests are wrapped up in the establishment of God's kingdom. It does not just mean possessions, but ALL the activities we are involved in and interested in.

FOLLOW THE RULES—THERE IS ONLY ONE WAY

Again, it is useless to expect to develop a thirst for one thing while continually drinking something else. God says worldly things must be put away by those who would seek a place in the divine scheme of things. Why? Because they interfere with and obstruct the development of spiritual appreciation and desire. If we carefully *follow the divine rules*, we shall get the desired results, and *no other way*. And the divine rules are very different from natural thinking.

The Spirit through Solomon gives another guide for developing a thirst towards the things of God. He records—

"It is better to go into the house of mourning, than to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart. Sorrow is better than laughter; for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better" (Ecc. 7:2, 3).

So brief, so insecure, so overcast with sorrow, so filled with trouble and evil, so far short of what could be! Go to the house of mourning, the endless funeral procession, the hospitals, the asylums, the institutes for the blind, the numberless victims of selfish, senseless warfare, the inevitable bitterness and strife in all human activities, if you would develop a thirst for the new order of God. Cease to live in heedless self-entertainment, and a busyness to eat, drink and be merry; and stop to THINK.

WHO WAS THIS MAN?

Who was this man David who wrote these Psalms? What kind of a life had he, that he should see so clearly through its utter emptiness and delusion? Obscure in his youth—a quiet, meditative man of God. Thrust into sudden notoriety, not by his own choice, but as a result of the nation's faithlessness, and his own abundant faith. Thereafter he experienced treachery, ingratitude, persecution, peril and hardship, because of jealousy—fearful jealousy that fumed against the calm, successful courage of his faith. Cast out from his own people, a hunted fugitive in an alien land.

Then came prosperity, popular acclaim, power and authority as the divinely-anointed leader of the divinely-chosen, holy nation—the national vessel of God's tabernacling with men. What opportunity now for the fulness of life's purpose of joy! And so it seemed for a time, but while adversity had brought out his strength, prosperity revealed to him his weakness, whose shadow he was never again permitted to forget. The years that

might have been so bright were stained as a result with strife, murder and civil war.

"ORDERED AND SURE"

But against this dark background of human failure, God made with David the covenant of divine success, "*ordered in all things and sure.*" How much, in the light of his own discorded life, must these words have meant to him, "*ordered in all things and sure.*" And as he compared his own sad reign with the glorious picture of God's Kingdom, would he not thirst after God and exclaim, "*THIS is all my salvation and all my desire?*"

In the third Psalm for today, he said—

*"O send out Thy light and Thy truth; let them lead me;
let them bring me to Thine holy hill, and to Thy taber-
nacle"* (Psa. 43:3).

Here is an earnest desire to be guided by God's Word, and an anxiety to be present at His assemblies of worship. Whenever the brethren and sisters are met together, the true godly mind is anxious to be there. SOME brethren and sisters are of this character, and some are not. The pattern recorded in the Word clearly reveals that it is only the former type that God will approve. Now is the time of opportunity to teach ourselves the wisdom of being such. We have read recently—

*"In thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand
there are pleasures forevermore"* (Psa. 16:11).

This is our assurance and our goal. When we start to practice or study anything, there is no pleasure to begin with, but wisdom says, "Continue at it, the pleasure will come with familiarity and accomplishment." How much truer and more important in divine things! There is fulness of joy in store for those who by God's guidance learn how to appreciate and evaluate TRUE joy—joy that has no sad aftermath, nor is snatched away at its height, but is perfect and unending. It is only for those who learn how to remove from their own lives and characters all those carnal things that are out of harmony with godly joy.

SOLEMN WARNINGS BY CHRIST

In the New Testament reading (Matt. 25) there is ample instruction for a man to examine himself by: the parable of the ten virgins, the parable of the talents, and the separating of the sheep from the goats—as searching and solemn a series of warnings as can be found anywhere in Scripture.

If God were to say to us, "Leave your own pleasures and profit-seeking for half-an-hour, and do exactly as I say, and I

will fill the rest of your present life with abundance and happiness," would we have any difficulty in obeying? But actually in proportion we are asked to do much LESS and are offered much MORE. If we could only bring ourselves to fully realize the magnitude of what is offered for faithfulness—but we cannot, it is too gigantic, it is beyond our comprehension, we are too wrapped up in present things.

Somehow the fact that for six thousand years an endless parade of men have lived brief snatches of life and passed on to nothingness does not impress us as it should with the utter brevity and unimportance of this life's affairs. We plan and worry and labor and fret, and what does it amount to? NOTHING. A breath. A vapor. A striving after wind. The one perfect life was lived without a place to lay his head.

THE FOOLISH VIRGINS—REAL PEOPLE

There were ten virgins, and five of them were wise, and five were foolish. This is a very sad parable, as indeed are most. We are apt to forget that the foolish virgins represent REAL people, brethren and sisters we have known, it could very easily be OURSELVES. They knew the bridegroom was coming, they believed it and were looking for it. They THOUGHT they were ready. They looked like the other virgins. They traveled along with them. They had lighted lamps just the same, *but*—there was very little oil in them—just enough to deceive themselves, but not enough to carry them through.

The lesson is SO clear; all the virgins read it over and over; but *still* there will be foolish virgins revealed at the judgment seat—self-deceived and unprepared. Why? Because the flesh is so deceitful and so clever at making us believe we are what we are not. Let us look to our oil. We know what the oil is. It is the Spirit. We must be filled; not just enough to make a showing, but FILLED with it—filled with the knowledge of God, permeated with its divine characteristics so that it shines forth from us in faithful labor, patience, wisdom, self-control, kindness, gentleness, purity, holiness and godliness.

"If THESE things be in you, AND ABOUND ye shall be neither barren nor unfruitful; but he that lacketh these things is blind." (2 Pet. 1:8, 9).

The next parable presents a different aspect of the same lesson—the man who entrusted various talents to his servants.

Our English word "talent" comes from this very parable. Talent is a Greek word, denoting a certain unit of money; the original meaning is "something weighed out". Jesus used it to

represent the various gifts or abilities that men are given to use for the glory and service of God, and it has come into our language with this meaning.

WEIGHED OUT, AND TO BE ACCOUNTED FOR

We are taught here that all men's abilities and possessions are carefully WEIGHED OUT to them for a specific purpose, and that in the day of inspection they will have to give account of how everything has been used. This idea of stewardship is very prominent in scriptural teaching and if it were better comprehended much future sorrow would be avoided.

"After a long time the Lord of those servants cometh and reckoneth with them" (Matt. 25:19).

The unprofitable servant in this case is not charged with anything as serious as *false* use of his trust. He is not charged with any open wickedness—simply a slothful failure to put his abilities and possessions to his Lord's use. It is not enough that we simply abstain from what is forbidden; it is equally, or even more, important that we DO what is commanded.

Consider the excuse he makes, *"I knew thou art a hard man, and I was afraid."* How common, and yet how unreasonable! "I knew you expected a lot, therefore I made that an excuse to do nothing. I consoled myself with the assumption that I could not possibly satisfy you, so I did not try at all." What a mean way of putting the blame for his failure on the one who had given him everything he had!

"CAST HIM OUT"—DREADFUL WORDS!

He may have thought, "I have only been given one talent. It is clear that the Lord does not consider my part very important. I will explain to him that I knew he expected wise and careful dealing and would be angry if I made a slip and lost it, so I did not feel capable, or confident enough to try. I know that the capable, five-talent brethren will take care of everything. My small bit will not be missed if I do not do it, nor noticed if I do."

What did the Lord answer? "You wicked unprofitable servant. You have condemned yourself by your own self-deceiving excuses for your spiritual laziness. You admit that you knew I would require an accounting and a bringing forth fruit. You should have done the best you could even though it were very small. Cast him out. Take his possessions and abilities away from him—he has not used them in my service. My kingdom is only for faithful workers."

"COME YE BLESSED—DEPART, YE CURSED"

In the final part of the chapter Jesus drops the clothing of parable and speaks with unmistakable plainness, driving home the warning.

"Come, ye blessed of my Father; I was hungry, thirsty, a stranger, naked, sick, and in prison, and ye ministered unto me."

This is the thought with which we began: "Blessed is he that concerns himself to understand and act wisely in behalf of the poor, the weak and the sick." Many in the brotherhood, and even the brotherhood itself, are thirsty, weak, sick, strangers and in prison. In various aspects, and at various times, the descriptions fit us all. We all need mutual help. Only those will be approved and accepted who concern themselves about those things and devote their lives to help and improvement in the ecclesia and in the brotherhood.

The main thing is the Spirit of Christ—the oil in the lamps. That is what is always mostly lacking—and mostly needed. The Spirit of Christ does not worry about its own advantage or welfare or pride or justification. It does not mind even if it has no place to lay its head. It is anxious to help and heal and comfort, to stir up zeal, to promote harmony and righteousness and peace, to be about its Father's business, to labor in the vineyard, even though it be in but the humblest capacity.

Therefore let a man examine himself and see how HE compares with these things. And wherein he finds that he does not correspond with the divine pattern by which all will finally be measured, let him diligently set himself to DO SOMETHING about it. Let him put it FIRST on his list of things to be done, before all temporal activities and schemes of advancement that perish with the using.

"For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged" (1 Cor. 11:31).

The Day of Atonement

"Let us go forth therefore unto him, bearing his reproach, for here have we no continuing city" (Heb. 13:13).

Yom Kippur—the Day of Atonement. The Jews have been observing this event for over three thousand years—more than half the time since Creation. This is the central, most important, most solemn day in the whole Israelitish cycle. It is the great yearly occasion of cleansing and reconciling to God.

Natural man is a selfish, foolish, lustful animal—of no value, interest or pleasure to God. But training, and development, and discipline, and divine help can make man fit to become part of the eternal spiritual order.

This is the whole lesson of the Mosaic Law. Law is beautiful. God is a God of order. Law is the training of the mind and character to follow a pattern of harmony and beauty. The High Priest was the apex and embodiment of the Law. His garments, we are told, were "For Glory and for Beauty."

That sums up the Law—for *Glory and for Beauty*—the glory of God and the beauty of holiness. Christ's law is but a further, deeper development of the eternal principles taught in Moses' Law.

The ordinance of the Day of Atonement is recorded in Lev. 16. It is no accident that the first verse tells us that these instructions were given following the sudden destruction of Aaron's two eldest sons by God for offering strange fire to Him.

Let us note *why* they were destroyed. They had not forsaken God. They were not serving other gods. They were not even neglecting God's service to follow their own pleasures. In fact, they were *actually serving God* at the very moment they were struck down.

What, then, was their sin? *Careless, presumptuous service.* Not following God's instructions. Doing it as *they* saw fit. God must be honored, and presumptuous service—using our own faulty, human judgment instead of following instructions—dishonors Him. They had been chosen from the world to serve and glorify God in His holy Temple. "*Ye are the Temple of the living God*"—each one of us, personally and individually, and the lesson is as much for us as for Israel of long ago.

Verse 2—Aaron is told never to enter the Most Holy except on the divinely-appointed occasions, and in the divinely-appointed way. Only the High Priest could go into the presence of God; and

he only once a year, and then only with solemn and elaborate ritual.

If God wants man to draw near to Him, why did He set up this complicated and burdensome system of barriers and restrictions? Why did Christ—sent forth to man because “*God so loved the world*”—keep saying such harsh, penetrating things that the vast majority—all but a mere handful—turned against him?

Before man can have intimate companionship with God he must be indelibly impressed with his own worthlessness and God’s dreadful holiness and majesty. Let us remember with humility and reverence the rigid, lifelong obedience, and the terrible, agonizing death, of Christ which God considered necessary to manifest the requirements of His holiness and to establish a basis of approach.

The Mosaic Tabernacle was about sixty feet long and twenty feet wide. It was entered from one end and divided into two rooms. The outer room (the “Holy Place” where the priests ministered daily) was twice as large as the inner room (the “Most Holy” where only the High Priest could go once a year). Here is the same lesson as the parable of the virgins: there were ten virgins in the Holy Place, tending the lamps of God; but when the Most Holy was opened, *only five went in*—five were left outside, beating vainly on the door.

These rooms were separated by the veil. This was the veil that was miraculously torn in half when Christ died on the cross, signifying the opening of the way to the Most Holy—the presence of God. In the Most Holy was the ark of the covenant, upon which were the two golden cherubim—representing the eternal covenant-purpose of God-manifestation in a holy, perfected multitude.

The Day of Atonement was the center and climax of the last and greatest ceremony of the year. And every fifty years this Day of Atonement marked the beginning of the joyful Jubilee year of freedom and release. On this day the High Priest made two separate sacrifices, and two visits into the Most Holy—first for himself and then for the people. For himself the sacrifice was a young bullock—for the people it was two goats. What is the difference between these two offerings?

In the first place, the bullock was a much more important and valuable sacrifice than the goat. Then the bullock has no implications of waywardness and disobedience, as has the

goat. Goats symbolize those on the left hand—the sinners. The bullock, or ox, stands for strength, labor and productiveness.

As befits its greater importance, the bullock is usually considered as an individual unit, but the goat in herds. While the goat symbolizes the waywardness of the flesh, the ox represents the faithful leaders and laborers in the Truth. Isaiah (7:25; 32:20) uses the figure of the plowing ox as the Truth-proclaimer, and Paul likewise brings it out when he speaks of the prohibition of muzzling the ox that treads out the corn and applies it to those who devote their lives to preaching the gospel (1 Cor. 9:9).

So we see that it was fitting that the High Priest (representing Christ) should first offer for himself a *single* bullock, then a *plural number* of goats for the people.

On this occasion (v. 4), the High Priest was not to put on his usual ornamental garments “for Glory and for Beauty,” but plain white linen—for on this day he was to offer for himself. The “Glory and for Beauty” came later—*after* the offering—but they would be out of place in this time of humiliation and atonement.

But we notice in this verse 4 that he must first *wash himself* before putting on the white linen. And this washing, we are told in Exodus 30:20, is “*THAT HE DIE NOT.*” It meant death if he failed to cleanse himself personally before taking on the Christ-righteousness. All these ordinances are to emphasize eternal principles.

So arrayed, Aaron casts lots between the two goats—one for the Lord and one for the “scapegoat.” It will be noticed that for “scapegoat” the margin has “*azazel*”—the original Hebrew word. All dictionaries and concordances agree on the general meaning of this word—“sending away, getting rid of, averting, departure, removal, separation.”

Verse 11—the High Priest kills the bullock which is for himself and his household. Then (v. 12), he takes a censer full of burning coals from the sacrificial altar in the tabernacle courtyard. References to coals of fire appear several times in Scripture—particularly in connection with visions of the glory of God, as in Psalms, Isaiah and Ezekiel.

We know the symbolic meaning of fire: consuming judgment. *Coals* of fire seem to carry the more particular meaning of controlled, useful fire—a *regulated* purging and trying with a view to cleansing and purifying. For example, in Isaiah 6:7

(after Isaiah speaks of his unclean lips), an angel lays a coal of fire on the prophet's mouth, saying—

"This hath touched thy lips, and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged."

Beside the censer of coals (which probably hung by a chain from his arm) the High Priest was to take his hands full of sweet incense beaten small (v. 12). The incense of the Mosaic service had to be made *exactly as God specified*. It was offering strange (incorrect) incense that caused the death of Aaron's two sons. And this special kind could not be made or used for any other purpose than the properly-ordained worship of God. Two hundred and fifty men of the company of Korah presumed to offer incense contrary to the Law, and were destroyed by fire for their presumption.

In the plague that followed, Aaron (the true God-appointed priest) ran out with a censer of incense and made atonement—standing between the living and the dead—and the plague stayed. From all this we see that incense is a God-ordained form of atonement and intercession. In the Revelation (5:8; 8:3) incense symbolizes intercession and prayer.

The High Priest had to have his hands *full* (v. 12)—all he could hold. There were to be no limits or half-measures in Christ's intercessory work. Paul says—

"He is able to save them to the uttermost that come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:25).

On our part the full hands mean there must be *"prayer without ceasing."* Our hands, or activities, must be filled with prayer.

It was, we note, "sweet" incense. The process involved in preparing the incense, both for Christ and his brethren, is often far from sweet at the time. But patient endurance is a sweet savor to God, and in the ultimate will produce *"fulness—full hands—of joy for evermore."*

Then, the incense had to be "beaten small." To be beaten small is to be humbled by affliction. All the lumps of human pride and self-assertion must be pounded to fine powder, so that the whole mass can mix and blend smoothly, and the resultant aroma be a pleasant, balanced harmony of all the elements.

With the censer on his arm, and his hands full of incense (v. 13), the high Priest reverently passes beyond the veil into the

divine presence. Then the carefully-prepared incense is placed on the purifying fire, and a cloud of incense-vapor fills the room and covers the cherubim mercy-seat above the ark—*“THAT HE DIE NOT”*—says the record (v. 13).

Here again we are reminded that it was a matter of life and death. Without the purging, purifying fire, the incense-cloud with its sweet odors would not arise and the High Priest—unshielded—would die before the terrible majesty that dwelt between the cherubim, above the ark. This is why Paul said he *“gloried in tribulation, knowing that tribulation worketh patience,”* and causes the sweet prayer-incense to arise acceptably and protectively before God.

Next (v. 14), the High Priest had to sprinkle the blood of the bullock upon the mercy-seat, and before it seven times. *The very mercy-seat itself is cleansed with the purifying blood.* Then he killed the goat of sin-offering for the people (the one on which the lot for the Lord had fallen) and did the same with its blood as he had done with the blood of the bullock.

“And he shall make atonement for the Holy Place”
(v. 16).

Why did these holy things need atoning for? *“Because”* (we read) *“of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions.”* Here are two distinct things (though of course related). The original word for uncleanness (*tumah*) means any kind of defilement, regardless of actual sin, and it is applied throughout the law to death, disease, unclean animals and childbirth. It is constitutional uncleanness—uncleanness that is the result of being part of an unclean system of things. Natural man is naturally unclean before God. There is defilement in the very process of being born.

Beside their uncleanness, there were also their “transgressions” to atone for. This word means (beside “sin”) “rebellion.” Any act contrary to the Word and Will of God, however well-intentioned or however good it may seem to the doer, is—in God’s sight—rebellion. *“To obey is better than sacrifice,”* Saul was told. Saul, in mistaken and presumptuous “mercy,” saved Agag—and lost his kingdom and his life. Man’s proper—and *only*—course is to obey the commands of God and not presume to use his own fleshly judgment.

This word “atonement” has taken on a hazy, ecclesiastical meaning, but the basic idea is very simple. The regulations speak in verse 18 of making atonement for the altar. Verse 19

says the High Priest shall—by sprinkling the altar with blood—*cleanse* it from the *uncleanness* of the children of Israel. "Atonement," scripturally, is simply cleansing. In verse 30 the whole ordinance of the Day of Atonement is summed up—

"On that day shall the priest make atonement for you to CLEANSE you, that ye may be CLEAN from all your sins."

Any sin—anything out of harmony with God's eternal will—is a form of filthiness, infection and defilement; and it clings offensively and corruptingly to a man in God's sight until it has been properly washed away. Cleansing and cleanness make up the great theme of the Scriptures.

Beside the basic meaning of "cleanse," the Hebrew word translated "atone" (kippur, kaphor) also carried the idea of "cover." The shadowy atonements of the Law were a cleansing by covering, a *provisional* cleansing, but the true atonement is a true cleansing—

"How much more shall the blood of Christ CLEANSE your conscience from works of death" (Heb. 9:14).

"He hath washed us from our sins in his own blood" (Rev. 1:5).

"The blood of Christ CLEANSETH us from all sin" (1. Jn. 1:7).

Verse 17 describes a very significant and unusual fact on this great yearly Day of Atonement. *All this time there must be no man in the Tabernacle.* The usual bustle of priestly activity in the tabernacle and its court are strangely stilled. Alone and in silence the white-clad High Priest goes about his solemn tasks in the otherwise deserted building. How clearly is foreshadowed the passing away of the Mosaic service, and the lonely, single-handed work of the great High Priest to come!

When everything had been typically cleansed (v. 20), then the High Priest turned his attention to the living goat that remained. He lays both his hands (indicating completeness) on the goat's head (v. 21), and confesses over it all the sins, transgressions and iniquities of the children of Israel, thus symbolically placing these sins on the goat. Then the goat is sent away into the wilderness by the hand of a "fit" (that is, a "ready" or "prepared") man.

It will be noted there is no scapegoat for the High Priest, to carry away his sins, iniquities and transgressions—there was just the single bullock for him. It would seem, then, that one aspect of the double-goat symbol was to distinguish between

constitutional uncleanness and actual transgression, and to foreshadow that he whom the High Priest typified was free from the latter.

This is the only place in all the sacrificial ordinances that sins are carried away outside the camp. It is very fitting, on this yearly occasion when the great typical cleansing of the camp is enacted, that all sins are—in a figure—taken completely from the nation.

But there seems *more* to the double-goat ordinance than this. If we think upon it, we shall be struck by the fact that—while there are a great multitude of symbols of Christ's *death* in the Law of Moses—*there are practically no symbols of resurrection, or of life after death.* This is not out of harmony, for the Law was (as Paul says—2 Cor. 3:7-9), a "ministration of death"—a "ministration of condemnation."

The Law ended with Christ's crucifixion. Resurrection was a step beyond the Law—"beyond the camp," so to speak. The Law could not, of itself, bring resurrection, so it is in keeping that this should not be a prominent feature of its symbols.

But still, as a foreshadowing of Christ, it is to be expected that the Law would in *some* way portray resurrection. Two chapters earlier (Lev. 14), there is something similar to the double-goat arrangement, in the law concerning the cleansing of leprosy, which we believe gives us a clue. In this ordinance two birds are used. One is killed, then the other is dipped in the first one's blood (identifying it with it) and then SET FREE in the open field OUTSIDE THE CITY. Here clearly is a figure of *life after death—life from the dead.*

Leprosy was the most spectacular and dreaded form of physical uncleanness. The term "unclean" is always applied to it, and the expression "*cleansing*" is used of leprosy, while "*healing*" is used of all other diseases. Leprosy was regarded as a living death. It is understandable, then, that we find very similar symbols in the cleansing of leprosy and in the great national day of cleansing from sin and death.

Christ's resurrection is essential to the cleansing efficacy of his death—he was "delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification" (Rom. 4:25). So Christ's death did not in itself complete the redeeming work. Therefore somewhere in the shadows of the Law (and most appropriately on this great Day of Atonement) there is needed a symbol showing the taking away of sins by the risen Christ. This we see in the second living

goat taking over where the sacrificed goat ended, and departing to a "land of separation" OUTSIDE THE CAMP.

The significance of this expression "outside the camp" becomes clearer when we see what is done with the remains of the slain bullock and goat. They are carried forth *without the camp* and burned (instead of being eaten by the priests, as was usual with the sacrifices). Why? *Why were the priests strictly forbidden to eat any sacrifice that had sanctified the tabernacle?* Paul gives the answer in the last chapter of his letter to the Hebrews.

First, this indicated that those under the Law had no right to partake of the Christ-sacrifice. This does not mean, of course, that those who lived during the Mosaic dispensation are excluded from the benefits of Christ's death, but that the Mosaic and Christian dispensations are incompatible—the old must be left behind before the new can be entered. (He was speaking to some who were hesitating between the two and attempting to embrace both).

Second, it indicated that Christ would suffer "*outside the gate.*" The great, central, anti-typical sacrifice to which all the others pointed would be OUTSIDE the whole Mosaic sacrificial system, and *not part of it*. His suffering outside the gate was a sign of his rejection by the Jewish nation.

And thirdly—says Paul—the type indicates that we "*have no continuing city.*" It indicates a forsaking (like Abraham) of the comfortable, established present for the sake of the glorious promised future—seen by faith. "*Let us go forth to him,*" is Paul's rallying-cry—to the rejected sacrifice "*without the camp, bearing his reproach!*"

Now, if these things were indicated (as Paul says they were) by the carrying out and burning outside of the dead bullock and goat, how much more the shameful departure of the living goat shows them! The Jews would regard the scapegoat (upon whom all their sins were symbolically laid) *exactly as Isaiah 53 indicates they would regard Christ*—as cursed, and rejected, and banished from God.

As the goat was driven forth (we are informed by historians), they lined the way to heap curses and abuse upon it. In this chapter in Isaiah there is a remarkable parallel with the scapegoat—

"We esteemed him smitten of God . . . the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."

How fitting then that—of all the types of the Law—this despised, rejected, sin-laden goat should foreshadow the glorious resurrection that is the keystone of all our hopes!

Following the departure of the scapegoat, Aaron laid aside the holy white linen garments (in which he had come closer than at any other time to his great antitype), and put on again his regular elaborate Mosaic vestments, and took up again his regular duties for another year.

The Temple-veil, after being thus drawn aside to give a brief prophetic glimpse of the future, is closed again—to be disturbed no more until next year's Atonement Day.

The men who burned the slain bullock and goat, and sent the scapegoat into the wilderness, return, wash their clothes, and rejoin the camp, and another yearly cycle begins for Israel.

But—arising out of Paul's remarks—our minds linger with the animals burnt for sin without the camp, and with the goat that has gone away sin laden and alone into the wilderness—bearing his reproach. For—though Israel did not, and still does not, know it—*therein their salvation lay.*

Perfect Peace

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee" (Isa. 26:3).

This declaration of the Spirit introduces us to a subject of great depth and beauty—and one also of great and abiding importance. We do well to mediate upon it—to consider it word by word.

"Thou"—God is the beginning and foundation. God is also the ending and completion. This divine charter of eternal peace is encompassed by God: ". . . whose mind is stayed on *THEE*."

"Thou wilt." Here is purpose and assurance. No yea and nay. No perhaps, or possibly, or usually—but a sure and all-powerful guarantee: *"Thou WILT."*

"Keep." Permanence and stability. What value is this peace, if it will not endure? But here we are dealing with One who wearies or changes not. *"Thou wilt KEEP."*

"Thou wilt keep him." Who? Everyone? All who ask? No. Only a certain class. Only those who follow a certain, prescribed course. Only the ones described in the latter part of this promise.

In natural things, intelligent men do not take the road south, and expect to reach the north, or the downhill road and expect to reach the top. Rather are they very careful as to their methods and directions. But in spiritual things—the only things of any real importance—*wishing and assuming* so often take the place of *planning and doing*.

The Scriptures say: *"As a man sows, so shall he reap."* It is as simple as that. This is not recorded for us in bitterness or anger, but it is a plain statement of fact. In natural things, men accept this fact. They do not sow one crop, and expect to reap another; or sow nothing at all, and expect to reap as if they had sown.

If we give our lives and time and energy to natural passing things, we shall reap natural, passing things—very nice and gratifying natural things, if we work hard in that direction.

If we give our lives and time and energy to spiritual, eternal things, we shall reap spiritual, eternal things (and our crop of natural things will be poor, but what matters that?).

The choice is ours. We each have our life. We can invest it exactly as we choose. But let us be sure that we have thought

it well out, that we know just which we are doing, and that we will be *satisfied in the end with the results.*

Christ will not wave a magic wand at the judgment-seat, changing wishes and intentions into facts. He will be *judging sober judgment*—according as every man's works shall be found to be.

What is the next word? "*In.*" Just a little, unimportant one that we might pass over, but perhaps worth a thought. "*Thou wilt keep him IN*"—inside, encircled, protected, overshadowed.

Perhaps just at present it does not appeal to us to be kept *in*. Perhaps, especially if we are young, there are many enticing-looking things *outside*. But here is where "*wisdom is profitable to direct.*" Here is where we are exhorted to consider the end, and not be "*as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding*"—aware only of the present.

In the final picture, "*in*" will be very desirable, and "*out*" will be very empty and bleak. Some will say, "Lord, open to us and let us *in.*" But there will be no entering then. "*Thou wilt keep him in.*"

The next word is "*perfect.*" This is the key word, and sets the tone for the whole promise, giving it meaning and value. The whole theme of the Scriptures is perfection. How does Jesus sum up the marvelous, heavenly teachings in his message in Matt. 5?—"BE YE PERFECT"—and lest there be any quibble about what he meant, he added—"even as your Father in heaven is perfect."

Jesus prayed that his disciples might be "made perfect" (Jn. 17:23). Paul, Peter and James gave expression to the same earnest prayer for those in their care (Heb. 13:21; 1 Pet. 5:10; Jam. 1:4). To the Ephesians (4:13) Paul declared that we should be no longer children, but—

". . . ALL come in the unity of the Faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a PERFECT man, unto the measure of the stature of the FULNESS OF CHRIST."

Epaphras labored fervently in prayers that his brethren might "*stand PERFECT in ALL the will of God*" (Col. 4:12). Paul reminded Timothy that the very purpose for which the Scriptures were given was that—through diligent and unceasing application to doctrine, correction, reproof and instruction—

"The man of God might be PERFECT, and thoroughly furnished unto ALL good works." (2 Tim. 3:17).

With this marvelous instruction of the Spirit (so glorious in its import that it is blinding and fearful to the natural, fleshly

mind) correspond the many beautiful and inspiring visions we are given of the True Bride, "*adorned for her husband*" with the true inward spiritual adorning.

"Christ loved the Ecclesia, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of (the living) water by the Word . . .

"That he might present it to himself a glorious Ecclesia, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish . . . this is a great mystery" (Eph. 5:25-27, 32).

Truly it is a "great mystery," hidden from the "wise and prudent" who are quite sure in their "wisdom" that it is an impossible fantasy, but revealed in divine mercy unto a few "babes."

Dare we say to God that all these promises of the Spirit are meaningless exaggerations? That we have no right to foolishly expect these conditions in the holy, sanctified, called-out Body of Christ, in which God dwells by His Spirit? That we must be practical and reasonable, and abandon these impossible ideals, and come down to earth? That we must resign ourselves to a common natural, earthly mediocrity in the holy Body of Christ—and be thankful it isn't any worse?

That is the counsel of defeat and despair. That is what we are asked to give in to and accept, after years of striving and struggling toward the "*more excellent way.*" One thing is certain, a body, or an individual, will NEVER attain any higher than it aims. *And the scriptural standard and goal is PERFECTION.*

That was what God intended, and for which He made complete provision—both in Israel and in the Ecclesia of Christ. There are no greater lessons in Scripture than those of Achan and of Ananias and Sapphira—parallel cases in a strange and significant way. How clearly they reveal the mind, and purpose, and desire of God!

Have we not so often pondered on the fact one small offence in all Israel completely disrupted the working of God in and through them, and they could not go on until that offence was tracked down and rooted out?

In His loving arrangements for Israel, God made provision for a maintenance of perfection—a constant renewing, and cleansing and purging out of the slightest thing that offended—so that He could dwell closely and intimately among them. What a wonderful, "holy nation" in the earth Israel could have been, if they had maintained this intended relationship with God! But

as Israel drifted from God, God ceased to cleanse and purify them by rooting out the offences. The glory gradually moved farther away.

So with the newborn Ecclesia of Christ. God gives the divinely intended pattern in the stirring record in the beginning of Acts.

"And they continued stedfast in doctrine and fellowship and prayers . . . and all that believed were together and had all things common . . . with gladness and singleness of heart . . . praising God and having favour with all . . . and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit . . . and the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one mind, neither said any of them that ought of the things he possessed was his own . . . great grace was upon them all" (Acts 2:42-47; 4:31-33).

What a beautiful, "impossible" picture!—impossible and impractical in the view of the seared and blunted "wisdom" of the mind of the flesh.

And because of this faithful, zealous condition, God—in His mercy and care—cut off from among them the defilement of Ananias and Sapphira, jealously cleansing and protecting His infant Ecclesia, just as He had the new-born Israel.

But—as with Israel—the glory of the heavenly vision soon fades and the flesh, in its self-satisfied Laodiceanism, presumes to define what is, and what is not, "possible" to the power of the Spirit; and what were once inspiring and transforming divine assurances are interpreted as tantalizing and unattainable will-of-the-wisps.

"*Thou will keep him in perfect PEACE.*" This word "peace" is the central word of the sentence—it is the *seventh* word from each end. It is the keystone of this beautiful arch of divine promise which springs from, and eventuates in, God. What is peace? The dictionary defines it as—

"A mental or spiritual state in which there is freedom from that which is disquieting or perturbing—fears, agitating passions, moral conflicts."

Peace is freedom. Jesus said to the Jews—

"The Truth shall make you FREE" (Jn. 8:32).

They were quite unimpressed, and replied, "We are free already, we have no need of your freedom." And to the majority it was just meaningless words when he told them—

"Whosoever commiteth sin is the SLAVE of sin."

Men talk much about freedom. They take great pride in the delusion that they are *free*. But all except the rare few who have the Spirit's peace are helpless slaves of the great master Sin.

Sin tells them to be proud, selfish, ambitious, to seek their own, to labor for and be concerned about worldly things, to gratify their natural desires which lead them finally into the cold arms of Sin's inseparable partner, Death.

Peace is freedom. But true peace is not just a negative thing. It is not just the absence of fears, passions and conflicts. True, scriptural peace is a living, positive force.

Peace, without God in the center of it, would be quite a monotonous vacuum. It is easy to understand natural man's lack of desire for it. But the rest of the promise takes care of that—*"Whose mind is stayed on Thee."*

The mind is the thoughts, intellect, awareness, consciousness, hopes, desires, purposes, yearnings and aspirations. These must have a center and an object of interest and affection. They must have a fruitful field of activity and exercise.

There are two, separate, distinct spheres in which they can operate—the agitating passions, or the peace of God. We must consider them well, and choose between them.

"Whose mind is stayed." To be stayed is to be upheld, supported, sustained, established—unwavering, unmoveable. David says—

"Great peace have they who love Thy Law, and nothing shall offend them" (Psa. 119:165).

"Nothing" here is related to the "perfection" of the peace. It is valueless if it does not hold true every time, without fail.

"Which love Thy Law." Some seem to feel that love and law are incompatible—that they are two opposites—that we must override law in order to manifest "love." In a sense it is true that love and law are incompatible, for as soon as we wholeheartedly and enthusiastically love the Law, it ceases—for us—to be law, and becomes rather an eagerly-sought opportunity to demonstrate our love. Jesus says—

"If ye love me, keep my commandments" (Jn. 14:15).

But as he speaks, the thought changes. He says a little later:

"If a man love me, he WILL keep my words" (v. 23).

This time he does not say "commandment"—he does not need to. If a man love him, they are no longer commandments, but happily fulfilled wishes of a loved one. David exclaimed—

"O how I love Thy Law! It is my meditation ALL the day!" (Psa. 119:97).

We can put this "all" in the same category with the "perfect" and the "nothing." It is a word of completeness—a word of glorious *extremeness*. Some seem to labor under the notion

that to be an "extremist" is something to be ashamed of—an epithet with which to belabor and discredit others.

For the mind to be stayed on God is to love the Law of God, and to meditate upon it ALL the day—for the Law of God is the revelation of the mind and character of God. It teaches us what He is, and what He takes pleasure in. It both reveals Him to us and draws us to Him—transforming us to His pattern of perfection.

Writing to the Philippians, Paul speaks of the "*peace of God which passeth all understanding.*" And he tells us how to go about achieving it. First he says—

"Rejoice in the Lord ALWAYS: and again I say, Rejoice!"
(Phil. 4:4).

This is very important. See how he puts it first, and how he repeats it for emphasis. And note the "always." Not just when we naturally feel like rejoicing—it means nothing then—but *always*, as a regular, established, purposeful course of life. (This "always" is related to the "perfect," the "nothing," and the "all" that we have noted earlier.)

Can we rejoice in the Lord always?—when we are sick, or in trouble, or worried, or cast down, or discouraged, or under pressure of various kinds? These are the very times when it is most important to rejoice.

To rejoice in the Lord *always* is the first stepping-stone to the "*peace of God which passeth all understanding.*" Nothing is ever so bad that a consideration of the overall eternal picture will not give grounds for rejoicing.

In fact, the worse things are, the more they intensify the basis of true rejoicing. Rejoice *in the Lord*; rejoice that the present is brief and passing, and all its evil is working to a wise, eternal end.

Rejoice, as Paul says (Rom. 5:3)—rejoice, glory, triumph *in tribulation*. Not just rejoice *during* tribulation—the meaning is deeper than that. But rejoice *because of* tribulation—

*"Knowing that tribulation worketh steadfastness . . .
because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts."*

Surely if tribulation provide the avenue for God to pour love into our hearts, then tribulation gives abundant grounds for rejoicing! How strange and marvelous are the ways of God! How little we know about eternal realities!

How long was the power of the atom hidden within apparently "dead" matter! What infinitely vaster powers and pur-

poses exist in spiritual realms of which natural man has never dreamed!

Next Paul says—

"Let your moderation be known unto all men" (v. 5).

What is "moderation?" The word doesn't carry very much of a clear idea, nor does it at all express the true meaning here, as can be very easily determined. The Revised Version has instead "forebearance," and in the margin "gentleness."

Now we begin to get a clearer picture. Other versions have "forebearing spirit." This word is always translated elsewhere throughout the Authorized Version as "patience" or "gentleness." It occurs as "gentleness," for example, in Paul's entreaty:

"I beseech you, by the meekness and GENTLENESS of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:1).

Gentleness of character is an essential ingredient of peace of mind. We are apt to think of patience and gentleness as virtues practiced for the sake of others, but actually they have an even greater and more basic value to ourselves.

They are part of the invincible armament of internal peace. They make and keep peace within ourselves even more effectively than they contribute to peace with others. We cannot have peace unless we develop gentleness and patience.

"Let your patience and gentleness be known to ALL men." Here again a word of completeness and perfection—one of those *extreme* words which frighten the half-hearted. Unless these attributes are applied consistently and indiscriminately to *all*, and in *all* circumstances, they are not the real thing, and they will never produce peace. They are then just cheap subterfuges for personal advantage and self-satisfaction.

If we are building for *perfect* peace, our building materials must be solid and true, and not just surface veneer for outward appearance.

Why are patience and gentleness essential for peace? The answer is obvious immediately if we consider what the absence of these characteristics mean—*impatience and irritation*. Clearly no peace could blossom in that soil.

If we examine every cause of impatience or irritation, one or both of two things will be found at the bottom of it—having our *pride hurt*, or having our *desires frustrated*. If our pride and desires are related to the esteem of men, and to earthly things that men can jeopardize or in any way effect, *we shall never have peace*.

But if our glorying and desires relate wholly to eternal things that men cannot touch, our peace can never be disturbed. The peace of the godly man is secure, for it rests in things beyond the reach of mortal hands.

Jesus said—

“Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly, and ye shall have rest (peace) unto your souls” (Matt. 11:29).

Meekness and lowliness lead to peace. Pride is the great enemy of peace. Pride is a nuisance—

—such an evil thing; such a potent cause of misery;

—such a merciless driver and miserly rewarder;

—such a robber of time and energy;

—such a magnet for hate and envy—

—that it is a wonder any sane person harbors it. Yet it is deeply engrained in all of us, one of the most vicious and tenacious roots of the law of sin in our members. Pride is natural man's most cherished possession, and one of the world's great virtues. Most people will do anything, and spite themselves in every other way in order to protect their pride.

How much of man's labor is just to cater to his self-satisfaction and pride!—a better job, a better home, a better car, a better neighborhood, the desire to be looked up to as important—the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. Is that the mind of Jesus Christ, or of Paul, or of John the Baptist?

We must make our choice between peace and pride. We cannot have both, for one is spiritual, and the other is carnal.

The worst thing about pride is that it is such a universal and deceptive parasite. It can fasten its roots into anything, and flourish. There is no pride more robust and assertive than the pride of a man who is proud of his humility.

What is the third step Paul describes for peace?

“Be careful for nothing” (v. 6).

Does he mean just to let things drift without any effort or concern for them? Hardly, for he says elsewhere we must always *“abound in the work of the Lord,”* beside laboring for our own necessities and others.

What he is combating is *worry*, for there can be no peace where there is worry. The most effective cure for worry is to force ourselves to the humbling but comforting realization that we are but an insignificant partner in a great and invincible partnership.

God is the major partner. The big problems and their solution are safely in His hands. We but need to calmly do our little part as it presents itself from day to day. That is what Paul is telling us here; turn the problems over to God, and get on with *your* part.

"Be careful for nothing, but in EVERYTHING, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving make your requests to God" (Phil. 4:6).

"In *everything*" note again that word of completeness. Insurance is of little value if it does not cover every possible emergency. If it doesn't, it is not *insurance* at all, but just a gamble with odds. And there is only one insurance that covers every eventuality.

Peter says the same, with the same emphasis on completeness:

"Humble yourself. . . cast ALL your care upon Him"
(1 Pet. 5:6, 7).

"All your cares"—no exceptions. God's insurance has no small print, full of reservations. We note Paul says—

"In everything WITH THANKSGIVING make your requests to God."

Every approach to God must be with thanksgiving. That is the essential incense that *must* accompany every acceptable sacrifice. And surely that is reasonable! If we are so spiritually numb that we are not consciously and constantly thankful for the priceless blessings already so freely received—of being called out of death and darkness to the life and light of sonship of God—why should God give us any more?

Present problems and troubles must never be allowed to obscure this basic, overflowing thankfulness which is one of the essential ingredients of the perfect peace we are seeking.

After having outlined the way—

Rejoice ALWAYS in the Lord;

Let your gentleness, your patience, your forbearing spirit be consistently manifested toward ALL men;

Worry about NOTHING, turn ALL cares over to God;

In EVERYTHING seek God's help in constant thanksgiving.

Then the apostle gives the glorious assurance of success—

"The peace of God, which passeth all understanding SHALL keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ."

Is this another of those impossible ideals—those tantalizing unattainables? We cannot bring ourselves to side with those who morbidly think so.

As he bid farewell to his disciples, and prepared himself for his great and terrible ordeal, Jesus calmly said—

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you. Not as the world gives give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (Jn. 14:27).

Surely nothing could be truer than that it is not as the world gives that Jesus gives peace. What a shabby makeshift is the best the world has to offer!—especially as we look at it today with its vain cries of “Peace, peace!” when there is no peace. And there *cannot* be peace, for the Spirit through Isaiah declares—

“The work of RIGHTEOUSNESS shall be peace, and the effect of RIGHTEOUSNESS quietness and assurance forever” (32:17).

“Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” Is that sometimes hard to do? A little later, right at the end of his farewell, Jesus tells his little band how—

“Ask, and ye SHALL receive, that your joy may be FULL” (Jn. 16:24).

(“Full” is another of those wonderful words of perfection and completeness. There are no half-measures with the Spirit of God).

“These things have I spoken unto you that IN ME ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation . . . but be of good cheer—I HAVE OVERCOME THE WORLD” (Jn. 16:33).

Peace is the end of warfare, and the fruit of victory. He had overcome the world—the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life—and he had peace.

And he invites us to share with him his perfect, eternal peace—by leaving all, and following him.

The Image and the Stone

“And David put his hand in his bag, and took thence a stone, and slang it, and smote the Phillistine in his forehead, that the stone sunk into his forehead; and he fell upon his face to the earth” (1 Sam. 17:49).

We cannot help, as we read our daily portions, but marvel at the depth, beauty and interest of the great revelation that God made to man in the Bible. Time and time again we are struck by inexhaustible interplay of spiritual meaning and significance that runs in every direction in Scripture, like the weaving of a marvelous tapestry.

In the story of David and Goliath (so familiar to us all) this fact stands out repeatedly. In this epic encounter between faith and force, spirit and flesh, the godly and the earthly, we see all the purpose of God and the history of man focalized. The record occurs in 1 Sam. 17. The account begins—

“The Phillistines gathered together their armies to battle” (v. 1).

The name “Philistine” has found a place in the English language as a common noun. It is used to describe one who is earthly, ignorant, uncultured and unspiritual. These Gentile barbarians gather their forces against Israel and Israel’s first king.

How many of us know just where this great encounter between David and Goliath took place? It was a little south of Jerusalem, and halfway over toward the Mediterranean Sea. It was in the same locality where Samson’s strange adventures took place—right at the border between the Israelite hill country and the level Philistine plain. It was *“between the seas—Dead and Mediterranean—in the glorious holy mountain”* (Dan. 11:45)—where Gog is to meet his end.

Throughout the story, we are inescapably reminded of Christ’s two victories—first over the great and terrible giant of sin and death; and second, the victory to come over the colossal image of the kingdom of men. Goliath is a type of both.

“The Phillistines . . . pitched . . . in Ephes-dammim”
(1 Sam. 17:1).

This name means “border of blood.” In the antitype it marks the crest of human power: the *border of blood*—the point where it was broken and turned back, both at Golgotha in the past and Armageddon in the future.

For Christ, as for all, the victory must be first personal, first *internal*; then external. The real victory was won at Gethsemane and Calvary: "*Be of good cheer, I have OVERCOME THE WORLD.*" (That was spoken when the world did not even know he existed.) The triumph of Armageddon is but the logical and inevitable sequence of the triumph of the cross. So with us—the victory must be *personal*; all the rest will take care of itself.

Ephes-dammim, the "border of blood," is very closely related in meaning to Acel-dama, the "field of blood," purchased with the price of Judas' treachery.

"And Saul and the men of Israel were gathered together, and pitched by the valley of Elah" (v. 2).

"Elah" is the feminine form of "El" (God, strength, mighty one). Elah in Scripture means a strong, firmly-rooted tree. It is usually translated "oak" in the Authorized Version. Several significant things in Scripture occurred under oaks, or "Elahs". It is the word used (1 Chr. 10:12), when the men of Jabesh-gilead buried the bones of Saul and Jonathan under "the oak" in Jabesh. The custom of burying under an oak (Gen. 35:8) seems to carry the thought of resting under the overshadowing care of the Mighty One—"*Therefore shall my flesh rest in hope*" (Psa. 16:9).

Combining this thought with the meaning of "Jabesh" gives us a touching picture of Israel, as typified by their first king and his noble son—failure and success.

Jabesh is the common Hebrew word for "dried-up, withered". Saul stands for failure—the failure of one who was called and chosen, and given great honor and responsibilities.

Surely there is something very striking about Saul's bones and all his hopes being buried under a mighty tree in a dry and withered place! In Saul (the first king) we see the natural kingdom of Israel, buried in a withered place because of failure. But in his son Jonathan ("Gift of God"), buried under the shadow of the same mighty tree, we see promise and hope for Israel in the end. "*Unto us a Son is given, and the government (kingship), shall be upon HIS shoulder*" (Isa. 9:6). "*O My people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up*" (Eze. 37:12).

The figure of an Elah—a strong, well-rooted tree—is often used in Scripture for the righteous—

"Trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord"
(Isa. 61:3).

"As the days of a tree are the days of My people"
(Isa. 65:22)

"As a tree planted by the rivers of waters" (Psa. 1:3).

So the Philistines gather in the "border of blood"; Israel by the valley of the Mighty Tree.

"And the Philistines stood on a mountain on the one side, and Israel stood on a mountain on the other side: and there was a valley between them" (v.3)

Each army on a mountain slope—the valley between for the scene of the conflict. Mountains in Bible language are *powers*—the two great flesh-powers of the latter day are "mountains of brass" (Zech. 6:1)—and the "*mountain of the Lord's House*" shall be exalted above all the mountains of the earth (Isa. 2:2).

A valley is a place of sorrow, humility and trial. We find many poetic expressions based upon this thought. The "Valley of Achor" (trouble) which for Israel finally becomes a "Door of Hope" (Hos. 2:15), because "*We must through much tribulation enter the Kingdom*" (Acts 14:22).

In Psalm 84 we have the Valley of Baca (tears)—

"Blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee . . . who, passing through the valley of Baca, make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools . . . They go from strength to strength" (vs. 5-7).

Here, by a beautiful figure, the tears of sorrow are transformed into the water of life, by faith and the strength of God.

Then there is the Valley of Jehosphaphat (God's Judgment); the Valley of Haraga (Slaughter); and the central figure—"the Valley of the Shadow of Death" (Psa. 23:4). There are *forty valleys* mentioned in Scripture, including the last one. Young's concordance lists them all, and they would make a very interesting study. (We shall remember this "forty" when we reach v. 16).

"And there went out a champion out of the camp of the Philistines, named Goliath, of Gath" (1 Sam. 17:4).

Goliath means "exile". He stands for natural man in all his power and glory—an exile from God. Gath means "winepress", Goliath of Gath—"the exile of the winepress".

Our minds immediately go to the Revelation—to the "great winepress of the wrath of God" which is about to be typically enacted in this valley—the treading down by the victorious Christ of all human power and pride—the grinding to powder of the great Image.

"His height was six cubits and a span" (v. 4).

This would be around ten to eleven feet. Six is the number of man; 666 is the Man of Sin (Rev. 13:18). This family of giants

had six fingers on each hand, six toes on each foot (2 Sam. 21:20). Goliath had six pieces of armor.

“Six cubits *and a span*.” Surely the six cubits represent the six thousand years of the measure of the flesh’s rule on earth—the measure of the image. But what about the “span”? This Hebrew word occurs seven times in the Scriptures: once here, once speaking of God measuring the *heavens* with the span (Isa. 40:12), four times in measuring the high priest’s breastplate (Ex. 28:16; 39:9), and finally once in Ezekiel (43:13) in measuring the border of the altar of the Millennial Temple.

Seven occurrences, and all except this one measure divine things—heaven, the breastplate of judgment, the altar that is the very center of the worship of the Millennial Age. Are we not forced to the conclusion that the span beyond the six cubits is the millennial period—the highest and last period of the existence of natural flesh—the period of transition *spanning* between man’s measured six cubits of rule, and the unmeasured divine expanse beyond? (We shall find this thought reinforced when we come to consider the Stone sinking into the Image’s head in this span period).

Verses 5 and 6 inform us that Goliath was covered with *brass* armor. It could not be otherwise, for brass stands for the flesh, as *gold* does for the Spirit. We remember Moses’ serpent of brass, and that “serpent” and “brass” in Hebrew are from the same root and are almost identical words. Solomon made three hundred shields of *gold* for the Temple of God (the Gideon-army of faith), but because faith failed, the Egyptians came and took away these golden shields and Rehoboam tried to conceal the shame of the loss by the pitiful subterfuge of three hundred shields of *brass*.

“*Above all, take the shield of Faith*” (Eph. 6:16).

It must be a golden shield of spiritual faith; a brass shield of faith in the flesh will not do.

Samson’s encounter with the Philistine Delilah was in this same locality. The struggle between Samson and Delilah was just as deadly, though in a different way, as David’s and Goliath—but there the God-appointed champion of Israel failed, and the Philistine triumphed. *And Samson was bound with “fettters of brass.”*

That incident occurred in the valley of Sorek just north of this valley of Elah—the opposite side of the mountain. Whereas Elah means a “mighty tree,” Sorek means a “choice vine”. God

said to Israel, *"I planted thee a noble vine"* ("sorek" in the original).

The vine looms large in Samson's life, for he was ordained a Nazarite unto God from his mother's womb. The mark of the Nazarite was uncut hair and total abstinence from the vine. The forbidden vine, of course, in this symbol, is the corruption of the world, headed up in the harlot whose wine deceives all nations.

Samson was deceived, and fell, in the valley of Sorek—the valley of the Vine. And the false woman who had deceived him sold him in shame to her Philistine accomplices.

Returning to Goliath, we see this mighty champion of the flesh defying the armies of God. And Saul and all Israel are terrified. That is the picture up to verse 11. Truly a sad, shameful picture—all in the bondage of terror—not a man who is able to cope with this giant of the flesh—this godless Philistine who insolently challenges and defies them all.

But verse 12 introduces a complete change. Up to this point, the picture of fleshly might has been building up against God's people. Verse 12 is a sudden and striking break in the narrative—

"Now David was the son of that Ephrathite of Bethlehem-Judah, whose name was Jesse" (v. 12).

Here is the one man (and he but a youth) upon whom all the salvation of terror-stricken Israel depends—a young boy with the fearless courage of faith. And all these brave and experienced men of war let him go forward as their champion to fight the Lord's battle, knowing that victory or defeat for Israel rested solely upon this boy. What a scene!

"That Ephrathite of Bethlehem-Judah." Bethlehem—"The House of Bread"—had no significance in Israel up to this time, except that Rachel (the type of the Old Covenant) died there, and it was there, too, that Boaz (meaning "Lord of Strength") took a faithful Gentile for his bride, who was to be ancestress to both David and Christ. (Likewise *Jerusalem* does not enter the scriptural picture until David's time, except in the brief foreshadowing of its greatness that we get in the Melchizedec vision).

But now is typically fulfilled Micah's yet unspoken prophecy:

"But thou, Bethlehem-Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto Me that is to be Ruler in Israel . . .

"And this man shall be the peace when the Assyrian shall come into our land . . . we shall raise up against

him (the Assyrian) seven shepherds and eight principal (princes of) men" (5:2-5).

"Assyria" is a term applied frequently to the invader of the latter days. In Goliath, the Assyrian had typically come, and a shepherd of Bethlehem is needed to destroy him and deliver Israel.

David was a shepherd from Bethlehem, and—strangely enough—he is spoken of as both the *seventh* and the *eighth* son of Jesse. He is called the seventh in the genealogy (1 Chron. 2:15), and eighth here in the history (vs. 12-14). Possibly one son was by a concubine, or for some other reason was excluded from the genealogy.

Seven denotes perfection; eight, a new beginning—the eighth day, a new week—the eighth note, a new octave. Jesus rose the eighth day—the first day of a new week. Circumcision was on the eighth day—a symbol of the complete cutting off of the flesh at the end of the Millennium, the beginning of the eighth one thousand years. Eight were saved in the ark, the greatest type of a new beginning after a complete washing away of the old. So we find the eighth day memorialized in Ezekiel's Temple (43:27), and the entrance of that Temple was by eight steps (40:31).

"Jesse went among men for an old man in the time of Saul" (1 Sam. 17:12).

Why are we told that? To carry out this same symbolization of a *new beginning*. Paul says (speaking of the Law of Moses)—

"In that He said, A NEW covenant, He hath made the first old. That which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away" (Heb. 8:13).

David, type of a new beginning, comes out of the old when the old is done. Isaac (type of spiritual Israel) but *not* Jacob (type of natural Israel) is spoken of as the "son of his father's old age."

So also both Joseph and Benjamin. Omitting the sons of the concubines, Joseph and Benjamin were the *seventh and eighth* sons of Jacob. John the Baptist, too, was called the son of his parents' old age—he marked the end of the old dispensation and the beginning of the new.

The three eldest sons of Jesse followed Saul to battle. They were among the fearful who cowered before Goliath. These clearly stand for natural Israel, the elder brethren. We find later that they revile the youth of David because they are under the bondage of fear and he is not.

Why are their names given here? This chapter is so obviously and inescapably a symbolic miniature that there must be a

significant reason, and we need only to look up their meanings to discover the reason.

Eliab means "God is my Father." This, of course, refers to the origin of Israel, and their special position in God's sight—"Israel is My son, even My firstborn," said God to Pharaoh (Ex. 4:22). "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called My son out of Egypt" (Hos. 11:1).

Abinadab means "The Father is willing, liberal, gracious." This is the background of all Israel's history—

"All day long (that is, all during their daytime as a nation in God's favor) have I stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people" (Rom. 10:21).

Shammah means "desolation, astonishment, ruin." This word and its derivatives are used scores of times in speaking of the judicial desolation of Israel for faithlessness, as in Jer. 4:7:

"The lion is come up from his thicket. The destroyer of the Gentiles is on his way. He is gone forth from his place to make thy land desolate (shammah)."

Truly the "destroyer of the Gentiles" had entered the land, and they are typically in their present *Shammah* state, the state they must be in when the David-champion is raised up as their Deliverer. Hosea says of Israel—

"Come, and let us return unto the Lord . . . AFTER two days He will revive us: in the third day (Shammah) He will raise us up, and we shall live in His sight" (6:2).

Then follows that beautiful verse—

"Then shall we know, IF we follow on to know the Lord; His going forth is prepared as the morning: and He shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth" (v. 3).

"His going forth is prepared as the morning." On the third day, "very early in the morning," he arose to life and glory, and in Israel's "third day" their "Sun of Righteousness" will arise upon them, bringing with him the gentle life-giving rain, made up of the vast multitude of droplets "whom no man can number" drawn up into the heavenlies by the Sun's power out of the ocean of nations, purified in the process, and constituting the "great cloud of witnesses" that surround him in glory—

"Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him" (Rev. 1:7).

This combination of Sun and soft, gentle rain will bring forth the manifestation of the *Rainbow of the Everlasting Covenant*, confirmed to Noah at his new beginning after the earth's purifying baptism (Gen. 9:16); manifested to Ezekiel in the

cherubim-vision of God-manifestation as Israel's long night began (Eze. 1:28); overarching the throne in the Kingdom picture of Revelation 4; and finally encircling the head of the mighty Rainbow-Angel who comes to pour out the Seven Thunders of final judgment, and declares that "*There shall be time no longer.*"

"In the third—Shammah—desolation—day He will raise us up." Three is the number of *resurrection*, regathering, receiving again. In the third year of his righteous reign Jehoshaphat sent *princes and priests* to teach the Law of the Lord in *all the cities of Israel*, to turn them again to the Lord (2 Chr. 17:7).

Hezekiah, after receiving the message of death, was delivered from death and went to the house of the Lord on the third day (2 Kgs. 20:5). Under the Law any who were defiled by contact with *death* had to be purified the third day (Num. 19:12).

Jesus in Gethsemane went away three times and prayed to be delivered from death, praying—

“ . . . with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared . . . ”

—and was raised up on the third day, just as the earth on the third day of Creation rose up out of the waters in which it had been buried in baptism. The spring awakening of the vegetable creation from its winter of death is the yearly type, reminder, and promise of the resurrection. So we find it was on this same third day of Creation that all plant life sprang into living being. Jesus raised *three* people from the dead.

“David fed his father's sheep at Bethlehem” (v. 15).

We learn how faithful was his care by the incidents of the lion and the bear. It is a striking contrast—David *preserved* his father's *sheep*; Saul didn't find the *lost asses*. Sheep are clean animals. Through the Scriptures they symbolize the faithful flock. Asses are unclean, and represent natural, ignorant, fleshly people. The “burial of an ass” was the lowest, most dishonorable form of burial. It is recorded in Job—

“Vain man would be wise, though man be born like a wild ass's colt” (11:12).

And of the heathen that Israel doted on, God said: “Their flesh is as the flesh of asses”—coarse, carnal and unclean.

“And the Philistine (Goliath) drew near morning and evening, and presented himself forty days” (v. 16).

Forty is the period of probation, trial and judgment. Several illustrations will occur to mind—the waters of the flood, Israel

in the wilderness, Nineveh's probation, Jesus' temptation, etc. We recall the *forty valleys* of Scripture. Israel was given a final forty years of probation after the crucifixion of the Messiah. Moses' life was divided into *three* periods of exactly *forty* years each—forty years exposed to the honors, advantages and enticements of Egyptian royalty, but he turned his back on the "treasures of Egypt" and "chose to suffer affliction with the people of God" (Heb. 11:25); after having, at the age of forty, "*supposed that his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them,*" he waited forty years in the wilderness, until it was testified that—

"The man Moses was very meek, above all the men that were upon the face of the earth" (Num. 12:3)

—then forty years of labor for a hostile and unthankful people.

The challenge is a *double forty*. Eighty times—morning and evening for forty days—Goliath casts reproach upon the people of God. They had full opportunity, but not a man in all Israel dared to face him. Compare this with the "mighty men" and mighty deeds of David's reign.

Was it that they feared to face death? Or was it that they feared to take on single-handed the responsibility for the deliverance or servitude of Israel? Were they waiting for the Spirit of God to move some one in the camp? Had Israel's courage and hope fled because they knew God was not with their king?

In all these things we see the similarity with the great antitype. The whole issues of life and death for mankind rested on the success or failure of Christ.

"All we like sheep have gone astray . . . and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:6).

We wonder about Jonathan, who had previously, with his armor-bearer, attacked and defeated a whole garrison of the Philistines, and inspired Israel to faith and victory. We note immediately after David's victory, "*The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.*"

So Jonathan was an anxious spectator of these strange events. Jonathan, more than anyone else, fully appreciated the fearless depths of David's faith, for he too was fearless and faithful.

But something had held him back from facing the challenge of the Philistine giant. It may have been some circumstance that cast no reflection on his courage. Jonathan is to David as

the Bride is to Christ, and it is no reflection on the Bride that she is unable to overcome the giant-power alone.

Jesse said to David—

“Take this bread, and run to thy brethren, and see how they fare, and take their pledge” (vs. 17, 18).

How reminiscent of Joseph, and of Joseph’s greater antitype. *“Take this bread to thy brethren, and see how they fare.”*

“Run to them,” the father said (v. 17). The matter was urgent—far more urgent indeed than Jesse realized.

“And take their pledge.” What does that mean? Whatever the literal meaning may be, we can clearly see its fittingness in the type. Of the time of Jesus’ mission, Isaiah said: *“Seal the law among my disciples.”* And Jesus’ own words come to mind, *“This is my blood of the new covenant.”* Truly he “ran to his brethren” to “take their pledge.”

David was sent to take his brother’s pledge, but it would seem from their antagonistic reception that whatever was meant by the expression did not occur. Likewise Jesus was sent with bread to make a new covenant with his brethren, but they likewise railed on him. Moses and Joseph, similar deliverers of their brethren, received similar treatment.

“And David rose up early in the morning” (v. 20).

Rising up early is a term used in Scripture to denote care, concern and diligence. The Psalms speak often of awakening early to praise God. The thought is to be awake and watching with eager gratitude for the first dawning of the new day.

Each new daybreak is a type and promise of the great dawn of glory to come. Daybreak is the most inspiring and uplifting time of the whole day—a fact most of us completely miss in our artificial mode of life. It is no meaningless detail that it should be, and that it should be recorded, that Jesus rose from the dead *“very early in the morning.”*

Jeremiah is the great warning prophet of the period of Israel’s casting off, and *eleven* times in his book God declares that He—

“Rose up early and sent prophets . . .”

—but Israel would not hear. *It was the eleventh hour for Israel.*

“And David left the sheep with a keeper” (v. 20).

This is the same word translated “watchman” where Isaiah says, *“Watchman, what of the night?”* It means watcher, keeper, preserver, guardian.

Jesus said to Peter (Jn. 21:15-17), *“Feed my sheep.”* Just before his conflict with the giant sin-power on behalf of his

brethren, he told his disciples: "What I say to you I say to all, **WATCH.**"

"Who then is a faithful and wise servant, to give the household meat in due season? . . . Blessed is that servant whom his lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing."

* * *

"And David left his carriage in the hand of the keeper of the carriage, and ran into the army, and came and saluted his brethren" (v. 22).

Because the battle had been put in array (v. 21), David could not take what he had brought direct to his brethren, for they would be at the battle front. No actual fighting had begun, but the armies were lined up against each other. So David would actually seem to appear before his brethren empty-handed, and they misconstrued his motives and purpose in coming.

Like David, when Jesus came to his brethren he found them in combat and conflict with the enemy—not only externally with the Romans (which they understood and keenly felt), but also inwardly, with the power of sin (which they neither understood nor felt).

To all appearances he too brought nothing with him to them. They expected a Messiah to come in royal power. We are told he emptied himself and made himself of no reputation, and took on him the form of a servant.

What a pleasant, friendly greeting David receives from his eldest brother—

"I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thy heart"
(v. 28).

What volumes this tells us of Eliab's character, and the relation between David and his brethren! The word here translated "naughtiness" is quite a strong word—not playful in any way. Elsewhere it is translated "wickedness" and "evil".

To appreciate the significance of this greeting we must remember that David was already divinely anointed heir to the kingdom. And his brethren knew this, for they had witnessed his anointing (by a prophet that all the nation accepted) when he was chosen before them (as the Jews had witnessed the Spirit-anointing of Jesus at his baptism by John). But it would appear obvious that David's brethren had no faith either in him or his anointing.

"And as he talked with them, behold, there came up the champion, the Philistine of Gath, Goliath" (1 Sam. 17:23).

—and all the men bravely drawn up for battle draw back and cower before him. (We may find ourselves speaking of their fear a little disparagingly, but perhaps we should ask ourselves how we would have acted in the circumstances).

But the boy David could not understand the action of the men of Israel—

“Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?” (v. 26)

—that is, why doesn't someone go out and destroy him and remove the reproach from Israel? And the men he spoke to told him that Saul had offered his daughter and great riches and freedom for his father's house, to any who would face Goliath (v. 25)—yet with all these inducements no man had come forward.

The conqueror of Goliath should be given the king's daughter. Psalm 45 declares—

“The king's daughter is all glorious within . . .”

—note particularly the *“within”* . . .

“. . . her clothing is of wrought gold” (v. 13).

“Wrought gold” is faith shapen under the hammer of affliction. Now, who is the *“king's daughter”*? This whole psalm, we find, is a beautiful song concerning Christ and his Bride. It contains the tribute to Christ that Paul quotes in Heb. 1:19—

“Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.”

The conqueror of Goliath should also receive *“great riches.”* Paul's use of this word in his various delineations of the glories of the Truth adds great depth to its meaning. He speaks of—

“The riches of God's goodness” (Rom. 2:4);

“The riches of His wisdom and knowledge” (Rom. 11:33);

“The riches of His grace” (Eph. 1:7);

“The riches of His inheritance” (Eph. 1:18);

—and above all—

“The unsearchable riches of Christ” (Eph. 3:8).

* * *

“. . . and make his father's house free in Israel.”

That was the great purpose of Christ's battle with the enemy of his brethren—to make his Father's house free in Israel.

“Whosoever committeth sin is the slave of sin . . . If the Son make you free, ye shall be free indeed” (Jn. 8:34-36).

* * *

“And Eliab's anger was kindled against David” (v. 28).

Why? The most natural cause in the world—*fear and jealousy*. He, the eldest, a man of war, was afraid of Goliath. David, the youngest, a boy, was not. David's fearless words reflected on him, the elder brother, and being a natural man he reacted with anger and blustering—calling David names and attempting to humiliate and belittle him. Eliab said—

"With whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness?"

The "few sheep in the wilderness" have always been a matter of scorn and reproach to the faithful. So few can resist the argument of numbers that the fewness of the "little flock" has always been a stumbling-block.

We expect this from the world, but it is sad and discouraging to see this same outlook in the brotherhood—"We are the majority, and so that proves we must be right. You are just a 'fragment,' so you must be wrong."

But the sheep have always been few—and *they have always been in the wilderness*—outcast and despised. And it has always been Christ's humble work to care for his Father's few sheep in the wilderness—the poor and downcast of the world, not the rich and well-favored.

But the time is coming for the humble shepherd to manifest himself as a mighty deliverer. To the "few sheep" he says—

"Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom" (Lk. 12:32).

* * *

The words of this shepherd boy come to the ears of the distraught king, and he is so desperate that he sends for him. And the poor shepherd boy says to the mighty king—

"Do not be afraid! I will destroy this Phillistine."

Saul reasons according to the thinking of the flesh—obsessed with Goliath's armor and might—

"Thou art not able to do it" (v. 33).

Why not, if God is with him? What difference do Goliath's size and natural advantages make? There again is that same fatal human obsession with sheer weight and bulk and the outward appearance of strength. David replies—

"I kept my father's sheep, and there came out a lion and a bear . . . And I slew both . . . and this uncircumcised Phillistine shall be as one of them . . . the Lord will deliver me" (v. 34-37).

A lion and a bear. What does that make us think of? What will Christ first encounter when he first comes to deliver his sheep?

Up to the present we have been reminded mostly of Christ's *first* advent to conquer the great enemy SIN, which held all men in fear and bondage and death. As we proceed, however, we shall find our minds directed more to the circumstances of his *second* coming (though not to the exclusion of the first).

When does Christ slay a lion and a bear? Just before he issues his challenge to the great image of the Kingdom of Men. In fact, like David, it forms the very background and stepping-stone of that challenge.

For first he subdues the Kings of the South and the North—Britain and Russia—the *Lion and the Bear*—the latterday Egypt and Assyria, as they squabble over his land—the pasture of his sheep. Then the challenge goes to the kingdoms of the world—

"Fear God, and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment is come" (Rev. 14:7).

* * *

"As a roaring lion and a ranging bear, so is a wicked ruler over poor people" (Prov. 28:15).

The scripturally-trained eye sees that this is the character of all the sin-powers of the earth, of which the Kings of the North and the South are the latterday heads and representatives.

Picture Palestine—God's own pasture—the ravaged battleground between rival world-powers that Korea has been, and we can readily visualize the lion and the bear among the sheep.

* * *

David's faith was entirely in God—not in any way in himself. Therefore he had no doubts about the outcome, for *God cannot fail*. This is the frame of mind we must develop, if we are to be among the chosen few.

God cannot fail, and He has specifically promised "both to will and to do of His good pleasure" in those that truly love Him.

"We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10).

His workmanship, and GOD CANNOT FAIL. Do we grasp the tremendous and revolutionary significance of this passage? *Whether or not we do is the key to life and death.*

"Filled with all the fullness of God . . . according to the power that worketh in us" (Eph. 3:19, 20).

This is what we must sell all to obtain. This is what we must seek agonizingly and unceasingly, as for hid treasures, until we find it—for *this is life, all else is death.*

"ACCORDING TO THE POWER THAT WORKETH IN US."

* * *

"And Saul armed David with his armor, and put an helmet of brass upon his head; also he armed him with a coat of mail" (v. 38).

Saul attempts to arm David as Goliath is armed. That is simply fighting flesh with flesh. A "helmet of brass" (flesh) is the direct opposite of the golden helmet of salvation on which David relied.

The children of the Spirit are no match for the children of the flesh if they attempt to meet them on their own ground with their own weapons. Here the children of the flesh have all the advantage of numbers, experience, prestige and learning. Here is where the churches of the world—afraid of appearing unlearned, afraid of being left behind, afraid of being called "obscurantists"—have given away their scriptural foundation and undermined their only bulwark by meeting the evolutionists halfway in their speculations.

The children of the Spirit must find higher ground for the conflict. *They must not be drawn down into the Philistine plain*, but must stay up in the Israel hills. Their defense must lie in holiness and faith, and the consequent indwelling, invincible power and presence of the living God—

"Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord . . . he that hath clean hands and a pure heart" (Psa. 24:3, 4).

If we can reach this point, we are unconquerable. If the children of God haven't these things, they are no match for the wisdom of the world. It is only as instruments of God's use that they succeed against all the advantages that are on the world's side.

So David wisely put off all Saul's brazen armor. He did not even retain the helmet as protection for his head—the most vital part, but went forth in his simple shepherd's garb, with no natural protection at all. He realized it was all or nothing. *Part* of the armor would have been worse than none—it would have impeded his movements and chances for success without giving him any guarantee of adequate protection.

This is a problem and decision we must all face. There is no use putting on *half* of the world's armor. If we want to rely on the world's way of protection, let us go all the way. But if we want to rely on God, let us go all the way in *that* direction. Sad indeed is the man who grasps at both and gains neither!

* * *

"And he took his staff in his hand" (v. 40)

—his shepherd's staff. We cannot help wondering why David carried his staff into this encounter. What could he possibly have thought of doing with it against this great, heavily-armed giant? *Naturally* speaking, this is one of the most difficult things to understand, but as to the *spiritual* significance we are guided by the twenty-third Psalm. Truly David was here walking into the "*valley of the shadow of death,*" and he declares—

"I will fear no evil: Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me."

The staff is clearly the sustaining and comforting presence of God. And surely he needed comfort! We remember that David wrote this Psalm, and that it expresses his thoughts and feelings (while, of course, being a foreshadowing of the mind of Christ).

Therefore the taking of the staff—apparently from a natural point of view so unreasonable—seems to give us a marvelous insight into his frame of mind as he went down to meet the mighty Philistine champion in this valley of the shadow of death, as the army of men and the people of God watched in tense silence.

"And he chose five smooth stones out of the brook"
(1 Sam. 17:40).

"Five smooth stones." First, why five? Wasn't one enough?—he actually only used one. David said to Goliath—

"Thou cometh to me with a sword, and a spear, and a shield, but I come to thee in the Name of Yahweh of hosts" (v. 45)

—the Memorial, Covenant Name. David's sling and five stones represent the power of the Name of Yahweh set against Goliath's spear and sword. Paul, speaking of the armor of faith (Eph. 6:17) says the sword of the Spirit is the Word of God.

David has no sword—its place being taken by the stones of his sling—so these in his case stood for the Word of God. They could not represent anything else; the man of God has no other weapon.

What was the Word of God in David's day? In what way was *five* connected significantly with it? The answer is obvious—at that time the Word of God was the Book of the Law—the *five* books of Moses—the five smooth stones out of the brook of living waters—"Written and engraven on stones," as Paul testified (2 Cor. 3:7). Of Jesus it was foretold, in the Psalm (110) that

is the keystone of Paul's argument concerning Christ's Melchizedek-greatness—the Psalm that speaks of his enemies becoming his footstool—

"He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall he lift up the head . . . He shall fill the places with dead bodies; he shall WOUND THE HEADS over many countries."

The Psalms tell us of what brook he drank—

"How sweet are Thy words unto my taste!" (119:103).

"Thou shalt make them drink of the river of Thy pleasures; for with Thee is the fountain of life" (36:8, 9).

"As the hart panteth after the waterbrooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God" (42:1).

And Proverbs 18:4 (RV)—

"The wellspring of wisdom is as a flowing brook."

The five books of Moses are the entrance-way to the Old Testament, as the four Gospels are to the New. So we find that the *outer* veil of the Sanctuary entrance was upheld by five pillars with brass sockets (Ex. 26:36), while the *inner* veil of the Most Holy Place was upheld by *four* pillars with silver sockets (v. 32).

The principal subject of the five books of Moses is *sacrifice*—all the types and ordinances of *typical* sacrifice (just as the four Gospels portray all the elements of the *true*, living sacrifice and its great central fulfillment and example). From Eden forward—through Noah's offering and the consequent confirmation of the everlasting covenant—Abraham and Isaac on Mt. Moriah—all the sacrifices of the Law—everything centers in the *"Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."* The *first* of David's five stones struck the Sin-Image in the head and heralded victory—directing our thoughts to *Genesis* and the *beginning* of the promise of the seed to smite the serpent's head.

Now the *sling*—the weapon used to destroy the adversary—required a death for its preparation. Like the garments that God prepared to cover Adam and Eve's nakedness, it was made of the skin of a slain animal.

It was the sling that gave all the power to the stone in fulfilling its mission. By just throwing the stone himself, David could (naturally speaking) have accomplished nothing. But the sling developed a tremendous striking power—almost incredible accomplishments as to force and accuracy of aim are related of ancient slingers. (We realize that the power and aim in this case, of course, was supplied and directed by God, even as it

was in the great antitypical sling that cut down the mighty enemy of Sin.)

But there seems more to the number five than just a linking with the Law of God. When we think of stones, we think of—

“The stone which the builders (the elder brethren) rejected, and which became the head cornerstone” (Psa. 118:22).

“The stone cut out of the mountain without hands, that smote and destroyed the image” (Dan. 2:34).

Here is a smiting that is strangely parallel to this latter verse—though with one significant difference: one stone smites the Goliath-image on the *head*, one strikes it on the *feet*. But the result is the same—the Image is destroyed, and Israel is delivered.

The Nebuchadnezzar image represents the accumulated history of the *four* world empires that collectively make up the Kingdom of Men. David’s selection of the five stones relates his victory, therefore, to that of the *fifth*, Stone Kingdom that filled the earth.

We note that they were “smooth” stones—nothing about them sharp, coarse, irregular or rough. *But they were not made smooth by the artifice of man.* They were “cut out without hands.” They were made smooth by the grinding and polishing action of running water. Where the term “running” water is used in the regulations of the Law (as Lev. 15:5, 6, 50-52), the original is *chal*—“living.” The fitness of the symbol is very striking.

It may be noted too that—contrary to possible first impressions—a *smooth* stone accomplishes the slinger’s purpose much better than a rough one. It leaves the sling more freely and accurately, and flies truer in its course. Surely an impressive lesson here!

“And when the Philistine looked about, and saw David, he disdained him, for he was but a youth” (v. 42).

It seemed an impossibly unequal contest, and the Philistine champion was angrily insulted that Israel should send out such an opponent to make a fool of him. How God delights to humble the pride of the pompous and the mighty, in order to teach His eternal lessons! How often does He in His wisdom use *weakness and fewness* to confound great numbers and apparent strength!

And how often a faithful young boy is the honored instrument of His purpose, used to abase the mature in power and wisdom.

Joseph, Samuel, David, Joash, Jeremiah, Daniel, Jesus—seven who were hardly more than children when the burden of the divine purpose began to rest upon them in their generation.

What purer faith is there than the faith of a simple child? This priceless characteristic is so often lost in the hardened adult—

“Unless you turn, and become like children, you will never enter the Kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 18:3 RSV).

* * *

“And the Philistine said unto David, Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves?”

Knowing how the term “dog” is used in Scripture—to represent those of the world outside of the divine covenant—we see far more to this statement than Goliath meant. In David’s sight—and in God’s sight—that is exactly what he was!

We see this in David’s word to Saul (vs. 34-37). If God had helped him defend his father’s sheep against a lion and a bear—great and noble animals, as animals went—then he could surely with the same help defend God’s sheep against this uncircumcised barbarian, this “dog” which was frightening them with its blasphemous barking. There is no stronger term of contempt in the Scriptures than “dog.” We get the feeling of the word more in the current use of the word “cur.”

The crucifixion Psalm (22), which antitypically parallels this encounter, makes clear the meaning of “dog” (vs. 16-20 RSV).

“Dogs are round about me; a company of evil doers encircle me . . . Deliver my soul from the sword, my life from the power of the dog!”

And in the last chapter of the Bible we are told, as the final consummation of the age-long struggle—

“OUTSIDE are the dogs . . . murderers . . . idolaters” (v. 15 RSV).

* * *

David’s reply to Goliath shows a faith that did not contain the slightest shade of doubt or fear—

“I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee, and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air and to the wild beasts of the earth—THAT ALL THE EARTH MAY KNOW THAT THERE IS A GOD IN ISRAEL!” (v. 46).

“Without faith it is impossible to please God” (Heb. 11:6). If the cause is right, there can be no thought of failure, regardless of apparent odds or appearances. The earth *must* be taught that there is a God in Israel, and this can only be done by works of

faith—for works of faith are works of God. He works by and through the faith of the faithful.

As we trace the symbolism of these events, let us compare the statement of David to Goliath with the prophetic wording concerning the destruction of Gog. The similarity is striking—

“Speak unto every feathered fowl, and to every beast of the field, Assemble . . . that ye may eat flesh and drink blood.”

“And the nations shall know that I am the Lord, the Holy One in Israel” (Eze. 39:17, 7).

And again, of the same event in Rev. 19:17—

“And he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come . . . and eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains . . .”

* * *

“And David HASTED, and RAN to meet the Philistine” (v. 48)

—another impressive evidence of the entire absence of fear or doubt, and an indication of eagerness to do God’s work.

There are many interesting and instructive cases of *running* in Scripture. Who is the first man spoken of as running, and for what purpose? *It was Abraham, “the father of the faithful.”*

And the incident gives evidence of his robust eagerness to serve, that, was among the things that pleased God about him. When he saw strangers (that later turned out to be angels), he *ran* to offer them his hospitality (Gen. 18:2). His heart was in it—he was alive—nothing of the abomination of insipid lukewarmness. And when he had greeted them warmly and prevailed upon them (v. 6) and then he *“ran”* to the herd to fetch a calf, and *“hasted”* to dress it (v. 7). Then as they ate he stood by them, waiting to be of further service (v. 8).

Truly an inspiring example of zealous activity! *Abraham was at this time one hundred years old—“old and well stricken in age,”* as he is described in a previous chapter.

To walk in the way of God is duty. To *run* in that way with joyful, tireless eagerness is pleasure. In David’s beautiful picture of the Sun of Righteousness (Psa. 19), he says—

“He is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race.”

In the Song of Songs, the Bride exclaims—

“Draw me; we will run after thee, and be glad and rejoice in thee” (1:4).

But sometimes, though the spirit is eager and willing, the flesh is weak, and running is not the pleasure we would like it to be. Then let us remember the inspiring promise—

“They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint” (Isa. 40:31).

It is they who are portrayed in Ezekiel’s glorious vision of the Four Living Creatures—

“They RAN and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning . . . whithersoever the Spirit was to go, they went.”

* * *

“The stone sunk into Goliath’s forehead” (1 Sam. 17:49).

Here is typically fulfilled the Edenic promise that the woman’s seed should bruise the serpent’s head. The antitype stretches from Calvary to the destruction of Nebuchadnezzar’s image. Smiting the *feet* of Nebuchadnezzar’s image indicates the time and circumstance of the smiting. Smiting the *head* in the case of Goliath indicates (as in the Eden promise) the mortal, final nature of the blow.

The location of the blow teaches us that, to illustrate another aspect, the application of the time symbol is reversed—Goliath’s *head* represents the same latter-day period as the Image’s *feet*. Perhaps one thing this indicates is that in the time of the end human knowledge will have reached its apex, as Daniel was caused to prophesy (Dan. 12:4). Looking at the race in the figure of a man, the present is the period of its greatest mental accomplishment—the forehead period. It is very fitting that the Little Stone should strike it there—at the height and culmination of its pride.

Goliath was six cubits—and a span. The striking down of the image is at the end of the six thousand years of human rule—the transitional *span* period, when, like the original head-kingdom of Babylon, it was *“measured and found wanting”* (Dan. 5:27) and therefore given into the hand of Cyrus who proclaimed the return of the captives and the rebuilding of the Holy City.

“And he fell on his face to the earth” (v. 49).

To fall on one’s face is an indication of the humblest subjection and obeisance. Such will be the position of all who constitute the kingdom of men when the Little Stone’s work is done.

Christ destroys the kingdom of men, but he does not destroy all the individual people that make up that kingdom. So we can see a little more in this *sinking into the forehead*. The forehead represents the mind. So the Little Stone impresses itself into the minds of all people—

"The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord."

"All shall know the Lord from the least to the greatest"—and this knowledge and recognition will bring them to the position of humility and worship: they will "fall upon their faces to the earth."

"But there was no sword in David's hand" (v. 50).

He had no military weapon. His sling was just that of a shepherd—just designed to keep prowling animals from his sheep. He faced Goliath with just the equipment of his natural, peaceful occupation. Two principles are here emphasized—one applying to the first advent of Jesus and our present dispensation; the other to the future manifestation of divine, irresistible power.

"The weapons of OUR warfare are not carnal" (2 Cor. 10:4).

It was David's *faith*, rather than his skill or strength, that slew Goliath. Indeed, for this combat he deliberately *refused* the armor and weapons of warfare, realizing that his only hope lay in complete dependence on the help of God. As he himself said—

"The battle is the Lord's . . . God will deliver thee to me" (vs. 46, 47).

But the cryptic remark about there being no sword in David's hand applied also to the day of Christ's power (Zech. 4:6-7)—

"Who are THOU O great mountain? . . ."

"Who is this uncircumcised Philistine?"

"Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain . . . not by might nor by power . . ."

". . . but by MY Spirit, saith Yahweh of Hosts."

"There was no sword in David's hand."

* * *

"Therefore David ran . . . and drew out Goliath's sword . . . and cut off his head therewith" (v. 51).

In the destruction of the great day of God's wrath—

"Every man's sword shall be against his brother" (Eze. 38:21).

The armies of the great image are cut up by their own weapons. Then shall be fulfilled the warning and the promise—

"All that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Here is the patience and faith of the saints" (Matt. 26:52; Rev. 13:10).

* * *

"And David brought the head of the Philistine to Jerusalem."

Heads stand for rulerships. This is the obvious and natural meaning—often used in the Scriptures. So David's act symbolized the cutting off of all ruling power, and transferring all the world's headship and authority to Jerusalem—"the city of the Great King."

"But he put Goliath's armor in his tent" (v. 54).

This is recorded in contrast to the taking of the head to Jerusalem. It surely must have some significance: what is the point in it? Perhaps the connection of thought in Isaiah 2 gives the answer—

"Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem . . . Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isa. 2:3, 4).

Here the rulership being centered in Jerusalem is connected with the worldwide abolition of war. Throughout the Bible, "tent" signifies a passing, impermanent condition of things—something temporary. Paul points out in Heb. 11 that because of faith Abraham, Isaac and Jacob dwelt all their lives in tents, thus testifying that they were but pilgrims in a passing state of affairs.

The Rechabites in Jeremiah's day dwelt in tents instead of houses like the rest of Israel (Jer. 35:7) as a testimony to their separation and pilgrimage among the corruptions of Israel; as a witness that the present was not permanent—that it was not the promised eternal Rest of God.

So to put the armor and weapons of war in the tent, in contrast to taking the head to Jerusalem, shows that they represent a passing state of affairs—that war must pass away and be superseded by eternal peace—

"They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord" (Isa. 11:9).

The final verses of this chapter (1 Sam. 17) have occasioned difficulty to some—the fact that Saul does not appear to recognize David, though David had formerly been with him, and had been accustomed to play before him to soothe his troubled spirit.

But there are several possible factors that could explain these circumstances. A year or two (perhaps more) could have elapsed between. This would be most likely the time that David would be changing from a beardless youth to a fullgrown, bearded young man. Moreover, Saul's mental condition was subject to violent changes, involving recognition.

Possibly, too, the spirit of Saul's enquiry may have been: "Who is this person who has such fearless faith, and through whom God has wrought such wonderful deliverance?"—after the spirit of the disciples' awed exclamation—

"What manner of man is this, even the wind and sea obey him?" (Matt. 8:27).

Whatever may be the solution of this point, this closing incident forms a striking and fitting conclusion to a chapter of great figurative significance. *David comes before the rulers of Israel after having wrought deliverance in the face of a menace that had terrified the nation.* Saul the ruler says to Abner the captain of the host: "Who is this?" Do not our minds turn irresistibly to a similar event?

"WHO IS THIS that cometh from Edom?" (Isa. 63:1)
—that comes from the slaughter of the oppressors of Israel.

"What are these wounds in thine hands? . . . Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends" (Zech. 13:6).

David had previously appeared before Saul in the position of a healer whose ministrations were designed to soothe Saul's mind and banish his evil spirit. On later occasions we know that in these fits of evil, Saul more than once attempted to slay David who was trying to heal and help him. It is quite possible, therefore, that Saul had made similar attempts before, for we know that something had caused David to leave Saul, though Saul's malady and need for David's help continued. How fitting, then, is this final scene in which the mighty deliverer reveals himself as the one who had previously been among them as the gentle healer from Bethlehem!

"And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul" (1 Sam. 18:1).

Jonathan—the faithful, unselfish, spiritually-minded member of Saul's household—his soul was knit to the soul of David. His love for David was greater than the love of women (2 Sam. 1:26).

This spiritual union of Jonathan and David, following David's great labor of deliverance—the most striking instance of mutual love in Scripture—is it not typical of the joyous marriage supper of the Lamb? "The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David."

"Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul" (1 Sam. 18:3).

We have been called out of the perishing world to be a party to a love of which this—however wonderful—is but a shadowy type. There is no power in the world like the ennobling, transforming love of God—

"God, Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6).

Let us therefore draw near to God with a pure heart—eager to receive, and absorb, and deeply enjoy the full measure of the power of divine love.

"For the things which are seen are temporal: But the things that are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:18).

Ye Are Full

At the time the Apostle labored, Corinth was a thriving metropolis of wealth, luxury, commerce and corruption. This is the background of the Corinthian ecclesia, and it is to some extent reflected in the epistle.

Paul gives indications that the ecclesia there was well-to-do, and in good standing with the world. "*Ye are full,*" he says, contrasting them with himself, "*Ye are rich, ye are honourable.*"

And as is almost inevitable in such circumstances, they gave too much thought to worldly wisdom, to imposing appearance, to polished eloquence, to the meaningless husks of worldly convention. Because of this they did not grow in the Truth, they remained vacant-minded babes when they should have been growing into men. They lost their hold on spiritual values, with sad results to their conduct and course of life.

Envy and contention sprang up; immorality was being tolerated; greediness and revelling disgraced their solemn assemblies; spiritual gifts were prostituted to a confused babble of vain glory and pride; elements of the Truth were in danger, and the Apostle who had begotten them in the faith was openly despised for his poverty, his rude speech and his unpretentious simplicity.

So it was with a heavy heart that Paul took up his pen to address them. "*Out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears,*" he reveals to them later (2 Cor. 2:4). His thoughts would revert to that happier time when for eighteen months he had fervently labored among them, gathering believers and establishing a lightstand in holy zeal and purity.

Now, for fear of mutual sorrow and embarrassment, he hesitates to visit them (2 Cor. 1:23). But still he writes with a nobility and grandeur that befits his position and relation to them. *They* may have forgotten the height of their calling, but *he* has not.

His salutation is remarkable. Many grievous rebukes and corrections are to follow, but of these it gives no hint. They are still the Church of God that is at Corinth, called to be saints, separated and sanctified in Christ Jesus, the temple of God, and custodians of the Holy Spirit—so far the lightstand is still there. And so he addresses them, in an effort to appeal to all that is good in them, and to impress them with the need of prompt corrective action.

He goes further. He thanks God for the grace and blessings they have received and by which they are enriched in all utterance and knowledge. He reminds them that in this respect, no ecclesia has been more highly favored. His inference is—

"Where much is given, much is required" (Lk. 12:48).

And then he looks forward in hope to that time when in the mercy of God he is confident that they will stand approved at the judgment seat of Christ. He does not condone or minimize their errors, but in his love he is sure they will heed his rebuke.

It is noteworthy that, in discussing the things he has heard of them, he frankly names the source of his information. "It hath been declared to me by them of the house of Chloe". No thought of concealment or subterfuge. No anonymous accusations. The mind of the spirit is open and straightforward at all times.

His reference to their being babes in knowledge, though true, would perhaps fall a little unwelcomely upon their ears, for obviously they considered themselves intelligent and wise and mature. It is to this angle that he applies himself in the remainder of the first two chapters, stressing a vital principle of divine truth.

His exposition of the relation between the mind of the Spirit and the mind of the flesh is lengthy, but he sums up thus—

"The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned"
(1 Cor. 2:14).

"They are SPIRITUALLY discerned." They are entirely out of the realm of the natural. The two cannot be reconciled, any more than two people can carry on a conversation who do not know each other's language. They have nothing in common. Between them there is a great gulf fixed.

The world, man in his natural state, *all his wisdom, all his knowledge, all his science, all his learning, all his accomplishment*—are NOTHING. That is Paul's basis. There is no arguing the point. There is no debate over the merits and claims of such things as evolution, or any other elaborate theory of man's invention. The whole thing is dismissed with one word—FOLLY.

Why? Because *"the world by wisdom KNEW NOT GOD"* (1 Cor. 1:21). And this is equally true today.

"The FEAR OF THE LORD is the BEGINNING of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding" (Prov. 9:10).

The wisdom of the world is in many respects profound, but to all practical purposes it is useless, because it knows not God. *It does not come to grips with the basic realities of life.* The one important fact in the universe—the existence and revelation of God—it either denies or ignores.

On every other subject it has assembled vast multitudes of facts and even vaster multitudes of fancies. But to what end? What if one man could gather within his own mind all the world's wisdom, what good would it be to him when the time came to yield his breath? *But if he faithfully lays hold of the simple elements of GOD'S wisdom, eternity is his.*

"The Jews," Paul says (1 Cor. 1:22), "*require a sign; the Greeks seek after wisdom.*" They lay down their own conditions. They are the authorities. Their questions must be answered. And any revelation, to be considered by them, must conform to their conceptions. "Science"—that magic word!—"Science" says so and so. Nothing that contradicts it dare even be given serious attention.

This is why the teaching of these first two chapters is so important. With one sweep it strips "Science" of all its bluster and pretensions, and reveals it standing in naked shame at the pitiful little "mind of the flesh," blind to all eternal realities.

A discussion of science on its own merits is fatal, because it is endless. There is so much truth and so much error interwoven, so much fact and so much speculation inseparably entwined. But it all belongs to a passing order. "*The fashion of this world passeth away*" (1 Cor. 7:31). Where the mind of man and the mind of God conflict, we do not argue, we simply choose.

Saving truth, the knowledge that brings life, is in a different category altogether. Worldly knowledge is of no assistance in acquiring this, but rather the reverse. This is *spiritually* discerned—it is learned through the medium of a meek and humble and Godly lowliness of mind, and NO OTHER WAY. The more a mind is cluttered and obsessed with self-gratifying worldly wisdom, the harder is its task of complying with the divine requirements.

"If any man seemeth to be wise in THIS world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise" (1 Cor. 3:18).

God makes deliberate choice, Paul says, of those that are foolish and base and weak and despised, wherewith to accomplish His purpose, that no flesh should glory in His presence. We can understand why. All flesh is insignificant before His glorious and perfect majesty. "*In my flesh,*" says Paul, (Rom.

7:18), "*dwelleth no good thing.*" Therefore pride is ignorance and self-approval is presumption.

To illustrate his reasoning, Paul cites his own conduct while among them. Now Paul was as well qualified as any to display worldly knowledge. But, he says, I determined—I *made a special point*—NOT to do so. He deliberately divested himself of any personal persuasiveness and appeal.

As is recorded of Christ (Phil. 2:7—original), he *emptied himself*—he made himself of no reputation—that he might be a suitable and faithful vessel for the use of God. He did not look upon worldly wisdom with benevolent tolerance. He did not regard it in any way as of value in the work of God. He knew that it was incompatible with this, and that *to use it would confuse an issue that must be kept clear.*

Men must be persuaded to forsake reliance on the natural workings of their own minds and the accumulated "wisdom" of their fellowmen, and seek humbly for *God's wisdom through the operation of the Spirit.* There is no other way to God's favor than humiliation and meek reliance. All this is contrary to the mind of the flesh, and the world's standards.

In the eyes of most people, Paul destroyed his effectiveness by this course. To the natural man, he had no appeal. He displayed none of the qualities that attract the worldly mind. But Paul's mission was not to persuade the world, but to *take out from them* a people for the Lord.

He did not *want* to appeal to the *majority*, because he knew they were not the material God wanted. He was seeking those, and those only, that had a sympathetic affinity with the mind of the Spirit. Any who might be attracted from any other motive only cumbered the ecclesia, and were sure to prove later a source of trouble and anxiety.

"Wisdom is the principal thing," declares Solomon (Prov. 4:7).

"Get wisdom . . . Cry after knowledge, lift up thy voice for understanding, seek her as silver, search for her as for hid treasures" (Prov. 2:3, 4).

"Blessed are they who HUNGER and THIRST after RIGHTEOUSNESS, for they shall be filled" (Matt. 5:6).

If we do not learn to make this yearning for knowledge and wisdom and righteousness our MAIN CONCERN in life, then we can confidently assure ourselves that we, at least, are *not* numbered among that very, very few elect—that we are but worldlings, outside the scope of the Spirit's transforming power. Let us be among the wise!

The Lord gives wisdom, we are told, only to those that love Him. Only to those whose love is true and strong enough to control their conduct. If we love Him, He says, we shall do the things that please Him. That is the test. *And there is no force on earth that can overcome the terrible and relentless power of the flesh—only a fervent love.*

Only a burning, personal love for God and His warm, irradiating goodness, engaging the whole heart, mind and strength, is strong enough to prevent us following the selfish, fatal course that ends in death. Love gives energy and enthusiasm and vitality. It makes the humblest task pleasant. Nothing is too much trouble for it. No labor too great. No vigil too long. Without it the path of duty is insufferable drudgery. Love gives life a purpose and an incentive, a radiant glow that nothing can dim.

This is the fire that Paul is trying desperately to rekindle in the hearts of those at Corinth. They had all the machinery, but the driving force was lacking. They weren't progressing—they were drifting downstream and bickering among themselves. In his enthusiasm he is eager to discuss with them the deeper mysteries and glories of the Kingdom, but there is no intelligent response—only a vacant stare. They are carnally-minded, they are babes, they cannot comprehend, **AND HE DOES NOT EXCUSE THEM.**

They have consumed their precious time with foolish dissension—

"There is among you envying and strife and contention" (1 Cor. 3:3).

Envy was at the bottom of it, as it often is. The Scriptures have much to say about envy. It is the inevitable weed that grows in ground barren of love. It feeds on self-pity. It is the most despicable and malicious of all the corruptions of the human mind—

"Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy" (Prov. 27:4).

Elsewhere (Prov. 14), it is called cancerous rottenness of the bones.

Envy displays itself in many ways. It is the reaction of the wicked to the righteous, seizing upon small points of mean criticism. It was for envy, we are told, that the Jews hated the perfect man and delivered him to be crucified. Are we so free from these things that we need not be concerned about them? James asks (4:5)—

"Do ye think that the Scripture saith in VAIN, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?"

This warning is meant for *all*. It is a warning against the *natural* reactions of the *natural* mind, which seem so good and right to the mind that conceives them. That mind, of course, does not recognize or admit these things as envy. But we are clearly warned that unless we humbly seek to be taught of God, we have no hope of even *knowing* what is right, much less performing it.

"Love," says Paul, "*envieth not.*" Either we choose this course, or we don't. There is no use trying to reason with the mind of the flesh—it will justify everything, and confuse the issue where it cannot justify. It must be abandoned.

All that the world regards as fine—brilliant worldly intellect, strong passion, fierce animal courage, self-esteem, animal beauty, ambition, assertiveness, and envy in its many deceptive forms—all these must be seen in their true and ugly light, and resolutely repudiated. Christ, we are told, *emptied* himself. These were the natural desires and tendencies which he overcame and rooted out. Paul describes them as filthiness—natural filthiness of flesh and mind.

All this demands self-abasement, a bitter recognition of the uncleanness and corruption of our animal natures and thoughts, a clear conception of the deceptiveness of the flesh.

To counteract the envy and strife with which they are destroying themselves, Paul urges them to a consideration of the holiness of their calling, of its gravity and solemnity.

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (3:16).

"None of us," he reminds the Roman brethren (Rom. 14:7), "*liveth to himself and no man dieth to himself.*" We have assumed obligations, we have made promises, we have entered a covenant. We walk on holy ground; we do well to remember it.

"*Ye are the temple of God*"—you have entered God's dwelling—take heed how you conduct yourself. Remember the sharp lesson of Uzzah; remember the careless sons of Aaron. It is little enough we can do—let us do that little earnestly and well.

"If any man defile the temple of God, HIM SHALL GOD DESTROY, for the temple of God is holy."

Is any lesson more strongly or repeatedly taught throughout Scripture? Is any more necessary to weak creatures of dust?

"*I have laid the foundation,*" Paul says (3:10), "*let every man take heed how he buildeth thereon.*" Then in direct connection

with this warning of defiling God's temple, Paul returns to the theme of worldly wisdom—

"Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise" (v. 18).

The wisdom of the world is obnoxious to God—it has no place in His temple . . . Above all do not glory in men and their wisdom and accomplishments. Take a broader view. If you are worthy, all things are yours, and these men are but a means to that end, supplied and equipped by God for your benefit. Give God the glory, if any is due.

"All things are yours," he says—*"the world, life, death, things present, things to come—ALL ARE YOURS!"* How incongruous to fret and scheme for the temporary possession of an insignificant fraction of our inheritance when in due time, if we are worthy, all will be given us freely! The earth is ours eternally—surely we can withdraw from the mad worldly scramble for a few years and conduct ourselves in patience and faith and obedience!

All things are yours! Everything is subservient to your interests. All things are working together for your good. The present international tensions and conflicts, the life-and-death struggles of mighty nations are just pre-arranged details of God's plan of the ages centering around His elect. If we could only get this conception permanently ingrained into our outlook, we should never be tempted or dismayed by any events. All is as sure and planned and necessary as the expert movements of the surgeon's knife.

As Paul turns from this grand conception, it is easy to understand his next words, *"With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you"* (4:3). The issues were too big to permit of anxiety over man's judgment. He knew that man's opinion mattered nothing.

He fervently hoped and prayed that they would rise to justify their early promising beginning when all was love and zeal, but if they did not, he had done his best. There were millions who would not heed the call. His principle concern was with those few who would. His foremost duty was to the true church of God. Christ has said that not one of such would be finally lost. Paul besought the Corinthians with tears that they should not receive the grace of God in vain, *but he knew that many would.*

And so he early decided to *"know no man after the flesh"* (2 Cor. 5:16). He knew that some would come and go like ships in the

night. Many brethren, too, he knew were walking as enemies of the cross of Christ (Phil. 3:18). Toward the end of his ministry, he had to write from prison with an aching heart that "*All they which are of Asia be turned away from me*" (2 Tim. 1:15). Demas, his fellow-laborer, his trusted companion, at the same time unbelievably chose the attractions of this present world to the glories of the Kingdom (2 Tim. 4:10).

But still he could say, "*None of these things move me.*" The purpose of God stood sure. Paul's duty lay clearly before him. In the end all the elect would be gathered; not one would be missing. All the rest would be swept away with the things they had loved best. "*It is a very small thing that I should be judged of man's judgment.*"

"Do I seek to please men? If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ" (Gal. 1:10).

"So we speak, not as pleasing men, but God. Neither at any time used we flattering words, nor of men sought we glory."

Men are such insignificant things—GOD is the one to please and consider. Yet he says in this epistle we are considering—

"I please all men in all things" (1 Cor. 10:33).

And to the Romans—

"Let every one please his neighbour for his good to edification" (15:2).

Is there contradiction? We know there is not, though many things recorded by the mind of the *Spirit* seem contradictory to the mind of the *flesh*. Paul was "all things to all men" (1 Cor. 9:22). He pleased all whenever possible. In nothing would he cause offence if self-denial and self-abasement on his part could prevent it. In this sense he "pleased all men." *But he sought no man's favor; he sacrificed no principles. Desertion did not move him; ingratitude did not embitter him; contempt did not trouble him. For he was confident, he said, that—*

"The Lord, when he comes, will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the heart; and THEN shall every man have his due praise of God" (1 Cor. 4:5).

Until that time he was content to wait—

"He that is spiritual discerneth all things, yet he himself is discerned of no man" (1 Cor. 2:15).

Then, chiding them for glorying, he says—

"Who maketh thee to differ from another? What hast thou that thou didst not receive? If thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory?" (1 Cor. 4:7).

How much easier and more natural it is to take pride in our privileges and abilities than to faithfully realize and discharge the obligations they impose upon us! Paul reverses the world's judgment. Ability is not an asset—it is a *liability*. It has been given to us. It is charged to our account, and it must be accounted for. Favor is never divorced from justice. If we seem highly favored, correspondingly more is required of us. God has no idle favorites.

"Men will praise thee, when thou doest well to thyself" (Psa. 49:18).

The natural man is so incredibly warped in his outlook. In the sight of God such a man is a common thief, abusing a sacred trust and using his Lord's goods to his own ends. The mind of the flesh is a treacherous guide.

There is little said about the personal circumstances of the Apostle in the New Testament records, but Paul here, because of the Corinthians' attitude, is moved to mention his own position briefly.

The Corinthians, we have observed, were apparently well-to-do. Verses 8 and 10 of this fourth chapter support this observation. This led unconsciously to a false and superficial viewpoint regarding Paul. Of himself he says—

"We both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place; we are reviled, persecuted, defamed, made as the filth of the world and the offscouring of all things" (1 Cor. 4:11-15).

For Christ, he told the Philippian, he had suffered the loss of all things, even to the barest amenities of life, and the ordinary respect of his fellowman. In poverty, despised, and unattractive in appearance, he was everywhere the object of amused contempt; a common vagabond; the filth and offscouring of the world; a spectacle to angels and to men.

How many today, punctilious about the washing of cups and the dictates of fashion, would recognize the messenger of life and hope in such a disguise? Little wonder the prosperous and worldly-wise Corinthians had outgrown his crude and embarrassing plainness. God's ways truly are not man's. God chooses those things that are weak and base and despised.

"I write not these things to shame you," Paul assures them, "but as my beloved sons I warn you,"—*I warn you to judge carefully and wisely according to spirit and truth. Give less thought to outward appearance and material possession. What*

consideration would the blind and empty-minded world give to this homeless and ill-clad outcast?

Our minds irresistibly turn to another such solitary figure, dwelling alone in the wilderness, in the humblest of circumstances. "But what went ye out into the wilderness to see?" Christ asked the perplexed multitude (Matt. 11:8), "Did you expect to find a man clothed in soft raiment—some imposing fashionplate?" Did John's rough appearance dismay you?

And someone else was recognized throughout all Israel for a similar disregard of worldly standards, even John's own prototype—"A hairy man and girt with a girdle of leather" (2 Kgs. 1:8).

And there is yet another homeless wayfarer, another unknown, lonely wanderer, rejected, unesteemed; no form or comeliness, no beauty that we should desire him; no attractive or imposing appearance; no visible dignity or grandeur—lowly, humble, reviled and despised—yet the Son of God and the light of the world, the way of life and the door of hope.

Him we meet to remember, though the world by wisdom knew him not. Judge not according to outward appearance, but judge with wisdom and discernment.

"He that is spiritual discerneth all things."

A New Name

"Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but ISRAEL, for as a prince thou hast had power with God and with man, and hast prevailed" (Gen. 32:28).

We have been following again in our daily readings the very interesting and instructive events of the life and wanderings of Jacob. We are told that God has caused these things to be recorded that we may receive instruction, comfort and hope.

The first lesson we learn is that—in the lives of the people of God—*nothing happens by chance*. All is arranged in God's wise purpose for the development of His children, and His hand is ever present to control and direct.

The reading of God's Word is the most important activity of our lives. It *should* be the most looked-forward to and enjoyable. Each day as we begin we should meditate upon the solemn and wonderful fact that *this Book*—alone of all books ever written—has been composed by *God Himself*, for the express purpose of saving man from death and making him "wise unto salvation." Each word is there because God specifically caused it to be there.

And the pleasure and impressiveness of reading these daily portions of Divine authorship are increased by the realization that, throughout the world, faithful and earnest brethren and sisters are reading and thinking upon these very same incidents, day by day. It is an intimate, worldwide communion of minds in the glorious deep things of the Spirit of God, of which the natural man, like the beasts of the field, knows nothing.

We have just read again of the blessing of Jacob and Esau by Isaac. Many questions arise in our minds. Some we cannot answer. But we should remember that in all these things the basic purpose is not to satisfy our curiosity, but to *give us guidance* that will help us to order *our own lives* in a way that will please God.

We may wonder why the faithful patriarch Isaac appears so out of step with the Divine purpose as to attempt to give the blessing to Esau. We read —

"Isaac loved Esau, BECAUSE HE DID EAT OF HIS VENISON, but Rebekah loved Jacob" (Gen. 25:28).

We know that before the birth of Esau and Jacob, Rebekah enquired of God and was told the elder should serve the younger. But—*did Isaac know?* Or did she "keep these things in her heart?"

As we look back and survey the whole broad sweep of Israel's history, Jacob stands out so clearly and unmistakable as the chosen seed that we are apt to assume that the distinction must have been obvious from the first, and that Isaac should never have considered for a moment giving the principal blessing to Esau.

But in view of Isaac's life, and his especial mention as one of the great examples of faith, we should hesitate to attribute to him a complete disregard of God's expressed will.

True, it is sadly evident in this whole incident that there is something *wrong*, and it would appear that all concerned in it had lessons to learn. We must remember that there was no Bible to turn to then. To a large extent these early patriarchs must work out in their own lives, for their sakes and ours, the lessons that are now left so plainly on record for our guidance.

We see *Isaac*—misguided and overly influenced by the robust, worldly qualities of Esau. It is true, however, that Isaac grieved because of Esau's alien wives. He would realize how vital it was that the people of God be preserved from the destroying influences of alien marriage. Abraham, in choosing Isaac's own wife, had strongly impressed him with this basic scriptural principle.

We see *Esau*—whom the Scriptures described as a "profane person"—a worldly, animal, unspiritual man to whom the present appeal of a tempting hot meal was stronger than his perception of a Divine birthright. Doubtless Isaac hoped and prayed that Esau, his eldest son and heir, would awaken to the great responsibility of carrying on the purpose of God. It is possible that, superficially and naturally, Esau appeared to be—at this stage of their development—a warmer and more intense character than Jacob. *But Esau was not a man of faith*—and the pillars of God's eternal house *must*, above all things, be men of faith.

We see *Rebekah*—with her Divinely-imparted knowledge that Jacob, the younger, was the chosen seed. But Rebekah did not seem to realize that God's plan of the ages is too great and too holy to be built upon deceit and falsehood, however well-meant.

Rebekah must learn that God's way is not man's way—that man's concern and duty is to glorify God by a strict adherence to His righteous, upright principles of truth, and humbly and trustingly leave the consequences to Him.

In the final view, we have but one concern in life—to *please God*. We do not have to do great things, nor assume an anxious personal responsibility for preventing the failure of God's plan. Our ability is very limited, even at best. Our circle is very small.

Consider Jacob's life. Like that of all God's people, it was filled with frustration, disappointment and trial. Jacob did not accomplish very much that could be seen by the natural eye.

Yet how many since his day have been instructed and inspired by the simple story of the way he met the daily problems of his life! He had the nucleus of an unshakable faith in God and recognition of His ever-present *reality*, passed on to him through Abraham and Isaac, but that faith had much to learn and much to suffer before it came to perfection.

Jacob was the fourth actor in this strange incident of the blessing. On what a shaky and shady, humanly-contrived foundation it was that he attempted to secure the birthright and the blessing! For the first he took a sharp advantage of foolish, careless Esau's exhaustion; for the second he used falsehood and deceit.

He had to learn by bitter experience that sharp practice and deceit are the way of natural, grasping man, and have no place with the people of God. Patience, straightforwardness, broad uncalculating generosity and unselfishness are the noble, infinitely satisfying ways of godliness. The man of God has nothing to fear. He need not scheme and bargain, fret to get more or to prevent loss, for he *cannot lose*. Paul, by the Spirit, gives us the overwhelming message—

"ALL THINGS ARE YOURS, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's" (1 Cor. 3:23).

All things are ours! What difference then does it make if we do not get them today? We shall tomorrow, if we are faithful—the great Tomorrow of eternal promise.

The one thing the Scriptures remember about Esau is that he "despised his birthright"—the eldest son of the chosen family—chosen to keep alive the Truth of God in the earth. Today God has chosen a few and has revealed to them His way of life. Can it be that there are Esaus among them—too concerned about their mess of pottage to realize the great glory and responsibility of their call? Paul reminds all such that when it was too late, Esau sought God's blessing in vain with bitter tears.

Because of Esau's anger at the deception, Jacob is forced to flee from home. Rebekah said—

"Flee thee to Laban my brother, and tarry with him a few days, until thy brother's fury turn away; then will I send and fetch thee" (Gen. 27:43-45).

These "few days" stretched into twenty long years, and some time during that weary waiting for the return of the son whom she loved, Rebekah appears to have fallen asleep. We are not told about her death. She never appears again, but her last words here have been the concern of many a faithful mother since—

"I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth. If Jacob take a wife of these daughters of the land, what good shall my life do me?" (v. 46).

This speaks well concerning Rebekah's outlook. Her interests were wholly in the purpose of God. She knew her family were the chosen seed. So intense were her feelings about this that if Jacob were to follow Esau and defile the line by alien marriage, Rebekah had no desire to live and witness her family's betrayal of the Divine trust and covenant.

The story of Jacob's life really just now begins. Previously there are but two brief references—his birth and the purchase of the birthright. At life's end, standing before Pharaoh, he says—

"Few AND EVIL have been the days of the years of my life" (Gen. 47:9).

Jacob is an outstanding example of learning godliness by suffering. The days of his years were truly filled with evil. This incident of the blessing sends him out alone into the world. Sharp practice and deception stalk his path from this time forward, and give him no rest.

Jacob desires Rachel but is tricked into marrying Leah also, and consequently his household henceforth was filled with jealousy and contention. He serves Laban twenty years, during which time Laban constantly endeavors to impoverish and defraud him. When he leaves Laban to return home in search of peace, he soon after loses his beloved Rachel. The fearful meeting with Esau, the trouble involving his daughter Dinah, and the disgraceful conduct of Reuben, are incidents of the long return journey.

Soon after he resettles in Canaan, his favorite son Joseph, Rachel's firstborn, is taken from him, and he is victim of another heartless deception which is perpetuated by his own sons for twenty cruel years—the supposed death of Joseph.

Yet during this eventful last half of his life, many *wonderful* things happen to Jacob too, as he learns by personal experience about God's great purpose of preparing a people for His Name.

Jacob's name means "supplanter or usurper." We remember that Esau exclaimed bitterly—

*"Is he not rightly named 'Jacob,' for he hath sup-
planted me these two times!"* (Gen. 27:36).

Jacob's life-struggle is symbolized in the changed name that God gave him in the midst of his trials. The time was to come when God would say to him—

*"THY NAME SHALL BE CALLED NO MORE JACOB,
but ISRAEL (meaning a prince with God), for as a prince
thou hast had power with God and with man, and
HATH PREVAILED"* (Gen. 32:28).

A wonderful testimony of the Divine success of Jacob's new, patient, self-controlled way of life! There is great significance in God giving a man a *new name*, especially such a glorious name as this, and the taking away of the name of shame. Jesus said—

*"To him that overcometh will I give a NEW NAME,
which no man knoweth save he that receiveth it . . . On
him that overcometh will I write the Name of my God,
and my new Name"* (Rev. 2:17; 3:12).

Jacob overcame. He overcame his fears, and he overcame himself.

Let us go back and follow his journey from the beginning. It was a great change when he set out alone from home. He was not young as we consider youth today, but he had hitherto lived a protected and quiet life. We are told that Esau was a man of the open field, but Jacob was a "quiet man, dwelling in tents."

From what he says later, it would appear that he set out on foot, with just a staff for the way. Therefore it could hardly have been the first night of his journey that God appeared to him at Beth-el, for Beth-el is over fifty miles from Beersheba, through hilly country.

And it was fitting it should not be the first night. It would give him time to think, test his determination, and be a clearer separation from the old life he is leaving behind. A night or two in the open, wondering about what lay ahead, would prepare his mind for the heavenly vision. Yet he was not left alone too long, for God, in His infinite love and mercy, knew Jacob's need. One night, before he had gone very far on his journey, he had a dream in which he saw a ladder (more properly, a stairs)

reaching up from the earth to heaven. Angels were ascending and descending upon it, and above it stood the Lord, and He spoke to Jacob, repeating the covenant of Abraham and Isaac, and said—

"I am with thee, and will keep thee, and bring thee again to this land. I will not leave thee" (Gen. 28:15).

There is much to be learned from this vision. First, it was clearly a revelation and assurance to Jacob that God was closely watching over and controlling the lives of His people. Nothing could more strikingly convey this thought than a ladder directly connecting heaven and earth, with God's messengers travelling back and forth upon it as they carry out His will on behalf of His children. And there is a deeper import in the ladder that Jesus unfolds in his words to Nathaniel—

"Hereafter ye shall see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man" (Jn. 1:51).

He is clearly alluding to Jacob's dream. *Jesus himself is the ladder*—the God-provided connection and way of communication between Himself and man. And angels ascend and descend upon him—that is, through and by him God's purposes are accomplished. Without him the angels could not do their Divine work of leading men to a place in God's Kingdom, for Jesus is the essential keystone to the whole plan. He "prevailed to open the book" and to make possible the fulfilment of its contents.

The common version gives the impression that Jacob is *bargaining with God*: "If God will do certain things, then He shall be my God." But the whole atmosphere of the event teaches us that this is a totally incorrect impression. This is a solemn and grateful self-dedication, in view of God's great mercy and revelation.

It would appear, too, that in this revelation of God to Jacob, the initiative was entirely on God's part, but here again a later remark of Jacob's gives us a different picture. Of this incident, he says—

"God ANSWERED me in the day of my distress" (Gen. 35:3).

This tells a little more about those first few anxious days as he set out from home. It is reasonably certain that from the time he left home, Jacob's mind was occupied with thoughts and prayers concerning God's help in the lonely and unknown path ahead.

This was the turning point in Jacob's life. His conduct from this time on is that of an active, yet patient faith. We can hardly regard the incidents of the birthright and the blessing as manifestations of true faith. They were attempts to secure by natural and questionable means what God had already promised He would give. They were not necessarily proofs of *lack* of faith, but rather of a misconception of how faith should work.

On the other hand, it is not faith to make no effort at all. The incidents of the breeding of the sheep and of the preparation to meet Esau seem to be examples of how faith should operate. That is, putting all reliance on God and none on self, but at the same time striving to merit God's help by diligent application to all *legitimate* efforts and precautions.

We cannot sit back and presume on God. If this were not a vital principle and a common danger, it would not appear as one phase of the three-fold temptation of Christ. That temptation symbolizes *all* temptation—lust of the flesh, lust of the eye, and the pride of life.

"Cast thyself down, for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning thee" (Lk. 4:9, 10).

We must carefully follow the narrow road between presumption on God on the one hand, and the foolish vanity of self-reliance on the other. Jacob succeeded, and is a lesson to us.

* * *

"Leah was tender-eyed (that is, we believe, gentle, patient, amiable)—but Rachel was beautiful and well-favored" (Gen. 29:17).

Jacob had another Divine lesson to learn—

"Favor is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman that feareth the Lord, SHE shall be praised" (Prov. 31:30).

Leah had the sadder life, but the nobler position in God's plan.

It is significant that, as he was about to die, Jacob commanded his sons to bury him in the cave of Macpelah, beside Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah—and *Leah*. Rachel is not mentioned. *She was not buried there*. She died and was left along the way.

It is significant, too, that it is the unloved Leah, and not the favorite Rachel, whom God selected for the line of the royal seed.

There is a patient sadness, and a deep reverence, in Leah's naming of her children—*Reuben*—the Lord hath looked on my

affliction; *now* therefore my husband will love me. *Simeon*—the Lord hath heard that I was hated. *Levi*—now *this time* will my husband be joined to me. But two years later, at the birth of the sixth and last son, it is still the same unfulfilled hope: *Zebulun*—**NOW** will my husband dwell with me!

The enmity in the house of Jacob was carried down through the history of the nation, finally ending in the disruption of the kingdom. The first, faithless king was of the seed of Rachel. Following Saul's rejection, God set the throne forever in *Judah*, of Leah.

Proud and wilful Ephraim, of Rachel, became the leader of the opposition, soon breaking away with nine other tribes to form a separate and Godless kingdom. Beth-el, the "*House of God*," where Jacob at the beginning received the everlasting covenant and made his vow dedicating the nation to God—this same Beth-el became the center of Israel's idolatrous worship:

"Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone" (Hos. 4:17).

Ephraim had gone back to his mother's stolen idols.

The immediate cause of Jacob taking Leah was Laban's deceit, but the real cause was the hand of God. Through Leah came the great prophet-leader Moses and priestly tribe of Levi; through her too came the greater Prophet than Moses and Judah's royal tribe.

For twenty years Jacob faithfully served Laban, under stringent and unfair conditions, submitting patiently to repeated changes of agreement as Laban schemed for his own advantage. Why did he stay? Could there have been something in it of David's thought? As in 2 Sam. 16:11, 12—

"Let him alone, for the Lord hath bidden him. It may be that the Lord will look on mine affliction and that the Lord will requite me good for his cursing this day."

Both Paul and Peter teach us that faithful service in all things is a first principle of the Truth, regardless of the character of the ones served. (In our obsession with what we may term "doctrinal" matters, we can so easily overlook these **EQUALLY VITAL** "first principles" of *conduct and life*. Of such stuff is hypocrisy made). The one served is incidental. Our real employer is always God.

Jacob stayed with Laban because he (Jacob) was really serving God and laying up treasure in heaven. He was learning not to scheme for himself but to wait in patience for God's direction, in the meantime laboring diligently at what came to hand.

Finally, in the dream concerning the colored sheep, God directed him how to prepare his affairs so that he might become independent and self-supporting and be able to leave Laban. Then some time later God appeared to him and said—

“Get thee out from this land; return to the land of thy kindred” (Gen. 31:13).

So Jacob set forth on his journeys again. He had come on foot with only a staff. He leaves with wives, servants, children, and cattle. But he had found no satisfaction in outward things. There is no peace in Jacob's family, but bitter enmity between his wives and among his sons.

On leaving, Rachel steals the household idols of Laban her father. When Laban overtakes Jacob, he angrily charges him with theft. Jacob, who knows nothing of the matter, makes a great show of righteous indignation, and vows that *whosoever is found with them shall die*.

Laban searches through everything of Jacob's but Rachel, by *deception*, is able to conceal them. Again Jacob condemns Laban for his charges, and protests the innocence of his company. The long trail of deception is still plaguing Jacob's house, and will follow him through life.

Later on the journey, Jacob's overconfident vow is fulfilled in a terrible way which he least expected—*his beloved Rachel dies in giving birth to Benjamin*.

Perhaps Rachel would have died in any case. Perhaps it was necessary in the plan that she be removed out of the way at this time. But perhaps on the other hand a little humility and caution on this occasion of Laban's charges would have spared Jacob his rash vow and the loss of what he cherished most. Overconfidence and the temptation to sweeping self-justification has trapped many.

Rachel, as she died, called her son Ben-oni—*Son of My Sorrow*; but Jacob renamed him Benjamin—*Son of My Right Hand*.

Rachel and Leah typify natural and spiritual Israel, just as do Hagar and Sarah. Rachel is the first chosen, but at the marriage-feast, *Leah is the first espoused*, then Rachel is added to the family. So it will be that the spiritual Israel is first at the marriage-feast of the Lord, *then* natural Israel will be taken in. Laban said—

“It must not be so done in our country, to give the younger before the FIRSTBORN” (Gen. 29:26).

The Spirit through Paul declared (Gal. 3:17)—

"The Law of Moses (which was 430 years after) cannot disannul the Covenant of Abraham."

So the *apparently* first-chosen natural Israel must take second place to the true Israel of God, for actually the children of faith were chosen in their father Abraham four hundred thirty years before the giving of the Law to natural Israel.

Rachel's outward, surface beauty fittingly typifies natural Israel; Leah's tenderness and gentleness the true "*beauty of holiness.*" Rachel took her Syrian father's gods. Israel's downfall was that she turned to the gods of their idolatrous ancestors. Of King Ahaz, for example, it is recorded that he worshipped Syrian gods, and (2 Chr. 28:23)—

"They were the ruin of him and of all Israel."

Rachel in dying gives birth to a son. The nation, too, died in giving birth to their long-awaited son of whom the prophet Isaiah had spoken: "*Unto us a Son is born*" (9:6).

They, like Rachel, called him the "son of their sorrow," but his Father called him, "*The Son of My Right Hand.*" In both cases, too, the son was born at Bethlehem-Ephrata. And there Rachel—the natural Israel—was buried, having fulfilled her purpose. The Spirit by Jeremiah says—

"A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children refused to be comforted, because they were not" (31:15).

Matthew fittingly applies this to Herod's murder of the children at the birth of Jesus, but that was but a symbolic fulfilment of what was to happen to Rachel's children because of the birth of this son and their treatment of him.

Jeremiah's context makes it clear that this weeping of Rachel is the long desolation of natural Israel. But to Rachel and her children the prophet says (Jer. 31:16)—

"Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears; they shall come again from the land of the enemy."

We hope too that Rachel will "come again from the land of the enemy." We cannot presume to pass ultimate judgment in any case, especially not in view of the brief record we have here. We can but attempt to faintly trace the marvelous types and shadows that show the hand and wisdom of God in the affairs of men.

Rachel's children will in God's mercy, be finally purified and redeemed by the life-work of the great son of Leah whom we meet weekly to remember, who will not rest until he has removed all enmity and sorrow from the family of Jacob.

As Little Children

"I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them unto babes, for so it seemed good in Thy sight" (Matt. 11:25).

There are many touching and beautiful references to children in the Scriptures. Among them none is more important or of deeper significance than the one contained in the 18th chapter of Matthew's gospel.

Christ's life mission was to provide a way of life and to teach men to walk in it. In this chapter we find the Great Teacher propounding a fundamental lesson with a graphic, unforgettable illustration. He came to teach Truth to a world which had, in the unbounded confidence of its ignorance, developed for itself an intricate and highly plausible system of philosophic self-deception.

This system, even in Christ's day, was already venerable with age. In fact we find it in full bloom ten centuries earlier at the time that David lived and wrote, as his 49th Psalm clearly shows. Its keynote is found in verse 18 of that Psalm—

"Men will praise thee when thou doest well to thyself."

This has been man's watchword from the childhood of the race. If a man spends his time benefitting himself, building up wealth and power and prestige, he will be honored and flattered and fawned upon. The same banner of glorious selfishness still waves in unchallenged supremacy today.

So ingrained by centuries of repetition and habit is this principle of predominant self-consideration that it is often unquestioningly taken for granted as a basis of interpreting Christ's teaching, even among the brotherhood.

As this chapter opens, we find Christ's own chosen disciples eagerly crowding around him as each confidently pressed his claim to the honor of pre-eminence—over which they had previously disputed among themselves—

"At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven?"
(v. 1).

Can we imagine the feelings of Jesus? How utterly alone he must have felt! How overpowering the consciousness that he alone of the earth's millions could see through its headlong folly! How crushing the weight of his singlehanded task of instruction and enlightenment!

"And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them" (v. 2).

On another occasion the disciples had imperiously forbidden children to bother Christ. The setting up of the kingdom was a work for men, they said. The glorious, majestic Messiah of Israel had no time for children.

He had been very angry on that occasion as he rebuked their proud and misguided zeal. Here again a great and fundamental lesson is to be driven home.

"Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven?" they had asked. How they underestimated the privilege of their position and the difficulties of the long, hard road that lay before them! Christ's answer fell with sobering weight on their enthusiastic rivalries. They were going far too fast. Entrance into the Kingdom was no foregone conclusion as they had hastily assumed. Directing their attention to the despised child in their midst, he said—

"Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall NOT ENTER into the Kingdom of heaven" (v. 3).

Here was a new and bewildering viewpoint. The children whom they had thrust away were set before them as examples of the attitude to which they must be converted if they would so much as even gain an entrance to the Kingdom, let alone be greatest in it.

In what way are we to become as children? *Mainly in unlearning many of the lessons that the world has carefully taught us.* In going back to childhood's viewpoint that we may learn anew in truth from Christ. How early the world teaches its children selfishness and ambition and bitterness and distrust! This is the sordid legacy that is carefully handed down. Even if it can give us nothing else, it takes infinite pains to teach us this.

This third verse is not merely a pleasing figure of speech. It is not to be contemplated abstractly with a warm glow of sentimental approbation. It is a positive command, an absolute ultimatum—

"Whosoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child" (as Luke's record gives it) "shall IN NO WISE enter therein."

The world regards itself and us as men—wonderful, mature, self-dependent creatures of vast intellect and even vaster importance. And it engages with an amusing, but tragic,

obsession in a multitude of pursuits which it describes by various flesh-appealing phrases, such as "getting somewhere," "being somebody," "amounting to something" and similar terms. All of which represent, in the main, the accumulation of various amounts of property, prestige and power (often quite useless and always troublesome), each increasing in desirability as it becomes inaccessible and enviable to others less fortunate.

The basis of its operations it terms "self-preservation, the first law of nature," which, of course, in Scriptural terms, is the mind of the flesh. In all its activities the world worships maturity, adulthood, self-reliance, aggressiveness, ambition, and domination.

How necessary and refreshing is the lesson brought to our attention in this scene from the life of Christ! The world brusquely says, "*Adults only.*" The gentle message of Christ is, "*None but children.*"

Before we can receive *his* blessing we must cast aside these noble, manly, lofty delusions of self-dependence; we must realize the paltriness of the achievements upon which the world has built its illusions of grandeur; and we must unreservedly confess our utter and childish helplessness.

In analyzing the qualities of childhood we must use discernment. The Bible does not introduce children to our attention as models of perfection—much to the contrary—but the observing mind will see the lessons that Christ teaches.

There are certain fundamental characteristics of childhood to which our notice is drawn. Their existence is explained by the incomplete development and hardening of the motions of sin, and the limited opportunity that worldly maturity has had to poison the mind and impressions with its false wisdom and cut-throat philosophy. Therefore, the younger the child, usually the better the example.

The first childish quality that is drawn to our attention is *humility*. This is the basic lesson of the present chapter—

"Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven" (v. 4).

Childlike humility—not a hypocritical or ceremonial self-abasement, but a *free and natural recognition of inferiority*, unmarred by any tendency either to glory in it or to conceal it. The natural reaction of the normal child before it learns from

its elders the questionable worldly wisdom of pride, deception and dissimulation.

Why is humility necessary? Because it is the inevitable accompaniment of wisdom and a clear understanding of our position, and *its absence indicates either ignorance or deceit*—both equally fatal.

* * *

This overlaps another trait of childhood we must possess—*naturalness*. Society has chosen to lade itself with a thick clay of sham and artificiality. Outward appearance is made the all-important thing. The scriptural lesson is that *outward show and inward worth are very rare companions*.

To the world's dull senses, intrinsic solemnity and sincerity have no appeal. It must have the gaudy, mincing pageantry that, to the eye of wisdom, speaks of a sad emptiness within. Paul suffered much from shallow minded men who gloried in appearances and belittled his unreserved heartiness and lack of ostentation.

The unconscious wisdom of young childhood, which makes no false pretence of splendor, knowledge, or importance, is a refreshing antidote to the universal adult practice of attempting to disguise a weak, pitiful, decaying body of sin with gaudy embellishments of dress, deportment and conversation.

* * *

Then there is *simplicity*—

"In simplicity and Godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God" (2 Cor. 1:12).

Simplicity—the word breathes of an indescribable peace and tranquility from the countless unanswerable complexities of existence. The patriarch Job suffered anguish of mind as he sought to plumb the fathomless depths of God's ways and appointments, but he was taught to find peace in the assurance that in the ultimate all things work together for good, and God is just, and all man needs is simple faith.

Solomon too, in Ecclesiastes, ponders and weighs the inconsistencies of life and experience and he, like Job, learns he must accept it with childlike simplicity—*"Fear God and keep His commandments—this is the whole duty of man."*

Man's sole concern and obligation is to learn God's will as thoroughly as his opportunities permit and, of course, to obey it. Nothing else need bother us. Childlike simplicity and singleness of purpose is the keynote. It is grown men, with idle, speculating minds, that have added all the complications.

The next example we can glean from the chapter we are considering. Peter (always the first to speak), desirous of applying Christ's lesson and anxious to catch its spirit, asks—

“Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times?” (Matt. 18:21).

Poor Peter! Who but an adult would think of counting forgivenesses? How noble he felt! Seven times! The rabbis, we are told, limited it to three.

But again we must turn to the nobility of infancy for an example of Christ's answer. There is to be no reckoning of forgivenesses. How repeatedly a small child will forgive and forget! How soon are hurts forgotten! How easy reconciliation! What young child would think of the cramped and calculating course of grudgingly *numbering* these occasions? It takes a mature adult to properly bear a grudge.

Consider the solemnity of Christ's final words on the subject. Speaking of the miserable fate of the unmerciful debtor in his parable, he says—

“So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye FROM YOUR HEART forgive not every one his brother their trespasses” (v. 35).

Then there is *teachableness*. A willingness and ability to learn, a desire for knowledge, a free unashamed recognition of ignorance, frank and open honesty of mind. There is a sad line of demarcation between childhood and maturity, when the fund of knowledge becomes regarded as sufficient, and all inlets are closed. At this point progress and growth stop. Opinions harden. The faculty of fresh, unbiased reasoning withers like an unused limb. Desire to learn ceases. There is no longer any sensation of incompleteness of knowledge. The possibility of error becomes unthinkable. Childhood is over. Maturity has been reached.

* * *

Paul, writing to the Corinthians, refers to another feature of childhood's superiority. “In *malice*, be ye children,” he exhorts them.

What is *malice*? Enmity of heart, ill-will, spite, a deep-seated bitterness that delights in the misery of perversity, a rottenness of the bones, any state of mind that magnifies unpleasant and meaningless trifles and sows malignant seeds of discord. An ugly thing, is it not?

And do we think we are free from it? Then why do we laugh at another's misfortune or embarrassment? Why do we see

humor in things that create discomfort? Latent malice is in every heart—"In my flesh dwelleth no good thing."

Peter, using the same example of childhood, appeals to extreme infancy for his illustration—

"Laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies and envies, and all evil speakings, as NEWBORN BABES" (1 Pet. 2:2).

Here Peter mentions another attribute of infancy—*guilelessness*, simple innocence. A broad and intimate acquaintance with facts is not always desirable. If God has condemned a thing, it is much more pleasing to Him if we can accept His judgment as loving children and leave it alone without first having to know all about it.

"Let them go their way, let them see the other side—the experience is good," the foolish world says, "Let them weather the storm—it will teach them self-reliance." But such philosophy is heedless of the tremendous percentage the storm sweeps relentlessly away, and it ignores God's lesson that self-reliance is at best a broken reed.

God teaches that there is neither wisdom nor kindness in exposing tender shoots to a blast that tests the endurance of well-rooted faith. Christ's prayer was that God should *keep His children from the evil* that is in the world and man is not wiser than God. When Jesus was urged to unnecessarily expose himself, he replied—

"Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God" (Matt. 4:7).

* * *

The parent-child figure is nowhere more strongly emphasized than in relation to God's fundamental requirement—*obedience* in simple faith—

"Be ye as obedient children" (1 Pet. 1:14).

No amount of laborious and complicated service and worship and devotion is to be compared with simple obedience. Some men do many wonderful works in Christ's name—but do they pass the acid test of a humble childlike desire to know and obey God's elementary requirements, regardless of their apparent contradiction of the world's wisdom? Are their mighty works done *their way*, or God's?

"If not," declares Christ, "If they do not the will of my Father, no amount of parading their great works will get them into my kingdom." Why not? Why shouldn't a lifetime of noble, self-sacrificing, well-meaning service be rewarded? Because they

miss the fundamental issue of the Gospel. It is not of works but of childlike, unquestioning faith.

To enter the Kingdom, a man must be absolutely righteous. The Bride is to be presented "*holy and without blemish, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing.*" Even ninety-nine percent is not sufficient. But no man can accomplish this for himself. No amount of effort and service can do it. If it were possible, then man could glory.

There is only one way to become wholly righteous. God has promised to cover sin and impute perfect righteousness on the basis of tried faith. If a man's life and conduct are guided by implicit faith, God will count him righteous.

Here again is illustrated Christ's declaration that we can only enter the Kingdom as children. We must have righteousness to enter, but it is not the manly, self-confident, self-reliant, earned righteousness of works. It is the faithful, trustful, childlike imputed righteousness of grace.

* * *

We are brought to the last and most important childlike characteristic we must evidence. The one upon which the parent-child relation of God and man is primarily based—*trustfulness*—a child's trust and a Father's care.

Here is where the example of childhood faces its most difficult task—to teach adult faith to rely on the invisible, immovable Rock, and not the visible, shifting sand. To relax its frantic and worrying efforts to build security out of perishing mammon, and in the serene confidence of childlike faith to feel the assuring strength of the everlasting arms.

Our relationship to God is as children, shaping their characters under their Father's care. As such there are things to which we must give heed, and things to which we must not. As a Father to His children, God has said to us—

"Take no thought for temporal things—I shall supply them as they are needed. What you must do in the few brief years at your disposal is to diligently prepare yourselves for the work I have in store for you. You have much to do and the time is short. Be content with what I give you—and remember, too, that sometimes I shall give you more than you need to see if you use MY GOODS wisely and faithfully FOR ME, or if you squander them upon yourselves. Later on you must give an account of how you have used your time and opportunities and possessions."

A true conception of our position as children will lead us to a proper use of our time. Childhood is a limited period, a time

of passing opportunity. It is a time for learning and preparing. In it the basis of the future is laid. It is a time of education and discipline—often of necessary and beneficial chastisement.

If used diligently and wisely and intelligently and obediently it will lead to an acceptable and eternal manhood. If used foolishly or thoughtlessly or frittered in pleasure or wasted in ambition, it will, of course, lead to another end just as eternal and inevitable.

If we rely on ourselves, *our* knowledge, *our* ability, we lose the strongest incentive to resist temptation when it affects our well-being—but if we in faith cast aside worldly security and throw ourselves entirely upon God's care, knowing that we shall only be cared for if we are well pleasing to Him, it will be a strong deterrent to doing anything that may forfeit His care and guardianship.

That is, *if our whole treasure and insurance and dependence is in heaven in the shape of God's favor and care, we shall be much more careful not to jeopardize it or let it lapse by rendering a faulty obedience.*

Let us then—in humility, in naturalness, in simplicity, in forgiveness, in freedom from malice, in purity, in guilelessness, in trustfulness, in heedlessness of worldly cares, in dependence on our Father—be obedient children, worthy of our exalted relationship to Him.

Discernment, we have said, is necessary to profitably extract the lessons of childhood. This is a scriptural warning. There are qualities inherent in childhood which we must resolutely put away. Paul said (1 Cor. 13:11)—

"When I became a man, I put away childish things."

It is these things, sadly enough, to which we tend to cling.

The smallnesses, the limited perception, the narrow outlook, the desire for amusements, the petty quarrels, the fussing over trifles, the frivolity, the foolishness, the love of pleasure, the playing of games, the silly talking, the day-dreaming, the lack of ability to face and analyze facts, the fatal attraction of novelty and color, the immature love of bright toys and shiny playthings, the lack of self-control, and of courage to think and to be different—*these things*, upon becoming men, we must firmly put away.

"Brethren, be not children in understanding: in understanding be men" (1 Cor. 14:20).

Let Us Rise Up and Build!

"From the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem, unto Messiah the Prince . . . shall be . . . seventy weeks" (Dan. 9:24, 25).

The story of Nehemiah is a story of great courage and devotion in the face of tremendous difficulties and disappointments.

The events of this book occur about four hundred and fifty years before Christ in the middle of the two hundred year life span of the second great world empire—Medo-Persia. The first empire—Babylon—the head of gold—had been destroyed with all its glory by Cyrus, about one hundred years before. The small beginnings of the third and fourth empires, Greece and Rome, were just starting to stir.

Nehemiah's labors occur just about one hundred years after the return from the captivity of a remnant under Zerubbabel, to rebuild the Temple. As the book opens, we find Nehemiah as the cupbearer to the King of Persia, supreme ruler of the known world from India in the east to Ethiopia in the west. Nehemiah's position was a very important one, of great honor, influence and advantage. He would be in close and daily contact with the world ruler. The empire's choicest comforts and luxuries would be available to him.

We are reminded of Moses in the court of Pharaoh and his decision to "choose rather affliction with the people of God." Through the love of God and the discernment of the Spirit, he chose the glories of eternity rather than the vain baubles of present prosperity.

We are told nothing of Nehemiah's background or tribal lineage or family affairs. In this respect he stands before us like Melchizedek. All we know of him is that he was an *Israelite indeed*, in the fullest sense of the term.

The king was Artaxerxes I, son and successor of the great Xerxes I of whom Daniel says that—

"By his strength through his riches he shall stir up all against the realm of Grecia" (Dan. 11:2).

Xerxes was the Ahasuerus of Esther. Esther, if still living at the time of Nehemiah, would be about fifty-five years old when the book opens. The story begins—

"And it came to pass in the month Chisleu (Dec.) in the twentieth year (of Artaxerxes) as I was in Shushan the palace, that Hanani, one of my brethren, came, and certain men of Judah. And I asked them concerning the

Jews that were left of the Captivity, and concerning Jerusalem" (Neh. 1:1).

How old Nehemiah was, or how long he had been cupbearer to Artaxerxes, we do not know, but it is apparent that his heart was with the remnant of his people in Jerusalem.

The report he received was very saddening. One hundred years had past since a faithful remnant had returned with Zerubbabel when Cyrus destroyed Babylon and proclaimed freedom to go home. After much effort and delay, the temple had been rebuilt after a fashion at the urging and encouragement of Haggai and Zechariah, but things had not prospered. These men reported to Nehemiah that Judah was in great affliction and reproach.

Fourteen years earlier than Nehemiah, Ezra the priest had gathered together another little company of exiles and had gone back with the purpose of teaching and reestablishing the law and the Temple services. But clearly more help was needed. So much was required that Ezra had not the power or authority to accomplish.

When Nehemiah heard of the conditions in Judah, where Ezra was striving against great odds to bring the people back to the way of God, he wept, and mourned, and fasted and prayed for the blessing of his people.

So four months pass—four months in which Nehemiah continues to pray and plan and form the great determination to leave behind all the meaningless luxury of the Persian court and devote himself to the service and welfare of the afflicted people of God.

He must have known from the beginning that it would be largely a thankless and a hopeless task. But in the deepest sense it was not hopeless, for he was playing a worthy part in the eternal purpose, and though most of the results of his effort were soon dissipated when he was taken away, some of his accomplishments remained and were part of the chain of events that prepared the way for the eventual manifestation of the Messiah.

He built the wall and restored the city. Daniel has prophesied that from this event, the coming of the Messiah should be measured—seventy weeks of years—four hundred and ninety years. By Nehemiah's efforts the desolated city was reborn to a reasonably secure existence as a center for the development again of Jewish life.

This lasted. But his greater task of establishing righteousness and justice among the people *did not last*. As soon as his back was turned, the dog returned to its vomit again, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.

That is the sad background that overshadows all the story of the intense, self-sacrificing efforts of this simple, humble, zealous man of God.

His prayer, as he prepares himself to seek the king's favor, is worthy of study—

"O Lord God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love Him and observe His commandments (Neh. 1:5).

"The great and terrible God"—do we realize how great and terrible He is? A strong and living realization of this is fundamental to a humble and contrite walk. *"Keeping covenant and mercy to"*—whom? What two characteristics are necessary?—

"To them that LOVE HIM and KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS."

Then Nehemiah said he prayed *"night and day."* If we truly desire anything, we will be continuous and persevering in our efforts and prayers. Then he says—

"WE have sinned; WE have dealt very corruptly; WE have not kept Thy commandments" (vs. 6, 7).

We find this is characteristic of men of God. They make themselves one with those whom they seek to help. They stoop down to them and seek the mercy of God together with them.

In verse 9 he speaks of the *"place God has chosen to set His Name there."* All the faithful through the ages have been united in this desire and prayer—

"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem. They shall prosper that love thee" (Psa. 122:6).

But Nehemiah did not stop at prayer and desire, He gave his life to the service of this divine purpose.

* * *

As chapter two begins, he is in the presence of the King, four months after hearing the news about Judah. The time has come to present his petition, after long preparation by prayer and fasting. It was the time of year of the great deliverance from Egypt under Moses—*Passover-time*—the beginning of the Jewish year. His heart would be especially stirred for the lost glories of his people.

His resolve to petition the King filled his mind, and the king noticed and remarked on his disturbed condition. See how

intimate was his relation with this ruler of the world! But his heart was with the people of God—

"Send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers' sepulchres, that I may build it" (Neh. 2:5).

Doubtless Nehemiah would be thinking of the words of Daniel, recorded one hundred years before—

"From the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem, unto Messiah the Prince . . . shall be seventy weeks" (Dan. 9:24, 25).

Verse 6 says the queen was sitting by the king when the request was made. Why should the queen be mentioned? It may have been Esther, the queen of the previous king.

"The king granted me, according to the good hand of my God upon me" (v. 8).

It will be observed of Nehemiah that, on the one hand, he takes every precaution and exerts every effort for the success of his endeavors, just as if everything depended on him alone, while at the same time he simply and unaffectedly attributes all that he accomplishes to the hand of God.

It is a very strong human tendency to fall short in one or the other of these things.

Nehemiah's troubles begin immediately upon arrival at Jerusalem—

"When Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah, the servant, the Ammonite, heard of it, it grieved them exceedingly that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel" (v. 10).

These are his enemies right to the end, the saddest part being that they had powerful allies within the camp of Israel, who worked secretly against Nehemiah. When, in the last chapter, he returns to the land after being away for a while, he finds that the High Priest had provided a chamber for his arch-enemy Tobiah in the very court of the Temple. And he found that the High Priest's grandson had become son-in-law to Sanballat, the other principal adversary of God's people.

This is the sad note on which the book closes. We are reminded of the closing days of the life of Paul—

"At my last answer, no man stood with me."

"All they which are in Asia be turned away from me."

But they were in good company. Jesus himself ended his days an apparent failure, with his enemies triumphant.

* * *

But we are now at the beginning of Nehemiah's work. Sanballat was the leader of the Samaritans, the Gentiles who

had been brought to Israel by the Assyrians to replace the removed Israelites; and Tobiah was the leader of the Ammonites, descendants of Lot, who had always been antagonistic to Israel.

Nehemiah's first action was to secretly survey the ruins of the walls by night. He went out by the valley gate at the southwest corner of the city, eastward along the Valley of Hinnom, the south border of the city, then up the Valley of Jehoshaphat, the eastern border of the city.

Part way up he had to dismount and walk because of the condition of the ruins. *There was no pathway to the city of God.* This latter part would take him by the location of Gethsemane. His whole trip would be similar to that taken by Jesus and the disciples the night he was betrayed. He then retraced his steps and reentered the city.

What was his purpose in the secret night-time tour halfway around the city walls, through the Valley of Gehenna and the Valley of Judgment? As far as any *practical* purpose, surely he would have been able to see the condition of the city from within by clear daylight in the three days he had already been there.

It would seem rather that this trip was to view the sad ruins of the holy city in the quietness of communion with God, meditating on her position in the eternal purpose, and preparing his heart for the tasks and problems ahead.

He had left the capital city of the Kingdom of Men in proud and glittering prosperity and activity. He now stood in the quiet of the night, viewing the desolate ruins of the capital city of the Kingdom of God, which it was his task to rebuild and revitalize. Daniel had said—

"The wall SHALL be built again, even in troublous times."

So far he had said nothing of his mission. But now he has prepared himself, he announces the purpose for which he has come—

"Come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem!"

He tells them how God has prospered his plans, and now the king had given him authority for the necessary work and materials.

"And they said, LET US RISE UP AND BUILD!"

Let us each be deeply impressed with *the difference that one courageous, cheerful, devoted man can make*—between success and failure, despair and hope.

But Sanballat and Tobiah, with Gesham the Arabian, laughed them to scorn.

* * *

Chapter three describes the rebuilding of the wall—

“Then Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brethren and the priests and they builded the sheep gate, and they sanctified it” (v. 1).

The sheep gate entered into the Temple area, on the north-east corner of the city, so named because it was through here that the animals were brought for sacrifice—the sheep gate—the *way of sacrifice*. The whole undertaking was begun by *sanctifying the work unto God*, seeking His help and blessing. And when the wall was completed, the whole was dedicated to God with praise and thanksgiving.

This high priest Eliashib was the grandson of the high priest Jeshua, who had come back earlier with Zerubbabel. Though he entered into the wall-building, he appears to have been no friend of Nehemiah's, but rather of Tobiah and Sanballat.

Though he was high priest, he is not mentioned as taking any part in the reforms and activities by which Nehemiah endeavored to stir up the people and bring them back to God.

* * *

This building again of the old ruins of the wall which had been broken down for one hundred and fifty years was a tremendous undertaking. There are several interesting points about it.

In this work Nehemiah was typical of Christ, the great wall-builder, and also of every faithful laborer in every age who endeavors to build up and strengthen the Holy City's wall of defense and separation from the world.

When the wall is broken down, nothing can prosper. Things just go from bad to worse.

The first point we notice is that each man built the part *nearest his own house*. This is an important principle.

* * *

It is recorded in verse 5 that the nobles of Tekoa—

“. . . put not their necks to the work of their Lord.”

Paul tells us that all these things were written for examples for us and they are examples in more ways than one. Among other things they are examples of the fact that *all is recorded* for good or for ill. If we are related to the purpose of God (and we believe we are), then all our activities are being recorded. *Let it not be recorded of any of us that we “put not our necks to the work of the Lord.”*

That applies to us all, for listening is just as important as speaking. *All* is the work of the Lord, whether it be the meetings, or just our private contacts together. Let us all put all the effort and enthusiasm we can into everything we do, as unto the Lord!

The nobles of Tekoa put not their necks to the work, and it is forever recorded against them, but we find later in the chapter that the common people of Tekoa finished their own part early and then went somewhere else and built up an extra portion.

* * *

We read in verse 20 that Baruch the son of Zabbai *earnestly* repaired his portion. As some are singled out for their lack of zeal, so here is one mentioned for special zeal. There was a lot of earnest work, or they never could have gotten the wall up in fifty-two days in the face of such obstacles, but here was a *real extremist*—a man who gave himself to the uttermost. As Paul says of some in his day—

*“To their power—yea, and BEYOND their power—
they were willing of themselves”* (2 Cor. 8:3).

But all did not go as smoothly as we may imagine from the brief outline in chapter three. Chapters four, five and six give us more detail of the difficulties they encountered—

*“But it came to pass that when Sanballat heard that
we bullded the wall, he was wroth, and took great
indignation, and mocked the Jews”* (Neh. 4:1).

The enemy first tried ridicule to dishearten and divide the laborers—

“What do these feeble Jews?” (v. 2).

How strikingly this is paralleled in Israel today—

“Will they fortify themselves?”

*“Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the
rubbish which are burned?”*

Ridicule has always been the cheap weapon of the ignorant majority. It is a powerful weapon in these days of weakness, if faith and vision are not strong.

* * *

*“Hear, O our God, for we are despised, turn their
reproach upon their own head, gve them for a prey in
the land of captivty”* (Neh. 4:4).

Are these words in the spirit of Christ? They are prophetic and symbolic utterances of the Spirit. We would get the sense better if we read them as prophetic—*“Thou shalt gve them for a prey.”*

The children of God do not desire the death of the wicked any more than God does, but they do fervently desire the triumph of righteousness, the vindication of faith and patience, and the *complete crushing and destruction of the evil power of sin and death*. Those who presumptuously chose the way of sin must be destroyed together with sin.

The ridicule failed. Nehemiah records—

“So we built the wall—for the people had a mind to work” (v. 6).

What a comforting expression! What wonders can be accomplished for the Truth when this is the case!—

“The people had a mind to work.”

But the enemy pressed harder, and went from ridicule to conspiracy. And the circle of adversaries broadens as the work advances—

“Sanballat (the Samaritans), and Tobiah (the Ammonites), and the Arabians, and the Ashdodites . . . conspired all of them together to fight against Jerusalem” (v. 7).

“Nevertheless,” records Nehemiah—

“We MADE OUR PRAYER, and SET A WATCH.”

Here again is combined, in a God-pleasing way—faith and works—dependence on God coupled with intense personal effort.

Verse 10 introduces a disturbing aspect—the most discouraging obstacle Nehemiah had to face—

“Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish, so that we are not able to build the wall.”

Nothing more quickly undermines a group than the presence of faithless cowardice and fear. We can do our cause no greater harm than to spread this fatal infection—

“Our strength is decayed—the task is too great.”

But Nehemiah exhorts them to courage with the stirring watchword—

“Remember the Lord” (v. 14)

—in your weakness and disappointments, keep the **POWER OF THE LORD** before your mind!

Thereafter they worked with a tool in one hand and a weapon in the other. In verse 19, Nehemiah says to them—

“The work is great and large, and we are separated on the wall, one far from another.”

How true that is of our position today! And how important that we do as they did and *keep in close contact for mutual encouragement and defense!*

And Nehemiah commanded that all the workers should remain inside the city during the night, for their own protection and for the mutual defense of the city. We are reminded of the instruction at the time of the passing over of the avenging angel in Egypt—

"None of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning."

Any wandering outside of the separating and protecting walls is danger and disobedience.

"So neither I, nor my brethren, nor my servants, none of us put off our clothes, saving that every one put them off for washing" (v. 23).

Complete dedication and devotion, day and night watchfulness and readiness—but still they did not neglect their own cleanliness and purification. It is so easy, in the midst of intense and energetic labor for the Truth, to forget that *our principal responsibility is our own personal character and conduct and self control*—our principal battle is always against our own uncleanness, our own enemy within.

* * *

Chapter four introduced us to serious problems the work encountered, but chapter five reveals a problem far worse. There is a great lesson in Nehemiah's patient perseverance in the face of ingrained human fleshliness and evil. What a degraded thing the natural man is! What glorious and beautiful possibilities are held out before him, but how few have *any desire* to rise out of natural groveling earthiness!

"There was a great cry of the people against their brethren."

Why? Because the more fortunate and more powerful among them were cruelly oppressing the poorer ones, grinding them down into hopeless bondage and debt. This is, and has always been, the way of natural man—greed, selfishness and cruelty, yet with such protestations of piety and self-righteousness and showy charity!

"We have mortgaged our lands, and vineyards, and houses: we bring into bondage our sons and daughters."

Naturally, *we* too are of the same evil, selfish stuff. We *must* learn—from these manifestations of evil—the ugliness and viciousness of the inner enemy we all have to contend with. We

must, by the light of the Spirit, learn to discern the same basic motives and reactions and self-justifications.

Nehemiah says, "*I was very angry.*" Did the fear and goodness of God mean nothing to them at all? Doubtless they justified their conduct as "prudence" and "industry" and "wisdom" and "good business" and dismissed the plight of their brethren as the result of foolishness or laziness or carelessness (as doubtless it may have been in some cases).

"The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked" (Jer. 17:9)

—and we can justify and glorify *anything*, if we want to do so. See how the nations of the earth, both East and West, present every selfish, greedy action as a pious labor for human good! "*Let a man examine himself.*" It is a very humiliating study, if done by the light of God's Word.

Nehemiah was "very angry." Then he says—

"I consulted with myself" (Neh. 5:6).

Here is wisdom. Paul says—

"Be ye angry—and SIN NOT" (Eph. 4:26).

"I consulted with myself." He did not speak or act impetuously in anger—this is the almost irresistible temptation.

Nehemiah had been given supreme authority in Judea. His word was law. But he *pleaded* with them—

"Restore, I pray you, to them this day" (v. 11).

He sought to *persuade* them, to teach them a more excellent way, to make them ashamed of their wickedness, in the presence of all the congregation. Instead of commanding them, he asked them to enter into a solemn and public oath that they would do what he asked.

In this way he made it as *easy* as he could for them to do what was right, and as *difficult* as he could for them to go back to doing what was wrong.

"And all the congregation said, Amen, and praised the Lord" (v. 13)

—praised the Lord for the great relief, and for the provision of such a wise and righteous and patient leader who could be firm and inflexible without being unnecessarily harsh and dictatorial.

The remainder of chapter five, verses 14-19, is a statement by Nehemiah of the course he personally followed all through his administration, because of the fear of the Lord.

He accepted no payment or contribution for his support. His servants, instead of ruling over the people as those of former governors had done, all labored in the common work, and

furthermore he personally supported a continuous assembly of one hundred and fifty people attached to his administration.

Like Paul, he desired to "spend and be spent" for them. His reward and pleasure was in helping and serving his people and putting on record an example for the guidance and inspiration of others.

"Think upon me, my God, for good, according to all I have done for this people" (Neh. 5:19).

He desired nothing from man. He wanted to *give* all he could, of himself and of his substance. All he desired was the remembrance and mercy of God. He is not boasting. It was necessary, in the wisdom of the Spirit, that this be recorded for our edification. Here the secret thoughts of his heart are laid bare for our comfort and guidance.

They are still building the wall. The enemy, who has tried ridicule and conspiracy, now tries—in order—deceit, and intimidation, and a crafty trap, and internal sedition. Well might Nehemiah exclaim—

"O God, strengthen my hands!"

He records—

"Sanballat and Geshem sent unto me saying, Come and let us meet together in one of the villages" (Neh. 6:2).

This is one of the most difficult approaches of the enemy to contend with—

"Come and let us talk it over. Let us see what can be worked out. Perhaps we are closer together than we think. Why be narrow and exclusive?"

The Truth IS narrow and exclusive. It demands a degree of allegiance and submission that very few are willing to give. In this dispensation it will always be small and despised. When it begins to prosper and spread out, it soon becomes contaminated and diluted. And it is not something that can be compromised. Either we accept it as a whole or we do not.

Nehemiah gave the perfect answer to all the pleasing and plausible invitations to "come out and fraternize"—

"I am doing a great work: I cannot come down to you" (Neh. 6:3).

Of course, we *must be* doing a great work—this is not just a convenient excuse; it must be a *statement of fact*.

We have no time for other things. Living the Truth and serving God is a full time occupation, and *any who do not realize this have not properly learned the Truth*. Any who think

they have time for anything but God's service have a very faulty conception of the height and depth of the Gospel.

When this sugar-coated approach failed, the enemy tried another—

"Then Sanballat sent his servant unto me with an open letter in his hand" (v. 5).

An open letter was a sign of discourtesy, and contempt, in the pattern of haughty instructions to an inferior servant.

The letter was a threat—an attempt to blackmail and intimidate. It charged Nehemiah with planning rebellion against Persia in fortifying Jerusalem, and hinted that if Nehemiah did not cooperate, the charge would be brought before the King. It ended with the same invitation—

"Come now, therefore, and let us take counsel together" (v. 7).

A charge to the Persian King by the officials of all the surrounding territories would be serious. In dictatorships and despotisms, even the mere *suggestion* of rebellion is often sufficient for condemnation, for such rulers play safe and purges are frequent.

But Nehemiah was not intimidated. He had faith that God would see him through without recourse to seeking to appease or compromise with the enemy. The power of God was far greater and more real to him than that of Persia.

The next assault is from within. An Israelite, posing as a friend and as a prophet, came to Nehemiah warning him of assassination and urging him to take refuge in the Temple. To a God-fearing man like Nehemiah, it was a subtle and plausible approach. It was designed to cater to both fear and vanity—

"You are very important to the work of God—you are justified in making an exception in your own case and using the Temple as a refuge. Remember that David ate the showbread in a case of necessity. Why expose yourself when you can be safe? You are just being foolhardy and making a show of your faith and tempting God."

This from an apparently sincere and godly man would be very appealing and plausible. But Nehemiah was too familiar with the mind of the Spirit to be deceived by fleshly wiles—

"Who is there that —being as I am—would go into the Temple to save his life?"

"And, lo, I perceived that God had not sent him, but that he prophesied this prophecy against me, for Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him" (vs. 11, 12).

We must examine all advice for *motive* and *purpose*. If it appeals to the flesh, we need to be doubly on guard. Often the only safe answer is, "Get thou behind me, Satan."

"My God, think Thou upon the prophetess Noadiah, and the rest of the prophets, that would have put me in fear" (v. 14).

Think of the difficulties and hazards of Nehemiah's position, when *even reputed prophets* were secretly trying to ensnare and destroy him. How similar his position was to that of Jesus among his enemies!

But nothing stopped the work. In the midst of all this intrigue, within and without, the work continued. *This is important.*

The best way to handle and combat all disruptive and diversionary tactics is to **IGNORE THEM** and *keep on working at the main objective*, which at present is the **MAKING READY A PEOPLE PREPARED FOR THE LORD**.

There are lots of side issues, lots of challenges, lots of threats and hints that we may be tempted to be drawn aside into conflict with, but life is short, time is brief, and we are a very small cog in a great enterprise.

Let us not be diverted. Only God Himself can straighten out many things. Let us stick to the one glorious, central objective, so that we can sincerely answer to all diversionary invitations to "Come and let us take counsel," by saying—

"I am engaged in a great work: I cannot come down to you."

And so Nehemiah could record—

"So the wall was finished in fifty-two days, and when our enemies heard thereof, they were cast down, for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God" (Neh. 6:15).

But here is the sad and significant part. Even though they perceived this, they were not converted, but schemed harder. This is a perverse characteristic of the flesh, to rebel against the light. It is not sensible or logical, but how very human and natural!

* * *

Verses 17 and 18 reveal a very disastrous condition from the point of view of the soundness and welfare of God's people—

"Moreover in those days the nobles of Judah sent many letters to Tobiah, and the letters of Tobiah came to them."

"For there were MANY in Judah sworn unto him because he was the son in law of Shechaniah, and his son Johanan had taken the daughter of Meshullam."

Allen marriage—mixing with the world—going out to see the daughters of the land—the greatest single evil that has plagued the people of God since before the flood.

"She is such a nice person!"—"He comes from such a nice family!"—"Perhaps it will bring them to the Truth."

"Shall we do evil that good may come?" God, in His mercy, or for His own purpose, sometimes brings good out of evil, but He more often brings *evil* out of *evil*. Either way, the shame and disobedience of the original evil remains.

* * *

"The nobles of Judah sent many letters to Tobiah."

He does not say, *"Some of the nobles,"* but, *"The nobles,"* showing that, not just some individuals, but *as a group* they were scheming with the enemy against Nehemiah.

Nehemiah was no friend of special privilege or oppression. These nobles had been living well by oppressing their poor brethren and fraternizing with the leaders of the outside nations around them.

They resented Nehemiah's reforms—his bothersome zeal for holiness and for the fulfilment of the law of God.

"Also they reported his good deeds before me" (v. 19).

This was very subtle and hypocritical. Tobiah was an enemy of God and of God's people. He was using every means he could to destroy the good Nehemiah was doing.

The issue was a clear case of allegiance to God, or to the enemy of God. There was no middle ground.

But they "reported his good deeds" before Nehemiah. *What's wrong with reporting a man's good deeds?* Is it not according to the law of God to do so? Should we not be charitable—see the best?—think the best of any one?

Here was the subtlety and the hypocrisy of it—a vicious, malicious misapplication of a divine truth that would nullify all distinction between good and evil, faithfulness and unfaithfulness. They labored to *confuse the issue, glorify the enemy, and weaken the faithful*—all in the name of "charity" and "friendliness."

"And they reported my matters to Tobiah. And Tobiah sent letters to put me in fear" (v. 19).

This situation will be found in all ages of the Truth—men who *pretend* to be loyal friends of the Truth, but whose heart and

sympathies and associations are in the broad way with the enemy, and who are always trying to glorify the enemy and weaken and belittle those who faithfully strive for the narrow way.

* * *

We begin chapter seven. First Nehemiah says that when the wall was finished, he appointed its rulers. This is the next necessary step. First build up the wall safe and complete. Then set up faithful rulers in charge. His principle of choice is a very important one to follow—

"He was a faithful man, and feared God above many"
(v. 2).

This should be the basis of choice in all ecclesial arrangements—natural ability, personal relationship, animal friendliness—*mean NOTHING.*

"To THIS man will I look, saith the Lord . . ."
—not to the learned, or accomplished, or polished, or self-assertive, but—

" . . . to him that is poor, and of a broken spirit, and that TREMBLETH AT MY WORD" (Isa. 66:2).

Then (v. 3) for the security of the city, the gates were only to be opened at limited times, and under careful guard, and during the night each household was to be responsible for setting a watch in its own area.

They were actually in a state of siege, where constant care and watchfulness was essential to their safety. *We are impressed in all these things with the parallel of the Household today, as sheep in the midst of wolves.*

Nehemiah's next concern was with the inhabitants of the city:

"The people were few, and the houses not bullded"
(Neh. 7:4).

And he says—

"And my God put in my heart to gather the people that they might be reckoned by genealogy" (v. 5).

We notice that Nehemiah has a single purpose—the *peace and prosperity of Jerusalem*—and he proceeds in an orderly way from step to step. He says so often, *"My God put in my heart"* to do this or that.

All action must be based on prayer and study of the Word of God, seeking guidance—

"It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23).

We must learn, and remember, that as natural, animal creatures we have neither the knowledge nor mental capacity to determine our course of action ourselves. Man, with all his pride, is utterly and constitutionally incapable of knowing what he should do even from moment to moment, let alone the big issues of life.

For the foundation of his genealogy, Nehemiah first goes back to the record of those who came back from Babylon one hundred years before under Zerubbabel. The rest of chapter seven is this list, which is identical, except in minor detail, with that in Ezra chapter two.

It is thought more probable that Ezra's list is the way it was when made up in Babylon before leaving, while Nehemiah's is a list made after arriving in the land, with adjustments made for any changes that occurred in between.

* * *

The wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of the sixth month, just a few days before the beginning of the seventh, in which the joyful *Feast of Tabernacles* was to be celebrated.

The people were apparently aware by custom and tradition that certain national celebration days fell in this month, but they were not aware of the details. Having completed the wall, however, their minds turn toward God Who has prospered their effort thus far. What should they do—how should they proceed to arrange their national life?

This is the most encouraging sign in the whole book, and must have given Nehemiah great comfort and satisfaction.

Just how widespread the feeling was, or how long it endured afterward, we do not know, but at this time at least there was a great movement to *seek the Law of God*.

An enthusiastic desire on the part of *all members* for a constant increase of the knowledge of the Word of God is *essential* for any sound ecclesial life—not just a few, well-worn, crotchety points, beaten back and forth, year after year, *but a broad, balanced wholesome study of all Scripture*. This love for, and knowledge of, God's Word is the great distinction between the people of God and the people of the world. Without this we may be very "nice" people, but we have no right to consider ourselves children of God.

* * *

"And all the people gathered themselves together AS ONE MAN into the street (or broad place—RV: square) that was before the water gate, and they spake unto

Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the Law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded Israel" (Neh. 8:1).

God had specifically commanded in the beginning that this Law should be periodically read in public to *all* the people at this Feast of Tabernacles.

ALL the people should *know*, and *understand*, and be *deeply interested*—there alone is safety.

And the command specifically required that "children" be included in the audience. As soon as they were old enough to comprehend what was going on (and that comes quite early), *they were to be there listening*. They were to be considered—they were an important factor—they were mentioned specially—they were not to be forgotten, or just allowed to run riot while their elders worshipped. These early years are vital in laying the character's foundation.

* * *

"And Ezra the priest brought the Law before the congregation, both of men and women, AND ALL THAT HEAR WITH UNDERSTANDING—(all old enough to understand) upon the first day of the seventh month" (Neh. 8:2).

This is the first mention of *Ezra* in this book. Up to now *Nehemiah*—the worker, the builder, the organizer—has dominated the scene. But now all the people, including *Nehemiah* himself, call upon *Ezra* to take the lead in reading and explaining the Law of God.

Ezra was a direct descendant from *Aaron* and appears to have been the grandson, or possibly great-grandson, of the High Priest *Jehozadak*, who was carried captive to *Babylon* by *Nebuchadnezzar*.

He was not in the direct line of the High-Priesthood, being apparently a younger son, or son of a younger son.

(One of the "chief", or leading, priests who returned from *Babylon* with *Zerubbabel* was named *Ezra*, and it is a possibility that this was the same person. If so, he must have been quite young at the time of *Zerubbabel*, and he would be very old now—at least one hundred and twenty or one hundred and thirty).

It is a very strongly established Jewish tradition that *Ezra* was the instrument used by God to compile the book of *Chronicles* and to arrange and complete the canon of *Scripture*. There is no proof of this, but several facts fit in very well with it—

1. This work must have been done around this time. It could not have been earlier or later for this is the end of the historical period of the Old Testament, and the sun is descending over the prophets, leaving Israel in a darkness that was not dispelled until John came as a "shining and a burning light."

2. Ezra appears to be the most fitting and qualified for this work, and was clearly the leader in teaching the Law of God at this time.

3. Ezra had dedicated himself to—

"Seek the Law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments" (Ezra 7:10)

—and it was for this very purpose of teaching the Law that he had (like Nehemiah later) sought and been granted permission from the king to go with authority to Jerusalem.

4. He is spoken of in terms that appear to indicate a special relationship to the law in the sight of God, as—

"The scribe of the Law of the God of Heaven" (Ezra 7:21).

"Ready (skilled, prepared) scribe in the Law of Moses."

"The scribe of the words of the commandments of the Lord, and of His statutes to Israel" (Ezra 7:11).

* * *

When the people were gathered—

"Ezra opened the Book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people" (Neh. 8:5).

He was on a platform, so they could all see him as well as hear him.

He "*opened the Book in the sight of all the people.*" This is important. The Book must be kept in the forefront. Without this Book we are, like Samson without his hair, "*as weak as other men.*" But in this Book is life and strength—a power greater than any power on earth. When we present it we must always keep it and its words *right out in front*, and ourselves always behind it.

"And Ezra read from daylight until midday, and the ears of all the people were attentive" (v. 3).

They did not *force* themselves to pay attention—they enjoyed it—realizing with marvel and excitement as he read that these were the *living words of the eternal God Himself*, Who had condescended to speak to them and to their fathers.

Other priests and Levites worked with Ezra in reading and explaining the Law—

"So they read in the book of the Law of God distinctly, and gave the sense and caused them to understand the reading" (Neh. 8:8).

This again is very important. *There is little to be gained by reading without understanding.* We should never be content to do our readings mechanically without understanding.

What we cannot understand we should ask—ask our brethren, consult the works of the pioneers in the Truth, ask God in prayer.

God is not pleased with a blank, half-hearted, ritualistic reading of His Word, any more than He was with Israel's mechanical thoughtless sacrificing.

* * *

Verses 9 and 10 are very interesting. When the people heard the words of the law, *they wept.* They wept for humiliation and sorrow and remorse for the condition the nation had gotten itself into after God had been so gracious as to choose and bless them above all people.

But Nehemiah and Ezra said to them—

"Mourn not, nor weep, this day is holy unto the Lord your God" (v. 9).

It was the first holy sabbath of the joyful Feast of Tabernacles—the last feast of the year, the feast that represented the ingathering of all God's glorious elect—the end of all toil—the swallowing up of death in victory.

It was natural to weep. It was a good and wholesome reaction. But there was a more excellent way to express their deep emotion—*joy and zealous determination—thanksgiving and praise.*

Ezra and Nehemiah exhorted them—

"Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet and SEND PORTIONS UNTO THEM FOR WHOM NOTHING IS PREPARED . . .

"Neither be ye sorry, for the JOY OF THE LORD IS YOUR STRENGTH."

"The joy of the Lord is your strength." Just what does that mean to us? Surely this is the central message of this book. Here is the secret of Nehemiah's confidence and courage in the face of constant problems, without and within.

Truly joy IS strength, and the "joy of Yahweh" is a sound, glorious, eternal joy. Are we a part of that joy and strength? Jeremiah records in words that perfectly fit this occasion in Nehemiah—

"Thy words were found, and I did eat them, and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by Thy Name O Yahweh, God of hosts!"
(Jer. 15:16).

We too are *called by His Name!* Think upon it—glory in it—joy in the strength of it! *Yahweh Elohim*—"He who shall be mighty ones"—the glorious Memorial Name!

Nehemiah continues—

"The people went their way, to MAKE GREAT MIRTH, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them" (v. 12).

They understood. They had learned more about God. They had approached closer unto Him, for understanding is the basis of all fellowship and communion—

"This is life eternal, that they may KNOW Thee, the only true God" . . . "The joy of the Lord is your strength."

They continued to gather day by day to hear the Word read, and they learned that at this time Israel were to leave their houses and dwell in booths made of tree branches to remind them of the free open life they lived when God delivered them from Egyptian bondage, and in these booths they were to rejoice in the Lord seven days.

"And day by day, from the first day unto the last day, he read in the book of the Law of God . . .

"And there was VERY GREAT GLADNESS."

And so the great feast of Tabernacles ended, after twenty-two days of celebration.

Chapter eight ends on a note of exultant joy—a foretaste of the final great anti-typical Feast of Tabernacles. In chapter nine the whole picture changes—the tone of chapter nine is realization, repentance, resolve and reform.

We might have said, *mourn* first, put things right, and then rejoice. But Nehemiah said, "*Rejoice* first! Joy in the strength of Yahweh—*then* let us assemble with fasting and sack cloth to make a covenant with our God."

The joy had to come first. Jesus said that the kingdom of heaven was like treasure hidden in a field; which, when a man findeth—

"For JOY thereof he goeth and selleth all that he hath"
(Matt. 13:44).

The joy had to come first. It was the joy that made him sell everything else. The joy is the strength that makes the sacrifice possible—

"For the joy that was set before him he endured the cross and despised the shame" (Heb. 12:2).

We must not limit this joy to the future, for *it is the strength of the present*. The fruits of the Spirit are "Love, Joy and Peace". Then follow the others, built upon these—meekness, self-control, etc. Until the joy comes—takes hold of us, fills us—we haven't *begun* to understand the Truth.

The joy of chapter eight is tempered in chapter nine with the realization that the nation's record before God was a dismal one, that their present distressed condition was a result of long abuse of God's patience, and that they themselves had been content to lay so long in ignorance and disobedience.

First (v. 2) they separated themselves from all strangers. Does this conflict with the command we looked at a little while ago that *all the strangers must attend and hear the Law* read at the Feast of tabernacles?

No. *There* it was the public proclamation of the Word—the preaching and the teaching of the will of God and the way of righteousness. *Here* it is fellowship and covenant—God's relation to His separated people.

Here again (v. 3) the Law is read to them, but the process is different, and the application more personal. For a period the Law is read. Then for a period they confess where they have failed. They examine themselves by what has been read. They pray, and confess, and seek forgiveness.

Their purpose is reconciliation with God, as a separate, purified, faithful people. Most of this chapter is a prayer in the form of a *long historical confession of the sins of the nation* from the days of Moses forward. It lists the continual manifestations of God's love and goodness toward them, and their continual disobedience and rebellion.

This prayer illustrates one very important principle—when things are wrong *they cannot be put right by just ignoring the past*.

There can be no sound foundation for the future if the facts of the past are not recognized.

The past was on record—the continual struggles of the faithful prophets against the unfaithful majority. They could have said, "All that is passed. We refuse to have it considered. Just take us as we are on our present profession."

But that would not have been acceptable. It would not have provided a clean and sound foundation. *It would have left the picture confused, and their real allegiance in doubt*.

And so they concluded the prayer by (v. 7) referring to their miserable and oppressed condition—all their possessions and their own bodies and lives subject to the whim of a heathen king.

But they did not ask for relief. They recognized its justice and purpose. What they *did* do was to enter into a written, signed covenant, and a solemn curse, and an oath, to separate from all others and to faithfully observe all the Law that God had given them through Moses.

Chapter ten begins by listing all the leaders who subscribed to this covenant. Eliashib the high priest is not among them. Apart from the actual building of the wall, he is not mentioned as taking part in any of these activities or reforms.

The latter part of chapter ten is a list of items that were considered to require special mention in the covenant, because of their seriousness, and because of the time's special abuses.

The *very first one*, at the top of the list, is that old stone of stumbling that had caused so much evil and corruption all down through their history right up to their own time—ALIEN MARRIAGE—a *wilful, presumptuous, premeditated* breaking down the scriptural wall of separation and safety.

* * *

They also covenanted that they would—

“ . . . leave the seventh year and the exaction of every debt” (v. 31).

The release of the seventh year was one of the most beautiful and wholesome and unworldly provisions of the Law—

“At the end of every seven years thou shalt make a release . . . Every creditor that lendeth ought unto his neighbor shall release it . . . ”

“He shall not exact it of his neighbor, or of his brother, because it is called the Lord's release” (Deut. 15:1, 2).

And they could not circumvent this by refusing to lend, the same chapter commands them to lend to any in need.

Consider the implications of this command! Every seventh year all debts were cancelled. It was designed for a purpose. It was designed to break the habit of obeying the selfish impulses of the flesh, and to develop large, wholesome, godly qualities of mind.

The basic evils of the flesh are the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life—that is, *greed, lust, and pride*. This comprehends all natural human motives.

The command was to give them practice in developing faith and overcoming greed—to *break them out of the natural worldly way of thinking and acting.*

The commands of Christ carry even greater revolutionary and flesh-nullifying implications, if we will face them in their fulness.

The final item of the covenant is significant, especially in view of what happens later—

“And we will not forsake the house of our God” (v. 39).

We won't give up and get tired, or be drawn away by other interests. We will stick with it to the end.

* * *

We remember that at the beginning of chapter seven, when the wall was finished—

“The city was large, but the people were few therein”
—and Nehemiah decided to record all the people of the land by their genealogy.

As we begin in chapter eleven, the census has been made and all the people cast lots to see who would dwell in Jerusalem.

It was necessary for their national existence that this capital city, the center of all their worship and religious activity, be maintained. But living there was a disadvantage. It was dangerous, because it was against here that all the enemies' schemes were directed, and it would be common knowledge that *many rulers of Judah were allied with the enemy and had plotted against Nehemiah and those that supported him.*

Furthermore, it was greatly disadvantageous to live in Jerusalem because their livelihood and prosperity depended upon working upon their lands.

Therefore they cast lots and picked one out of every ten to live in Jerusalem.

“And the people blessed all the men that WILLINGLY offered themselves to dwell at Jerusalem.”

Some chose it willingly, as a personal sacrifice on behalf of the nation. These put *spiritual* consideration before *temporal* considerations—the service and glory of God before their own advantage. They are types of the faithful who choose to live in the Holy City with all its present dangers and worldly disadvantages.

It was by all these measures that Nehemiah took that Jerusalem was put on the way of becoming once again populous and active. It took much faith and effort to get the process started.

The rest of chapter eleven to verse 19 gives the names and *numbers* of those groups that dwelt at Jerusalem. The balance of the chapter gives a general listing of the places where the *rest* of the people lived, but they are *not numbered*.

Here again the type is followed, for the inhabitants of the Holy City are listed and numbered, but those without are not. We are reminded of the reference to the careful measuring of the Holy City in Revelation eleven, illustrative of the fact that the lives, trying and disciplining of the people of God, are all divinely measured and directed, while that of the outside world is left to time and chance.

This chapter in Nehemiah is one of the nine places where Jerusalem is spoken of as the "Holy City" the others being in Isaiah, Matthew, and Revelation.

* * *

The first 26 verses of chapter twelve deal with the priesthood. Verses 1-7 give the heads of the priestly courses at the time of Zerubbabel; verses 12-21 the leaders of these courses in the next generation.

Verses 10 and 11, in between, give the line of descent of the High Priests. Jeshua was the High Priest who returned with Zerubbabel. His grandson Eliashib, the friend of Tobiah and Sanballat, was high Priest at the time of Nehemiah. Three generations are listed beyond Eliashib, which would be the line from him to the youngest of the High Priestly line then born.

Paul's remarks in Hebrews concerning the infinite superiority of the High Priesthood of Christ over that of the fleshly line of Aaron is vividly emphasized by the unfaithful Eliashib at this critical and typical period in Israel's history. Truly there is great significance in the statement that the Law was "weak through the flesh."

"*Weak through the flesh.*" The flesh is a weak thing, for all its pomp and pride and pretensions. Apart from the strengthening of the Spirit, it is utterly helpless and undependable. If man could only see himself as he really is, and seek the divine strength that is so freely and graciously offered! If we ourselves could only perceive and achieve this in its fullness!

* * *

The listing and ordering of the priestly courses seem to complete the organization of the city and the worship.

All is now ready for the great event that climaxes Nehemiah's labors—the joyful and triumphant dedication of the completed walls and organized city of God.

The Holy City is finished and complete, as far as was within the possibilities of the time.

The event, therefore, is typical and symbolic of the final dedication of the Holy City to God, as portrayed in the final chapters of the Revelation.

"And at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought the Levites out of all their places" (v. 27).

The Levites—the priests—typical of the seeking out and gathering of the great company, the chosen nation, the kingdom of priests, the redeemed, the Lamb's Wife—

"... to bring them to Jerusalem, to keep the dedication with gladness, with thanksgiving and with singing."

How clearly the final antitypical fulfillment is brought before our mind—

"The redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion, and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads: and they shall obtain gladness and joy: and sorrow and mourning shall flee away" (Isa. 51:11).

"And the priests and the Levites purified themselves, and purified the people, the gates, and the wall" (v. 30).

As it is recorded in the Revelation—

"There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, but they which are written in the lamb's book of life" (21:27).

Now Nehemiah brings the princes of Judah, the priests and the singers, up upon the top of the wall, apparently at the southeast corner of the city.

There he divides them into *two companies*. Here we have a clear representation of the *two-fold aspect of the Household of God*—Jew and Gentile—which is portrayed in so many ways.

These two companies set out in opposite directions upon the wall, finally meeting together again at the northwest corner of the city at the sheep gate, where building of wall first started, by the Temple—illustrating the separating of Jew and Gentile and their finally converging and uniting again in Christ, who is the beginning and ending of the purpose of God.

We note at the end of verse 39 that, when they had completed their course, they—

"... STOOD STILL in the PRISON GATE."

The prison is the grave, and only Jesus can open that gate. Today all his people of past ages, having completed their course on the wall, are "standing still in the prison gate," awaiting the

trumpet call to come forth and to enter into the joyful ceremonies of praise.

So the dedication was completed, and—

“That day they offered great sacrifices, and rejoiced: for God had made them rejoice with great joy—the wives also and the children rejoiced . . .” (v. 43).

Note again the *specific inclusion of the children*. We remember a similar occasion when the children rejoiced as a triumphant procession entered Jerusalem, and the pompous, self-important, hypocritical Pharisees thought Jesus should make them stop.

All our efforts should be to *get* our children to rejoice in the Lord; to get them to realize—

“How great is His goodness, how great is His beauty!”

If we can only accomplish this, we have given them the Pearl of Great Price.

“ . . . and the children rejoiced: SO THAT THE JOY OF JERUSALEM WAS HEARD EVEN AFAR OFF”

—even as it will be when the Holy City the New Jerusalem, is made manifest.

The rest of the chapter records how joyfully the worship and the services and the providing of the tithes and of the portions for the priests and Levites continued to function in a thankful atmosphere of zeal and harmony.

* * *

It would be very pleasant if the book ended here. Nehemiah's labors had reached a glorious and triumphant accomplishment. The wall is built, the gates set up, the genealogies established, the priestly courses arranged, the services set in order, the Law being studied, the people rededicated to God by a solemn covenant of obedience—joy and holiness and zeal reign triumphant.

But there is another chapter—a sad one, and yet it too is glorious. Beginning with verse 6, its events are many years later—

“But in all this time was not I at Jerusalem: for in the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes, king of Babylon, came I unto the king, and after certain days obtained I leave of the king.”

We remember at the beginning the King set him a time. How long he stayed at Jerusalem the first time we do not know, nor how long this chapter is after he left the city.

We discern another type, which will be more striking and impressive as we consider the events of this chapter—

“The Son of Man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch” (Mk. 13:34).

What did Nehemiah find when he returned after a long absence spent in the presence of the king?

The scene is a sad one—

“When the Son of Man cometh, shall he find the faith on the earth?” (Lk. 18:8).

Nehemiah tells us—

“And I came to Jerusalem, and understood of the evil that Ellashib did for Tobiah, in preparing him a chamber in the courts of the House of God” (v. 7).

Here was one of the major causes of the evil condition Nehemiah found on his return—the High Priest, the spiritual leader—was unfaithful, and allied to the enemy.

He had brought in the enemy and established him right in the Temple of God.

“And it grieved me sore. Therefore I cast forth all the household stuff of Tobiah out of the chamber” (13:8).

The Temple is cleansed. Judgment begins at the House of God. Malachi, who prophesied sometime during this period, declared—

“The Lord shall suddenly come to His Temple. Who may abide the day of His coming? Who shall stand when He appeareth? . . . He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver” (3:1-3).

Nehemiah continues—

“And I perceived that the portion of the Levites had not been given them . . . for the Levites and singers were fled every one to his field” (v. 10).

“The singers were fled.” The rejoicing had fallen silent. The praise and worship and thanksgiving had stopped.

“Then contended I with the RULERS, and said, ‘Why is the House of God forsaken?’ ” (v. 11).

“Why is the House of God forsaken?” We remember the solemn covenant they had made before he left them.

“And I made treasurers over the treasures—Shelemiah (Recompensed of God), Zadok (Righteous), Pedatah (God has ransomed), Hanon (Merciful)—for they were counted faithful” (v. 13).

A complete change of administration. Faithful stewards are given charge over the treasures—

"Thou hast been faithful over a few things. I will make thee ruler over many things" (Matt. 25:21).

Verse 15—He found them profaning the Sabbath, working for their own advantage, following their fleshly interests.

Verse 16—And aliens were coming in, and trading on the Sabbath. God had said—

"My House shall be a House of Prayer for all nations" (Isa. 56:7).

Israel was chosen to teach the whole world the *blessings of righteousness*. But what kind of teachers were these? How could the alien learn the ways of God when these appointed teachers encouraged them to come and help them *break* God's laws?

So Nehemiah set his servants as guards at the gates, to allow no merchandise to be brought in on the Sabbath. Then the merchants set up their stands *just outside the walls* to entice the people to come out and shop.

They sought to circumvent the law by a technicality—to come as close as they could to getting in. But Nehemiah "chased them FAR AWAY." The principle is clear. Temptation and evil must not be put just outside the wall, where it can continue to tempt. It must be chased *far away and out of sight*.

* * *

"In those days also saw I Jews that had married wives of Ashdod, of Ammon, and of Moab.

"And their children spake half in the speech of Ashdod and could not speak in the Jew's language" (13:23, 24).

What a sorry state of affairs they had gotten themselves into in Nehemiah's absence! How can children learn the language of the *Truth* when we deliberately choose an instructor for them in the language of the *world*?

Surely this is the *saddest and most evil aspect of alien marriage*—the children grow up misguided and confused—speaking half the Jew's language and half the confused, heathen, worldly tongue of Ashdod—a pitiful mixture so often manifested in families born of alien marriage—far sadder even than no knowledge of the *Truth* at all.

"And I contended with them, and cursed them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair" (v. 25).

"There shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth."

"Shall we then hearken unto you to do all this GREAT EVIL, to transgress against our God in marrying strange wives?"

—the age-old evil that had corrupted all the earth, and brought the flood on the world of the ungodly.

* * *

“And one of the sons of Jolada, the son of Eliashib the high priest was son-in-law to Sanballat . . . therefore I CHASED HIM FROM ME . . . ” (v. 28).

“Depart from me, ye cursed, into outer darkness.”

How could the high priest countenance the marriage of his grandson to the daughter of Sanballat, the arch-enemy who had labored so hard by every evil device to destroy Nehemiah and his work for the lord? *Here is how—*

A new movement was in the air. The old narrow separateness was in disrepute. The past was to be forgotten.

“Was not Sanballat a Samaritan?—of a people who accepted God, accepted the Law of Moses? Nehemiah was an extremist—well meaning indeed, and he did a lot of good work, but he did not have the proper spirit. Fortunately he is gone now, and we can be more charitable. True, Sanballat was an enemy, but are we not commanded to love our enemies?”

Such would be the argument—very persuasive—very appealing to the flesh.

The sad thing is that *such reasoning is prevalent today—*reasoning that misses the whole spirit of Scripture, and subtly endeavors to undermine the walls that faithful Nehemiah labored to build in troublous time, just as our pioneer brethren have built them up from the rubbish for us.

To illustrate the reality of this danger, I would like to quote a paragraph from a standard Christadelphian publication put out by another group—a paragraph that shocked me very much. The writer is discussing these actions of Nehemiah in chapter 13 which we have just considered. He says—

“One cannot but be thankful that Nehemiah did not live a millennium or so earlier, otherwise he might have contacted Obed and there would then have been no ‘sweet Psalmist of Israel’ nor wise king Solomon, nor good kings Jehoshaphat and Hezekiah, for the Bible would have been deprived of one of its most beautiful characters, Ruth the Moabitess, the ancestress of David from whom those kings sprang.”

How could ANYONE claiming to be in the Truth so misconstrue and misunderstand Scripture—and set Scripture against Scripture—faithful Nehemiah against faithful Ruth!

He is thankful that Nehemiah did not live in the time of Ruth or he might have been able to prevent her marriage to Boaz! See

how this line of reasoning undermines the power of the whole book of Nehemiah, and opens the way for the undermining of any other unpalatable portion of Scripture—opens the way for the free course of the thinking of the flesh. *This is today's great danger to the Household.*

Nehemiah labored amid enemies of every sort, and his true friends—those who stood for the narrow way without compromise—were few.

Today the struggle, and the choice of allegiance, is ours. Let us labor and watch constantly upon our walls, and say to all who would hinder, or compromise, or distract—

"We are doing a great work, we cannot come down to you."

Psalm 119

*"I will run in the way of Thy commandments, when
Thou shalt enlarge my heart" (v. 32).*

The theme of this Psalm is the glory and beauty of the Word of God, and the divine blessedness and happiness God's Word brings to all those who love it. This Psalm contains twenty-two sections of eight verses each. Each section is identified by one of the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet, and each of the eight verses in each section begins (in the original) with the letter that is applied to that section. There are twenty-two letters in the Hebrew alphabet and twenty-two books in the Hebrew Scriptures.

We may at first wonder at the use of such an arrangement like this in the inspired Word of God. It may at first seem artificial and mechanical and out-of-place, and beneath the dignity of divine inspiration.

But as we think upon it, two related thoughts emerge. First, we are impressed with the fact that *order* and *arrangement* and *pattern* and *harmony* are characteristics of all God's works—from the microscopically small to the infinitely large. From the structure of the atom to the vast framework of the heavens, all is beauty and order.

Next, we are led to the thought that as this Psalm, extolling the Word of God, so obviously manifests *pattern* and *arrangement*, so we can expect to find—in greater and greater degree as we search—pattern and arrangement throughout the whole Bible. Type and antitype—parallels and contrasts—symbols and allegories—repeated themes in different forms—basic principles taught by a variety of lessons and examples—histories of men and histories of nations, precepts, parables, commands, entreaties, things very simple and things very complex—through all we see the *pattern and purpose of infinite wisdom*.

* * *

There are nine words used throughout this Psalm to describe the Word of God in its various aspects of guidance, instruction, enlightenment, admonition and comfort.

In the Common Version they are consistently translated by English words which quite well express the meaning of the original terms, and all translations are practically unanimous

in rendering these words in the same way. This is a help in studying their various shades of meaning.

With one or two exceptions, every verse of this Psalm contains one of these nine words. They all occur within the first eleven verses, and throughout the Psalm they occur around fifteen to twenty times each.

These nine words are: law, testimony, way, precepts, statutes, commandments, judgment, and two Hebrew words—*dabar* and *imrah*—both translated “word” in the Common Version.

The first is LAW—which occurs in the first verse. The Hebrew is *torah*, the term applied to the five books of Moses, though the meaning in this Psalm is not just the Law of Moses, but the Law of God generally as a body of instruction and regulation for the well-being of man.

The first verse sums up the whole Psalm—

“Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the LAW of the Lord.”

The second (v. 2) is TESTIMONY. It is from the root meaning “witness”—“repetition”—“going over.” It is the word used in the phrase, “The Ark of *Testimony*.” It carries the idea of the established sureness and *faithfulness* of God’s Word, purpose and promises.

The third (v. 3) is WAY or WAYS, from the word meaning to “tread” or “walk.” The thought is that God’s Word defines a certain way or *manner of life* and conduct—a consistent pattern of goodness, an unswerving travelling in a certain direction.

The fourth (v. 4) is PRECEPTS, from a root meaning “to have charge or oversight.” It emphasizes God’s *oversight and superintendence* of His children—His watchful guidance concerning the details of their lives and conduct.

The fifth (v. 5) is STATUTES. The root means “to hew or engrave,” hence “to decree or ordain.” Here we are taught the firm *inflexibility* of His principles and requirements.

The sixth (v. 6) is COMMANDMENTS, emphasizing the *authority* and rulership of God as the Creator and Possessor of heaven and earth.

The seventh (v. 7) is JUDGMENTS, from *shaphat*—“to judge, to discern, to set right.” Here is the thought of God’s holy and impartial *righteousness*, as illustrated by Abraham’s plea—

“Shall not the JUDGE of all the earth do right?”

The eighth occurs in v. 9—WORD. The original is *dabar*—“word, purpose, expressed will.” It corresponds with *logos* in the Greek—

“In the beginning was the Word . . . and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us” (Jn. 1:1, 14).

This presents the aspect of God's glorious, eternal purpose of self-manifestation in a perfected host, redeemed from among men by the precious blood of His only begotten Son, the Head of the Body.

The ninth and last, found in v. 11, is in our version also translated WORD, but the original is not the same as v. 9. The original here is *imrah*, from *amor*—“to say or speak,” first occurring in Gen. 1:3—

“And God SAID, Let there be light.”

The basic root actually means, “To bring forth to light—to inform.” This word, therefore, speaks of the aspect of God's revelation to man, teaching and enlightening—causing to understand—dispelling darkness.

* * *

Thus we are impressed with the rich and many-sided beauty of God's holy Word—its divinely ordained position as the source and center and foundation of life and light.

Throughout this Psalm are interwoven two major thoughts — on the one hand, the *ecstasy of intense rejoicing* in the contemplation of the infinite light and glory revealed in the Word, and on the other, *intense desire and yearning and supplication* for comfort and strength. The Psalm begins—

V. 1—*“Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord.”*

“Blessed”—This is the word with which Jesus began his marvelous discourse on the godly life—

“Blessed are the poor in spirit;

“Blessed are the meek;

“Blessed are the pure in heart.”

The word for “Blessed” literally means “happy.” But it means more than just happy—it means to be truly, fully, and *soundly* happy—happiness with a *divine foundation* happiness in harmony with, and related to, eternity. Blessedness—divine happiness — is God's great gift to His children. *If we are not happy we have not truly found God.*

“Blessed are the UNDEFILED”— this word means (and is translated) “whole, complete, perfect.” It is the word used throughout the Law of Moses that is translated “without

spot"—*"without blemish,"* as applied to the sacrificial lambs. It is the word used in Psa. 19—*"God's way is PERFECT."*

Blessed are the undefiled—*there is no other blessedness than this—no other happiness than calm and peaceful acceptance and harmony with God.*

The rest of the Psalm is a commentary and elaboration on this opening verse. The thought in the second verse is *wholeness of heart*; in the third verse, *"doing no iniquity."* These opening verses draw the broad picture and declare the basic principles. It must be all or nothing. If there is any conscious and voluntary disobedience, or division of the heart, then the whole pattern is marred and useless.

Diligence is the thought of verse 4. *Just doing* is not sufficient — there must be a *loving and painstaking earnestness* to do the very BEST we can. The word here translated "diligently" is a word of extreme intensity—it is elsewhere translated "very, greatly, exceedingly, mightily, with all thy might."

Let us not look upon this demand for obedience "with all our might" as a hard command. Things are much easier and far less of a burden—*much more enjoyable*—if they are done heartily and with all one's might. It is the divided, slack and half-hearted service that is so hard and tiresome.

V. 6—*"Then shall I not be ashamed."*

John speaks of being ashamed "before Christ at his coming." But to the mind enlightened in the Truth, there is a very real present aspect to this verse. There is shame and failure and weakness, and there is the blessedness of freedom from this shame whenever, and as long as, there is a true, putting away of weakness, and walking in conscious harmony with God's will and holiness.

The thought in v. 7 is *learning*—

"I will praise Thee with uprightness of heart when I shall have LEARNED Thy righteous judgments."

Bro. Roberts said, *"The natural man is an ignoramus with us all . . . left to himself, he is a fool and a liar."*

These are harsh words, but true. Holiness, and godliness and spiritual-mindedness must be laboriously *learned* by persevering effort, and above all by a frank and searching recognition of the ugliness and hopelessness of our natural death-tending ignorance. Our life, if it is at last to lead to life, must be a constant *learning and searching* of the ways of God—and not then just a learning of facts and information, but a learning *in the heart* of the principles of wisdom and godliness.

V. 8—"FORSAKE ME NOT."

So in each verse, we find a special thought, which, all together, make up the pattern of a pure and Godly life.

In v. 9—the thought is *cleansing*.

In v. 10—the plea to be *kept from wandering and straying*.

In v. 11—the Word *hidden in the heart*—treasured and cherished and guarded.

In v. 12—"Teach me."

V. 13—"I have *openly* declared."

V. 14—"I have *rejoiced*."

Rejoicing is an essential part of godliness. If rejoicing in all the eternal beauties and goodness of God is not the peaceful underlying current of our minds, then we are carnal, and walk as men. Any dissatisfaction or unhappiness is a reproach against God's goodness.

V. 15—"I will *meditate*."

We all do far too little meditating—the things of the present press in so much upon us. It is meditation on the Word that develops spiritual depth and fulness. But it must be disciplined, effectual meditation upon what is revealed—not the self-pleasing speculation of the natural mind—upon what is *not* revealed. The one is hard, and rare, and useful—the other is easy, and common, and much worse than useless.

V. 16—"I will *not forget*."

Forgetting is perhaps the one greatest single enemy of godliness. How often do we start out determined to remember, to carefully keep in mind—and then, hours later, suddenly realize that we have forgotten—that the pressure of the present has obliterated everything but itself.

Peter spoke of faith, goodness, knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love—of the need for *constantly abounding* in these things—constantly living in this spiritual atmosphere of holiness, and he says—

"Though ye KNOW these things, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to STIR YOU UP by PUTTING YOU IN REMEMBRANCE."

In our weakness, we need constant "stirring up" and "putting in remembrance." It was these things that made Paul exclaim—

"O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from this body of death!"

"I will *not forget*"

* * *

V. 17—“Deal bountifully with Thy servant, that I may live, and keep Thy Word.”

Here the Psalmist seeks the graciously-promised blessing and strengthening power of God that he may live unto God and hold fast to His Word.

V. 18—“OPEN THOU MINE EYES, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy Law.”

We think of the fleshly veil that obscured Israel's spiritual vision all during their national history, and of Jesus' words to his few humble disciples—

“Unto YOU it is given to understand, but unto THEM it is NOT given.”

Is it fair that it should be withheld from some, and revealed to others? It would not be fair any other way. If spiritual understanding were like any other learning—governed by mental capacity and education, in which all vary through no fault of their own, where would be fairness?

But the way to spiritual understanding is through lowliness, and meekness, and humbleness, to which all can bring themselves down if they choose.

“The MEEK will He teach His way . . . To the HUMBLE and TREMBLING will I look, saith the Lord.”

How fitting and how beautiful are the ways of divine wisdom! The blessings of spiritual understanding are reserved for those few among men who bring themselves down—empty themselves of all desires and truly and consistently seek communion with God with *all their hearts*, putting aside all earthly things as useless impediments in the way.

V. 19—“I am a stranger in the earth.”

Here the Psalm touches another major aspect of the Way of Truth. “I am a stranger in the earth.” Are we always conscious of the SEPARATENESS of our holy calling in Christ Jesus? Is it apparent in the common, day-to-day pattern of our lives? Wherein does the distinction lie?

Are we kinder, more patient, more calm? Are we distinguished among men for quiet, cheerful, sobriety and godly dignity? Is our speech always seasoned with godly grace?

Consider how some men, in *natural* things, through constant perseverance and application, excel in some particular activity. Consider the heights of dexterity and accomplishment to which the human mind and body by patient practice can be developed and trained.

It is in this way that the children of God are to approach the development of spiritual-mindedness and godliness—*constant effort and practice*. The outstanding pianist practices and studies many hours a day. So does the athlete, and all who desire to excel in anything. *They do it for a corruptible crown. Why is it that the children of this world are wiser in their generation than those who consider themselves the children of light—as Jesus so sadly observed?*

* * *

Every verse has its own particular thought and lesson but there are some verses that seem to stand out as especially bright beacons along the path—

V. 32—*“I will RUN the way of Thy commandments WHEN THOU SHALT ENLARGE MY HEART.”*

Largeness of heart is a blessing greatly to be desired and sought after. We understand better what largeness of heart signifies when we contrast it with smallness and pettiness of heart. Largeness of heart does not here particularly mean generosity, although that, of course, is necessarily included. It means a broad, spiritually-balanced and mature attitude and outlook. Paul said to the Corinthians—

“O Corinthians, I have ENLARGED MY HEART unto you . . . It is not I that am cramping you . . . you are cramped in your own affections . . . My children, you MUST enlarge your hearts too!”

And he describes largeness of heart in his previous epistle to the same ecclesia—

“Love beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things” (1 Cor. 13:7).

There is *nothing small and petty about the true children of God*. They think and act in harmony with their relationship to infinity and eternity. This quality of breadth and nobility is the gracious gift of God to those who seek Him—

“I will run in the way of Thy Commandments when THOU—(it is all of God)—when THOU shall enlarge my heart.”

* * *

V. 57—*“THOU art MY portion, O Lord.”*

The thought is that expressed by Joshua—*“As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”* And not just serve Him, but HAVE Him—POSSESS Him as their portion—the treasure that they choose to own in preference to all other treasures.

* * *

V. 62—*“At midnight I will rise to give Thee thanks!”*

What a vivid picture this presents of overwhelming affection and desire!

The godly man awakes at midnight, and with his first waking moment God is in the forefront of his thoughts. And so great is his love and gratitude that he must arise to offer thanksgiving and praise. It is not sufficient that he lie there in loving meditation—he must arise and perform some *art of worship* to give vent to his over-flowing heart.

Do we realize the true, overwhelming power of divine joy? Do we enjoy this intense thrill of divine affection, or are we living in the shadows and missing the best of life? These are the joys that divinely bestowed largeness of heart brings.

* * *

V. 71—“*It is good for me that I have been afflicted: that I might learn Thy statutes.*”

There are many keen joys that are discovered in the midst of affliction that are never dreamed of in the stupefying atmosphere of prosperity and ease. This is of God, Who hath given even to affliction its compensating sweetness. In affliction the shell of thoughtless shallowness is broken through and heart speaks to heart in intimate and comforting communion. All the little meaningless things fade into their true insignificance, and the real and true things stand out in large, clear perspective.

* * *

V. 74—“*They that fear Thee will be glad when they see me.*”

What companionship is there like the rich and deep companionship of the Truth? This Psalm seems to review every aspect of spiritual experience.

* * *

The group of verses beginning with verse 97 sum up the whole spirit and meaning and purpose of the Psalm—

“O how love I Thy law! It is my meditation all the day!”

Let us think upon this—“*my meditation ALL the day.*” The law of the Lord was, to the Psalmist, an object of continuous and absorbing marvel. It was the center of his affection and interest. His mind constantly gravitated to it, as the focus of all his desire and affection. It was his greatest source of pleasure and satisfaction.

Is it ours? And if it is not, why is it not? Are we at least approaching closer to that condition? Can we enter more fully,

and understandingly into the Psalmist's feelings than, say, a year ago?

These questions demand a positive answer. These are the questions that will lead us to life, IF we will seek their solution. And if we seek in the appointed and acceptable way, it is promised that we SHALL find.

We are not to be cast down if we do not immediately find ourselves sharing the full intensity of the devotion here expressed. That will come of itself in time, if we, on *our* part faithfully follow the steps that lead to it.

* * *

V. 98—*"Thou through Thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they (that is, the commandments) are ever with me."*

It is the *wisdom*—the *knowledge*—that develops the full intensity of the *love*. The more we *know* of God, the *closer* we feel to Him, the more *real* and *present* He seems.

His Word is His great revelation of Himself, that we may know Him. We are closest to Him when our minds are drawing inspiration and comfort from that Word. The Word is the mercy-seat or place of meeting.

* * *

V. 99—*"I have more understanding than all my teachers: for Thy testimonies are my meditation."*

He clearly does not refer to teachers of *righteousness*, for his comparison then would not be fitting or brotherly. As this Psalm portrays the godly mind in general, the "teachers" who have been excelled in knowledge must refer to *natural education and instruction*. The godly mind, as it develops, increasingly perceives the errors and blindness of the natural mind in regard to the only real and lasting things in life, however superficially clever and well-instructed the natural mind may be in purely natural things.

Even in childhood, the world in its instruction seeks to indoctrinate the mind with false theories of existence and false principles of conduct, but this is much more subtle and intensified in the so-called "higher" levels of education.

The man who prides himself that he can safely expose himself to them is just foolishly priding himself that he can safely swim in polluted water.

* * *

V. 100—*"I understand more than the ancients, BECAUSE I keep Thy precepts."*

There is another basic foundation truth revealed here. *Obedience is the only path to growth in spiritual understanding.* Obedience is the only way out of doubt, and darkness, and confusion. There is much that we do not know—but there is plenty, very close to us, that we DO. There are plenty of close, personal commands that we understand, or can easily understand, very well—commands to do with speech, conduct, character, and how to use our time, and possessions, what kind of thoughts to fill our minds with, how to act in godly gentleness in daily contact with others.

Obedience to these is the ONLY way to a fuller and more comforting knowledge of God.

“If any man will DO HIS WILL, he shall know of the doctrine” (Jn. 7:17).

“The MEEK will He guide in judgment, and the MEEK will He teach His way”.

The meek are those who see the ugliness and foolishness of all the pride and assertion and roughness and unpleasantness of the flesh, and endeavor to overcome it and put it all away. *Such alone are the sons of God.*

* * *

There are two more verses we would like to consider—

V. 103—*“How sweet are Thy words unto my taste
Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!”*

How many experience the intense pleasure and enjoyment so beautifully described here?—an enjoyment not fleeting and deceptive like the pleasures of the flesh, but full and deep and ever-increasing.

In what a pitiful deluded state are those that look upon the Law of God as burdensome and oppressive and restrictive of pleasure, when actually it opens the ways to the *most intense and lasting of pleasures*, both now and in the future—

“In Thy presence is FULLNESS OF JOY; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore”

There is no use seeking happiness anywhere else, and the sooner we learn that lesson the happier we are. This leads us to the thought of v. 165—

*“Great peace have they which love Thy Law, and
NOTHING shall offend them.”*

If we do not have great peace, and if *anything* or *anyone* offends us, then according to this verse *we do not sufficiently love God's Law*, we are small and cramped in our affections, we have not found the divine blessing of largeness of heart.

If we are offended, the fault is with ourselves. *No one has any RIGHT to be offended.* It is just a childish catering to pride and vanity which love of God's Law will teach us to grow up and put away.

Speaking of divine, spiritual love, Paul says—

"When I was a child, I thought as a child, but when I became a man I put away childish things."

The fleshly habit of pouting and being offended was *among these childish things*, for he further says—

"Love suffereth long, and is kind: beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things —Love NEVER faileth."

There is its beauty and power. *"Love NEVER faileth."*—
"NOTHING shall offend them."

This is the goal to which we and the Psalmist struggle. He concludes with words of fervent petition and desire, seeing as afar off the perfect and eternal beauty of holiness (Psa. 119: 173-176)—

"Let Thine hand help me; for I have chosen Thy precepts."

"I have longed for Thy salvation, O Lord; and Thy law is my delight."

"Let my soul live, and it shall praise Thee, and let Thy Judgments help me."

"I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek Thy servant;

"For I do not forget Thy commandments."

His Father Ran and Kissed Him

"Then drew nigh unto him (Jesus) all the publicans and sinners for to hear him" (Lk. 15:1).

What attracts these outcasts, whom the Pharisees openly despised? It was not because he hid his light or condoned their sins. None was more outspoken or uncompromising in his denunciation of sinfulness. But he showed sympathy for them. He wanted to help them. He won their confidence and attention by his genuine and unmistakable concern for them. He *worried* about them, if we may use that term. It *grieved* him that they should be astray—that they should grope in darkness—that they should be in ignorance of the pleasures and glories of God's love, the incomparable joy of a pure heart at peace with itself and God—that they should be as sheep without a shepherd, ignored and despised by those whose duty it was to teach them.

It was his main concern. It was not a hobby or a pastime with him. It was his *life*—his meat and drink. He had come, he said (Matt. 18:11), "to save that which was lost."

For the self-righteous and hypocritical Pharisees he had little patience. Having the keys of knowledge, they neither entered in themselves, nor permitted others to enter (Lk. 11:52). But to these unfortunates, who, in the absence of guidance or instruction, were making shipwreck of their lives, Jesus came with understanding and compassion.

After reading so often of the sublime and awful *holiness* of God, it is very pleasant to read here of His *long-suffering mercy and compassion*. He is represented to us not only joyfully receiving the repentant sinner, but as actually going after that which was lost until He find it, and carrying it back upon His shoulders rejoicing. To the sanctimonious, letter-of-the-law Pharisees, this must have seemed blasphemous heresy. But to those whose minds are receptive it furnishes a powerful motive toward righteousness. "*Grieve not the holy Spirit of God,*" says Paul (Eph. 4:30). It is a solemn thought that God has given us the power to grieve Him, and also to give Him joy. How careful we should be!

This conception of God as grieved at waywardness and joyous over repentance reveals to us a loving Father with deep concern for His children—His own offspring, created in His image and after His likeness. The mystery of parental love is a

wonderful thing. In humans it is often misguided, perhaps, but still it is a strange and beautiful thing to contemplate. Ever ready to forgive. Ever ready to forget the unhappy past. Believing all things . . . hoping all things . . . enduring all things.

"Come now, and let us reason together, said the Lord" to Israel. (Isa. 1:18), "though your sins be as scarlet they shall be white as snow, though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

But we must not distort the picture by sentimentally ignoring its other aspects. God's mercy is great and His love is longsuffering, but judgment finally descended upon Israel. Isaiah continues in the next verse (v. 20)—

"But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

"Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God," says Paul (Rom. 11:22), "on them which fell, severity: toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in His goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off."

A proper balance will give us a correct and inspiring view of God as the loving Father Who will withhold nothing from His obedient children, and Who is eager and joyful to receive them back upon repentance, but Whose authority and holiness must be respected, and Whose righteous anger is a consuming fire.

* * *

The Parable of the prodigal son is written for the instruction of that class represented by the elder brother. The younger son wasted all his substance in wicked living. He forsook his father for the world's pleasures. *He only returned when all was gone and he had nowhere else to go.*

The elder son surely had grounds to feel justified in his suspicions, and to feel that his father was being taken advantage of. But the prodigal was sincere. He was truly humble and penitent. He realized his foolishness, though to the elder brother, who gave his suspicions the benefit of the doubt, the evidence was not convincing because he preferred to think the other way. *"With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged."*

The father, on the other hand, gave the benefit of the doubt to mercy and love and hope. There was no bitterness or reservations in his forgiveness. While he was yet a great way off he ran to meet him. He did not stand upon his dignity, or remain coldly aloof demanding proof. He did not force an apology. He loved him and he wanted him back and he was willing to forget the past and hope for the future. He showered

every display of affection and attention upon him, in his intense joy at reconciliation.

The elder son did not share all this exuberant enthusiasm for the returned sinner. He had his doubts. He was angry and resentful. He doubtless felt the prodigal should be made to suffer a little and be humbled instead of being royally feasted.

Most of all he lacked the balancing and softening influence of brotherly love. If, instead of thinking of only himself, he had loved his brother as he should, he too would have been truly glad to see him return, *he would have been only too eager to hope for the best and believe the best.* He would have been overjoyed to know that his brother had been reclaimed in time from his folly. Far better to be found wrong on the side of kindness and gentleness and faith in others, than to be found wrong on the side of judgment and suspicion. "*With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged.*"

True, indeed, justice demanded that the younger son be punished, but should his own brother urge the claims of justice when the father extended mercy? Let us remember that the father here represents God. His reaction is the proper one. He went out to meet the returning sinner. All his actions were dictated by love and fatherly affection. The father was not necessarily sure the younger son would justify his love, but still he gave it without stint, knowing that *it would be the strongest incentive possible to keep his son in the proper path, if anything could.* Many times God forgave and accepted Israel back to His favor, knowing that they would lapse into sin again.

How ungracious the older brother seems in contrast with his father's love! But it did not seem so to him. He felt quite justified in his self-righteous indignation. He had no qualms at distressing his father, or marring the joy of reconciliation. He could only see one point of view and that was that he had worked hard and faithfully and here was this returned wastrel being shown favors that he had never received.

He had no doubts about the justice of his position. He KNEW he was right. All the cold, hard facts were on his side. The younger son should have been humiliated and made an example. He should have been made to pay for his sins, right to the uttermost farthing. According to the letter of the law, he was right, dead right, and he knew it. But he could not see, in his vindictive eagerness, that he was killing the spirit. It was his father who had been wronged, and the father had chosen to forgive. Love is wise enough not to go too far—

"There is a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down and a time to build up."

* * *

The Father's approach to the elder brother was just as tender as to the other. Gently he reminds him of the true state of affairs—of the need for love, and for joy, rather than prolonging the bitterness of selfish jealousy.

The older brother's task was hard. The Prodigal's share of the inheritance had been wickedly squandered with no thought for either his father or the brother that remained. Now the latter was called upon to share with the returned renegade what was rightfully his own. Only one thing could enable him to fight down the well-justified but destructive reactions of the flesh, and that was a strong and deep love for his father and his brother—a love that was big enough and wise enough to take into account his brother's weaknesses and failures and still be able to love him and make sacrifices for him and unselfishly seek his welfare. It is the unlovable, the weak, the stragglers, the lost sheep that need love and sympathy and help most—

"They that be whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick" (Matt. 9:12).

Jesus does not tell us what the older brother replied. The parable closes with the father's gentle entreaties. Each of us must supply the older brother's answer within ourselves, remembering that—

"He shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy" (Jam. 2:13), and—

"Love will cover the multitude of sins" (1 Pet. 4:8).

Temples Made With Hands

"The Holy Spirit this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while the first tabernacle was yet standing" (Heb. 9:8).

In our readings for today (Aug. 12) we see the nation of God's special choice in three important epochs of their history.

It is a wonderful privilege to be able to view at a glance the great historic panorama of the Hebrew people, for God has chosen them as the vehicle of His manifestation to the world. By their history He teaches us His ways, His divine principles of righteousness, His great purpose of salvation.

* * *

In the first reading (1 Kgs. 7) we are with Solomon in the building of the temple—the most magnificent building of its time, and perhaps of all time. Its value is estimated as up to five billion dollars.

It was a great, intricately ornamented jewel of stone, cedar and gold—the pride of the nation and the wonder of the world—breath-taking in its lavish splendor.

But it was not God's idea. Like the appointment of the king, it was *man's* idea and desire. True, in God's great purpose there was to be a Temple, and there was to be a King. But the time had not come; and this was not the kind of Temple or King that God had in mind.

The Temple and Kingship were great paradoxes. They were *types* of the Spirit, but they were *manifestations* of the flesh. How beautifully does God bring the promise of future good out of present evil!

No trouble or expense was spared upon the Temple's external glory and beauty. If ever a splendid edifice could contribute to the value of divine service, this was such.

But as to inner, spiritual glory, it was a beautiful monument of failure, and God Himself had to finally destroy it because of all the evil that had become associated with it.

Our second reading (Jer. 33) deals with that time—the days of the prophet Jeremiah, when both the Temple and the Kingship were thrown down—

"Remove the diadem (the royal crown), and take off the mitre (the priestly headdress) . . . it shall be no more until he comes whose right it is" (Eze. 21:26, 27).

There is a great lesson in all these things, to be found in the words of Paul—

*"The Temple of God is holy, which Temple are ye . . .
If any man defile the Temple of God, him shall God
destroy" (1 Cor. 3:17).*

* * *

The building of the Temple was *David's* idea. It was an expression of deep thankfulness and reverence—

"David said to Nathan the prophet, Lo, I dwell in an house of cedars, but the ark of the covenant of the Lord remaineth under curtains" (1 Chr. 17:1).

"Then Nathan said unto David, do all that is in thine heart, for God is with thee."

King and prophet—both worthy men—decide that God needs a splendid Temple for His honor. Nathan was so sure that this would be a good thing to do that he immediately gave assent on God's behalf. What could possibly be wrong with such a great and righteously intended plan to advance God's honor and worship?

But that night the Word of God came to the prophet—

"Go and tell David My servant, Thus saith the Lord, Thou shalt NOT build Me an house to dwell in; for I have not dwelt in an house since the day that I brought up Israel unto this day . . .

"Spake I a word to any of the judges, saying, Why have ye not built Me an house of cedars?" (vs. 4-6).

Then follows the great Covenant of God with David—the raising up of Christ to rule the world in righteousness and peace from David's throne in Jerusalem. God continues—

"Furthermore, I tell thee that the Lord will build THEE an house" (v. 10).

God is the great Builder. That is the point. We cannot build to God, but He to us. Paul says—

"Every house is builded by some man, but THE BUILDER OF ALL THINGS IS GOD" (Heb. 3:4).

Houses are man-made, but God is building a universal house, not of dead stones, but of living hearts.

How gently and graciously He takes the sincere desires of David to glorify God with a magnificent building, and lifts them to an application to eternal things!

David, the man of war, the man of struggle and conflict, is permitted to *prepare* for the house.

David, the man after God's Own heart, desires to build Him an house. God holds up a gently restraining hand to his hasty zeal, and begins to explain many things to David, and through David to all like him who seek God's heart.

Taking up this desire, God fashions it to a pattern of type and lesson for all succeeding generations. David, the man of war and conflict, must prepare. Solomon, the man of peace, must erect. To David was given a revelation of all the plans and specifications.

God must be recognized above all as both the *Planner* and the *Builder*—"both to *will* and to *do* in us of His good pleasure"—and to Him are reserved the times and the seasons.

The Temple, like the Kingship, was to prove to be a lesson in many ways, for those who have eyes to see and ears to hear. *Its splendor lasted but forty years from the time its first foundation was laid*—forty, the period of trial and probation.

In the fifth year of Rehoboam, Shishak, king of Egypt, came and plundered the Temple's gold. Its great external glory and magnificence was no defense, but a weakness and danger.

It was the king of *Egypt* who first came and robbed it. In our reading today we read of other buildings of Solomon as part of his royal estate. Among them (v. 8) was a house for the daughter of the king of Egypt, whom Solomon had taken to wife.

The House of God was not Solomon's only project—*it was not his ONLY alliance and defense*. He had considered it prudent also to make political affinity with Egypt—

"And Solomon made affinity with Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and took Pharaoh's daughter" (1 Kgs. 3:1).

He felt safer to seal his friendship in this way with this great world power. All the "wise" kings did so. It was considered very foolish not to take out this political insurance.

"And it came to pass in the fifth year of Rehoboam, that Shishak, king of Egypt, came up against Jerusalem. And he took away the TREASURES OF THE HOUSE OF THE LORD, and the treasures of the king's house; he even took away ALL."

Solomon's misguided affinity with Pharaoh and marriage with his daughter had given Egypt a foot in the door and excuse for a hand in Israel's affairs. How often God turns our world scheming against us, to teach us wisdom, and smites us with the very rod we made for our defense!

* * *

Were the children of Israel able to build this Temple to God themselves? When God directed Moses to build Him a Tabernacle of the materials that had been offered *freely and willingly* by Israel, He said to Moses (Ex. 31:2)—

"See, I have called by name Bezaleel, the son of Uri, of the tribe of Judah; and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship."

God says He called him "by name." His name means "the shadow or protection of God."

But when Solomon came to build the Temple out of the materials *taken by force as spoil* from the heathen nations around Israel (1 Kgs. 7:13)—

"He sent and fetched HIRAM out of TYRE."

The meaning of Hiram's name does not seem to be known. *God did not call him by name.* It was a Gentile name—he was named after the Gentile king of Tyre.

Hiram was not an Israelite. He was the son of an Israelite woman who had married out of Israel. He had a Gentile name and did not live in Israel.

Here again is manifested both weakness and promise. *Weakness* in the choosing of a half-alien as the chief artificer of God's Temple—*promise* in the union of both Jew and Gentile in this Temple-builder. In the beauty of God's infinite wisdom and mercy we see future promise and strength brought from the womb of present failure and weakness.

* * *

In the second reading, four hundred years have passed. The Temple has seen much iniquity and neglect, and *very little true worship*. The four hundred years (ten times forty) have measured the patience of God with a fleshly and unholy people. The conditions leading to this crisis are described in 2 Chr. 36:14:

"All the chief of the priests and the people transgressed very much after the abomination of the heathen, and polluted the House of the Lord which He had hallowed.

"And the Lord God sent to them by His messengers, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place.

"But they mocked His messengers, and despised His words, and misused His people TILL THERE WAS NO REMEDY.

"Therefore He brought upon them the Chaldeans . . . and they BURNED THE HOUSE OF GOD . . . and all the vessels of the House they brought to Babylon, to fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah."

And so the great Temple for which David had longed, and planned, and labored, and which had been built to the design

given by God Himself, was destroyed because all its splendor had failed completely to bring the people to godliness and purity of heart.

And so our second reading begins—

“Moreover the Word of the Lord came unto Jeremiah the second time while he was yet shut up in the court of the prison” (Jer. 33:1).

The end for Jerusalem and the Temple is very near. The Chaldean army has surrounded the city for the last time. All escape is cut off. It is during *the last year of the last king of Judah*.

Jeremiah is in prison for devoting his life to proclaiming the Word of God. The nation is making its final stand against a cruel and terrible enemy, and Jeremiah is telling the people that there is no use to resist but that they should give in and allow the Babylonians to take them captive.

The people were doing just what Hezekiah was praised so highly for doing one hundred years before.

But there was a great difference. Hezekiah defied Assyria in faith and righteousness and obedience to God; Zedekiah defied Babylon in wickedness and disobedience. And there was a difference in the purpose of God. The cup of His wrath was filled; the time had come to pour it out.

How easy to be deceived by His apparent forbearing! But the cup is being filled—drop by drop—and finally it is too late. In verse 5 God says—

“I have hid My face from this city.”

Its doom was sealed.

Then from this point to the end of the chapter there follows a *stirring prophecy of their time of final blessing*, especially striking in view of the background against which it was uttered: the enemy overrunning the whole land—the city shut up and surrounded—the people in misery at the end of their endurance—the one man of God among them shut up in prison. There is always promise and hope shining through judgment—

“Behold I will bring it HEALTH AND CURE, and I will cure them, and will reveal unto them the abundance of peace and truth” (v. 6).

The nation was *sick*—very sick of the evil disease of sin. As another prophet described it—

“From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but WOUNDS, BRUISES AND PUTRIFYING SORES” (Isa. 1:6).

If sin is thus described as a *sickness*, why should not its sufferers be pitied rather than punished? *Because a divine remedy has been freely offered, but men love sickness rather than cure.* Jeremiah says—

"Is there no balm in Gilead, is there no physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of My people recovered?" (8:22).

Gilead was proverbial for its healing balm. God is here asking in a figure: *"Why is Israel corrupted with sin—have I ceased to be available as a Forgiver of sin and Guide in righteousness?"* In Jeremiah 3:22, God says—

"Return, ye backsliding children, and I WILL HEAL your backslidings."

This figure is used frequently throughout the prophets. God says similarly through Hosea—

"I will heal their backslidings" (14:4).

And we remember the familiar words of Isaiah—

"The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and WITH HIS STRIPES WE ARE HEALED" (53:5).

"With his stripes we are healed." Can we not then see a deeper meaning to the healing ministrations of Jesus, as he went about the villages of Galilee and Judea?—especially when he said, as he often did to those whom he healed—

"Thy sins be forgiven thee: go and sin no more."

Sin and sickness are inseparable parts of the great pattern of evil that holds the world in bondage. *"With his stripes we are healed."* In the New Testament reading it is recorded that, as he was healing the deaf man, Jesus—

"Sighed, and looked up to heaven."

Sin is the greatest disease, and God is the Great Healer. This is the lesson that underlies the first incident in the New Testament reading (Mk. 7)—the issue between Jesus and the Pharisees over the endless traditional washings of the Jews.

It is so easy to fall into the same pattern as the Pharisees—careful and troubled about external washings—physical cleanliness, bodily ailments, fleshly diseases, natural infections—yet have far too little anxiety about the INFINITELY MORE DANGEROUS *germs of impatience and anger, the virus of harshness and sourness, the infection of thoughtless living for self, and the gangrene of covetousness for worldly things.*

Verse 6 of Jeremiah 33 continues—

"I will reveal to them the abundance of peace and truth."

Surely here is a foreshadowing of God's great manifestation of Himself through His Son in the fulness of times—"the abundance of peace and truth."

"I will cause the captivity of Judah and Israel to return."

There is no hint here that 2,500 years were to pass over them before this would be fulfilled. It is hard for us to get the divine perspective of time. The workings of God are a great lesson in quiet patience. The few years of a lifetime mean nothing to Him. See how long Abraham merely waited in faith. And Moses, who had such a great work to do, was eighty years old before God began to use him—before God was ready to use him, and he was ready for God's use. He kept sheep in obscurity for forty years after *he* thought that he was ready and the time was ripe.

"And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity" (v. 8).

This is the part the Jews did not, and still do not, realize the need of. The cleansing and purifying and preparing of the *individual* is everything. Ninety-nine percent of our work for God is right inside ourselves—inside our own hearts.

The Jews wanted a Savior, but they did not realize his greatest work was *saving them from their own sins. DO WE?* Take care of that—the preparing of the individual—and all the rest takes care of itself. Subduing the world will come easily, at the proper time, once we have subdued ourselves.

Our greatest work in the Truth is making *ourselves* fit for God's use. It is so easy to forget *that* in our enthusiasm to prepare *others*. God will erect the Temple visibly at the proper time. Now is the time for preparing the stones, for hewing the timbers and refining the gold.

* * *

We may wonder how God can suddenly cleanse a whole nation that has lain in wickedness and blindness for so long. Is not righteousness and cleanliness an *individual* matter of *voluntary* acceptance?

The method and circumstances of the purifying gives us the answer. Zechariah (ch. 13) reveals that *two-thirds of the people in Israel will be cut off and destroyed* in the terrible days of the Armageddon conflict.

Ezekiel (ch. 20) reveals that the Jews of the world will be gathered into the wilderness of the nations, and there God will plead with them, and make them pass under the rod, and will purge out all the rebellious and unrepentant.

They are a strange and closely-knit people. There have been times in the past when a wave of earnest repentance has swept the nation. This time the shock of realization will be greater than ever, for after two thousand years of fighting against the light, they will suddenly be confronted—in the sight of all the world—with inescapable evidence of their age-old rebellion and folly—

"They shall look upon him whom they pierced, and mourn . . . In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem . . . And the land shall mourn, every family apart."

Can we picture the unprecedented anguish of their remorse?

"His blood be upon us and upon our children!"

Two thousand years of nightmare suddenly revealed to be self-imposed! Two thousand years of self-pity suddenly exposed as two thousand years of self-justification for the vilest of crimes against their own great Messiah—the Son of God who loved them and gave himself for them.

Consider their utter humiliation in the sight of all the world! Never was such a scene as this—never was there such a national self-searching—never was there such a sudden stripping away of all self-esteem! And it comes just at the moment of the deepest danger and greatest deliverance of all their long history. What an emotional turmoil will twist and rend that nation to its depths!

Can we not see how in the marvelous wisdom of God the scene is gradually being prepared for this great national cleansing and transformation—a nation born in a day?

* * *

"And it shall be to Me a Name of joy, a praise and an honor before all the nations of the earth" (Jer. 33:9).

Out of this purified humility of the Jews will come honor. In weakness they shall be made strong.

Their past repentances have been short-lived, and have died with the death of the powerful and righteous leaders who have from time to time led them back to God.

But this time they shall be given righteous judges who shall not be taken away—judges who will be able to discern the thoughts and intents of the hearts, and render swift and unerring judgment, as promised in v. 15—

"In those days and at that time will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David, and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land."

“David shall never lack a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel.”

Never again will they drift into evil through a lack of righteous leadership. Never again will evil men pervert justice and set iniquity up in power.

And as by this divinely-contrived arrangement the nation of Israel will be prepared for God’s use and honor, so that nation will be used to carry God’s praise to the world.

And not just honor and praise, but a name of *joy* before all the nations of the earth. How different from all the powers that have dominated the world in the past, even the hypocritically self-righteous ones! Here is one that will be a name of joy before all the nations under her divinely-guided sway!

“In those days Jerusalem shall dwell safely, and this is the name wherewith she shall be called: The Lord our Righteousness” (Jer. 33:16).

This is the name that is applied in chapter 23 to Christ—“The Lord (Yahweh) our Righteousness.” Here it is applied to Jerusalem as the “city of the Great King” and as emblematic of the Bride the Lamb’s wife, the New Jerusalem, who shares the Name of her Bridegroom, for they are all “*in his Name*”—part of his Name (Rev. 3:12)—

“Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the Temple of my God”

—the living Temple of which that of Solomon was but a shadowy type—

“. . . and I will write upon him THE NAME OF MY GOD, and THE NAME OF THE CITY OF MY GOD, which is NEW JERUSALEM, and I will write upon him MY NEW NAME”

—“The Lord (Yahweh—He shall be) our Righteousness.” This name expresses the purpose of God to manifest Himself in righteousness in a multitude whom He has made conformable unto Himself. God speaks of Jerusalem as—

“The place I have chosen to PUT MY NAME THERE.”

The putting of God’s Name—Personality—Identity—Authority—there means bringing it to the condition of righteous blessedness that Jeremiah foretells—making it holy and godly—the world center of His Power and Presence.

* * *

In the New Testament reading (Mk. 7) the Nation and the Purpose are brought face to face in the great crisis of their long and strange history. The Son of God—“*the Lord our Righteous-*

ness"—walked among them, seeking to write his Name upon the city and the people. V. 1—

"Then came together unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, which came FROM JERUSALEM."

It is significant that this delegation was from Jerusalem, the city in which the purpose of God centered and which was the scene of the events of the first two readings for today. Jesus said, when told that Herod sought to kill him in Galilee—

"I must walk today, and tomorrow, and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem . . . O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee!"

Jerusalem must be both the murderer and the scene of the sacrifice. *Jerusalem was now just forty years from its last and greatest destruction, just as it was just forty years from destruction when Jeremiah began his ministry.*

Forty years more and the Roman armies would come and destroy the city and the sanctuary, amid some of the most terrible scenes ever recorded, as Daniel had foretold.

* * *

This delegation from Jerusalem calls Jesus to task because his disciples do not observe the ceremonial ritual of frequent washings required by Jewish tradition.

These lessons are laid out for us *so clearly*, and Jesus—with divine wisdom—so plainly discerns and manifests their error, that we may wonder how a learned, intelligent and responsible class of men could get things so much out of proportion, to be so fastidious about superfluities and so blind about important principles.

But these things are written for *our* guidance and admonition, and we *must* find admonition in them. There are lessons here that apply to us, if we can but see the application.

We remember the parable with which the prophet Nathan approached David regarding Bathsheba. David was violently aroused against the rich man of the parable who took the poor man's lamb. He saw the point instantly. How could anyone be so senselessly selfish and cruel! It must be immediately punished with death!

It was not until Nathan said: "*Thou art the man,*" that the terrible light broke upon David. So all these lessons of Jesus. Let us say to our old man of the flesh: "*THOU art the man!*"

The more we examine our old man in the light of Scripture the more we see him in *all* these Biblical lessons.

The Pharisees were very fastidious and correct in a *shallow* way, but they were very inconsistent in *deeper* things.

The deepest principle of the Truth is that all things must be done in, for, and by, love. To the extent that we fail to reach this depth as the motive and method of all that we do and say, to that extent we fall into the error of these Pharisees. Whenever we are harsh, or impatient, or unkind, we are exposing our professed worship as mere Pharisalism.

It is mean and unworthy (and a subtle gratifying of the flesh) to justify rudeness and impatience and sourness toward children as necessary discipline. Instruction and discipline *must* be in patience and godliness and love or they are simply a cowardly diverting to defenseless children of our inner evil characteristics.

How could these scholarly Pharisees devote their lives to studying God's Law without perceiving and living the true *spirit* of the Law? NOTHING IS EASIER. Natural flesh, having devoted itself to God's Law, naturally becomes self-righteous and critical. This is one of our greatest dangers—

"Knowledge PUFFETH UP, but love EDIFIETH."

The Pharisee is present in us all, ever ready to parade his own self-esteem upon the stage of God's Word. When, instead of applying this lesson to ourselves, we give vent to self-approving indignation at the Pharisee of this chapter, *we ourselves are in that very act manifesting the hidden Pharisee of the heart.*

How true are the Spirit's searching words—

"The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jer. 17:9).

And the apostle's anguished cry at perceiving the natural hopelessness of this fact—

"O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from this body of death?" (Rom. 7:24).

Let us remember the prophet's words: *"THOU art the man."* Consider the example of Pharisal hypocrisy Jesus exposes. How does it apply to us? Verse 11 of this 7th of Mark—

"It is Corban by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me."

"It is a gift to God—It is already dedicated—I am sorry but I am not free to give you any of it."

Perhaps the way in which we are most likely to manifest the Pharisalism is in respect to our time—

"I am too busy—I must get up an address—I must prepare my article—All my time is already Corban—I cannot stop to help

you—I cannot write that so-needed letter of encouragement; I must hurry to a meeting; I am late already.”

It is so easy to get into a comfortable Corban rut, like the priest and Levite hurrying to Jerusalem right past the wounded man, busy with our pleasant little self-appointed tasks, and lose contact entirely with the real issues of life.

They did not *mean* to be hypocrites, but they had allowed the old man of the flesh to completely deceive them. They had gotten things so terribly out of proportion that they had turned religion from a beautiful way of life into a dead skeleton of bare, rattling doctrines and meaningless technicalities. All the emphasis was on externals—none on the fruits of the Spirit in the heart.

Religion had become just a fixed set of beliefs and the repeated mechanical performance of certain acts—

“Except they wash oft, they eat not. And many other things there be which they have received to hold.”

The traditions of the elders. Some of their predecessors, with well-intentioned blindness, had invented a host of regulations, to keep small minds busy and self-satisfied, believing that if every aspect of life had its set religious performance, then the individual will of necessity be kept safely hedged within the path of righteousness.

They must have recognized that in the main their system did not work—did not produce holiness—but they would doubtless console themselves with the thought that the fault was not with the system but the people. *We may very easily make the same mistake. We must constantly examine our own system for similar weaknesses. If our system merely produces self-satisfied doctrinists, and does not purify the Body from the fleshly corruptions of worldliness, selfishness, unkindness and impatience, and produce a people of outstanding gentleness, kindness, holiness, and zeal, it is mere surface Pharisaism, and our standing aside from other groups is mere hypocrisy.*

Jesus tried to show them that what had been meant to be a living force in the hearts of men they had dried up into a multitude of legal technicalities—cold, dead, powerless.

Here again we are in great danger. We so easily drift into *performing* our religion, rather than freely and enthusiastically *living* it. We so easily go through its exercises—the readings, the meetings, the set times for prayers, the customary thanksgiving for our meals—and then leave it behind and forget as we step out into the realities of life. The holy Word of God on our

lips one moment—impatience, irritableness, rudeness and worldly foolishness the next—sweet water and bitter from the same fountain!

As soon as custom begins to form a crust, as soon as there is any tendency to drift thoughtless through a performance, we are in danger of “making the Word of God of none effect by our traditions.”

One very tell-tale evidence of this tendency to ritualism is self-commendation. We do our readings faithfully, no matter how tired we are or how late it may be—we struggle through them. And if we should happen to miss, we faithfully catch up, and have a pleasant glow of self-approval.

This begins to sound very much like ritualism. Why? Because self-approval immediately reveals that we have forgotten *why* we are doing them.

It is not a matter of *commendable performance* of some task—it must be the joyful fulfilment of a *spontaneous desire*. Do we have any feeling of self-approval when we do something we genuinely enjoy? No. Rather, we have a feeling of *pleasure* and *thankfulness*.

We must read, not just to get the readings done, but to *enjoy* learning more of God, to enjoy godly company and godly memories, to satisfy hunger and thirst for righteousness.

There is, of course, no virtue in *not* doing the readings. It is even sadder to *miss* them than to do them mechanically.

But in anything arranged according to a schedule (and some things, such as this, must be) there is the danger of the Pharisaism illustrated in this very instructive incident.

As he concluded this lesson, Jesus said—

“There is nothing from without a man that entering in can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they which defile the man” (Mk. 7:15).

Some have used these words to justify the use of tobacco. This is doubly sad, for the true spirit of it is missed, and a wrong idea encouraged. Any with spiritual discernment will perceive this fallacy, for these words could just as well be used to justify addiction to drugs, to say nothing of alcoholism.

The defilement of tobacco, like that of alcohol and drugs, is *from within*. The heart that seeks these forms of self-gratification, and that subjects the mind and body to the *unnatural and habit-forming influences and slavery* of these things is defiling himself.

But let us perceive the great truth of Jesus' words. All defilement is from within—from the heart. It is the state of the heart and mind—the lusts, desires, reactions, intentions, motives.

Jesus mentions several things that come out of the heart and defile the man. The various lists of virtues and vices which occur throughout the Word should be carefully studied. The tendency is to slur over them, without considering each individually. *But each is there for a purpose.*

The tendency also is—noticing in passing that some are things which we would never think of doing—to dismiss the whole list with a feeling of relief that we, like the Pharisee—

“Are not as other men are—extortioners, adulterers, etc.” (Lk. 18:11).

Instead of judging ourselves by noticing the things we *do*, we commend and gratify by noticing the things we *don't* do, and so the list—meant to purify and humble us—is perverted to the feeding of our pride. So, in this list, let us not concentrate on the “murders” and “fornications,” but let us take note of the two things with which the list closes—*“pride and foolishness.”* No one can claim to be free of these two final defiling evils—*pride and foolishness.*

As we are comfortable enjoying a list of others' sins, we abruptly come face to face with ourselves. *Thou art the man!*

* * *

“And from thence he arose and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon” (v. 24).

This is the only recorded time that Jesus during his ministry left the land of Israel, for he was not sent—as he said—except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

It is striking that it should be *Tyre and Sidon*, the dominion of king Hiram—“ever a lover of David”—who had helped Solomon build the Temple one thousand years before.

On this visit to the borders of Tyre and Sidon there is an occasion of the manifestation of great faith and spiritual discernment on the part of a Gentile—the incident of the Syro-Phenician woman. She said, as recorded by Matthew—

“O Lord, thou SON OF DAVID” (15:22).

What did she know of David . . . and of David's times . . . and of Hiram's love for him . . . and of Tyre's contributing the skill and materials for the Temple?

And what did she know of Jesus, to call him “Lord” and “Son of David”?

At first Jesus did not answer her at all, in spite of her faith and tearful entreaties. Let us not then be discouraged when *we* seek and he does not immediately answer.

And when the disciples became weary of her persistent entreaties, and besought him to do something about it, he simply said (again reading from Matthew)—

I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (15:24).

Then she came and worshipped him, and said: "*Lord, help me!*" But still there was not the slightest hint of acceptance—

"Let the children first be filled, for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it unto the dogs."

WOULD WE still have persisted? Would we still have loved him? Would our faith have said, "I know he is the Son of God, although he *seems* so narrow and cruel—I *know* there is a reason, though I cannot understand it"?

The Jews were children of God, and the Gentiles were but dogs. What an exposure to all the world's fleshly pride and patriotism! Would we have burned at this humiliating rebuff, and have turned away in angry mortification? Or would faith, humility and wisdom have kept the way of hope open, and have brought forth the simple, beautiful reply—

"Yes, Lord, but the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs" (Mk. 7:28).

And he said unto her—

"O WOMAN, GREAT IS THY FAITH!"

Under great trial, the spirit held firm against the perplexity, disappointment, and resentment of the flesh. *Like Jacob, she had wrestled through the darkness, and prevailed—*

"I will not let thee go, unless thou bless me!"

Have we less faith, less love, less perseverance than this nameless alien woman of Canaan? We, too, are Gentile aliens, the dogs that eat the children's crumbs.

* * *

The last incident of this chapter is the healing of the deaf and the dumb man. Sometimes Jesus healed with a word. Sometimes the healing is an extended, detailed process, as here. Here seven things are listed that Jesus did in healing this man. There must be some meaning to these things, for faith and wisdom to search out. First we read—

"And he TOOK HIM ASIDE from the multitude" (v. 33).

The significance of that, at least, is clear.

"And put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue."

There are three occasions where it is recorded that Jesus spat in connection with his healing—this case, and two with blind men. The *deaf* and the *blind*—types of his people Israel—
“*Their ears are dull of hearing, their eyes have they closed*” (Matt. 13:15).

The only other references to spitting are the several that refer to *the treatment of Jesus by the people he came to heal*. The ones he came to suffer and die for. Of the great Jewish council that condemned him it is recorded—

“*Now they did SPIT in his face, and buffeted him*”
(Matt. 26:67).

He himself prophesied this—

“*He shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on*” (Lk. 18:32).

And the Spirit of Christ in Isaiah said—

“*I hid not myself from shame and spitting*” (50:6).

Spitting was a sign of deepest insult and shame—to submit meekly to spitting was utter degradation and contempt. We see then in the spitting in connection with the healing a reference to the way in which the healing of mankind was to be accomplished. “*He endured the cross and despised the shame*” . . . “*He was despised, and we esteemed him not.*”

“*And looking up to heaven he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened*” (v. 31).

“He sighed.” *Why did he sigh?* He was a “man of sorrow and acquainted with grief.” How heavily the sorrow of mankind weighed upon him! Have we not, at a hospital, sat and watched the endless passing to and fro, and felt in some small way this acquaintance with grief? But to the infinitely tender spirit of Jesus, the grief of the world was a close and constant companion:

“*Surely he hath borne our grief, and carried our sorrow.*”

The people said in awe and thankfulness—

“*HE HATH DONE ALL THINGS WELL!*” (v. 37).

How little they understood the full meaning of what they said! How little we understand! In everything he was the perfect manifestation of God among men—

“*He hath done all things well.*”

The 144,000 on Mount Zion

The picture presented to us in the early verses of Revelation 14 is among the most beautiful and deeply significant of all Scripture—a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, with 144,000 redeemed who bear the Father's Name in their foreheads—a voice from heaven of many waters, of thunder, of harpers harping with their harps—a song which none but the singers know—their pure, holy, separated, undefiled perfection without fault before the throne of God.

Throughout the Revelation, Jesus is portrayed by the Lamb. He is the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world"—the redeeming Seed of the Woman, first foreshown in the skin-covering provided in the mercy of God for the guilt-nakedness of Adam and Eve.

The lamb is the basic sacrifice all through Scripture. Abel, first listed among the faithful (Heb. 11:4) brought of the "firstlings of his flock—a more excellent sacrifice.

Then we find Abraham upon Mount Moriah, the holy mount of sacrifice where later the Temple stood—"God will provide Himself a lamb." Jesus said—

"Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it, and was glad" (Jn. 8:56).

Then the Passover Lamb in the dark night in Egypt—the blood on the doorway—the Lamb of Divine protection and deliverance.

Under the Law (the shadow of good things to come) every day saw the offering of its two lambs—the morning and evening sacrifices.

Isaiah foretold of the Redeemer of mankind as a lamb brought to the slaughter—wounded for our transgressions, bruised for iniquities, cut off from the land of the living, but in the end prolonging his days, satisfied with the results of the travail of his soul (Isa. 53).

When, at last, in the fullness of times, John the Immerser introduced him to Israel, he declared—

"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (Jn. 1:29).

There are seven words translated "lamb" in the Old Testament, and two in the New. The principal one in the Old Testament means "leader, ruler, subduer." The same root is used in Gen. 1:28 concerning Adam and Eve—"Subdue the earth."

This meaning may seem strange in view of the significance of "lamb," as meek and gentle, but it envisions the young male lamb as the potential leader or ruler of the flock. This is providentially prophetic of the Lamb of God, who *overcame the world* by his perfection, submission and sacrifice.

The word used in the Revelation is different from that in the rest of the New Testament. It is a diminutive form and means "little lamb"—*arnion*. It is a gentle term of affection, just as we would use "little lamb."

Here is emphasized that all power is of God—all power is of love—and God's strength is made perfect in weakness and gentleness. A "little lamb" accomplished the great work foretold from the beginning which none of the mighty wild-beast nations have been able to do—the *complete and permanent subduing of the earth*, even to the subduing and eventual abolishing of sin itself—the root of all evil and rebellion. This is the only subduing that is worthwhile.

The "Little lamb," when John sees him in the Revelation, is "as it *had been slain*"—it had passed triumphantly through death. And it had seven horns and seven eyes—all *power and all knowledge*. This lamb alone was found worthy to open the seals—to unfold the course of history and to open up the way to the complete fulfilment of God's glorious purpose with this earth and mankind.

The use of the Lamb symbol for Christ, right through to the very triumphant end of the Revelation, emphasized that God's whole beautiful plan of salvation is built on self-denial and sacrifice.

"If any man will come after me . . ."

—if any man desire to be among this joyful 144,000 who follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth—

" . . . let him DENY HIMSELF, and TAKE UP HIS CROSS, and follow me" (Matt. 16:24).

Self-denial and sacrifice! Are we *big enough* to "follow the Lamb?"

* * *

The Lamb stood on *Mount Zion*. The first mention of Zion is when David captured the Jebusite stronghold and named it the "City of David." It was the southern extension of the hill of Moriah, where later the Temple was built. These two hills—Moriah and Zion—together portray the priestly and kingly aspects—

"He shall be a priest upon his throne."

In the vast scope of the House of Prayer, as portrayed by Bro. Sulley—a scope utterly unperceived by any orthodox commentator—this *whole area of Moriah and Zion* form the central glorious pinnacle upon which the altar stands—

"Upon the top of the mountain, the whole limit thereof round about shall be most holy. Behold, THIS IS THE LAW OF THE HOUSE" (Eze. 43:12).

* * *

It is remarkable and beautiful that Jerusalem first appears in history in a foreshadowing of her end—as the throne of a priestly king of righteousness and peace—*Melchizedek*. That was at the time of Abraham.

In Joshua's day, five hundred years later, a sad change had come about. The name still remained—Jerusalem—"*City of peace*"—its king Adonizedec—"*Lord of righteousness*," but king and people were hopelessly sunk into depraved wickedness and idolatry.

The meaning of *Zion* is given by Strong's as "pillar, sign, waymark." The same word is translated "title, waymark and sign" elsewhere.

Gesenius gives its meaning as "something bright, shining, sunny and conspicuous." Others as "stronghold, fortress." All these meanings are harmonious and related, and present a picture of a strong and prominent fortress-city set upon a hill, shining conspicuously in the light of the sun—a beacon and a landmark.

Such is Zion—literally and spiritually. Our thoughts turn to the many references in the prophets to the latterday "ensign upon the mountains" that is set up for all nations to see, as in Isa. 18—

"All ye inhabitants of the world, see ye, when He lifteth up an ensign on the mountains."

"In that time shall the present be brought to the Lord . . . to the place of the Name of the Lord of Hosts, to Mount Zion."

Many are the prophecies of the day of Zion's glory—

"The joy of the whole earth is Mount Zion" (Psa. 48:2).

"Of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her" (Psa. 87:5).

That is the only true nationality—the only true citizenship.

"I lay in Zion for a foundation" (Isa. 28:16).

And Isa. 51:11 gives the same picture we have here—

"The redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; everlasting joy shall be upon their head."

"They shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and mourning shall flee away" (Isa. 51:11).

Moriah and Zion—twin hills of *sacrifice and triumph*—the priesthood and the crown!

* * *

"And with him 144,000." These are the redeemed. In chapter 7 they are sealed in tribulation—twelve thousand from each tribe of Israel. Here they are manifested in glory.

The one hundred and forty-four—the square of twelve—marks the connection with Israel, the foundation of God's purpose—*"Salvation is of the Jews"* (Jn. 4:22). On the framework of Jacob's twelve sons, the whole national organization was built.

Twelve is four times three. Four appears to indicate universal dominion—*"to the four winds"*—*"the four corners of the earth"*—the four world empires of man. And three appears to indicate resurrection, fulfilment, completion.

The camp of Israel was arranged in four groups of three.

The breastplate had four rows of three stones each.

The new Jerusalem has four sides with three gates on each side.

The twenty-four priestly courses of David's kingdom, and the twenty-four elders of the Revelation point to a doubling of the twelve, foreshadowing the union of Jew and Gentile—

"Other sheep have I which are not of this fold."

Twelve is the pattern of the ruling subdivisions of the Kingdom of God, past and future. There were twelve princes of the tribes, heads of their father's houses under the king; the twelve apostles will sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel under the King of kings (Matt. 19:28).

The year, which is measured by the sun, is divided into twelve months, each ruled by the moon, the secondary light—four seasons of three months each.

The day, again measured by the sun, is divided into twelve hours. So those Kings and Priests who reign subordinately with Christ are twelve times twelve times one thousand. Twelve squared is twelve intensified—given body and reality.

There are no hidden inner chambers in the Ezekiel temple of the Age to come—its heart and center is a twelve times twelve altar high up on the holy hill of Zion—the Lamb and the one

hundred and forty-four thousand *manifested in glory for all the world to see*. How beautifully Bro. Sulley's conception of the Temple brings out this glorious picture!

The one thousand symbol illustrates *multitudinousness*—a large number—“*One shall chase a thousand,*” “*One among a thousand,*” “*The cattle upon a thousand hills,*” “*A little one shall become a thousand.*”

The one hundred and forty-four thousand figure teaches us that the *multitude* of the redeemed are the “*Israel of God.*”

* * *

“*Having his Father's Name.*” What a wealth of beauty, comfort and promise is contained in that one word, “*Father!*”

A true father—of which God is the perfect example—is a tower of protection, comfort, counsel, companionship, understanding, inspiration, and firm but kindly discipline and an ability to enter with infinite patience into the hearts and hopes and problems of childhood.

God's Fatherhood is His greatest promise and blessing—

“*Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the SONS OF GOD!*” (1 Jn. 3:1).

“*If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone?*” (Matt. 7:9).

There is great depth in this parable of fatherhood. *Bread* comprehends every form of need, physical and spiritual; and *stone* every fleshly reaction of unkindness, thoughtlessness, rebuff, harshness, impatience, and neglect.

Our children look trustingly to us for guidance, example, comfort, assurance, understanding, maturity, Christ-like tenderness and compassion, love, appreciation, encouragement, companionship, and a personal manifestation of the joy and beauty of holiness. *Are we giving them bread, or a stone? Whose fault is it if they starve spiritually?*

It is Jesus who brings out in its full beauty this exalted relationship in which we stand. In him the fullness of God's Fatherhood is manifested.

This beautiful truth, like so many others, is destroyed by the Trinitarian doctrines of the churches of the world.

At Jesus' first public manifestation, this is his theme—“*My Father's House . . . My Father's business.*”

It may seem strange that (with but one exception in Isaiah) *no one in the Old Testament ever addresses God as Father*, not

even David in the Psalms. Jesus, on the other hand, rarely used any other form of address.

This conception of God as the Father was a great stumbling block to the Jews in the teaching of Jesus.

This is perhaps the greatest aspect of Jesus' manifestation and revelation of God to the world. Paul brings this out beautifully in writing to the Galatians and the Romans. He says—

"When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His SON . . . that we might receive the adoption of sons . . . wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a SON" (Gal. 4:4-7).

And Romans 8:15—

"Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, ABBA, FATHER!"

Truly, as John says, the glorious Gospel of Christ was a new commandment. And yet it was not new, but the same from the beginning. For *this intimate sonship was latent and implied right from the forming of man in God's image.* Luke traces the genealogy of Christ right back to "Adam, which was the son of God."

The faithful line of Seth, before the flood, are spoken of as "sons of God" (Gen. 6:2). And God said to Pharaoh—

"Israel is My SON, even My firstborn!" (Ex. 4:22).

The heart of the covenant to David was, of David's son—

"I will be his Father, and he shall be My Son."

And again (Psa. 2)—

"Thou art My son, this day have I begotten thee."

Twice more in the Psalms, the same thought is approached—

"A father of the fatherless is God in His holy habitation."

"Like as a father pitieth His children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him" (Psa. 103:13).

God through Jeremiah says to Israel, speaking of the future:

"Thou shalt call Me, my Father" (3:19).

And Jeremiah 31:9—

"I am a Father to Israel."

And Malachi, pleading for brotherliness and love, enquires—

"Have we not all one Father?"

"Hath not one God created us?" (Mal. 2:10).

Isaiah, as Paul says in another connection, is "very bold," and comes closest to the New Testament manifestation—

"Thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not. Thou, O God, art our Father, our Redeemer, Thy Name—the Memorial Name—is from everlasting" (Isa. 63:16).

The Fatherhood of God and the Memorial Name are inseparably linked. Israel, as a nation, never reached a degree of spiritual discernment where God could fully manifest Himself as Father. There was always a thick, fleshly veil on their hearts.

As we realize how little was said, or understood, of this beautiful truth during all the long Old Testament times, let us, like the beloved apostle, be moved by the manner of love and revelation that has been shown to us, and let us appreciate the infinite value and significance of the first words of the prayer Jesus taught his disciples to pray—*"Our Father."*

* * *

"His Father's Name written in their foreheads."

There is a vast range of meaning and significance in the term, *"Name."* The eternal Divine purpose is comprehended in the Memorial Name—*Yahweh Elohim*—*"He Who shall be Mighty Ones."*

The two basic significances of God's Name are His *character* and His *purpose*—what He *is*, and what He *purposes to be*. Moses pleaded, *"I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory,"* and God replied—

"I will proclaim the NAME of Yahweh before thee . . .

"Yahweh, Yahweh Elohim, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth."

Beside character and purpose, *Name* imports many things, as: **AUTHORITY**—*"My Name is in him"* (Ex. 23:21). *"By what Name hast thou done this?"*

RELATIONSHIP—*"Let us be called by Thy Name"* (Isa. 4:1).

HONOR, RENOWN, ACHIEVEMENT—*"Make us a Name."*

REPUTATION—*"A Name that thou livest"* (Rev. 3:1). *"A good Name is rather to be chosen than great riches."*

RECOGNITION, ACCEPTANCE, INTIMACY—*"I know thee by Name"* (Ex. 33:12). (Compare Jesus' words, *"I know you not."*)

ALLEGIANCE—*"Confess His Name" . . . "Love His Name" . . . "Hold fast My Name."*

FAITHFULNESS—*"Believe on the Name."* *"For His Name's sake."*

REPRESENTATION—*"I come in my Father's Name"* (Jn. 5:43).

PROTECTION—*"The Name of the Lord is a strong tower."*

DELIVERANCE—*"Save me, O God, by Thy Name"* (Psa. 54:1).

MANIFESTATION—“*I have manifested Thy Name*” (Jn. 17:6).
“*The Name of the Lord cometh from afar*”
(Isa. 30:27).

REMEMBRANCE—“*Blot out his Name*” (Rev. 3:5).

LIFE, EXISTENCE—“*I will give them an everlasting Name.*”

IDENTIFICATION—“*Everyone that is called by My Name.*”

CITIZENSHIP—“*I will write on him the Name of the City of my God*” (Rev. 3:12).

In its fullest application, *Name* imports an individual's *history, nature and destiny*, the sum-total of his existence. When Jesus promises that he will write upon those whom he accepts his New Name and his Father's Name, he is promising immortality and the Divine Nature—everlasting membership in the family of God.

To be baptized “*into the Name,*” and to be “*in the Name,*” constitutes a complete union and unity with the bearer of the Name, a sharing in all that has been accomplished through this Name.

Names are important in worldly matters—a family name, a company name, a national name—all are matters of great value, and power and pride.

In spiritual things, a sound and clear union and allegiance and faithfulness to THE NAME is infinitely more important. THE NAME is the banner, the ensign, the rallying-point, the fortress of assembly.

“*God hath given him a Name which is above every name*” (Phil. 2:9).

“*There is none other Name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved*” (Acts 4:12).

It is clear that the Name is the touchstone—the deciding factor of life or death. To have the Name, to comprehend the Name, to be in the Name, is life eternal. Herein lies the importance of the next expression—

* * *

“*Having his Father's Name written in their foreheads.*”

The Father's Name is His character and purpose. Having the Father's Name in the forehead involves a MIGHTY TRANSFORMATION OF BOTH CHARACTER AND PURPOSE which but few ever attain to. Our greatest danger is underestimating, failing to even *comprehend*, the depth and extent of the transformation of life that is demanded.

To have a purpose is to consciously shape all life's activities in relation to a determined end. It is to eliminate all that interferes with, or has no value, in attaining that end.

Unless we consciously and continually subject our daily activities to this test, *we have no purpose, we have not the Name in our forehead.*

The forehead stands for the mind, the consciousness, the will, the desires and interests. If God's Name is truly in our forehead, we shall be continually anxious to learn more about Him and His Word. Our *thoughts* will ever gravitate toward Him with joy and interest and love.

When we read, it will be things that have to do with Him and His purpose. The motives behind all our actions will be to please Him and serve His interests and glorify His Name.

We shall realize with dismay our natural subjection to the deceptive mind of the flesh, and we shall pray and study earnestly to acquire more and more of the safety and peace of the mind of the Spirit—*the Name in the forehead.*

The High Priest was the center and apex of the worship of the Mosaic Law—the heart and embodiment of all its shadows and significances. He was a man of sign. On his forehead he wore a pure gold plate engraved with the words—*“Holiness to the Lord.”*

To bear the Father's Name in the forehead requires strength and determination. The strength is freely offered by God to those that seek it—

“My strength is made perfect in weakness . . . ”

“Seek and ye shall find; ask and it shall be given you.”

God said to Ezekiel (3:8, 9)—

“I have made thy forehead strong against their foreheads. As adamant harder than flint have I made thy forehead.”

We must be unchanging and unflinching in the bearing of the Father's Name.

* * *

There is a striking contrast throughout Revelation between the *Father's Name* and the *Beast's Name*—the *Father's Mark* and the *Beast's Mark*.

The end of chapter 13, just preceding, speaks of those who have the *Beast's mark*, number, or name in the forehead.

The *Beast* is the Babylonian-Greclan-Roman apostasy, centered in Rome, and it has set its mark on nearly every aspect

of the world's life and activities. All nations are drunk with the wine of her fornication. Let us try to discern all the ramifications of the Beast's mark in the customs and festivities of the world and shun them like the plague. We cannot bear the Name of both God and the Beast together—

"COME OUT OF HER, MY PEOPLE!" (Rev. 18:4).

* * *

The Name was *written*." Three terms are used in this connection—to write, to engrave, to seal. To *write* implies the implanting of information, knowledge, understanding, thoughts—

"I will put My law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts" (Jer. 31:33).

"Ye are our epistle, written in our hearts, known and read of all men . . . written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the Living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart" (2 Cor. 3:2, 3).

To *engrave* carries the thought further. It speaks of a shaping, a deep and permanent penetration and impression. God declares of the Christ-stone, cut out of the mountain without hands (Zech. 3:9)—

"Upon one stone shall be seven eyes—(the seven eyes of the little lamb, the seven spirits of Deity)—Behold, I will engrave the graving thereof."

In the Mosaic Tabernacle, only three things were engraved, all to do with the High Priest's vestments—

1. The stones on the shoulders—*the strength*;
2. The stones in the breastplate—*the heart*;
3. The pure golden plate on the forehead—*the mind*.

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy strength and with all thy heart and with all thy mind."

Thirdly, to *seal*—in chapter 7 the one hundred and forty-four thousand were sealed in their foreheads. To seal is to mark for safety, to identify as a possession, to recognize and accept, to impress with an identifying symbol.

From ancient times to the present, a seal has been a mark of genuineness, authority and approval—

"He that receiveth his testimony has set to his seal that God is true" (Jn. 3:33).

Elihu said to Job—

"God openeth the ears of man and sealeth their instruction" (33:16).

Again—

"Seal the law among my disciples" (Isa. 8:16).

"And I heard a voice from heaven" (Rev. 14:2).

The apocalyptic heavens are defined by what is said to occur in them. John sees the stars of heaven fall, heavens departed as a scroll, silence in heaven, war in heaven, the dragon cast out of heaven, armies in heaven on white horses.

In apocalyptic symbolism, all these things speak of *historical developments among the ruling powers of the earth*. The Lamb and the one hundred and forty-four thousand were "in the heavens." They had broken in through the "door in heaven" of chapter 4, and had taken their place among the ruling powers of the earth and were preparing to destroy them so as to fill the earth with God's glory.

There were three aspects to the voice from heaven. It was—

1. Like many waters;
2. Like great thunder, and
3. It was the voice of harpers harping with their harps.

The "*Voice of many waters*" is the triumphant voice of a mighty multitude. "*Waters*" are defined in apocalyptic symbol as "*peoples, multitudes, nations, tongues*" (Rev. 17:15).

Isa. 17:12 speaks of the noise of the rushing nations as the noise of rushing waters. The rushing of the wings of Ezekiel's cherubim was like the noise of great waters, and the Multitudinous Son of Man of Revelation 1 had a voice like the sound of many waters.

The picture we get is the sweeping, irresistible force of a mighty river in flood, or the pouring of the seas over the land.

"And like great thunder." Thunder is the audible manifestation of the power of God, particularly, but not always, in judgment and destruction.

The first Scriptural mention of thunder is in connection with the plagues of Egypt; the second with the mighty and terrible manifestations at Mount Sinai.

Paul contrasts the scenes at Mount Sinai with those at Mount Zion. There the host of mortal natural Israel was fearful and terrified, and Moses went alone up the mount. Here the multitude of spiritual Israel are joyful and triumphant, united with the greater than Moses upon the mount, themselves the agents by which the thunder-judgments are administered. These are the seven thunders—the seven last plagues.

* * *

But though they are *like* rushing waters and *like* thunders in their passing manifestations of fearful judgment, they are actually in their permanent inward reality—

"Harpers harping with their harps."

Surely there is intended to be power and significance in this three-fold repetition of this joyful, worshipful word! A harp is an instrument of praise and thanksgiving and joy. The harp was the comfort, inspiration and instrument of expression of David, the man after God's own heart. The Psalms are not mere poems, but songs. There is infinitely more feeling, depth and expression in song than in mere recitation.

Psa. 81 speaks of the "*pleasant harp*," and Isa. 24 of the "*joy of the harp*." Conversely the symbol of mourning is to refrain from the harp's use and hang it on the weeping willows (Psa. 137:2).

In 1 Chr. 16, we read of David's arrangements for singing in the worship of God. We read there of "*the musical instruments of God*" (v. 42), and of the first Psalm David delivered into the hands of Asaph, the chief of the singers—

"Sing unto the Lord, all the earth:

Show forth from day to day His salvation . . .

Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness . . .

Let the heavens be glad, and the earth rejoice."

What are the "*musical instruments of God*?" In Rev. 15:2 the redeemed standing on the glassy sea have the "*harps of God*." What do these harps signify, for clearly they symbolize a much deeper and living reality—"The harps of God."

Musical instruments are inanimate objects giving voice-like sounds of worship and praise. Their appeal and acceptability to God can only lie in their representation and symbolization and manifestation of the true heart-condition of the living worshipper himself. This was Bro. Thomas' conclusion. He says:

"Every one of them has his harp, for he is himself a 'harp of the Deity,' and therefore an INSTRUMENT OF JOY."

Music is a very prominent aspect of Divine worship in Scripture. David's and Solomon's arrangements for the musical service are given in great detail, and with each reformation and restoration—Hezekiah, Josiah, Nehemiah—this aspect is much to the fore.

It is a notable fact that in the Mosaic Tabernacle arrangement, there is *no mention of music*, while in the Temple it appears to be the principal aspect of the service.

This is not to indicate that our present Tabernacle and wilderness dispensation is without its joy and thanksgiving and praise, but it does teach that all our joy and desire has its

roots in the future living Temple Age, and that we cannot in their fullness, sing the songs of Zion in a strange and captive land.

Our joy at present, though deep, and rooted in thankfulness and praise, is largely overlaid with passing sorrow, as we walk in mortal weakness through a dark vale of tears—

“Weeping may endure for the night, but joy cometh in the morning” (Psa. 30:5).

* * *

Music is harmony, unity, beauty, and purposeful *orderliness* of sound, and our God is a God of order and beauty.

Noise is *confused* sound—Babel—the world.

Music is disciplined, purposeful, meaningful sound. We shall be greatly struck if we look through a concordance under the word “sing” and see the long list of stirring exhortations and *commands* to lift up the voice in joy and thanksgiving and praise.

It is surely remarkable that musical sounds, from one tone to its repetition at a higher pitch—the octave—naturally falls into a *sevenfold* division—a division recognized by ancient nations.

And it is further remarkable that it has been found that to be able to transfer harmonies to different keys in the scale, the addition of five half notes is required, so that the full scale has *twelve steps*. Surely this reappearance of the divine seven, twelve pattern in so fundamental a thing is more than mere coincidence.

Music has great power. David’s pure and spiritual psalms of praise soothed the spirit of Saul and inspired him, temporarily, at least, to better things; and Elisha, in trying and alien circumstances, called for a minstrel that his mind might be better prepared to speak the Word of God.

This *must* be the purpose and result of our hymns. Herein all our hearts can be united as one.

In the dedication of the completed typical Solomon Temple, it was when the players and singers were “*AS ONE in praising and thanking the Lord*” that “*the glory of the Lord filled the house*” (2 Chr. 5:13, 14).

Christ’s whole desire was that his true brethren should be one, as he and the Father were one. *Our singing must accomplish in us this joyful spirit of mutual love and oneness.*

Music has great power, but its true purpose is Divine worship and spiritual joy. Man has profaned it to fleshly things.

* * *

"And they sang as it were a new song before the throne, and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty-four thousand which were redeemed from the earth."

"A new song." This NEW SONG of the redeemed is mentioned frequently in the Psalms—

"Sing unto him a new song" (Psa. 33:3).

"He hath put a new song in my mouth" (Psa. 40:3).

"O sing unto the Lord a new song!" (Psa. 96 and 98).

Both these psalms end—

"For He cometh to judge the earth: He shall judge the world with righteousness"

—THE WORK OF THE ONE HUNDRED AND FORTY-FOUR THOUSAND.

"I will sing a new song unto Thee, O Lord! (Psa. 144).

"Sing unto the Lord a new song. The Lord will beautify the meek with salvation" (Psa. 149).

And Isaiah says the same thing—

"Sing to the Lord a new song: The Lord shall go forth as a mighty man, He shall stir up jealousy like a man of war" (Isa. 42:10).

This is the theme of the song of Moses and the Lamb—*"Yahweh is a Man of War."* THE YAHWEH ELOHIM MAN OF WAR IS THE MULTITUDINOUS CHRIST.

The new song is given in Rev. 5:9, 10—

"And they sang a new song, saying, Thou has redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.

"And hast made us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth."

Truly no man can sing this song save the one hundred and forty-four thousand. Only the redeemed—the glorified saints—can sing it with truth and reality.

The triumphant Song of Moses on the banks of the Red Sea is the first song—the first mention of human singing—in the Bible. The Song of Moses and the Lamb is the last. This is not coincidence. It is marvelous Divine design. (The angels sang together at Creation).

We do well to realize the great importance of singing in the service of God. And not just singing, but—what is more important—the *spirit* of singing. A basic disposition of thankful joyfulness is absolutely essential to make our service acceptable.

This is emphasized time and time again in the Psalms as the only reasonable, acceptable, *possible* frame of mind in view of the infinite goodness and mercy and love of God toward us. Psalm 100 is a good example—

“Serve the Lord with GLADNESS: come before His presence with SINGING . . .

“Enter into His gates with THANKSGIVING, and into His courts with praise. BE THANKFUL unto Him, and bless His Name.”

Paul emphasized this same essential frame of mind—

“Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, making melody in your hearts to the Lord” (Eph. 5:19).

That is what we MUST HAVE—*“Melody in our hearts.”*

If we get enough of this spirit of thanksgiving into us (and we *must* get it into us), then it will overflow into all our relationships, and make all our contacts with our brethren and sisters a joy and a blessing. It will heal many heartaches and solve many ecclesial problems.

Singing and joy are not reserved solely for the future. In a deep and beautiful passage in Job, Elihu says—

“God, my Maker, Who giveth songs in the night.”

When we think of songs in the night, we cannot help but turn our minds to Paul and Silas in the midnight darkness of the Philippian jail, their bodies wracked with pain and their feet clamped in stocks—

“At midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises to God” (Acts 16:25).

The same thought of deep spiritual joy being born out of the dark night of present sorrow is woven through Psa. 42—

“O my God, my soul is cast down within me . . .

“Yet in the night His song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life.

“Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me?

“Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise Him, Who is the health of my countenance, and my God.”

“AND THEY SANG A NEW SONG BEFORE THE THRONE, AND NO MAN COULD LEARN THAT SONG, BUT THE HUNDRED AND FORTY-FOUR THOUSAND WHICH WERE REDEEMED FROM THE EARTH.”

The Cherubim of Glory

"They rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Yahweh of Hosts, which was, and is, and is to come . . . all the earth is full of His glory" (Rev. 4:8; Isa. 6:3).

These strange, symbolic figures appear throughout the Word of God, from the Garden of Eden to the Revelation, particularly at times of great change and significance. They are a pictorial representation of the *Memorial Yahweh Name, the eternal divine purpose, the manifestation of the glory of God in a host of redeemed ones.*

Basically, their likeness is the "likeness of a MAN," because it is the gracious purpose of our God to manifest Himself in a multitude taken from among men.

Their fundamental characteristic is LIFE. They are collectively "*the Living One,*" the "One of Life." Not life just in the sense of passive existence; but ceaseless, intense, joyful activity. Even in their standing still (as we see from the visions of Ezekiel) there is an appearance of endless, tireless, vigorously exuberant motion. Their whole symbolic appearance speaks of life without any end, energy without any limit, joy without any surfeit or surcease. Of them, the apostle John records (Rev. 4:8) that they—

" . . . REST NOT DAY AND NIGHT, saying Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty."

Divine praise and worship is the deepest, purest and most intense form of rejoicing.

Beside life, joy, activity, the principal conceptions associated with the figure of the Cherubim are power, authority, knowledge, unity, holiness, unchangeableness, limitless rapidity of motion, and, above all, *the manifestation of the Glory of God.*

* * *

As to the word itself, "Cherubim" is actually plural, the singular being "Cherub," and therefore the form "Cherubims" (as appears in the common version) is incorrect, being a double plural.

It is very interesting and significant that in the Hebrew original, the singular form occurs exactly twenty-seven times (three times three times three) and the plural form sixty-four times (four times four times four). Cherubim are mentioned in twelve books of the Old Testament (four times three). In the perfection of God's Word, the symbolic use of numbers is a very

interesting study, and is one of the many evidences that the Bible is the product of an Intelligence far greater than the limited mind of man.

There are endless avenues of study for any who are truly interested in the deep things of God, and *God is not interested in any who are not deeply and whole-heartedly interested in Him.*

The root meaning of the word "Cherubim" is uncertain. Several possible derivations have been suggested, as: "to be mighty, to bless, to grasp, to hold fast." All these would be fitting, but the one which seems both most fitting and most probable is that it is from KE-RAB, "*Like the head or chief,*" after the example of Cyrus, KO-RESH, "*like the heir,*" and MI-KA-EL, "*who like God?*"

The "K" sound is the same in each and is the common Hebrew prefix of likeness. *The idea of likeness, manifestation, is the basic idea of the cherubim.*

The RAB part could not be more fitting. It means greatness, especially numerical greatness. It is translated *great* one hundred and twenty-eight times, *many* one hundred and ninety times, *multitude* seven times, *captain* twenty-four times, and less frequently by other words of similar import, as *abundant, exceedingly, more, prince, master, etc.*

How better could be expressed the basic significance of the Cherubim symbol—the powerful, multitudinous *likeness* of the *great captain* of their salvation?

This matter of likeness is a serious consideration. The thought of likeness is the whole underlying conception of the great, joyful, everlasting multitude. *If we do not have the likeness, we shall NEVER be part of the Cherubim.*

The Cherubim are a manifestation of the Glory of God. They must manifest it *personally* first.

When Moses asked, "Show me Thy glory," God replied—

"I will make all My GOODNESS to pass before thee, and I will proclaim the Name of the Lord before thee" (Ex. 33:19).

"And the Lord passed before him and proclaimed, 'Yahweh, Yahweh Elohim, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in mercy and truth'" (Ex. 34:6).

That was the glory of God that was proclaimed to Moses, "*Graciousness, long-suffering, goodness and truth*"—YAHWEH ELOHIM. What headway are we making in preparation for becoming part of the Cherubim to manifest the glory of the

goodness of God? Jesus said repeatedly that the reward is for "him that overcometh." What have we really overcome? What have we put away? Is the preponderance of our interest and affection in natural or spiritual things? What about patience, cheerfulness, kindness, largeness of heart, and returning good for evil? What do we mostly talk about? —the things of God, or the things of the flesh?

ARE WE BIG ENOUGH for this great destiny, the manifestation of the glory of God?

There is an essential growing process in spiritual things to which the Scriptures frequently refer, from spiritual babyhood to the full stature of the perfect man in Christ Jesus. *The Cherubim were not babies, but MEN.* There is nothing foregone or automatic about this process of growing up. Many start who never finish. It is not enough to get baptized and then sit down and wait for it to happen. The process that must occur in all true saints is described in the beautiful words of Paul to the Corinthians—

"We all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord"
(2 Cor. 3:18).

True, indeed, it is not something that we ourselves can accomplish. Of ourselves we can do nothing. But *it will never happen if we do not do our required part*, and if it does not happen we shall never become a part of that triumphant, vigorous, ever-worshipping host.

Our part is to "*behold, with unveiled face.*" The veil is the flesh, the things of the flesh, the thoughts of the flesh, the interest and desires of the flesh. These things are the veil. They obscure the beholding.

The beholding is study, meditation, single-minded interest and determination. When we are beholding, thinking about the things of God, putting into practice the things of God, we are growing, we are advancing toward the full stature, we are being changed into the same image, we are being transformed in the spirit of our minds.

As soon as we *cease to behold*, as soon as we *look away*, we begin to wither and the enemy begins to win again, as when Moses' hands were let down in the battle against Amalek.

The first appearance of the Cherubim is in connection with the fall of man, and the expulsion from Eden, and the promise of the Seed of the woman who should bruise the serpent's head.

We last see them in the Revelation, around the throne, giving praise and thanksgiving to the Lamb—

"Thou hast redeemed us out of every kindred, tongue, people and nation, and hast made us unto our God kings and priests, and WE SHALL REIGN ON THE EARTH" (Rev. 5:10).

In between, they appear in the heavenly patterns of the Mosaic Tabernacle, of Solomon's Temple, and of the great future Temple of Ezekiel's prophecy, the House of Prayer for all nations.

They are mentioned when the ark is carried away into the land of the Philistines, and again when David brings it up to Jerusalem.

They are mentioned in the Psalms as the vehicle of God's presence and purpose, and in the great crisis of Judah's history in the time of Hezekiah, when the Assyrian destroyer sweeps down from the north, flooding the land and besieging Jerusalem. At the same time they appear as the *seraphim* in Isaiah's vision of God's glory, at the beginning of his ministry (ch. 6), and it is by their agency that he is symbolically purified by a living coal from the altar.

Turning, then, to Genesis 3:24, we read—

"So He (God) drove out the man; and He placed at the east of the Garden of Eden CHERUBIMS, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life."

The Cherubim seem to be mentioned especially throughout the Scriptures at times of human failure, as a symbol of the surety of God's promise and purpose; as here, and the rejection of Eli's house, the casting down of the kingdom in Ezekiel's day, and in the Revelation as a comfort and assurance during the long, dark period of Catholic oppression.

The word here for "placed" means "caused to dwell, to rest, remain, inhabit, particularly (though not exclusively) to place in a tabernacle," as—

"The Place which the Lord thy God has chosen to PLACE His Name there" (Deut. 16:2).

The word for "placed" is *shakan*, from which is derived *Shektnah*—"The Dwelling," "the Abiding"—the word the Jews use to describe the Divine Presence manifested in glory in the Tabernacle between the Cherubim, over the Mercy-Seat.

It was brother Thomas' conclusion, a conclusion which seems very fitting and reasonable and harmonious, that (Elpis Israel, page 154)—

"The Cherubim (placed at the Garden of Eden) were the throne of the Lord in relation to the antediluvian world. There He communed with men. His presence was there, and the altar He had set up. When men went to sacrifice before Him, there they presented their offerings."

This beautifully fits in with the significances of the Cherubim in the Tabernacle, Temple and prophecies of Ezekiel and John, and connects the theme throughout Scripture from Genesis to Revelation.

(Later editors of *Elpis Israel* have in a footnote unfortunately "corrected" brother Thomas, at this vital foundation point of the Divine Purpose, the true significance of the symbol brother Thomas recognized and explained so clearly).

* * *

"And there will I meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the Mercy-Seat, from between the two Cherubims which are upon the ark" (Ex. 25:22).

The next mention of cherubim is in the construction of the Mosaic Tabernacle at Sinai (Ex. 25). The fact that this Tabernacle was constructed at Sinai, as Israel were being secretly organized in preparation for their revelation to the world as the Kingdom of God, is of itself of deep significance, for it is there that the *True Cherubim*—the *True Tabernacle*—the *True Kingdom*—is to be prepared for manifestation.

The Cherubim were at the very heart and center of the Mosaic Tabernacle. All the Tabernacle structure, yea, all the entire camp of Israel, focused inwards to the Holy of Holies, the inner Sanctuary into which no one entered but the High Priest, and he only once a year, and with great preparations and solemnity.

HERE were the Cherubim. The only object in the Holy of Holies was the Ark of the Covenant, and the Cherubim were part of the Ark. The Ark had a coverlid of pure gold, called the Mercy-seat, or place of mercy. Inside the Ark were the two tables of the Law, and the pot of Hidden Manna, and the Rod of Aaron which had budded.

The Ark and its cover represented Christ, the place of mercy, the place of the manifestation of God, the Word, the place of communication between God and man. In Ex. 25:18 we read—

"And thou shalt make two Cherubims of gold, of beaten work, in the two ends of the Mercy-seat."

They were beaten work, they were hammered into shape.

They were to be made of one piece with the Christ Mercy-seat, their wings were to be stretched forth on high above the Mercy-

seat, and their faces were to be perpetually directed toward it. And God said—

"THERE will I meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the Mercy-seat, from BETWEEN THE TWO CHERUBIM" (v. 22).

This was God's dwelling in the midst of Israel. Here the Shekinah-glory of God dwelt until it was removed in the days of Ezekiel in a great symbolic Cherubim manifestation in preparation for the destruction of the Temple, never to return until it comes into the new Millennial House of Prayer by the way of the gate that is on the East, the true, antitypical Cherubim.

The two cherubim were of "one piece" with the golden Mercy-seat. They rose up out of it; it was their foundation. Together with it they symbolized the fullness of the divine purpose of manifestation in a redeemed multitude taken from Jew and Gentile, whose foundation is Christ, the God-provided Place of Mercy.

Israel as a whole never saw the Cherubim of glory, for the veil of the Most Holy hung in the way. And there were two other hangings that obscured their view, the hanging of the door of the Tabernacle, and the hanging of the gate of the court.

Both of these latter hangings were, like the veil, of blue, purple, scarlet and fine twined linen, representing the flesh, but the veil differed from them in that on it alone were embroidered representations of the Cherubim, the high destiny of the few chosen from mankind.

The veil, we know, represented the flesh that had to be rent before the way into the Most Holy could be made manifest. The Cherubim being represented on it is a further identification of them being taken from among men.

* * *

The Cherubim appear in *one other place* in the Mosaic tabernacle. They are woven into the ten curtains that were coupled together in two sets of five to form the first layer of the covering of the Tabernacle. There were four layers of covering in all.

This first, inner layer, of fine twined linen woven with blue, purple, scarlet, and Cherubim, represents the saints of God as the inner Cherubim-custodians of the House of Prayer for all nations that contains the Tree of Life. They are the true Tabernacle that God pitched.

This Mosaic Tabernacle, says Paul, was among the "patterns of things in the heavens" which must be typically purified by the blood of sacrifices. The Cherubim being part of this symbolism further shows that their significance related to mankind redeemed by sacrifice.

Numbers 7 records the dedication of the Tabernacle at Sinai, when all was finally completed and prepared. For twelve days in succession the prince of each tribe in his turn brings an elaborate and costly offering of dedication, and sacrifices are made. It is a tremendously significant occasion. *In symbol, the great purpose of God is complete; His dwelling-place is ready for the manifestation of His glory.*

The final verse tells us that—as a climax to this twelve day observance—Moses went into the Tabernacle, and he heard the voice of God speaking to him—

"From above the Mercy-seat, between the two cherubims"

—and thus began the dispensation of the Law of Moses.

* * *

The next mention of the Cherubim is four hundred years later, in connection with what is in some ways the darkest and most ominous day in Israel's history.

It was the last day of Eli's life. *Eli, the rejected.* Eli who, though he served and feared God, had put fleshly things before spiritual things—who, when faced with a difficult choice, had put his sons before God.

Israel had been smitten before the Philistines. They say—

"Wherefore hath the Lord smitten us today before the Philistines? Let us fetch the ark of the Covenant, that it may save us" (1 Sam. 4:3).

A desperate ignorant, last minute, superstitious seeking of God's help.

What did they expect to accomplish? They professed to recognize that God had smitten them. Did they think that they could force His hand, that He would not dare let them be defeated if the safety of the Ark was at stake? There is a lesson here for us, if we can but discern it. The flesh always tends to presume, and seeks to use God for natural ends.

The unbelievable happened. God, in marvelous prophetic symbol, permitted the Ark with its Cherubim, the dwelling place of His glory, to be taken captive by the Gentiles. The High Priest and his sons, heads of the Aaronic priesthood, die in this black day. Amid the travail, *a new son is born.* His mother,

dying like Rachel in childbirth, with deep prophetic import, names him Ichabod—

"THE GLORY IS DEPARTED FROM ISRAEL" (v. 22).

* * *

The next reference to the Cherubim is in 2 Samuel 6, where David makes arrangement to bring the Ark to Jerusalem. David's heart is right. His desire and zeal is God-pleasing, but at first he acts without seeking guidance, in the thoughtless enthusiasm of his ignorance.

David and all the house of Israel are rejoicing before the Lord with every manner of musical instrument, but suddenly, like a lightning bolt, the whole joyful occasion is shattered and crushed. The oxen stumbled, Uzzah touched the ark to steady it, and *God struck him dead on the spot*. What a terrible lesson in obedience—

"I WILL be sanctified in those that draw near unto Me" (Lev. 10:3).

The instruction was plain. It MUST be God's way. It had been on record for nearly five hundred years. They were told to study it constantly and teach it incessantly to their children. *Every-one* there *should* have known the Ark was to be *carried*. Did NO ONE know?

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hos. 4:6).

Why had they not studied and heeded the instruction? The flesh doesn't stop to think of God's point of view. It presumes that its own good intentions are a sufficient guide. But they had thoughtlessly dishonored God and ignored His clearly expressed desires.

The lesson was hard, and the experience bitter, but David was the type to recognize his mistakes and learn. Said he—

"The Lord our God made a breach upon us, for that WE SOUGHT HIM NOT AFTER THE DUE ORDER" (1 Chr. 15:13).

So they tried again in the *right* way, and this time they brought up the Ark of God unto the city of David with gladness. The great prophetic significance of this occasion is that *the Ark with its Cherubim, after nearly five hundred years of wandering, in the Wilderness, in the Land, and in Gentile Captivity, is finally brought by the hand of David, God's Anointed, for the first time, to the City of God, the City of the Great King—JERUSALEM.*

It has reached its final resting place. David, foreshadowing the great Priest-King to come, the true Cherubic-Ark, dances

in joy before the Lord, girded with a linen ephod, the white garment of the priesthood, signifying the "righteousness of saints."

The Ark, taken from the Mosaic Tabernacle in the days of Eli, *never re-entered it*. The service was carried on at the Tabernacle without the Ark, without the Cherubim, without the Glory of God.

In the days of David, the empty, Ark-less Tabernacle was at Gibeon, while the Ark had gone up to Jerusalem into a new tent that David had made. This period would appear to represent the present dispensation of the Gospel to the Gentiles during which the Ark and the Cherubim and the Glory of God have left the Mosaic Tabernacle but have not yet entered the Millennial Temple period.

Later when the Temple, the new home of the Ark, had been built in the peaceful reign of Solomon, according to the pattern divinely revealed to David, the ancient Tabernacle is folded up and stored away within the Temple.

The Ark never returned to its place in the Mosaic Tabernacle, but the Tabernacle, when its purpose had been fulfilled and it had been replaced as the House of God by a greater and permanent building, was brought to final rest within the new House. *How beautifully the divine purpose is thus portrayed, and all Israel shall be gathered into Christ at last!*

* * *

"As the trumpeters and singers were as one . . . the glory of Yahweh filled the House of Elohim" (2 Chr. 5:15).

We come to the Temple of Solomon, begun with such glorious promise, ending in such terrible tragedy.

The Cherubim become more prominent than they were in the Tabernacle. The Temple of Solomon, though it failed, was a symbol of a further development in the plan, of a more glorious dispensation. The Tabernacle spoke of wandering and impermanence, the Temple of rest and stability. It speaks of the Millennial Age when the anti-typical David has subdued the nations, and the anti-typical Solomon has built the House of Prayer for all nations.

Representations of the Cherubim now appear in the outer appointments *where they can be seen by the Temple worshippers*. They are no longer reserved for the eyes of the priests only. So will it be in that day of the open manifestation of God's glory in the earth.

In Solomon's Temple the dimensions of the Mosaic Tabernacle are doubled. Here is portrayed an enlarging, an expansion of the purpose.

As is fitting, the Cherubim are first mentioned in connection with the Most Holy. In the description of Solomon's Temple, the Holy Place is very significantly called the "Oracle"—*d'beer*—"the Place of the Word," from *Dabar*, "Word, Purpose," corresponding to Logos in the Greek. This word "Oracle" occurs sixteen times (four times four). The Oracle was a *perfect cube*—its "length and breadth and height were equal" (Rev. 21:16). It represents the perfect state—the New Jerusalem—where the projected *Plan of God* (two dimensions) has fully developed into the solid reality of the perfect *Building of God* (three dimensions).

In 1 Kings 6:23 we read—

"Within the Oracle he made two cherubims of olive trees."

These two cherubim of olive wood overlaid with gold stood side by side with their wings outstretched. The wings touched one another in the center and extended thirty-five to forty feet from wall to wall.

The use of *olive wood* (Heb. "trees of oil") clearly connects them with the two olive trees, the two anointed ones—"sons of oil"—of Zechariah's vision, *the post-resurrectional two witnesses of the golden lampstand* (Zech. 4).

Beneath the outstretched wings of these huge figures, the Ark with its original smaller Cherubim was placed.

Now there are FOUR Cherubim within the Most Holy—the Oracle—the *Place of the Word*. Four is the full symbolic number of the Cherubim. The visions of Ezekiel and John show four. How beautifully this portrays again an enlarging and multiplying of the purpose out beyond Israel to the Gentiles!

"It is a light thing that thou shouldst be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob . . . I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles that thou mayest be My salvation unto the ends of the earth" (Isa. 49:60).

The stretching of the wings right out to the walls of the Oracle portrays this *filling of the earth with God's over-shadowing glory*. (The Mosaic Cherubim did not reach from wall to wall, but were small and in the center of the room).

In the two-fold aspect of the original Cherubim the purpose in Jew and Gentile is *foreshadowed obscurely*, but in the further doubling and enlarging of the Cherubim in the Temple

of Solomon into *four*, the purpose is *emphasized and manifested clearly*.

It is interestingly repeated and emphasized in verses 23-26 (1 Kgs. 6) that the two great Cherubim were of exactly the *same* height and extension. Paul warns both Jew and Gentile against assuming pre-eminence over the other; all are one and equal in Christ Jesus.

* * *

Corresponding to the inner curtains of the Tabernacle, the walls of the Temple were carved with Cherubim (v. 29). But now added to the Cherubim were palm trees and open flowers. What do these signify of the change from the present Tabernacle-state of wandering to the Millennial Temple-state of rest?

The *palm tree* is victory and peace. The great apocalyptic multitude who stood before the throne and the Lamb (Rev. 7:9) were clothed in white linen, and had *palms* in their hands. Palm trees and cherubim are prominent features of the Ezekiel Temple.

And what of the "open flowers"? The word for "open" means to be free, to be set loose, to break bonds, to burst forth as a blossom. Do not the words of Solomon's Song come to our minds?

"Rise up, my love my fair one, and come away. For lo, the winter is past; the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth and the time of the singing of birds is come" (2:10-12).

* * *

Where the *veil* hung in the Mosaic Tabernacle at the entrance to the Most Holy, we find there were *two olive wood doors* in Solomon's Temple (1 Kgs. 6:31). These doors, too, were carved with cherubim and palm trees and open flowers (v. 32).

We might assume that the two doors took the place of the veil, but we find from one single mention (2 Chr. 3:14) that there was also a veil of blue and purple and crimson, with cherubim upon it, just as in the Tabernacle.

So now, at the entrance to the Most Holy, beside the veil, there is a double door. Veils signify *obscurity and a concealing of the way*. We need only think of the veil of Moses' face, and the veil on Israel's heart, the veil of darkness spread over all nations.

But doors indicate *a way made open*: a door of utterance, a door in heaven, a door of hope, "I am the door," "I have set before thee an open door."

Two doors with cherubims and palm trees and blossomed flowers surely symbolize that *a two-fold cherubic company has blossomed into victory and has entered into the Most Holy state through the Christ-door*, to join their forerunner.

But the veil is still there, too. It **MUST** still be there during the Millennial age, for though the doors have been opened and the first fruits have passed into the Most Holy state, the way therein is still barred by the veil of the flesh to the mortal inhabitants of the earth.

There is thus a double condition well portrayed by the doors *and* veil. We find similar references to the Millennium in the Revelation and elsewhere, indicating that for some it is the fulfilment, while for the generality of mankind it is a probationary state.

* * *

Likewise at the outer entrance into the Holy Place there are now doors instead of a hanging (1 Kgs. 6:34). They have the same decorations: cherubim, palm trees and open flowers, but there are *two significant differences*: (1) They are of *fir*, instead of olive, showing their secondary nature as pertaining to the entering in of the harvest of the Millennium, and (2) they are each double, folding doors, making *four* in all, indicating a further opening and expansion of the way of entrance to salvation. *Four* appears to be the *number of universality*, and as the cherubim increase from two to the fullness of four, so in their order do the doors.

It is fitting that there were two double or folding doors, rather than four separate doors, for this way the two symbol is preserved and emphasized in the expanding to the fullness of the four.

This four-fold door at the Temple entrance would bring the symbolism of the cherubim before the eyes of all who worshipped at the Temple. No longer are the Cherubim a hidden symbol for the priests of God alone, for in the Millennium they will be brought before the eyes of all the world, and will be seen to be *the four-fold door of entrance to the House of God*.

No longer is there a veil or hanging at the outer Temple door, for all mankind now worship and serve in the Holy Place, their prayers ascend from the incense Altar, and they walk in the light of the ecclesial lampstand—

“Then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the Name of the Lord, to serve Him with one consent” (Zeph. 3:9).

"The Lord reigneth: let the people tremble; He inhabiteth the Cherubim: let the earth be moved" (Psa. 99:1)

The Cherubim are mentioned three times in the Psalms. The first occurrence is in Psalm 18. This is the song David composed unto God when he had given him deliverance from Saul and victory over all his enemies.

It is clearly prophetic and typical of the triumphant establishment of Christ's Kingdom over the nations of the world. The Psalm in its fullness far transcends the experiences of David. Both Peter in Acts 2, and Paul in Romans 15, apply it to Christ and his work.

The symbolism of whirlwind, clouds, fire and brightness amid which the Cherubim are represented, are the same here, as we shall see in Ezekiel, where the Cherubim are described most fully.

"He bowed the heavens also and came down. And darkness was under His feet. And He rode upon a Cherub and did fly, yea He did fly upon the wings of the wind" (vs. 9, 10).

"He rode upon a Cherub." In connection with the Cherubim, God is represented in two relationships. He is said to *"inhabit"* the Cherubim, to dwell in them, tabernacle in them. And He is also said to *ride upon*, or in, them as the vehicle of the fulfilment of His purpose, and the execution of His judgments.

It is another manifestation of the glorious divine truth that *"ALL things are for the sake of God's elect."* NOTHING HAS ANY PURPOSE EXCEPT AS RELATED TO THEIR DESTINY AND WELFARE, AND THE GLORIFICATION OF GOD IN AND THROUGH THEM.

The *"inhabiting"* aspect is their personal communion and fellowship with Him. The *"riding upon them"* is His use of them in executing His will.

The very last item that is mentioned in David's preparation for the Temple is—

"Gold for the pattern of THE CHARIOT OF THE CHERUBIM, that spread out their wings and covered the Ark of the covenant of the Lord" (1 Chr. 28:18).

"The Chariot of the Cherubim." We may wonder at this expression, because in the actual construction there is nothing of any remote likeness to a chariot, but the expression clearly refers to God's use of the Cherubim, the multitudinous Christ, as the vehicle of His purpose—

"He rode upon a Cherub, and did fly."

Psalm 104:3 records similarly—

"He maketh the clouds His chariot."

This is the great cloud of witnesses referred to when it is recorded of Christ, *"Behold He cometh with clouds"* (Rev. 1:7). And again—

"They shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven" (Matt. 24:30).

These clouds which God makes His chariot are another symbol of that great host of the redeemed which are represented by the Cherubim.

The conception of the *"Chariot of the Cherubim"* becomes much more clear to us when we consider the fourfold representation of the Cherubim, with their four wheels, which Ezekiel gives in detail.

A chariot is a symbol of majesty and authority. It is also a symbol of warfare and conquest, of safety and protection, and of swift, irresistible motion.

When Elijah was taken up from the earth there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and Elisha cried—

"The Chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!"

Here again was manifested the eternal purpose and because Elisha perceived this as Elijah was taken up, he was given a double portion of the spirit of Elijah.

Why was Elisha given a double portion just because he saw the circumstances of Elijah's departure, and what bearing does it have on us?

In the first case it indicated diligence, devotedness, dedication, and perseverance, presence of mind, faith and joyful interest instead of bewilderment and fear in the face of a sudden, terrible divine manifestation.

He was privileged to see and comprehend what few have seen—a glorious, prophetic manifestation of the eternal, divine purpose—

"The (Cherubim) CHARIOT OF ISRAEL, and the horsemen thereof."

In Habakkuk's vision of the triumphant advance of the Yahweh-Elohim from Sinai and Teman, he exclaims—

"His glory covered the heavens and the earth was full of his praise . . .

"Was thy wrath against the sea, that thou didst ride upon thine horses, and thy chariots of salvation?" (3:8).

The four chariots of Zechariah 6, which go forth from between two mountains of brass to carry the judgments of God

into all the earth, are another representation of the Cherubim chariot.

The two mountains of brass exist today as they have never existed in all history before.

Two colossal fleshly powers, facing each other in deadly antagonism, and each possessing the terrible capacity of utterly destroying the world. How long will God leave such powers in the hands of wicked man?

At the crisis of their antagonism, the cherubim chariots suddenly appear between them, and break their power, and go forth from thence into all the earth. *We have been offered the privilege of becoming part of that glorious host that will suddenly appear in divine power upon the world scene, and save the world from sin, evil, and self-destruction.*

* * *

There are two other references to the cherubim in the Psalms. Psalm 80 is a prophetic appeal from repentant Israel for a return of divine favor and comfort—

"Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel . . . Thou that dwellest between the Cherubim, shine forth!"* (v. 1).

"Let Thy hand be upon the man of Thy right hand, upon the son of man whom Thou hast made strong for Thyself" (v. 17).

The word "between" is in italics and is not in the original. The true meaning, which has much deeper significance, is—"Thou that inhabitest the Cherubim."*

God is appealed to on the basis of His purpose and promise that He will dwell intimately within those whom He has chosen for Himself.

* * *

Psalm 99 portrays the glorious fulfilment, when the earth is filled with His glory—

"The Lord reigneth: let the people tremble: He sitteth between the Cherubim; let the earth be moved."

Here again the original is the same. "Between" should be omitted, and "sitteth" should be "inhabiteth."

We come now to the fullest and most detailed description of the Cherubim, that given in the visions of Ezekiel.

Ezekiel was among the captivity in Babylon. His whole book revolves around the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple of Solomon by Nebuchadnezzar.

These prophecies which involve the Cherubim are prophecies of the casting off of Israel, of terrible divine judgment, and

of the departure of the glory of the Lord from the Most Holy Place, never to return until the new Millennial Temple is built as a "House of Prayer for All Nations."

The Cherubim are represented as active and instrumental in all these developments. At this time of terrible trouble for God's people, the breaking down of their whole established world, everything they had built or had ever had, and their being driven away with whips in herds like cattle, as slaves, to a foreign land because of disobedience—at this time God is illustrating by the vision of the Cherubim that all things are for the sake of God's elect, and that the eternal purpose and promise still stood firm.

THE CHERUBIM REPRESENT THE ETERNAL, SPIRITUAL REALITIES THAT ARE BEING DEVELOPED OUT OF THE FAILURES AND WEAKNESSES OF THE PRESENT.

* * *

"The heavens were opened; and I saw visions of Elohim" (Eze. 1:1).

Thus Ezekiel begins his glorious Cherubic revelation.

He was shown, in symbolic representation, the reality and meaning and purpose of things as they appear to the divine viewpoint. The curtain was drawn aside and he saw the things of the Spirit of God of which the natural man has no conception.

A WHIRLWIND

"And I looked and behold a whirlwind came out of the North" (v. 4).

The original is "a rushing wind." When the Spirit of God came upon the Apostles at Pentecost, there was a sound like a mighty rushing wind.

A whirlwind is the symbol of the greatness and irresistibility of God's universal, invisible power, especially in judicial manifestation.

Jeremiah says at this same time—

"A whirlwind of the Lord is gone forth in fury" (23:19).

OUT OF THE NORTH

The whirlwind "came out of the North." This too gives the aspect of judgment upon Israel, just as in the latter day, and deliverance comes from the South and East.

At this time the judgment from the North was the Chaldeans, but they were not the power, they were merely the instrument, the slaughter weapon in the hands of the six linen-clothed symbolic men of Ezekiel 9, who were led by the seventh man with the writer's ink horn.

To this *seventh* man the Cherubim handed the coals of judgment from between the Cherubim wheels, which he scattered over the city.

The armies of Nebuchadnezzar were all the natural eye could see, but Ezekiel is being shown a representation of what was happening upon a spiritual plane.

A GREAT CLOUD

"A great cloud, and a fire infolding itself"—self-contained and continuously renewed, like the burning bush—*"and a brightness was about it"* (v. 4).

The cloud symbol is a very fitting and beautiful one for the Multitudinous Christ. A cloud is a vast host of individual drops drawn by the power of the sun up into the heavens out of and away from the general waters and seas of the earth.

In the process they are distilled—separated from all impurity. In the drawing up, the drops are invisible, but when assembled they ride majestically in the heavens in all their pure whiteness and beauty.

Behind their majestic beauty there lies the tremendous power of God, ready to be poured forth in storms of irresistible judgment, with pealing thunder and flashing lightning.

God is said to ride upon the Cherubim and also upon the cloud.

This cloud that Ezekiel saw was a *"bright"* cloud, like the cloud of glory that enveloped Jesus, Moses, Elijah and the three disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration.

AMBER

"And out of the midst of the fire there appeared the colour of amber" (Eze. 1:4).

There are different views on the meaning of the word "amber." All authorities seem to be agreed that it does *not* mean amber, but refers to some very brilliant metallic alloy. The more dependable modern versions just say *"shining metal."*

Weighing all factors, including the Septuagint Greek translation made about two hundred BC, the probability strongly points to what the ancients called *"electrum,"* a very bright alloy of gold and silver. The lexicons generally lean to this.

The Tabernacle and Temple were gold and silver in the inner parts, but brass in the outer sections.

Gold is a well-known symbol of tried faith and righteousness, but what is the meaning of *silver mixed with gold*, which makes a more lustrous and beautiful metal than either one alone?

SILVER

The word for "*silver*" occurs about four hundred times. About three hundred times it is translated silver, about one hundred times "money." It is the only word in the Old Testament for money, except in one or two incidental cases.

Silver in Hebrew basically denoted *money, value, price*. Its first occurrence is in speaking of the riches of Abraham, its last in Mal. 3:3—

"He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver."

When we learn that the original in the Bible for "*money*" is this same word *silver*, we see many interesting expressions—

"The atonement silver" (Ex. 30:16).

"The redemption silver" (Num. 3:49).

"The trespass silver, the sin silver" (2 Kgs. 12:16).

"They weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver"
(Zech. 11:12).

The ransom money that all in Israel, rich and poor, had to give for their life was a half-shekel of silver.

ATONEMENT AND FAITH

What then is the silver that is combined with the gold of faith to make the bright glory of the Cherubim? Clearly, it is the Redemption, the Atonement, *the great sacrifice for sin without which the purest of faith would be powerless*. It is very interesting to note that while *men and women* brought *gold* (Faith) for the Tabernacle (Ex. 35:22), only *men* brought *silver* (vs. 23, 24), and that this silver was the exact amount of the *Atonement* money (Ex. 30:12-16; 38:25, 26).

There were 603,550 men numbered (Num. 1:46). Each gave half a shekel (Ex. 28:26). The silver given was 301,775 shekels (Ex. 28:25—a talent is 3,000 shekels).

And this silver was used for the *foundation* of the whole Tabernacle—the one hundred silver sockets upon which all else was built (Ex. 38:27).

See what a beautiful meaning this gives to the two trumpets of silver, the proclamation of redemption, the Gospel proclaimed through all the land.

"Out of the midst thereof" (out of this glorious and triumphant life-giving combination of Atonement-silver and Faith-gold) *"came the likeness of four living creatures"* (v. 5).

LIVING ONES

"Living ONES" would be more correct. Truly they were *"creatures"* in the sense that they were created—they are the

new creation—but that is not part of the meaning of the word here. This same word is applied to God Who certainly is not “created.”

It just means LIFE. The primary characteristic of the Cherubim is life—intense, vibrant, joyful life. Life is the great promise of the Scriptures, Death is the great enemy to be vanquished and destroyed.

WHY FOUR?

WHY were there FOUR Cherubim? Four is very broadly used in the divine plan. It appears to denote *the plan itself*, the four-square Holy City of the great Master Builder, the fullness and completeness of God’s purpose in creation.

The natural number of man is six, but man as a completed and organized community in the purpose of God—man as shaped to God’s purpose and filling the earth with His glory, a universal Kingdom—is four.

FOUR-SQUARE

Several things which specifically denote the *whole purpose of God*, either in nucleus or fulfilment, are especially said to be “four-square”: the sacrifice altar, the incense altar, the breastplate with the twelve stones and the Urim and Thummim, Ezekiel’s Holy Oblation in the midst of the land, and finally the Holy City of the Revelation.

Several others, though not *spoken of as “four-square,”* were so, particularly *the Most Holy Place where the Cherubim were.* The Most Holy was not only “four-square” it was a perfect cube. Its “*Length and breadth and height*” were equal—the perfect fulfilment of a perfect plan.

It is not four as a plural, but as a four-square, four-fold entity. Thus four rivers became united in one to form the river of Paradise; four world empires are united into one for the Kingdom of God; four points of the compass, north, south, east and west, signify one universal dominion.

In harmony with this, four is a factor of the periods of trial, probation and preparing for the divine purpose: forty days, forty years in the wilderness, four hundred years of affliction for Israel from their beginning in Abraham to the fulfilment in Moses as the four-square camp, the Kingdom of God.

“*And this was their appearance: They had the likeness of a man*” (Eze. 1:15).

Primarily their appearance was as the human form. All other aspects were symbolic representations of qualities. We are taught here, as in various other places, that the Cherubim

represent the human destiny and are a symbol of mankind glorified.

STRAIGHT FEET

"Their feet were straight feet" (v. 7).

This word "straight"—*jasher*—is never applied to physical shape but always to moral condition. It is translated "right" fifty-three times, "upright" forty, "righteous" nine, "straight" only three times; also, "just," "meet," "equity," etc.

In picturing the Cherubim, as in the symbols of the Song of Moses, we must strive for the depth of the spirit and meaning, rather than seeking a flat, literal picture.

The path of their feet was righteous and upright. The particular significance of this is that they are here represented in *judicial manifestation*. Here we see in type the latterday destruction of evil, and subduing of the world by the Cherubic Man of Multitude—"In RIGHTEOUSNESS doth he make war."

The vision is an introduction to the destruction of Israel's nation, city and Temple, and the beginning of the dark "Times of the Gentiles." It was a vision of both comfort and warning.

SOON THE CHERUBIM WILL APPEAR AGAIN TO REVERSE THIS ORDER, TO CAST DOWN ALL THE POWER OF THE GENTILES, GATHER ISRAEL AND REBUILD THEIR TEMPLE AND CITY. ALL IS PART OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE FOUR-SQUARE PLAN OF DEITY'S CONSTRUCTION.

It is fundamental to fully and unreservedly realize that all God's ways are just and right. The shallow mind of the flesh sets itself up to judge God in detail: "Why does He allow this?" "Why do the apparently innocent suffer?"

We must guard against this viewpoint. It is very natural, but it is very foolish. It is rebellion against God. If we accept the reality and universal power and divinity of God, and only a fool can deny it, then all reason demands that we must accept His Word concerning His ways. Any other course is presumptuous absurdity.

The feet of divine judgment are always straight feet: right, just and upright.

BURNISHED BRASS

"The sole of their feet was like the sole of a calf's foot and they sparkled like the colour of burnished brass."

Our mind goes immediately to the Son of Man similitude of Rev. 1 whose feet were—

"Like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace."

And the feet of the Rainbow Angel of Rev. 10—

"His feet as pillars of fire."

Malachi gives the same picture of conquering, punishing feet (Mal. 4:2, 3)—

"Ye shall go forth leaping like calves from the stall. Ye shall tread down the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet."

The brazen aspect of the feet appears to signify the human instrumentality by which the judgments are carried out. In Ezekiel's day it was the Chaldeans; in the last days it will be the natural Jews who are the warhorse, the battle axe, the threshing instrument, the Zechariah chariot-horses, the Micah tearing lion, the torch of fire, the Judah bow and Ephraim arrow.

HANDS

"They had the hands of a man under their wings" (Eze. 1:8).

Here again the human agency is apparent; both the human basis of the Cherubim and their use of the nations of natural men in the fulfilling of the divine purpose.

FOUR FACES

"As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion on the right side, and they four had the face of an ox on the left side: they four also had the face of an eagle" (v. 10).

That is, four faces in four directions: a man's in front, a lion facing right, an ox's facing left, and an eagle at the back.

These four faces indicate four aspects or characteristics of the Multitudinous Christ. The same four symbols occur in the four Living Ones of Rev. 4:7.

MAN

The man is the basis, for the divine purpose is being developed from human stock. The redeemed are, aggregately, the Son of Man, the "Man of God's right hand."

The "Man whom God made strong for Himself" is the nucleus of the Cherubic creation. The Psalmist enquires (8:4-6)—

"What is MAN that Thou art mindful of him? Thou 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."

And the Apostle Paul, writing to the Hebrews (2:6), beautifully opens this up to our understanding and shows us that it applies in its fullness to God's eternal purpose in Christ.

LION

The lion on the right side and the ox on the left. The significance of the lion in this connection is unmistakable. It

points to majesty and dominion, the Lion of the tribe of Judah—Christ and his brethren established in royal power. This is the right side, the side of acceptance, honor and authority.

OX

When it is *coupled* with the right, the left hand is also a position of honor, as when James and John asked to sit at Jesus' right and left in his Kingdom.

When *contrasted* with the right, the left is the side of dishonor and rejection, humiliation and suffering.

We can clearly see a fittingness here from both points of view. The ox represents labor, service and sacrifice. In ancient times the sustenance of daily life was built upon the patient service of the ox. And in the Mosaic dispensation this strong and uncomplaining laborer for mankind was often called upon to give his life in typical atoning sacrifice.

Only the ox combines both aspects of service and sacrifice.

Surely, then, though in the Cherubim the triumphant lion-phase has been attained, it is fitting that the oxen face appears on the secondary left hand side to give far greater depth and meaning and background to the symbol.

And when we consider the left hand side as the side of rejection and humiliation, we need only to think of the significant phrase—

"Thy people will be willing in the day of thy power."

That is the day of irresistible lion-manifestation. But in the humble day of oxen service and sacrifice, he was—

"Despised and rejected; we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted" (Isa. 53:3, 4).

EAGLE

The fourth and final face is that of an eagle. This is the face that would not be seen from the front. It is the last face, as the man face is the first. This immediately suggests a contrast with man, as the lion is contrasted with the ox—

"First that which is natural, afterward that which is spiritual" (1 Cor. 15:46).

The Scriptures use the eagle as the symbol of unending youthfulness, freedom from natural limitations, and the tireless, effortless power and motion of the glorified spirit body—

"They shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary" (Isa. 40:31).

"Thy youth is renewed as the eagle's" (Psa. 103:5).

The eagle is proverbially the King of birds. It is renowned for the vast heights to which it soars, its tireless flight, its almost

incomprehensible powers of distant vision, its lightning swiftness of motion.

It is a fitting symbol of the glorious powers of the spirit nature.

Though it is the majestic and unchallenged ruler of the heaven, God uses its gentleness and loving attention to and training of its young as typical of His care for His Own people:

"I bare you on eagles' wings" (Ex. 19:4).

"As an eagle stirreth up (Heb. oor—wake, rouse; encourage) her nest, fluttereth over (rachef—to brood, cherish, develop in life—Gen. 1:2 same word) . . . so the Lord alone did lead him" (Deut. 32:11).

WINGS

The eagle face leads us naturally to a consideration of the wings of the Cherubim, for this is a related symbol. We are told concerning the wings—

1. Each had four.
2. Two were stretched upward and were joined to one another (that is, to the other Cherubim).
3. Two covered their bodies.
4. The noise of their wings was like the noise of great waters, like the voice of the Almighty, like the noise of a host.
5. When they stood, they let down their wings.

The primary significance of wings is **OVERSHADOWING**. The same word is also translated "*overshadowing*" and "*skirt*." It is the word Ruth uses to Boaz—

"Spread thy skirt (wings) over thine handmaid."

Boaz uses the same word to her, rightly and beautifully ascribing all overshadowing to—

"God, under Whose wings thou art come to trust."

Secondly, besides overshadowing and protecting, wings indicate *extension and dominion*. The same word is translated "*border*," "*uttermost part*," "*ends of the earth*." This is emphasized by the Cherubim having four wings—universal dominion—extending in every direction of the compass to the uttermost bounds.

Thirdly, wings indicate a *lifting up, an exalting*, a releasing from natural weakness and humility and limitations—

"Though ye have lain among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove, covered with silver" (covered with the redemption in Christ) "*and her feathers with yellow gold"* (tried faith) (Psa. 68:13).

And as previously quoted in another connection—

"They shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles" (Isa. 40:31).

"As an eagle beareth her young on her wings, so the Lord did lead Israel" (Deut. 32:11).

The wings of the Cherubim, therefore, give the picture of divine overshadowing and uplifting, the spirit transformation of the redeemed from weakness to strength, from lowness to glorious exaltation, and their universal dominion over all the earth.

Thus we see that the wings have an inner and an outer significance: the glorified saints' inner nature and their outer work, fittingly shown by two covering their bodies and two being spread abroad.

The wings of the Cherubim being joined together in one general canopy above them beautifully illustrates their unity, and the divine, overshadowing oneness of the Spirit that energizes them.

The noise of their wings being like the noise of great waters, like the noise of an host, and also like the voice of Ail Shaddai, the Almighty, show that they are a manifestation of God in a multitude, and their great multitudinous voice of dominion and authority is God's voice and power in them.

The last thing said about them is in the latter part of v. 24, which we have been considering—

"And when they stood, they LET DOWN THEIR WINGS".

And then above them, in the closing verses of the chapter, an even greater, more glorious, more awe-inspiring manifestation appears—

"THE APPEARANCE OF THE LIKENESS OF THE GLORY OF THE LORD."

This would appear to be the final consummation—the completing of the Cherubic work—the silencing of the Cherubic voice of authority—the letting down of the Cherubic wings of overshadowing dominion, as all is perfected and made eternally one with God—

"Then cometh the end when he shall have delivered up the Kingdom to God, when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power . . . then shall the Son also himself (individual and multitudinous) be subject unto Him that put all things under him, that GOD MAY BE ALL IN ALL."

The Beauty of Holiness

*"In the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning:
thou hast the dew of thy youth" (Psa. 110:3).*

There is great depth of beauty and instruction in the seven short verses of Psalm 110—

"The Lord (Yahweh) said unto my Lord, Sit thou at My right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool."

"Yahweh" Yahweh Elohim, *He Who Shall Be Mighty Ones*, the Memorial Covenant-Name, the glorious eternal purpose of the manifestation of God in a singing, rejoicing host of immortals.

"Yahweh said to my Lord."

It is David speaking, and from this verse Jesus establishes his own divine Sonship—

"What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is he? If David called him, 'Lord,' how is he his son?—and they durst not ask him any more questions."

Beside Jesus himself, both Peter and Paul apply this verse to Christ.

"Sit thou at My right hand."

The right hand is the position of favor, blessing, approval, strength, authority, honor, assurance, intimacy and fellowship. All these aspects are involved in the conception of Jesus ascending to God's right hand—

"The saving strength of His right hand" (Psa. 20:6).

"Thy right hand is full of righteousness" (Psa. 48:10).

"The Lord hath sworn by His right hand" (Isa. 62:8).

"At Thy right hand are pleasures forevermore" (Psa. 16:11).

Jesus is described as "The man of God's right hand" (Psa. 80:17)—the man in whom is centered and embodied all these aspects of blessing and fellowship.

* * *

The invitation to "sit" implies a completed work. Writing to the Hebrews (10:11-13) Paul refers to this Psalm in making a contrast between the Mosaic priests who *stood* repeating the same sacrifices day after day, year after year, and Christ, who—

*"... after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever,
SAT DOWN on the right hand of God, from henceforth
expecting till his enemies be made his footstool."*

To sit is a position of honor and fulfillment and rest. To stand portrays servitude and incompleteness and unfinished toil.

* * *

"Until I make thine enemies thy footstool."

This seems out of place. It seems to be lowering the exalted tone of the Psalm to start out about vengeance on enemies. We should be inclined to think that the judgment on the enemies, though necessary, would be a very minor aspect of the Kingdom compared to its glories and blessings, and goodness and love.

Are we a little embarrassed by this apparent obsession with vengeance, as in various "cursing" Psalms, as something we feel a need to explain away in this modern age?

Let us not explain them away: *let us learn by them*. They are to emphasize what stands in the way of the manifestations of blessings and life—the terrible destructive seriousness of the problem of sin and evil and godlessness and natural fleshly-mindedness.

"He must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet" (1 Cor. 15:25).

That is his work and purpose (v. 26)—

"The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."

Sin is the great enemy from the beginning—the enemy of both God and man—that Old Serpent, the Devil and Satan. The first enemy is Sin—the last enemy is Death. Between them are comprehended all evil and sorrow and travail.

So with the so-called "cursing" Psalms.

The more we realize the evilness and seriousness and harmfulness of sin—godlessness—the natural thoughts and motions of the flesh—disobedience and self-will, the more we shall understand, and REJOICE in these references to the enemies' destruction.

We shall more wholeheartedly and fervently cry with Paul—

"O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from this body of death?" (Rom. 7:24).

God, in the patience and wisdom of His glorious purpose, has so long tolerated the ignorant, arrogant wilfulness of man that even God's own people are liable to lose some of the vividness of their recognition of the continually outraged majesty and authority of God in the earth—the dreadful curse of Sin-in-the-flesh, the evil it creates, the good and joy it frustrates.

It is good to constantly be reminded of this vital truth. For all its surface pleasantness, the whole world lieth in godless wickedness.

"The Lord (Yahweh) shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion" (v. 2).

The rod is the iron rod of divine judgment of the earth—

"To him that overcometh will I give power over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron. As the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers." (Rev. 2:26, 27).

The rod is sent forth (v. 2) "out of Zion" as Isaiah and Micah join to proclaim—

"The Law shall go forth from Zion, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem."

And in Psalm 2, God declares—

"I have set My king upon My holy hill of Zion. I shall give thee the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession" (vs. 6, 8).

And these are the days of the fulfilment of these terrible and glorious things—the culmination of all the earth's long ages of travail and sorrow.

We see today Russia—the later-day Assyrian—rapidly rising to humanly irresistible domination of the earth—everywhere on the offensive—everywhere holding the initiative—everywhere successful and confident—everywhere advancing, except as God puts "hooks in his jaws" to turn him back into the direction of advance required by the divine purpose.

Our natural tendency is to share in the disturbance and concern of the world in these ominous events leading to the time of trouble such as never was. The world has suddenly grown very small. There is no place to get away for safety.

The hundreds of millions in Asia and Africa—long comfortably dominated by the western nations—are rising in ever-increasing waves of bitterness and violence, and are turning to Russia who according to God's purpose, has achieved out of the depths of poverty and backwardness, a modern miracle of scientific and industrial progress—far surpassing every nation of Europe and now pressing closer and closer upon the heels of America in the race for productive power and ascendancy, and in the one field above all today that means world-prestige—the field of space—easily outracing and humiliating the West.

But the command at this time is to "Rejoice! Lift up your heads! Your redemption draweth nigh."

There is nothing to fear. This is but the brief and divinely ordained travail that will bring forth the glorious reign of peace. God's almighty hand is upon Russia as much as it was on Egypt, Babylon and Rome. Nothing is left to chance. All is foreseen and controlled.

At just the right moment, the rod of strength shall go irresistibly forth from Zion from between the two terrible mountains of brass and Christ will reign triumphant in the midst of his enemies, and the modern nuclear nightmare of hatred and terror into which proud, evil man has plunged God's beautiful earth will be forever only a memory.

* * *

"Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power."

What volumes this expresses! What thoughts it provokes! Christ's "people" are natural Israel. The redeemed are more than his "people"—they are his children, they are himself, they are the "dew of his youth" of the end of the verse.

The great tragedy of Israel is that they were not willing in the day of his suffering, humiliation and weakness—

"O Jerusalem, if Thou hadst but known, in this thy day!"

"He came to his own, and his own received him not."

"We did esteem him stricken—smitten of God and afflicted."

"We will not have this man to reign over us!"

"Crucify him! We have no king but Caesar."

Terrible words! Terrible consequences! To what extent do we by our fleshly actions say the same—"We will not have this man to reign over us!"—for actions speak louder than words. They tell where our heart and affections truly are.

But God often in His love and wisdom brings future good out of present evil. The Jews' rejection of Christ, though terrible for them, was the blessing and salvation of the Gentiles, and at last, through and by means of the very tribulation they have brought upon themselves, all Israel shall be saved—

"They shall look upon him they pierced, and mourn."

"Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power."

* * *

Now comes the heart of the Psalm—the most beautiful part of all. Of this verse, bro. Thomas said in Eureka I—

"The appearance of dew from the womb of the dawn, as representative of the resurrection of the saints is the most beautiful of scriptural similitudes."

"In the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth."

The broad picture is clear—the multitudinous Christ manifested in light as the dew from the dark womb of the morning by the glorious rising of the Sun of Righteousness—but there are many possible shades of meaning to the various symbols.

The term "beauties of holiness" is also rendered "the splendors of the holy ones, or saints." The word here for "beauty" is elsewhere translated "glory, honor, majesty, excellence."

We can thus add to the breadth and variety of the meaning of the phrase, but really, for deep significance, the expression "beauty of holiness" cannot be improved upon. It is the essence of the purpose of God.

Beauty IS holiness, and holiness is beauty, and there is no true beauty other than holiness. All that is not holy is ugly and repulsive and diseased. Beauty is a prominent subject in the Scriptures—true, divine beauty—

"One thing have I desired . . . to behold the beauty of the Lord" (Psa. 27:4).

"Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us" (Psa. 90:17).

"He will beautify the meek with salvation" (Psa. 149:4).

"He hath made everything beautiful in its time" (Ecc. 3:11).

Beauty in creation, first natural, then spiritual, is the one greatest single proof and evidence of divinity. IT HAS NO OTHER EXPLANATION—

"He hath made everything beautiful in its time." All the infinite beauties of creation lead to the supreme and final and eternal beauty—the beauty of holiness.

The great power of the way of Christ is its beauty—its utter contrast with the selfish, wilful ugliness of the flesh.

"From the womb of the morning."

The spiritual significance of "morning" is summed up in the statement—

"Weeping may endure for the night, but joy cometh in the morning" (Psa. 30:15).

The night is the present dark time of weakness and mortality and struggle against the evil motions of sin, within and without:

"The darkness He called NIGHT."

This is the first mention of night, in the fifth verse of the first chapter of the Bible, and the last mention in verse 5 of the last chapter, Rev. 22—

"And there shall be no night there, for the Lord God giveth them light."

Light is the great need, the great gift, the great blessing, the great purpose. Our minds turn to that beautiful verse—

"God, Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of

the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6).

And so, truly, even now, in this night of weakness, there are "songs in the night," but they are songs of faith, and hope, and joyful anticipation, like the songs of Paul and Silas in the dark Philippian dungeon.

* * *

"Thou hast the dew of thy youth" (Psa. 110:3).

Dew is a very interesting and important phenomenon—both naturally and scripturally. It is far more important in Bible lands than in the zones we are familiar with.

In hot climates where some seasons have no rainfall at all, dew is vital for the maintenance of vegetation. We see this in Elijah's declaration to Ahab—

"There shall not be dew nor rain" (1 Kgs. 17:1).

And Haggai 1:10—

"The heaven over you is stayed from dew; the earth is stayed of her fruit."

On the other hand, we read—

"The king's favor is as dew upon the grass." (Prov. 19:12).

And Zech. 8:12—

"The ground shall give her increase, and the heaven shall give her dew."

The first mention of dew is in Isaac's blessing of Jacob—

"God give thee of the dew of heaven" (Gen. 27:28).

It has been a matter of objection to the fittingness of the dew to represent the resurrected saints, shining in the reflected glory of the new risen Sun of Righteousness, that dew descends from the air as condensation of atmospheric moisture. Therefore it is very interesting to note that though a portion of the dew is thus formed, *the greater part normally is from the ground.*

How beautifully this corresponds with the two classes of the resurrection—the dead in Christ and those that are "alive and remain" at his coming!

A recent edition of Everyman's Encyclopedia says (and the wording is very striking to those who know the true symbolism of the dew)—

"In 1885 Aitken by experiments discovered that while undoubtedly some of the moisture called dew was the result of condensation of the atmosphere, the greater part is formed from moisture just risen from the earth or to the surface of plant leaves."

The Encyclopedia Britannica confirms this and points out that the surplus moisture in the air is soon exhausted in one deposit, but the moisture from the earth keeps rising from deeper and deeper layers of the ground.

We see here a beautiful and poetic representation of the successive generations of the sleepers in Jesus coming forth to stand on their feet an exceeding great army.

The Spirit declares in Isa. 26: 19 (using the American Revised Version for clarity, and for its remarkable closeness to bro. Thomas' translation)—

*"Thy dead shall live. Thy dead bodies shall arise.
Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust, for thy
dew is as the dew of light.
And the earth shall cast forth the dead."*

* * *

*"Thou (the glorious, newly-manifested Messiah) hast
the dew of thy youth."*

"Youth" is a fitting term, for the joyful, and eternal vitality of the redeemed is spoken of as "renewing their youth"—

"Thy youth is renewed like the eagle's" (Psa. 103:5).
And the meaning of this we get from Isa. 40:31—

*"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their
strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles.
They shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and
not faint."*

But Bro. Thomas renders this word as "birth" instead of "youth." It is from the root meaning "to give birth to." Several versions render this passage, "I have begotten thee."

The saints are truly to Christ the "dew of his birth." They are the holy seed born of the bitter travail of his soul—

*"He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days . . ."
"He shall see the travail of his soul and be satisfied"*
(Isa. 53:10, 11).

And in Psa. 22, which is all about the details of the crucifixion, we read—

*"A seed shall serve him . . . it shall be accounted to the
Lord for his generation"* (v. 30).

This is the "nation born in a day" of Isa. 66—the "dew of thy birth" from the womb of the morning.

To Christ, Paul applies the words of Isa. 8:18—

"I and the children which God hath given me."

Of the King of Righteousness, David says—

*"Instead of thy fathers, shall be thy children, whom
thou mayest make princes in all the earth"* (Psa. 45:16).

Psa. 110 continues—

"The Lord (Yahweh) hath sworn, and will not repent—

"Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek" (v. 4).

This verse is the keystone of Paul's epistle to the Hebrews. Around it he builds the great framework of his demonstration that the Law of Moses must pass away before the advent of an infinitely greater and more glorious High Priest than any of Aaron's sons—

"If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchizedek?"

"For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change of the Law also."

"For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah . . . And it is yet far more evident that after the similitude of Melchizedek there ariseth another priest, who is made, not after the law of carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life" (Heb. 7:11-16).

Continuing in Psalm 110—

"The Lord at Thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath" (v. 5).

"He shall judge among the nations; he shall fill with dead bodies" (v. 6).

Here is how the Melchizedek priesthood is established. It is a ROYAL priesthood, a priesthood of power and rulership. As Psa. 72, declares—

"All kings shall fall down before him. All nations shall serve him" (v. 11).

His priestly kingdom is worldwide—it fills the earth.

* * *

"He shall wound the heads over many countries."

Rather as in Bro. Thomas and most recent versions—

"He shall strike through the Head of a wide dominion" (Psa. 110:6).

Here is the destruction of the Serpent-power of Sin, first in its latter day organized form as Gog of the land of Magog, the Head of the assembled Image, the Kingdom of Men, standing up against the Prince of princes, and secondly, the smiting of the Serpent-head of Sin in all its manifestations throughout the earth.

This leads us naturally to the final and climaxing thought of the Psalm—his humiliation and his glory, his exaltation through faith, obedience and suffering—

*"He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall
He lift up the head" (Psa. 110:7).*

It is the drinking of the brook in the way that we meet each week to remember.

"The brook" gives rise to many thoughts, both sad and glorious.

"Brook" is the same word as "valley." It means descent, a going down. He went down in obedience into the valley, even the valley of the shadow of death, to drink of the cup which the Father's wisdom had ordained.

"Drinking" of sorrow and travail is a familiar scriptural theme.

"I have mingled my drink with weeping" (Psa. 102:9).

"Tears to drink in great measure" (Psa. 80:5).

The "willows of the brook" are the symbol of humiliation and weeping.

The brook speaks too, of a weakness and smallness, as compared with the great and mighty rivers of the Gentile nations.

But there is another aspect to the brook symbol. The same word is used of the stream that flows out from Ezekiel's temple to carry life and blessing to the ends of the earth. This is the water of life, the Spirit-stream, the Word of God.

It was how they drank of the brook that determined the selection of Gideon's faithful three hundred.

"Ho everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters."

*"Behold I have given him for a witness to the people,
a leader and a commander to the people" (Isa. 55:1-4).*

Jesus said to the woman of Samaria—

*"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 ever-
lasting life" (Jn. 4:14).*

*"He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall
he lift up the head" (Psa. 110:7).*

He drank, in obedience, of the brook of suffering and the brook of wisdom and divine instruction. He went down into the valley of suffering, and lay down his life for his friends.

And now the Father hath lifted up his head, exalted him to His right hand, and given him a Name above every name, because he was faithful and obedient in all things, and set God ever before his face.

Let us contemplate his love, his wisdom, his obedience, his suffering and his victory, as we partake together of his solemn and joyous Memorial Feast.

To be Fleshly-Minded is Death

THE WORLD'S WICKEDNESS: OUR CALL TO HOLINESS

"Confess your faults one to another, and pray for one another, for the fervent, effectual prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (Jam. 5:16).

Why are we gathered here? Is it for enjoyment? No. The purpose of our life is not enjoyment, but accomplishment, development, growth, preparation. In the mercy of God, enjoyment is the result of godly activity, but it is not the purpose.

To be real and worthwhile, life must have a far deeper motive than enjoyment, or the satisfying of any desire. The motivating force in our lives must be the love of God, for its own sake alone.

Only this could make both Moses and Paul—two men so different and yet so much alike—sincerely and unaffectedly willing to be blotted out of God's purpose if it would help their brethren.

True love is entirely selfless. It is far too large and irradiating to be conformed to self-interest.

We are here to help and be helped. These addresses themselves are but a small part of the purpose of our gathering together. The real part is contact, fellowship, encouragement, mutual interest—better understanding, sympathy, drawing closer together.

God in His mercy has given us fellow-workers on the road to life. They are not perfect, as we ourselves are not perfect, but we are united in a striving for perfection, and earnest realization of the great beauty and desirability of perfection. That is the glorious bond that unites us here in one heart and spirit.

We are not here to congratulate one another because we fast twice in the week, and give tithes of all we possess, and are so much better than other men. This can creep into our attitude if we are not careful.

We are separated from other groups, not because we think we are better, but because we realize more clearly the dangers and weaknesses inherent in the flesh—our own flesh included—and are more concerned about them in the light of God's Word. We are not here to criticize and condemn others. We are here in recognition of our own weakness and need.

We are united in a glorious endeavor—the only worthwhile and satisfying endeavor in the whole earth—but the magnitude

of its scope and gloriousness makes us keenly conscious of our utter natural unworthiness.

It is God's will that it should create this feeling within us. God is infinite and omnipotent. We are perishing creatures of such limited understanding and ability.

This overwhelming sense of unworthiness should teach us kindness and compassion and mercy—a great hesitancy to judge, knowing that with what measure we judge we shall be judged, and we all need such mercy ourselves.

This realization of unworthiness is designed to create in us a vast gratitude that One so great and perfect can look down in patient compassion upon those so weak and erring.

And gratitude, if it is real and deep and fills the heart, will be irresistibly moved to express itself in ACTION.

And God in His wisdom has prescribed such a beautiful, self-blessing way of giving vent to this overpowering thankfulness—

"We love, because He first loved us, and this commandment have we from Him, that he who loveth God love his brother also.

"We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren" (1 Jn. 4:19-21; 3:14).

This is the heart of our subject—the heart of holiness. We remember that Jesus said that even sinners—ordinary people living according to the flesh—reciprocate kindness among themselves. There is no particular virtue in being good in return for good.

But it takes saints—holy ones—children of God, to be kind to the unthankful and evil, hoping to demonstrate the power and superiority of goodness, and, like God, by love to create love.

* * *

We are here to learn to grow, to get a fuller picture of the meaning and purpose of life.

Are we really pursuing a real PURPOSE in our lives?

Nothing worthwhile is ever accomplished without single-minded devotion and effort to which all else is subordinated.

The parables of Jesus contain the deepest and most searching lessons of godliness. The depth is measured only by how far we allow them to penetrate our hearts and motivate our lives. We have recently read together again the parable of the unjust steward, which Jesus sums up in these tragic words—

"The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light" (Lk. 16:8).

What tremendous efforts, what self-sacrifice, what complete dedication the children of this world will put into their endeavors!

Nothing is too hard for a man who is striving toward some coveted goal in this life—long hours of labor, loss of sleep, foregoing of pleasure and comfort—how often have we seen this as a man drives himself steadily ahead toward some corruptible crown which he can only, at best, wear but a few short troubled years.

Do we expect eternity on cheaper terms? How much actual EFFORT and SACRIFICE are we putting into our seeking the Kingdom of God?

"The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light."

Hundreds of millions live and have lived upon the earth. If Christ should ask us at the Judgment Seat—"Why you, and not them? What distinguishes you from the great perishing mass?"

What should we answer?

"We believed the Truth."

Will he not reply, "The devils also believe, and tremble"?

"We were in the Truth twenty-thirty-forty-fifty-sixty years."

"That is not a credit. That is a liability—something *given* to you to DO something with. What have you to SHOW for all these years of opportunity?"

Another parable comes to our minds: the Parable of the Talents. That is us. Our talents are health, strength, ability, a certain amount of material goods, time, facilities for studying God's Word, and a mind capable of infinitely more accomplishment for good than any of us ever approach to.

The purpose of this gathering—of all exhortation—is to impress us with the URGENCY of the situation. We cannot be drifting. We must be actively pursuing a purpose in life and keeping it always before our mind, conforming all plans to it. Any other course is hopeless.

"Seek ye first the Kingdom of God"—not all the material things the people of the world seek. This does not mean, Get into the Truth first, and get your salvation taken care of, and then turn your attention to getting the things of the world.

"Seek ye first" means that that must be first *all the time* all our life—a lifetime of seeking the Kingdom first.

Another parable speaks of four classes of soil on which the seed of the Kingdom was sown: three failures, tragedies; one

success. For most of us, the danger of the first two failures has past, for they happen early in the race, but the third is far more subtle and dangerous—

"The cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of present possessions choke the Word, and he becometh unfruitful" (Mk. 4:19).

This is a very pressing, urgent question for us all: Are we allowing the things of the present—the pressures of modern life—to choke the Word?—rob us of the crown of our life?—all unsuspectedly to rob us of eternity?

We live in a luxury unknown to all previous generations. To what extent are we justified in allowing ourselves to be swept up into this modern treadmill? Let us pray for enlightenment and guidance in this matter, that we do not find to our sorrow that the cares of this life have won their bitter victory in the end.

"I will pull down my barns and build bigger" (Lk. 12:18)—how deep does this folly go? Would Christ find it in our hearts too? Have we found it "necessary" to build a bigger barn?

For example, and this is only an example, for it applies in so many ways: we may be quite justified in spending God's money for an automobile, and God's time and strength in getting that money (for all we have is God's), for under modern conditions an automobile can contribute effectively to the overall usefulness of our lives in God's service (and that is the ONLY justification for anything)—

BUT—can we justify spending God's money for a better one than three-quarters of our worldly neighbors find quite adequate?

The same with our houses. Whose money are we spending? And what is our real purpose in life? For everything we do must be in harmony with one purpose, if we sincerely seek salvation. Are we princes, or pilgrims? We cannot be both.

These questions are for each to consider and decide. If we will face their implications, we shall find that they apply to every aspect of our lives. Are the cares of this life—those so pleasant, self-chosen, self-gratifying cares—choking out the fruit, cutting into time and effort that belong to the work of God? What are the implications of the command (1 Tim. 6:8)—

"Having food and raiment, be therewith content."

"Seek ye first the Kingdom of God" (Matt. 6:33).

THE WORLD'S WICKEDNESS

Is the world, as such, wicked? Truly there is a lot of wickedness in the world, a lot of crime, a lot of evil, a lot of violence—

but is not the world as a whole itself very strongly against this element? Can we today say, "*The whole world lieth in wickedness?*" Can we fairly call it "*This present evil world?*"

This blanket condemnation of the whole human race, except a handful of Christadelphians, is a serious problem to many.

Is there not much goodness, kindness, friendliness, mutual help, striving and planning for better things for the general welfare? Who are we, to condemn them all alike?

It is not we who condemn the world. Of ourselves we would not dare. It is the Word of God, and if any are willing to humbly study that Word, they will see quite clearly that the whole world DOES live in wickedness, just as the Spirit through the apostle John declares—a wickedness of which we ourselves, together with all mankind, are in our natural state a part.

The question for us is: Have we really come out? Have we really separated ourselves from the wickedness of which the Scripture speaks? They are not talking about the criminal element. They are not talking about the things the world itself considers wicked. They go much deeper into it than that. *They are talking about the basic characteristics of all human hearts.*

Naturally, by its own standards the world is not wicked. But the only true standard of measurement is God's standard, and we must go to God's Word and ask—

What is wickedness and what is righteousness?

What is right; what is wrong?

What is sound, and true, and everlasting; and what is false, and corrupt, and passing?

We must begin at the right place. We must begin with God, and work out from there, taking nothing for granted that we do not measure from Him.

God is the foundation and center of everything. There are no standards of anything apart from Him. Right and wrong, good and bad, mean nothing apart from Him.

He alone is stable and fixed and unchangeable in the universe.

He is eternal and perfect in beauty, wisdom, goodness and love. Everything is to be measured according as it is in harmony or disharmony with Him. All that is out of harmony with God is wickedness, foolishness, unhappiness, corruption, and death:

"Sin is transgression of the law" (1 Jn. 3:4).

The Scriptures put the same truth into a broader and more sweeping form when they say—

"Whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Rom. 14:23).

That is, everything—every human activity—outside of an intelligent comprehension and acceptance of God's law, is SIN. Everything that is not done within the framework of a conscious enlightened effort to be in harmony with God, is SIN, either ignorant or presumptuous.

Why is the definition of sin so broad? Why is everything weighted against us? Why can we not just as likely be right as wrong?

If we think about it, we shall see that it could be no other way. If God has commanded us to consciously frame our whole life in obedience to Him, then ANY independent action which is done in ignorance, thoughtlessness, or disregard of this command, is sin, even though in itself the act is not specifically forbidden.

It is the self-will, the self-pleasing, the ignoring of God's command and sovereign supremacy—that is sin.

* * *

But there is a stronger factor still that makes all action sin that is not done in conscious submission and obedience to God. It is expressed in these statements—

"The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

"To be carnally-minded is death, but to be spiritually-minded is life and peace" (Rom. 8:6, 7).

"The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other" (Gal. 5:17).

To be carnally-minded is to be just a natural, ordinary person of the world, acting according to natural, ordinary desires. This natural way is contrary to God's will and holiness. Paul sums it up thus—

"In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing" (Rom. 7:18).

"I see a law in my members . . . bringing me into captivity to the law of sin in my members" (Rom. 7:23).

This is why *"Everything that is not of faith is sin."* This is why *"The whole world lieth in wickedness."*

* * *

Let us not stand back abstracted and detached, as if the world and its wickedness were something entirely separate from ourselves. The main issue is *inward*—the examination and judgment of self.

Of others, let God be the Judge. Our duty to others is to help, persuade, exhort, yea, plead and warn, but not to judge and condemn.

It is so easy and self-gratifying to judge, condemn, criticize and ridicule. In so doing we condemn ourselves, for the very act of condemning is a manifestation of the *diabolos*—

"Who art thou, O man, that judgest another?" (Jam. 4:12).

The message of the Scripture is that—

"All have sinned and come short of the glory of God"
(Rom. 3:23).

All stand alike in need of infinite mercy and infinite help.

* * *

The "world" of which the Scriptures speak is the natural society of man—living according to the mind of the flesh, in ignorance and darkness as regards true spiritual principles.

In relation to God, all who are just natural parts of the world are aliens, strangers, living a mere animal existence, outside of the divine family and of God's covenants and promises of life.

About this "world" of natural mankind, the Scriptures say many things, some of which appear on the surface to be directly contradictory. On the one hand we have these broad, general statements of great power and beauty—

"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (Jn. 3:16).

"Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world" (Jn. 1:29).

"He is the mercy-seat for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 Jn. 2:2).

"I came not to judge the world, but to save it" (Jn. 12:47).

On the other hand we have these very plain statements and commands—

"I pray not for the world, but a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (Jam. 4:4).

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world, for all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father, but is of the world" (1 Jn. 2:15, 16).

The apparent contradiction disappears when we re-examine the first class of passages and realize that they all clearly emphasize—yea, they are mainly concerned with—the world's

lost, alienated condition and need for reconciliation and salvation from sin.

These passages manifest—not any blurring of the essential distinction and separation between God's sons and the world—but rather the great compassion of God toward the sinful world, and His merciful desire that as many as possible be saved FROM their alienated and hopeless position.

This is the key to our relationship to the world—sharp, clear separation; but infinite kindness and compassion and patience.

When we desire, in any form or degree, to “call down fire from heaven” against any in the world (usually it is someone who has hurt or annoyed us personally)—when we nurse and soothe our anger with the comforting thought that God will pay them back in full measure—we are manifesting the *diabolos* and not the Spirit of God. We are being small and cramped and self-centered.

We are pitying ourselves instead of rising to the largeness of heart and mind manifested by the Master in our readings a few days ago—

“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Lk. 23:34).

* * *

OUR CALL TO HOLINESS

What thoughts does the word “call” suggest? First of all we are reminded that salvation begins with action and interest on God's part. Jesus said—

“No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him” (Jn. 6:44).

God has called us—invited us to fellowship—offered us a position of honor and power and glory and responsibility higher than anything mankind has ever dreamed of—asked us to set aside all less-important, passing things, and diligently prepare ourselves for intimate, eternal association with Him.

To what extent do we really realize the implications of the call? If we really did fully realize its magnitude—would not our minds ALWAYS be filled with the thrill and expectation and wonder of it?

Would we not ALWAYS be zealously engaged in intensive preparation, impatient of anything that distracted or diverted our attention from these efforts?

How real is our professed zeal? How deep is our professed faith? How strong is our professed hope? How true and undivided is our professed love?

Surely it would seem that if we really possessed these things in their fulness, our characters and our activities would be so much different from what they are!—and so much more different from all the rest of natural, animal humanity!

Where is the pure, gentle, gracious transformation to a heavenly, Christlike holiness of which the Scriptures constantly speak as the ONLY way of life—the being “changed into the same divine image from glory to glory”?

OUR CALL TO HOLINESS

On the front of the headdress of the Mosaic High Priest, there was attached a plate of pure gold, and on it was engraved the inscription, “Holiness to the Lord.” That was the central theme of the Law of Moses: “Holiness to the Lord”—man is weak and unclean; God is great and holy—

“Be ye holy, even as I the Lord am holy” (Lev. 11:44).

Under the Law, everything to do with natural man, from birth to death, was defiled, impure, unclean. Over and over the lesson is emphasized: cleansing, purifying, purging, washing—sacrifice, atonement, reconciliation, redemption—

“Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world” (Jn. 1:29).

* * *

What is holiness? The Hebrew original is *kodesh*, meaning “SET APART, separated, sacred, dedicated, devoted in worship and service.”

Arising from this comes its secondary meaning of “PURE, undefiled, godly.”

Holiness is separation—separateness. What is involved in the conception of separateness, as regards the world of mankind in general? What associations and relationships are forbidden, and what are required as part of our testifying for God?

We know that the interpretation of separateness that would have us live in seclusion as monks or hermits—severing all contact with the world—is unscriptural, a deformed travesty of the Truth. Jesus’ prayer to the Father was (Jn. 17:15)—

“Not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil.”

Jesus’ words and Jesus’ own life and example are the key to this question. He mingled freely with harlots and sinners, those who were morally the lowest and least respected classes of society, but *he never for a moment took part in their activities,*

their worldly and fleshly interests. Though in intimate association with them, he was always separate.

Wherever he was, whoever he was with, he was wholly devoted to his Father's business—working for God—manifesting God—showing how beautiful and desirable and satisfying and more excellent is the way of godliness and holiness and love.

Without difficulty, without incongruity, without any violation of holiness, we can imagine Jesus going anywhere and associating with anyone.

But when we visualize what he would be doing, what he would be saying, how he would be comporting himself—we can never picture him stepping even for a moment outside of the narrow and exalted path of holiness, graciousness, complete and single-minded dedication to the service of God. We can never picture him allowing the issue of separation from the world to be obscured or confused, though associating with them in the most intimate way.

The principle of separateness must go much deeper than the juvenile hermit conception of not having physical contact with the world—that is shallow and superficial, a childish running away from reality and duty. It does not come to grips with the state of the heart and mind.

We might never actually have any contact with the people of the world, but if our hearts are in their worldly activities, their amusements and entertainments, their foolish, small-minded gossip about trivialities which makes up most of their conversation and what they consider news, we are not holy and separate.

We could sit at home all our lives and never see a soul, but if we fill our hearts and minds and interests with these things through newspapers, magazines, radio and television, we are just as much a part of the world of the ungodly as if we were bodily and actively in the front lines of every one of their activities.

The separateness must enter right into our hearts, or it is just a vain form—just a self-righteous, ritualistic, superficial fulfilment of uncomprehended regulations.

And it must go even deeper than just separation from the interests of the world. We could be totally uninterested in anything the world did, and still we could be just as much a part of the world and its wickedness as anyone.

How? Here are very fertile grounds for hypocrisy and Phariseism, for while we are condemning others for outward

and obvious worldliness, we may ourselves be far more seriously guilty of the more deceptive and dangerous inward worldliness—harshness, unkindness, bad temper, selfishness, lack of self-control, pride, inconsideration, the universal tendency of the flesh to bully and domineer when it is a position of advantage, unfair criticism, gossip, back-biting, indulging our own ugly fleshly desires and lusts in many ways.

All these things come from within, and defile a man—make him unholy—make a mockery of his professed separation—make him a part of this present evil world.

How rare and precious is consistency! The better we discern our own weaknesses, the slower we will be to criticize the weaknesses of others. Jesus said—

"I have overcome the world" (Jn. 16:33).

What did he mean? What was the world which he had overcome? Did not the world overcome and kill him? John defines the world as—

"The lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1 Jn. 2:16).

To the extent that we are motivated by the flesh in any way, to that extent we are part of the world and overcome by the world. To the extent we overcome lust and pride, to that extent we overcome the world, and are separate from it.

* * *

Here is another aspect of the subject—godly holiness and separateness is not a negative quality—not just a refraining, not a sterilized vacuum of self-centered isolation.

It is a positive, complete, wholehearted absorption and dedication to spiritual ACTIVITY—a filling of the life and heart and interests with work for God. We can't be holy by just lying in bed, if we have the power to get up and do something for God.

We must clearly realize that this is an essential aspect of holiness. In true holiness, there is just no room or time for worldliness. True holiness will fill the life completely with godly activity and will crowd everything else out. It is the only thing that has the power to crowd it out and keep it out.

Holiness is not fulfilled in passive standing aside, no matter how complete that standing aside may be.

The parable of the talents clearly teaches us that true, living, holiness is not a self-satisfied sitting back from all the world's activities and enjoying ourselves indolently in our own little

isolated world, which—being to the gratification of the flesh—is just as worldly as the world itself.

Holiness is work, effort, activity, service, self-sacrifice, devotion to a purpose and a goal.

The slothful, unfaithful servant who buried his talent in the earth certainly kept it separate from the world. He faithfully fulfilled the negative part of the command. But he was no example of true, living holiness.

* * *

Holiness is a manifestation of God—

"Be ye holy, even as I am holy" (Lev. 11:44).

"Let your light so shine that men may see your good works and glorify your Father Who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16).

The shining of the light to the glory of the Father is the manifestation of love, benevolence, sympathy, compassion, gentleness, and earnest effort and prayer for the well-being of others.

We must guard against the Pharisaic conception that separateness and holiness imply coldness, antagonism, self-centeredness, and a vindictive eagerness to see sin punished and the wicked suffer.

God does not desire the death of the sinner. God punishes reluctantly and sorrowfully. Let us take to heart the great lesson of Jonah—the "sign of the prophet Jonas"—

"Doest thou well to be angry?" (Jon. 4:4).

Nineveh was a cruel, vicious, evil persecutor of God's people, but God sharply chided Jonah for resenting His mercy toward them. God would have all men come to repentance. All, even the worst, are "His offspring."

We need not fret with selfish resentment when the wicked appear to prosper. No one can fight against God. No one who is not sincerely trying to live in harmony with God is ever really happy, though all are so frantically pursuing happiness.

We can relax in the assurance that there is no real happiness in sin and selfishness, even at present; and that all sin, no matter how apparently "successful," is self-destructive at last.

To be upset and annoyed because injustice in any form appears to triumph is merely a measure of lack of faith and discernment. Let us stop and get our bearings and keep the overall picture in mind.

God is in full control. He will see that justice is done—far deeper, wiser, more perfect justice than we can conceive of.

Was it justice to tolerate the terrible persecutions done by Paul before his enlightenment?

Let us not be afraid that God is missing anything—not a sparrow falls without His knowing. All we have to be concerned about is that WE ourselves are right with God, and a very large part of our being right with God is our attitude toward others in seeking their good, and deeply pitying all who are unredeemed slaves to the terrible master Sin whose only wages is sorrow and death.

Christ prayed for those who murdered him, and so did Stephen. In the latter case, the apostle Paul was among them. Is it not far more glorious to intercede than to condemn? Suppose our forgiving prayers save our enemies from death, and make them eternally our brethren. Are we not then *"workers together with God"* in bringing good out of evil, and life out of death?

Let us exercise this marvelous, soul-enlarging privilege of intercession and compassion to the uttermost, and leave the condemning to Him Whose right it is alone.

What more thankful, faithful, self-sacrificing servant ever lived than Paul, the persuaded persecutor?

* * *

Our duties of practical holiness and godliness toward others apply in intensive degree to the Brotherhood. Here above all else it is essential that all things be done in love.

How long must it be before we will learn that love is sufficient for all things?—that NO circumstance ever justifies the setting aside or violating of this basic characteristic of godliness?

True, indeed, we must be faithful to the Truth, we must be firm, we must testify against error, we must speak out clearly against wrong doing, we must stand aside when faithfulness demands.

But all these things must be done in love, and sorrow, and compassion, and never-despairing hope—never in bitterness, condemnation, anger or self-righteousness—

"God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God" (1 Jn. 4:16).

"He that loveth not his brother dwelleth in death" (1 Jn. 3:14).

John says further—

"Herein is love, that we keep His commandments" (1 Jn. 5:3).

And Jesus said—

"This is my commandment that ye love one another"
(Jn. 15:12).

There are two common misapplications of these teachings and we must avoid both of them. One is the cold conception that all that matters is technical obedience, and that *this* constitutes what the Scriptures call "love". If we will meditate with open heart upon all the Scriptures say about love, we shall realize more and more how shallow this view is.

The other is the flabby, sentimental notion that all that matters is "love", and that making an issue over specific obedience is being "*righteous overmuch*".

Both LOVE—the power of holiness, and painstaking OBEDIENCE—the divinely-prescribed shape and framework of holiness, are essential and inseparable.

Love is a gentle, sympathetic, humble, kindly way and spirit of doing what obedience requires to be done. In our weak mortal fleshly nature it is perhaps the most pressing issue before us—our most serious problem and concern.

Soon we must stand before the judgment seat of Christ, and let us clearly realize that we shall come face to face with the basic divine truth that—

"He that loveth not his brother abideth in death"

—and that this essential love is a far greater and transforming thing than most of us realize. And it does not just mean love when love is easy. John says—

"Hereby perceive we love, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 Jn. 3:16).

If we are not willing to do this, we have not the living Truth that Jesus and the apostles preached.

And if we are willing to do it, we WILL do it, because there are many ways in which we CAN do it. If we do not give our whole lives for the brethren, it is because we are not willing to do it. We have not caught the transforming spirit of this command.

The Spirit tells us that—

"Love is patient and kind—never rude—does not become angry—bears everything—hopes everything—endures everything" (1 Cor. 13:4-7).

If we have not got this, we have not got the Truth at all, for he plainly says that *without this, everything else is vain.*

When will we learn that love is sufficient for all things, and that there is NEVER any justification for bitterness or harshness or rudeness or unkindness?

How do we expect to teach the beauty of gentleness and kindness and self-control by manifesting bitterness, harshness, sourness and anger?

These things are out-and-out evil manifestations of the flesh, and if we allow the natural irritable bullying tendency of the *diabolos* to deceive us into thinking they are essential to firmness and discipline and plain-speaking, then we are pitifully self-deceived indeed.

If we do not first discipline OURSELVES—searchingly examine ourselves by the light of God's Word—discern the evil, proud, antagonistic motions of the flesh for what they truly are, how can we presume to guide and instruct others in the Way of Life?

How can harshness breed anything but coarseness and harshness and antagonism in return? Firmness is far more effective when it is gentle and courteous, for then it has the power of godliness.

Of those from whom it is necessary to stand aside in fellowship, Paul says—

"Count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother" (2 Thess. 3:15).

The word for "*admonish*" is a gentle, friendly one. Paul uses the same word when he exhorts the Colossians to—

"Admonish one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Col. 3:16).

Perhaps our minds go to the words of Christ concerning disfellowship—

"Let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican" (Matt. 18:17).

Is there a discrepancy in the spirit of these teachings? These words of Christ truly and seriously emphasize the importance of a clear, sharp distinction and spiritual separation, but—how did Jesus treat "*heathen men and publicans*"?

True, we cannot picture him taking part in their activities, or allowing himself to be identified with them in any way, but was he cold and rude to them? Did he avoid contact with them?—refuse to speak with them?—condemn them?

Did he not rather seek always to do them good, to treat them kindly, to be friendly and courteous to them, to show them a more excellent way, to persuade and win them to the way of Truth?

On this matter of holiness, let us remember one thing: our main problem is within ourselves, our own heart, the "*law of sin within our members*." Let us extend to others the charitable-ness we give ourselves.

We can find so many excuses for our own shortcomings. We fail many times a day. We know we fail. We put it down to the weakness of the flesh and pray for forgiveness and go right ahead good friends with ourselves—not too much concerned about these so easily self-excused manifestations of the *diabolos*. Perhaps we even admire ourselves a little for our sincere repentance and determination to press on again.

Why cannot we be at least as charitable toward the weakness of others? Why do we judge them with so much stricter a rule than ourselves?

Can we not believe that they too realize that it is the flesh, and that they too are striving against it just as we are?

There is a well-known passage in the book of James—
"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (5:16).

But do we know the rest of the verse? Do we know what comes just before this, and is part of the same thought?

It is a very important aspect. It would solve many problems, remove many misunderstandings, heal many wounds, draw us as a Body far closer together, strengthen and comfort us all in the struggle for life. It is this—

"Confess your faults one to another, and pray for one another."

The Catholic Church has made an ugly travesty of this beautiful first principle of godliness which has tended to obscure its value and importance, but it is a precept of great wisdom and power.

Much estrangement, much bitterness, much coldness between brethren, is due to a failure to realize that others are fighting the same hard battle against the same *diabolos* as we are—struggling hard though they often appear to fail.

They know they fail and recognize and deplore their failure, and are striving to overcome. But these things are all too often locked up in our hearts. We are too isolated and reserved. We just cannot bring ourselves to the point of laying them out in the open. There is a barrier pride can't surmount.

And so we lose one of the greatest beauties of true fellowship. We judge and are judged according to the public out-

ward manifestations of our mutual enemy the *diabolos*, rather than by the sincere and agonizing secret inward efforts to overcome it.

How often we regret a word or action, and would so much like to blot it out and start over! But unless we SAY so, others will judge us by the fleshly action, and not by the spiritual regret, and so estrangement and misunderstanding grow.

We are engaged in a deadly war against the same great Enemy. In this struggle, let us keep our lines of communication open so we can support one another. Let us frankly admit we are having a hard time with our *diabolos*; perhaps we can help each other on to victory together—where alone we each would fail.

"Confess your faults one to another, and pray for one another; for the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

Beware of Hypocrisy

"Sell that ye have, and give alms. Provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that falleth not" (Lk. 12:33).

LUKE CHAPTER TWELVE

This is an important chapter. It is an important part of the brief but infinitely deep teachings of the Greatest Teacher who ever lived—the Teacher who was a perfect Example of his own teaching.

The lessons he taught constitute the Way of Life. There are many teachers, many schools, many courses of instruction in this world, but this one stands out from them all, like light from darkness.

According as we pass or fail THIS course—according as we learn or do not learn it—so our eternal destiny is determined. Surely then there is nothing in the world that approaches the importance of the earnest, eager, continuous prayerful study of these things!

Let us not take Salvation for granted. So many appear to, by the unconcerned way they give energy and attention to so many unimportant and passing things.

Salvation is well within the grasp of all, but it is only promised to those who devote ALL their heart, and bend ALL their energies, to obtaining it.

Remember the Pearl of Great Price. He "sold all that he had" to get it. Think of that continually—many times a day—

He sold ALL THAT HE HAD to obtain it.

This chapter deals with the basic realities of Truth, of character, of conduct. It has to do with our daily lives—all the simple but basic day-to-day activities that form the pattern of our existence.

It manifests the mind and wisdom of the Spirit. It is essential for our salvation that we learn the lessons that God seeks to teach us through this Perfect Teacher that His love provided.

These are the truths that shall "make us free"—free from the mind of the flesh, the natural mind, the natural, animal way of death, the "corruption that is in the world through lust."

It is revolutionary. It is transforming. It is fresh, and new, and different. It is not just repairs and patches and alterations on an old familiar garment. We must be prepared for a complete change of thinking from the natural way of sinful, fleshly man.

We **MUST** come to the words of Christ as to a Great Light, in the full assurance of faith—realizing our own darkness and ignorance and need for complete transformation from natural to spiritual—praying that we may be blessed to understand, and comprehend, and absorb into our minds and lives these wonderful teachings of the Spirit of God.

* * *

“There were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trod one upon another” (v. 1).

The leaders he denounced in terrible, scathing words, directly dictated by the Holy Spirit to which he was always completely subject. His words were the words of God.

But the people he looked upon with sorrow and compassion, as *“sheep without a shepherd.”* They flocked to hear him, seeking help, light, guidance, comfort, an answer to the dark enigma of life, escape from the burden and sorrow and plodding meaninglessness of natural existence.

But very few comprehended. All except a handful turned away. They could not face the dazzling, searching glory of these words of eternal life. They were too deep, too vast, too revolutionary, too upsetting.

They meant too much of a change in the familiar, comfortable, deep-rooted patterns of flesh. His hearers sensed that he was asking them to break loose from all the fixed and stable and respectable principles the wisdom of the flesh is built on, and plunge with him in faith into the uncharted and the unknown.

He spoke words that could only be spiritually received and understood, words that could be understood only by those who—above all else—**WANTED** to draw nigh to God in love and worship and service and eternal, thankful joy.

* * *

“He began to say unto his disciples first of all . . .”

If *“First of all”* is made the beginning of his statement, as some translations show it, it would be clearer—

“He began to say unto his disciples, First of all . . .”

But *either way*, still gives strong emphasis to his warning—

“Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.”

He does not mean beware of hypocrisy in others: he means beware of it in **YOURSELF**. This is clear from what he says further, in vs. 2, 3.

First of all, ABOVE all, "*Beware of hypocrisy.*" Because of the deceptiveness of the mind of the flesh, *this* is our greatest danger and stumbling-block. This is the biggest hazard to our attainment of the Kingdom.

The original word of "*hypocrisy*" literally means "*acting a part on the stage.*" It means creating an appearance of being different from what we really are, or—and this is even more subtle and dangerous—*thinking* ourselves, our conduct, our motives, our characters, to be different from what they are.

Acting instead of really BEING is the great problem with us all. And we get so adept at *acting* a transformation, we think we're really transformed.

Naturally, by birth of sinful flesh, we are all hypocrites. The natural mind of the flesh is wholly hypocritical and false—

"In me—that is, in my flesh—dwelleth NO GOOD THING" (Rom. 7:18).

Only the light of the Spirit-Word, diligently studied and sincerely applied, can enable us to discern this natural, inbred hypocrisy of the flesh.

The diabolos is the great deceiver. The Spirit-Word is the great enlightener.

One of the six occurrences of this word "*hypocrisy*" is applied to Peter when he would not eat with the Gentiles (Gal. 2:13), there rendered "*disstimulation.*"

Peter was sincere, but he was deceived by the flesh. He did not see himself clearly. Let us constantly, searchingly, examine ourselves, our actions, our motives—WHY do we really do, say, and think what we do?

God hates anything false and artificial—all hollow show and appearance and pretence. All such is out of harmony with truth, reality and eternity.

SO much attention is paid to external appearance! SO much pitiful effort to deck and camouflage and glorify and glamorize a poor, corrupt, perishing body.

And so *little* concern or effort is shown for INNER reality and purification and transformation. "*Beware of hypocrisy*"—play-acting, putting on a show, making clean and beautiful the outside, neglecting the inside that God alone can see.

Any form of religion that does not go right down to the deepest roots of the heart and completely change and transform the whole life is HYPOCRISY—Pharisaism, counterfeit—powerless to save from death.

"For there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known.

"Whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; And that which ye have said in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed from the housetops" (vs. 2, 3).

The ACTING will be ruthlessly sifted from the true BEING. This is not a threat. It is a plain, simple statement of fact. And wisdom will be thankful, and guided by it.

God, we are told, is a "God of Truth," and let us be eternally glad it is so. We cannot fight against God. We cannot fight against facts. God's will—His glorious, perfect, all-righteous will—will prevail at last. Everything out of harmony with it must disappear forever from the face of the earth.

Everything that is in any way false will be exposed to shame, and cleared away. Everything that is hidden will be brought out into the light, in the process of cleansing the earth for the habitation of God's glory.

When all external appearance is taken away, what shall we have of eternal reality, as we stand exposed at the Judgment Seat of Christ, before the eyes of all the ages? How much of all our life's effort and interest and accomplishment will pass through the fire, to stand to our account?

We read of Achan's childish attempt to hide something from God by burying it in his tent, and how the whole affair was openly exposed before the whole congregation, and he was destroyed.

We see the same pitiful pantomime being acted out again at the beginning of another dispensation, in the scheming folly of Ananias and Sapphira.

We wonder, in the superiority of our enlightenment, how people can be so stupid as to try to deceive God in such obvious, clumsy ways. But "*beware of hypocrisy*": if we will examine ourselves, we will find Achan and Ananias right within our own hearts.

We shall find the same stupidity of the flesh that thinks it can please itself and gratify itself and cut corners in God's service and still out-manuever God into giving us eternal life.

Ananias and Sapphira "*kept back part of the price.*" They doubtless gave most of it, and felt noble in so doing, but the lesson is that "*most*" is not enough. God demands ALL—not as an "*austere man,*" but as our joyful and "*reasonable service.*"

Less than all means the heart is not right, the value of the Pearl is not comprehended, the sacrifice is blemished and incomplete.

Are we exactly what we appear to be?

Are we, to the best of our ability, and to the full extent of our opportunity, ALL that implied in God's commands and our solemn covenant that—

"ALL that the Lord hath spoken will we do"?

To the extent that we are *not*, to that extent we are hypocrites, play-actors, holding back part of the price.

"There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, neither hid that shall not be known" (v. 2).

* * *

"Fear not man who can, at worst, only cut off your mortal life; but fear God who can end your life eternally" (vs. 4, 5).

We all fear man. Man's opinion, man's favor, man's friendship, man's approval, man's help, man's ridicule, man's threats and powers of damage and harm—if we examine our lives, we shall find that these things loom large in all our calculations and provisions.

But what is man compared to God? What can man do beyond what God permits? The words of Jesus indicate the only way of wisdom—

"Frame your life and all your actions solely with a view to GOD'S opinion, and approval, and favor."

But this is hard. It is contrary to nature. It takes constant self-reminding and effort, and a deep, powerful, living Faith, to do everything we do solely as unto God with no deviation or hesitation out of fear of man or consequences.

But this path alone gives peace: this path alone gives life.

* * *

"Are not five sparrows sold for a farthing?—and not one of them is forgotten before God" (Lk. 12:6).

This is a tremendous conception. We cannot comprehend God but it is essential to our salvation that we continually meditate upon His infinite greatness and marvelousness.

Nothing is too vast for His perfect control; nothing is too small for His observance and attention! Not a sparrow falls to the ground without His knowing it. He is everywhere present, and universally aware of every minute detail of His vast and glorious creation.

All things are created by and out of His Spirit. All manifestations of creation are concretions of His Power, and atomic

research has begun to reveal in this our generation the infinite power locked up in a single handful of dust. And beyond power there is—even in the sparrow—the unfathomable marvel and miracle of Life from God.

We must continually strive to get the fullness of this vast conception of God.

He is not a God afar off. He is not a God too busy or too occupied to take constant and complete care of the least of His children. Any conception of God that is less than this does not have the full power of the Truth—either for comfort or for stirring up to the terrible responsibilities of holiness.

“Even the very hairs of your head are all numbered”

(v. 7).

Nothing is missed. Nothing is overlooked. Every giving in to the motions of the flesh, and every effort to overcome—no matter now small or insignificant—all are observed by a strict though loving Father.

* * *

“Whoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of Man also confess before the angels of God” (v. 8).

To what extent do we make an effort to fulfil this requirement of discipleship in our daily life? The natural way is to delude ourselves with one of many lazy excuses—

“It wouldn't do any good . . . I have tried it before . . . It only makes bad feeling . . . People will think I am odd . . . We shouldn't ‘Cast pearls before swine,’ etc.”

This last one especially—so much unfaithful stewardship hides behind the misapplication of this quotation! But the words of Jesus still stand to judge us at the last day: *“Only those who make a point of confessing me publicly will I confess.”*

And this matter of *“confessing Christ”* is not just talking about the Truth. Actually that is just a very small part of the full picture. The main aspect is LIVING the Truth in an open, light-irradiating, consistent, self-controlled, beneficent godliness, graciousness and gentleness.

It should always be obvious in a courteous and kindly way, that we are a separate, holy people, that we are not part of the common, coarse animal run of the world, that we have *“been with Jesus.”*

“Let your light shine”—noiselessly but unmistakably—*“that men may see your good works and glorify your Father.”* The connection and motive must be clear and obvious enough so that God is glorified—not us.

In vs. 13-15 a man in the crowd, wholly absorbed in his own petty little selfishness and completely oblivious to the vast scope of Jesus' words of eternal life, broke in to demand—

"Master, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me!" (v. 13).

What an ugly, grating and incongruous contrast to the depth and beauty of Christ's words! But when we think upon it, do we not all fit into this picture?—so much more concerned with and wrapped up in our own petty little interests than in the great scope of God's purpose.

We see the world going its animal way—to the bar, to the racetrack, to the theater, to the television—and we tend, like the Pharisee, to congratulate ourselves that we are *"not as other men are."* But we can so easily be going the same self-pleasing way on a different plane.

The question is: Are we, in our lives, primarily seeking to serve and please God, or ourselves? If the latter, then no matter how elevated and noble the activity, it is still the flesh.

Jesus' words are timeless and boundless in their gentle but clear warning—

"Take heed! Beware! Beware of covetousness—the animal desire for material things—for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (v. 15).

A man's riches are what he IS, not what he HAS.

Out of this incident comes the parable of the rich fool, who planned everything so beautifully for a comfortable, plentiful old age—the normal pursuit of animal man today.

Jesus did not condemn him. He didn't say he was wicked to make such wise and practical provision for the necessities of the future. He just said—

"You poor fool! You poor, pitiful, blind fool! Today your life is done. All your opportunities of gaining real, eternal riches are passed forever. It's all over for you. NOW what good is all your carefully hoarded wealth?"

And so, says Jesus, is everyone who gathers for himself, rather than for God.

* * *

The next ten verses put this lesson into direct, plain instruction, repeated for emphasis—

"Take no thought for your life, what you shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on" (v. 22).

Consider the ravens: God feeds them. Consider the lilies: God clothes them with greater beauty and splendor than Solomon in all his glory. All these things do the animal nations of the world seek after. This is their wisdom, their way of life. This is all they know. They know nothing of spiritual values, spiritual riches, spiritual insurance for every conceivable eventuality of the present and the future. So they labor to load themselves with possessions and safeguards, driven by greed, and obsessed with fear.

But YE are called to something infinitely greater and more noble and more satisfying, even God's glorious eternal Kingdom.

Jesus is not teaching laziness or improvidence. We are clearly taught elsewhere to "*provide for our own*," and "*If a man will not work, he shall not eat.*"

What IS he teaching? He is teaching first of all that we MUST NOT WORRY. This is a *positive command*. All worry is lack of faith, a doubting of God, a triumph of fear over love. Having done our best, we MUST trust in God's care—

"If God so clothe the grass, how much more will He clothe you, O ye of LITTLE FAITH!" (v. 28).

Is that us: "little faith"? Worried about this, worried about that; fearful and concerned about life's passing problems which loom so large and so important to them of little faith?

And he is teaching that we must get the right perspective. We must learn and recognize and accept the relative importance and unimportance of things. Truly we must eat, we must be clothed, we must have somewhere to live, but these are very passing, secondary things, the more simply taken care of and gotten out of the way the better, so the mind and time and energy can be given to REAL things.

Small minds are absorbed with food and raiment and all the passing things of this life. Spiritual minds dwell on the things of God—wonderful, glorious, eternal things.

Which are we?—small, childish, immature, concerned with and interested in the things of the present? Or are we truly endeavoring to GROW UP—to set our affections on things above, to grow in mental and spiritual stature, in knowledge and in divine grace?

We all start out small and childish. It's no sin to be small-minded. But it IS a sin, and a tragedy, to *stay* small-minded, to be *satisfied* with small-mindedness, to be absorbed and satisfied with earthly things—to want to just hoard marbles and play house.

It is said that very, very few people ever grow mentally beyond the age of twelve to fifteen. They get more knowledge and experience, of course, but they never get any more mature. Their type and depth of thinking as it is then stays with them all their life.

The great beauty of the way of God is that it develops the understanding of everything. It opens and enlarges the heart and the mind—

“Evil men understand not judgment, but they that seek the Lord understand ALL things” (Prov. 28:5).

“The natural man cannot know the things of the Spirit of God, but he that is spiritual discerneth all things . . .

“We have the mind of Christ” (1 Cor. 2:14-16).

* * *

“Fear not, little flock, it is your Father’s good pleasure to GIVE you the Kingdom” (v. 32).

God does not measure and calculate in His blessings. His ways are vast and limitless. Upon those who, in submission to these words of life, truly seek to conform to the required pattern of godliness, upon such He has promised to pour out a limitless abundance of blessings forever without measure or end.

“Sell that ye have, and give alms. Provide yourselves with bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that falleth not” (v. 33).

What wonderful words! What searching words! What revolutionary words! But how do WE stand as regards getting our whole pattern of life into harmony with the glorious, overflowing spirit of these things? Beautiful thoughts—but how about the practical application? How often God’s words to Ezekiel come to mind—

“Lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not” (Eze. 33:32).

Most of us have been in the Truth quite a while—plenty long enough to be showing some results of the power of these teachings, if we are ever going to. How do we stand? Is our life in tune with them? And if not, WHY not? Do we foolishly expect the prize without conforming to the rules?

Are we givers or getters? Are we scatterers or hoarders? Says the Spirit through Paul—

“God loveth a CHEERFUL giver” (2 Cor. 9:7).

That is, one who gives in the enlightened joy of reaching up toward the greatness of the mind of God, the Great Giver of all.

Jesus said, in his one direct statement that is not recorded in the Gospels—

"It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

"Blessed" means happy. It is more happiness, more fun, more sheer joy of living, to give than receive.

We tend to concentrate our attention, like the rest of the world, on the little childish, self-centered joy of receiving. But we are cheating ourselves out of the far greater and fuller joy of giving. Jesus said—

"Give, and it shall be given unto you—good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over.

"For with the same measure that ye measure, it shall be measured to you again" (Lk. 6:38).

So the degree of our joy and fullness of life is entirely up to us. It's up to us whether we choose to live big or small—according to the glorious greatness of the Spirit, or to the cramped smallness of the flesh.

There's a very beautiful proverb that says—

"There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth.

"And there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty" (11:24).

Cramped, calculating selfishness tendeth to poverty—shriv-
eled poverty of heart, soul and mind. Parsimoniousness is not
prudence: it is unfaithful stewardship and embezzlement of
God's entrusted goods.

* * *

"Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also"
(v. 34).

If we have treasure—goods, possessions, interests—on earth,
our heart will inevitably be there with them. Jesus says so. It
is an inexorable law of our nature. Therefore the URGENT
exhortation is—

"Sell that ye have and give alms" (v. 33).

Get rid of it, before it pulls you down to perdition. Get all your
treasure transferred to the Bank of Heaven as fast as you can,
where it will be safe, and where it will pull you UP instead of
down—where it will still be to your eternal account when all
human banks and insurance companies are liquidated in the
great earthquake soon to come upon the earth.

* * *

Let us close with the thought of v. 35—

*"Let your loins be girded about, and your lights
burning;*

"Be ye like unto men that wait for their Lord."

"Your loins girded"—the symbol of preparedness, readiness to move, to act, to respond instantly to a call. Active and awake, all affairs in order—not cumbered, cluttered and confused with present things.

Bro. Thomas said, one hundred years ago, that the return of the Jew to Israel and the rise of the Northern Colossus to world power and with covetous eye on the Mideast, would be signs of the end that even the blindest could not fail to see.

We have seen both fulfilled to a degree that even bro. Thomas himself never dreamed of. Let us be ready momentarily, for he is even at the door.

"And your lights burning" (Lk. 12:35).

ARE they?

"Let your light shine that men may see your good works and glorify your Father" (Matt. 5:16).

Is our life a shining spiritual light, so that men may look upon us and glorify God? It **MUST** be that way, if we are to achieve salvation. These words of Jesus are the *"words of eternal life."* His words describe and define the *only* possible way of eternal life, and they must be fulfilled in us if we are to be the children of God—

"Blessed are those servants—and they ALONE are blessed—whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching" (v. 37).

Zealous of Good Works

"In all things showing THYSELF a pattern" (Tit. 2:7).

PAUL'S EPISTLE TO TITUS

Paul's fourteen epistles appear to fall into five groups—

1: The earliest, 1 and 2 Thessalonians (and possibly Galatians) were written on his second missionary journey when he first went into Europe.

2: 1 and 2 Corinthians, and Romans during his third journey, when he spent most of his time in Ephesus. (This was at the time of the troubles in Corinth when Titus was sent there).

3: Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, Philemon and Hebrews near the end of his first imprisonment in Rome, when he was expecting to be soon released, as he indicates in several of them.

4: 1 Timothy and Titus in the period after his release, when he is back working in the same area of Greece, Macedonia and Asia Minor again.

5: Finally 2 Timothy, right at the end of his life, from prison again in Rome.

We know Titus to have been a companion and helper of Paul for a period of about twenty years, possibly longer, but he is only mentioned four times during that period—

1. He went with Paul from Antioch to Jerusalem (about 50 AD) regarding the issue of the Gentiles being circumcised and keeping the Law. Titus, a Gentile, was the test case. Paul refused to let him be circumcised, and the apostles supported him, and the freedom of the Gentiles from the Law was established. Thereafter Titus was a living symbol of that freedom, as Timothy was of not needlessly offending Jews.

2. About five years later (about 55 AD), during Paul's three-year stay at Ephesus, Titus was sent twice to Corinth concerning the ecclesial troubles there, as we learn from the Corinthian epistles; and he was successful in correcting the problems and reconciling the Corinthians to Paul. Due to the seriousness of the matter, and Paul's great concern, it would appear he considered Titus his most qualified fellow-laborer.

3. About ten years later, (about 65 AD), as we learn from this epistle to him, Titus was left in Crete to complete the work Paul had begun in organizing ecclesias in various cities there, and setting up suitable elders and a strong discipline for guiding the new ecclesias in constructive godliness. Here again he is

chosen for a difficult and important task, and when the foundations were laid, he was to be relieved by Tychicus or Artemas, who would carry on, so he could be used for pressing work elsewhere. Clearly he was one of Paul's primary helpers.

4. Finally, a few years later in Paul's second letter to Timothy, in his second imprisonment just before his death, he says Titus has gone to Dalmatia.

* * *

According to this epistle, then, Titus was left in Crete to follow up and complete Paul's work of forming and organizing ecclesias and arranging for elders to carry them on.

Then he was to join Paul at Nicopolis (on the western shore of Macedonia) where Paul was to make his headquarters for the winter in carrying on the Truth's work in a new region.

This would be just south of the Dalmatian coast, and doubtless the labors of Paul and Titus extended there, for later, from Rome (in 2 Timothy) we have noted Paul sent Titus to Dalmatia.

There is great emphasis in this epistle on the practical application of godliness. *The leading thought of the epistle is the vital importance of good works in any who profess the Name of Christ—*

"ZEALOUS OF GOOD WORKS" is the key expression.

Everyone is zealous about something—usually about their own interests and affairs. Some are zealous about *talking* about the Truth. But the important thing is to be "*zealous of good WORKS*"—this is enough to keep anyone both happy and busy.

The ideal presented in this epistle is of a society living and working together in the calm beauty and joy of spiritual self-control, with all the selfish, evil motions of the flesh recognized and restrained.

* * *

"Ordain elders in every city."

"Ordain" simply means to appoint, and should be so translated, as it is in some versions. The "ordination" of "clergy" in the world's churches is a later invention.

Great stress is laid (vs. 6-9) upon the qualifications of bishops (elders, arranging brethren). Seventeen requirements are listed, and they are worthy of much study and contemplation, for they are not just for elders—they are the required qualifications of ALL—Titus just had to make sure the elders he chose had the necessary Christian qualities that God requires of all believers.

Most are quite clear and, like most Scripture, need not explanation but *application*. The practical requirements of the Truth are usually quite clear and leave no excuse for neglect or misunderstanding.

It is the theoretical aspects we like to get side-tracked and bogged down in. It's more pleasing and less demanding upon the flesh to bandy unlearned questions than to face plain commands.

Overall, an elder must be strong, firm and determined, but gentle, calm and self-controlled.

The word "bishop"—literally, an overseer—occurs only five times, one of them applying to Christ. In the four times applied to brethren, the context in all cases indicates more than one in an ecclesia, and generally identifies them with "elders". The lordly "bishops" of modern churches have no similarity with New Testament bishops.

* * *

"A bishop must be blameless" (Tit. 1:7).

An elder, or bishop, must first of all be blameless. He must be free from any grounds of criticism. He must give up and put away anything that could be a matter of question or censure, to the detriment of the Truth—anything that might trouble his brethren or cause the outsider to doubt.

A bishop is to be the husband of one wife, and his children must be believers (v.6). It is unnecessary to point out how the Catholic Church has blasphemously contradicted the Word of God in forbidding marriage to their clergy.

* * *

"Not (soon) angry" (Tit. 1:7).

Like the similar addition of the word "*easily*" in 1 Cor. 13 ("*not easily provoked*"), the word "soon" is not in the original, but is a fleshly addition to weaken the command. "*Not given to anger*" is the true meaning.

* * *

"No striker" (Tit. 1:7).

The meaning is, "*not pugnacious or belligerent, quarrelsome, contentious*"—the opposite of a peacemaker.

* * *

"A lover of hospitality" (Tit. 1:8).

Not just hospitable, but a LOVER of hospitality—one who takes joy in hospitality—who always reacts positively and eagerly to the opportunity, regardless of his own convenience. One at whose house all are not only welcome but also actively

desired as an opportunity for service to God. One whose desire and pleasure is to help and take care of anyone in need.

* * *

"Sober" (Tit. 1:8).

"Sober" is calm, balanced, restrained, thoughtful, steady-minded—nothing silly or flippant—not changeable and excitable—thinking carefully before speaking, and meaning all that is said—a spiritual quality developed only by long contemplation of spiritual things.

* * *

"Temperate" (Tit. 1:8).

"Temperate" is self-controlled, self-disciplined, always acting, not according to feeling or emotion or personal desire, but according to the guidance of the Spirit and the Word of God.

* * *

"Holding fast the faithful Word as he hath been taught"

This is especially timely and important today, when there is such a tendency to innovation and seeking ***"some new thing"***.

The sound and consistent continuity of the Truth is essential. The Truth does not change.

The true elder is not an innovator or tinkerer or speculator, but a faithful preserver of sound truth passed on by pioneers before him. That, in God's mercy, is our position today, and it is our wisdom to be on guard against current fleshly attempts to belittle and destroy the foundations laid by past brethren.

* * *

"For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers" (Tit. 1:10).

It would be pleasant if there were not such things as these in our experiences in the Truth, but these things are part of the necessary pattern of our training and development.

They are to school us both in self-control and in defence of the Truth. BOTH aspects of training are necessary. It is important that the Truth be defended, but it is equally important that it be done with the pure, calm sword of the Spirit, and not with any of the ugly natural weapons of the flesh—

"The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God" (Jam. 1:20).

It takes no special effort or ability to criticize and condemn error. Any limited minds can do that, and enjoy the boost it gives their ego.

But it takes much self-discipline and self-preparation to confront error with a calm manifestation of personal godliness

and a CONSTRUCTIVE, upbuilding presentation of the deep beauties of the Truth.

* * *

"Whose mouths must be stopped" (Tit. 1:11).

False teaching MUST be faced and dealt with. We must constantly labor to make ourselves as competent as possible in defence of the Truth, and we must confront error as it arises.

Life is a continual training for God's service and we have NO time to follow our own interests.

And just going on record as objecting is clearly not a sufficient and faithful fulfilment of the command, for Paul says their *"mouths must be STOPPED,"* plainly showing that *action of separation must be taken if persuasion is not effective.*

We tend, according to our natural constitution, to go either too far or not far enough in this matter. We must try to get a full understanding of ALL the Spirit's teaching on fellowship, and go just as far as God instructs us to go by commands and examples of Scripture.

This epistle to Titus is an important part of this scriptural picture which we must clearly get and be guided by. Some seem always looking for something to find fault with, and to glory in separation as evidence of their holiness and zeal.

Others temporize and hesitate and tolerate far beyond the point where the Scriptures call for action.

There is corrective guidance here for both tendencies. On the one hand we have a picture of a condition almost unbelievably bad existing in the ecclesias—

"Unruly, vain talkers, deceivers, teaching wrong things for filthy lucre's sake" (Tit. 1:10, 11).

This is sad, but encouraging for us. We would think that all hope was gone if we faced such problems and conditions. But it teaches us there always were and always will be—problems that must be prayerfully and courageously and patiently and joyfully contended with.

Joyfully? Yes, *joyfully!* For ALL things have a wise divine purpose and are steps toward the ultimate glorious end. We should never regret anything unpleasant that happens to us, or wish it had not happened.

Truly we should not SEEK such things, but when they happen we must believe they have a necessary purpose in our education, and development in godliness, and we must recog-

nize that our wisdom lies in thankfully accepting the training and seeking the purpose.

On the other hand, we are taught these things in the ecclesia cannot be tolerated or ignored, but must be faced and grappled with and brought to a faithful conclusion.

"Whose mouths MUST be stopped"

—if not by persuasion, then by exclusion. These were newly formed ecclesias just drawn out of the evil world.

* * *

"Cretians are always liars, evil beasts, idle gluttons"

(Tit. 1:12).

This is strong language. It makes us think. It seems out of place in talking about brethren. Why does Paul use it? Would we be justified in doing so?

We would, if used in the same sense and purpose and spirit.

We can never too strongly delineate the basic characteristics of human nature. We must honestly face what we are naturally, so that we can clearly realize the tremendous transformation that is needed if we are to be any use to God.

Paul is not especially singling out the Cretians. That is not his style. He too clearly saw the evil of ALL human nature.

To make a strong point, he is quoting a very appropriate and obviously well-known statement by one of the nation itself, as he used the inscription to the Unknown God at Athens, and as we quote from news sources showing in man's own words what an evil state mankind is in.

This is the raw material out of which God is calling saints—liars, evil beasts, idle gluttons—

* * *

"Rebuke them, that they may be sound in the Faith"

(Tit. 1:13).

"Exhort one another daily, while it is called Today."

We constantly need mutual encouragement and mutual sharp warning, to face and combat the evils of our nature. It was this constant contemplation and realization of what he was naturally—his natural tendencies—that led Paul to exclaim—

"O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from this body of death? (Rom. 7:24).

"I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (v. 25).

The thanksgiving will be in proportion to the realization—

"To whom much is forgiven, the same will love much"

(Lk. 7:47).

Cretians, and every one else, *ourselves included*, are—naturally—liars, evil beasts, idle gluttons. It's much more easy to be an idle glutton—lazy and greedy—self-centered and self-pleasing—than we like to think. It is man's normal condition.

* * *

"Rebuke them SHARPLY" (Tit. 1:13).

This may seem like a contradiction to the gentleness and patience and meekness that is commanded in dealing with others (as in 3:2), but it is not. BOTH aspects are important.

It is the spirit and purpose in which the rebuking is done that is important. The faithful brother is *always* loving and gentle, but *never* weak and smooth.

A sharp rebuke from an obviously affectionate brother who has established a consistent record of personal self-control and labor for the Truth and true loving concern for all his brethren, would not need to be very strong to be effective, if anything at all could be effective.

But without first laying such a foundation of godliness, no rebuke would have power.

This command to "rebuke sharply" does give an opening for the sourness and harshness of the flesh to intrude, parading itself offensively as "righteous zeal," but it does not *justify* it.

The rebuke, though sharp and clear, and followed by appropriate action if necessary, must be in patience and love and sincere concern and true inner meekness and humility, and continual consciousness of one's own shortcomings. Only God can give us this combination of gentleness and divine strength.

* * *

"Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men" (Tit. 1:14).

It is the tendency of the flesh to ignore God's very searching rules of life, and to make its own self-pleasing rules, according to its own particular fancy.

We see this illustrated in its extremest form in the Jewish nation of Jesus' day—the multitude of added regulations by which they thought they served God, but by which they completely blinded themselves to the practical application and deep personal requirements of the Law.

It was all so sincere and well-meaning, and a very easy course for the flesh to slip into, and miss the realities.

Bro. Thomas may often seem over-liberal and tolerant when he opposes so vehemently all the well-meaning crotchets of his

day, as anti-pork, anti-tobacco, anti-slavery, anti-liquor, etc. but it is not that he was necessarily in favor of, or defending, these things.

He could clearly see that—blown up to special issues—they were but shallow, self-glorifying crotchets that fatally diverted the mind and zeal and energies from the real transforming power of the Gospel.

* * *

"Unto the pure all things are pure" (Tit. 1:15).

This is a deep and important saying, but it can be very easily misapplied to justify impurity, by those SEEKING such justification. It must, like other Scripture, be spiritually discerned by those seeking true purity. It will not mislead *such*, for they seek not self-justification, but constant self-examination.

The great point is that we must purify the HEART itself—go right to the root of the evil, and not veneer it over with self-satisfying external regulations. It is THEN, and only then, that EVERYTHING will be pure. It is just as Jesus said—

"Not that which goeth into a man defileth him, but that which cometh out of his heart" (Mk. 7:15-23).

Paul is talking especially about clean and unclean meats and ritualistic regulations that are the dangerous seeds of retrogression into legalistic Judaism—the course the majority of the early Ecclesia followed that ended with the Catholic Church.

We are commanded to break bread and drink wine in remembrance of Christ—a very simple command with a deep spiritual import: no details, no ritual.

But a host of crotchets—about what kind of wine, and what kind of bread, and how to break, and how to pour, and who takes first, and just what to say in prayer about it—have always swirled murkily about this very simple and beautiful command through all the Truth's history.

Let us be careful we just keep to the simple command, and try with all our power to concentrate our zeal on the deep and PERSONAL application—

"Let a man examine HIMSELF—and so let him eat."

"Unto the pure all things are pure"—a wonderful saying, a wonderful revelation—as long as we keep our minds centered on its true inward heart-searching and spiritual application.

Defilement comes from within, and purity must come from within—ever growing and pressing outward from within, rejecting and casting out all impurity.

"But speak thou the things that become sound doctrine" (Tit. 2:1).

Through this chapter and the next the great emphasis is on practical, personal holiness of life, and dedication and service to God, and against getting side-tracked into theoretical questions and contentions and genealogies and strivings. The thought and contrast is carried forward from Tit. 1:16—

"They PROFESS to know God."

They make a big show of talk and argumentation and threadbare "foolish questions"—

"but in WORKS they deny Him."

When it comes to their OWN daily activities and service and self-sacrifice, they deny God by living for themselves and their own desires and pleasures. The questions they bandy about are just a hobby and a conscience-salver.

Talking and arguing and making regulations for others is so easy: disciplining *ourselves*, giving up our *own* natural desires, bringing our *own* lives into full service to God, is so hard.

To keep talking about the Truth, and then to follow the flesh in what we do with our time and money (actually God's time and money) is just hypocrisy.

Our big concern must be how we ourselves live our daily life—what we do with our time and money and strength—and whether we manifest the spiritual character of the mind of Christ: purity, patience, gravity, goodness, kindness, love.

Apparently the Creteans especially manifested a fondness for hair-splitting and arguing and a constant going round and round on the same old worn and threadbare crotchets, instead of getting down to practical day-to-day holiness and self-sacrifice.

* * *

"That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate (rather: self-disciplined), sound in faith, in love, in patience" (Tit. 2:2).

"Sober," for which the margin gives "*vigilant*," means to be clear-minded, wide awake and aware, watchful, thoughtful—spiritual THINKERS, rather than, like most of mankind, mere animal FEELERS.

It is easy to drift into self-centered thoughtlessness and obsession with present trivialities—what shall we eat, what shall we wear, what shall we do to enjoy ourselves—chattering like monkeys about foolish, passing things.

The mind must be constantly disciplined and directed outward—away from present and self to the world and eternity—to the purpose of God and the service of God.

"The aged men." Old age can either follow the usual and natural course of recession to the small-mindedness and self-centeredness of childhood, or it can be God-guided into the golden age of experience, understanding and usefulness.

It depends on how we have prepared for it in earlier years. In the ideal ecclesial community that Paul portrays here, each age has its place and work—the aged to give counsel and wisdom and deep knowledge of the Word of God, the middle-aged to carry forward the work and activity, the young eager in all things to learn and to help—a healthy, wholesome, united Body of beauty and usefulness.

But we must guard against the very natural tendencies that Paul mentions that can so easily mar this picture. In the aged (Tit. 2:2), patience is emphasized, and (v. 3) avoidance of gossip and criticism.

Patience, because spirituality is a matter of gradual growth. Youth inclines to many things that Age has seen the emptiness of and grown out of. But Age must have patience while Youth is maturing. If there is movement in the right direction, we must be careful to encourage it, and not destroy it with fault-finding and impatience.

And Youth will be much more inclined to listen if Age can show in its OWN life that it has learned to manifest the fruit of Spirit.

We must examine ourselves—recognize how little we have really learned of godliness, and how long it took us to learn that little. This teaches patience.

* * *

"In all things showing THYSELF a pattern" (Tit. 2:7).

This is the vital thing. Christ, above all that he did or said, was an example. And so was Paul. Example is the greatest and most powerful exhortation.

It is not worthwhile giving any attention to anyone who does not first discipline himself and live up to his professed faith. Regardless of any appearance of knowledge, such have *nothing* to offer as to useful guidance in the way of life.

Examine a man's own life and characteristics. If he is not fulfilling the practical part of his professed faith, *pay no attention to anything he says, nor to any criticism he has of others.*

"That he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil to say of you" (Tit. 2:8).

Here is the power of godliness, for which there is no substitute. The Truth is not so much a matter of presentation and reasoning and logic, as of manifestation in beauty and power. If we do not manifest the beauty of the Truth in ourselves, then we cannot teach it in any living way to others.

We can pass on doctrines as such, but there will be no transforming power of godliness. We must SHOW the way of life and holiness, that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed.

The way of God, truly and joyfully lived, is the greatest persuasive power on earth. But it must be lived *joyfully*—not as a burden but as a glorious privilege. Jesus Christ single-handedly changed the course of this evil world by the sheer impact of perfect holiness. The Proverbs say—

"The wicked flee when no man pursueth; but the righteous are bold as a lion" (Prov. 28:1).

There is far more depth to this than we realize. Holiness IS power. We read of occasions when Christ's opponents were ashamed before the pure brilliance of his sinless perfection. They could not stand up to him as he probed the depths of their hearts and motives.

* * *

"Exhort servants to be obedient to their masters" (Tit. 2:9).

It should be, as in the New Revised Version, "slaves". Why tell slaves to obey their masters? Is not holding a man in bondage manifestly unjust and contrary to the spirit of Christ?

Yes, but so is everything else in this evil world. Paul here takes direct issue with the reformers and philosophers of this fleshly order of things, who do not get to the root of evil; and we must stand squarely with him for he represents the wisdom of God—they of the flesh.

The Scriptures tell us that *"The whole world lieth in wickedness,"* and God's present purpose is not to change it, but first to develop, by means of the discipline and trials of that evil background, a purified and spiritually-minded people for His Name and glory.

If, in God's wisdom, slavery helps prepare a man for God's Kingdom, then slavery for him is a blessing from God. The way and theories of men are right in their own eyes, but only God knows what is best.

To the mind of the flesh, this is foolishness. Paul says the natural mind cannot comprehend these things—only those whom God enlightens.

Truly we should not *seek* handicaps and disabilities and tribulations. *"If thou mayest be free, use it rather,"* is Paul's counsel.

But we must see—in everything that comes upon us—God's hand and God's wisdom. We must never regret or resent anything that happens—but always seek to learn and benefit from it.

Whatever we do, even in slavery, can, and *must*, be done unto God and for God, and God will gloriously accept it as such, and so we patiently and joyfully work out our salvation.

We must, like Moses, *"see Him Who is invisible."* We must, in our mind's eye, eliminate all the non-essentials, and boil the picture down to just God and ourselves. That is the only reality for us. Everything else is merely a passing background that God has provided to test and develop us.

All people and events in this background—real though they may seem—are but temporary experiences of our consciousness in the great eternal relationship of ourselves and God.

Where are all the people of one hundred years ago? Completely gone from existence and reality—and most of them gone eternally. They *seemed* so real in their day, but time proved that they were but briefly passing shapes and manifestations that the transient vapor called human flesh took temporarily.

They can become realities by attaching themselves to the Great Eternal Unchanging Reality, God Himself, for—

"The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to ALL MEN, teaching us that—denying ungodliness and worldly lusts—we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present evil world"
(Tit. 2:11, 12).

This is how we achieve reality and eternity—denying ungodliness and worldly desire. What is "ungodliness and worldly desire"? Can we define these terms the Spirit uses for our instruction? It would be very well for us to be clear on this.

The Scriptures leave no doubt. "Ungodliness" is anything not connected with, and in harmony with, God, and "worldly desire" is anything to do with present passing life. These we must deny—repudiate—put away. And we must live—

"Soberly, righteously, godly."

SOBERLY—according to wisdom and reason;
RIGHTEOUSLY—according to truth;
GODLY—in harmony and union with God.

* * *

“Looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ”
(Tit. 2:13).

More correctly, as in the Diaglott and RV—

“The appearing of the glory of the great God.”

—as we read in Matt. 16:27—

“The Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father.”

* * *

“Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works” (Tit.2:14).

“Redeem us FROM (out of, away from) *all iniquity.”* Iniquity is a word that does not make a strong personal impact on us, because no one really thinks they are iniquitous. But the literal meaning is “lawlessness,” failure to submit, to bring ourselves in harmony with Divine law—

“Redeem us from all lawlessness.”

Law is beauty and order and harmony. Conformity with God’s law is the way we achieve unity with God. And the Perfect Law—the Royal Law—the Law of Liberty is, as James tells us—

“Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”

Anything we do that is not in perfect harmony with all God’s will is lawlessness; and Christ suffered and died to redeem us, to deliver us—lift us up—OUT OF all lawlessness, into perfect harmony with God, as he was.

* * *

“To PURIFY unto himself a peculiar people.”

To cleanse, to make pure, to remove impurity. All of the Law of Moses teaches us that the natural flesh and its thinking are unclean. To be clean we must learn and walk by the mind of the Spirit, whose fruits are love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, etc.

* * *

“Purify a PECULIAR people.”

What is a “peculiar people”? The word has two meanings, both of which apply. Literally, it means “something beyond, something special or superior.” It also means a “personal possession”—a people especially belonging to himself—a people of his own—at one with him.

"ZEALOUS OF GOOD WORKS."

This is the key and central thought in this very practical epistle. It is not sufficient that we just DO good works. Even more important is that we be *zealous* about it—eager, enthusiastic—that this be our pleasure and consuming desire—that we never feel we have done enough for God and the Truth, but are always striving to do more.

That is "*zealous of good works.*" If we do not manifest this characteristic, we are not Christ's peculiar people. We are just ordinary, self-pleasing people, like all the rest of the perishing world.

"*Good works*" means helping people—both temporarily and eternally, especially the latter, but by no means ignoring the former—laboring, doing something practical and constructive, comforting and encouraging.

If we are sorry for ourselves, full of self-pity, we are USELESS to God.

We cannot even begin to fulfil this requirement of good works. For if, having the glorious gift of Truth, we have not enough faith and appreciation to be eternally and joyfully thankful to God, we are blind indeed. We just do not know God: we have never found Him.

Let us test *every* activity by this expression "*good works.*" Talking, arguing, discussing, contending, are "*good works*" ONLY if they perform *constructive good* for someone, only if they lead closer to practical godliness of life, only if they guide others in God's Way—or deepen and strengthen them in that Way.

The flesh has a hankering for crotchets—for what Paul calls: "*Foolish questions, contentions, unprofitable and vain strivings*" (Tit. 3:9).

Flesh prefers to avoid facing issues which have an uncomfortable practical bearing on its own conduct and character.

It would much rather argue about who was Cain's wife, or whether the Transfiguration was a vision, or whether Christ's temptation was "*subjective*" or "*objective*", than to think about the *personal* bearing of the command to love one's neighbor as one's self, or about how it uses for its own gratification God's goods entrusted to it in stewardship, or the command to sell what it has and give to the poor.

These *practical* questions the flesh avoids, preferring the crotchets and speculations which do not interfere with its

pleasures and self-will. But *“zealous of good works”* is still the clear distinguishing mark of the peculiar people of Christ.

They are too busy doing good for others to waste time and effort on barren contentions that have no practical value toward godliness.

* * *

“These things affirm CONSTANTLY” (Tit. 3:8).

Keep on about them over and over and over. About WHAT? (vs. 8, 9)—

“That they maintain good WORKS, and that they avoid unprofitable, unpractical, unproductive questions.”

* * *

And finally—

“A heretic after the first and second admonition reject” (Tit. 3:10).

This is his last command. A sad but necessary reminder that the way is narrow and against the flesh, that Truth IS important and must be faithfully defended, even to the point of separation when that becomes necessary.

May we, in God's love and mercy, be spared from such sad duties. But may we be given the wisdom and courage to resolutely face and deal with such things when necessary—in infinite patience and kindness, but with firmness and faithfulness, realizing the great and life-giving value of that Treasure which has been entrusted to our care.

Fellowship With Him

"This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all" (1 Jn. 1:5).

THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN, CHAPTER ONE

In our readings we begin today the first epistle of John. We are told very little about John, either in the Gospels or in Acts and the Epistles. Peter, Paul and James the Lord's brother stand out prominently, but not John.

And yet there is something very special about John. He was the disciple Jesus loved.

Truly Jesus loved them all, but John particularly. This tells us volumes about John. There was a very special and unique relationship between John and Jesus, and it must have been because of John's special character. It was not favoritism. We can rule that out as unthinkable.

The depth and closeness of love depends upon mental and spiritual affinity. The depth and fullness of love is limited only by the comprehensions and capacities of the participants. John was especially beloved because of a deeper unity with the mind of Christ.

It is notable, and there is a certain amount of comfort for us in the fact, that on two occasions where John is prominent in the Gospels, it is not in a good light. He, with James, wanted to call down fire from heaven upon the Samaritans, and he, with James, wanted the two places of highest preeminence in Christ's Kingdom. He had to learn the way of wisdom—the true nature of the spirit he was called unto.

Both times Jesus had to gently rebuke them. When he had first selected James and John, he called them Boanerges—"Sons of Thunder"—doubtless for the ardent power of their dedication and zeal. By Jesus' love, John's thunder was purified.

John was the first to believe, after the resurrection when he saw the empty tomb. Though not prominent in the history, John wrote the deepest Gospel, the deepest Epistle (this one) and the deepest prophecy (Revelation).

Though deep, and spiritual, and laying all emphasis on love as the essential motive and power of holiness, this epistle is

eminently practical and plainspoken. There is no haziness, such as the mind of the flesh delights and takes refuge in. What could be plainer or blunter than this?

"He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commands is a liar" (1 Jn. 2:4).

"Be not deceived: he that DOETH righteousness is righteous" (1 Jn. 3:7).

"He that committeth sin is of the devil" (1 Jn. 3:8).

The first five verses lay the eternal foundations in words we could meditate on forever without fully plumbing their depth, but the next five turn upon us and are plain, uncompromising and unsparing. They speak of sin, and liars, and self-deception.

* * *

"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life;

"For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness; and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us" (1 Jn. 1, 2).

Christ is the great reality—the key to everything—the visible, tangible, touchable manifestation to man of all God's everlasting purpose and goodness and holiness. He had to be perfect. He was the perfect God manifested. He was the perfect Word of Life—eternal life—made flesh. John says later—

"He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son hath not life" (5:12).

That is unmistakable and unevadable. We must have the Son to have life. See how John emphasizes this specific, factual reality as the vital foundation.

"We heard, we saw, we scrutinized, we handled—the Word of Life."

Their message was not a hazy philosophy of indefinite goodness according to the mind and judgment of man. It was not groping, human philosophy. It was specific testimony to a specific person to be accepted, specific truths to be believed, specific commands to be obeyed.

* * *

"That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ."

Fellowship with the apostles and with God and His Son, depends on learning and accepting and bringing ourselves into harmony with these things that John reveals and declares.

And what is fellowship? We must ever be on guard against letting technicalities take the place of realities. Fellowship is not an external agreement to associate, but communion, harmony, unity of mind and spirit.

We are in fellowship with God if—and *only* if—our entire lives and thoughts and desires and interests are centered on God—only if everything we do is done for and because of God; only if we *think God's thoughts*.

* * *

"And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full."

Joy is God's great purpose of love for man. Is our joy full? Is joy the thankful atmosphere in which we constantly live?—an all-sustaining, all-irradiating, all-protective joy?

It *will* be, if we really believe what we *say* we believe—if we really have a meaningful faith, and not just a form without power. John wrote to invite us up out of the flesh into the realm of all-enveloping spiritual joy and if we are willing to follow all the rules, and cast off the encumbrances that hinder, we can enter this joy.

The whole purpose, says John, of his writing, is that our joy may be full.

It is John that records that Jesus said the same thing, on the night that he was betrayed (Jn. 15:11)—

"These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full."

Joy is the great identification and secret of the Truth. If we have the Truth in a real and living way, we have joy—deep, overwhelming, unassailable joy. This is the key to whether our faith is real or just an empty form.

It is not a joy that *ignores* the sorrows and troubles and difficulties of this life. It is not even a joy that is *in spite* of these things. Rather it is a joy *because* of these things—an intense thankfulness FOR these things. Jesus said (Matt. 5:11)—

"When men persecute you, rejoice: be exceeding glad."

James said (1:2)—

"My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into trials and afflictions."

Paul said (Rom. 5:3)—

"I rejoice in tribulations."

And of the disciples it is recorded, when the authorities had beaten them for preaching Christ—

“They rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for his Name” (Acts 5:40, 41).

This is really having the Truth, having God, in a living and saving way!

Do we have it in this burning robust way, or do we just have a pale, cold, powerless form of godliness?

HOW can we joy in tribulations and rejoice in sorrow? Can it be reasonably explained, or is it just a striking form of words? It CAN be explained. It IS real. It is reasonable. In fact, it is the only reasonable, sensible, intelligent course at all. Jesus continued by saying—

“For great is your reward in heaven.”

James continues by saying—

“The trying of your faith worketh patience. Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing” (Jam. 1:2, 3).

Paul continued by saying—

“Tribulation worketh patience, and patience worketh assuredness, and assuredness worketh hope.

“And hope maketh us unashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts” (Rom. 5:3-5).

Is this reasonable? Is this sensible? Is this the path we want to follow, and the goal we want to achieve?

Present pleasure does us no good. It is nice while it lasts, like candy to a baby, but it really is not healthy. It is a cheat and a deception—it builds nothing lasting. Paul says present pleasure is a living death, because it has no promise for the future. It is just a brief dance of folly on the deck while the boat is sinking under us.

Joy is oneness with the mind of God, being in mental and spiritual harmony with God, seeing everything as God sees it—seeing the meaning and the purpose and the love and the beauty in all the works of God, in EVERYTHING that happens to us and around us; seeing—not just blindly believing—but actually seeing, realizing, understanding, rejoicing that—

“ALL things work together for good to them that love God” (Rom. 8:28).

Would it be nice to be never unhappy, never disappointed, never fearful, never lonely, never worried—always joyful, always content with what we have and what our position is? This is what the Truth freely offers us.

This is what the Truth really is. Do we have it? Have we found it?

The Truth is not just a little tidy packet of doctrines, but a living, transforming spirit-power. Paul said he was troubled on every side, yet not distressed; perplexed, yet never in despair; in sorrow, yet always rejoicing; having nothing, yet possessing all things. He said he took PLEASURE in weakness, hardship, contempt, persecution and distress; for when he was weak and poor naturally, then he was strong and rich spiritually. And he said—

"Be ye followers of me."

This is the mind of Christ, the mind of God, the spiritual mind—which is life and peace. Other than this is the mind of the flesh, which is sorrow and death.

"These things," says John, *"we write unto you, that your joy may be FULL"*—not just partially filled, but wholly FULL—complete, perfect, unassailable, unalloyed.

* * *

"This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all" (1 Jn. 1:5).

The great, central message that John brings is that God is all Light, pure Light, perfect Light. There are two great definitions of God in this epistle—

"God is Light."

"God is Love"

—the two great, eternal, divine realities: LIGHT—Truth, Holiness, Purity, Righteousness; and LOVE—Goodness, Mercy, Compassion, Benevolence, Kindness.

Wherein does the significance of this message lie for us, that "God is Light"? The message is that if we seek Life and Joy we MUST come to the Light. We must leave all things of darkness behind. Jesus said—

"Men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil" (Jn. 3:19).

This is the natural man—natural desires. We must desire light, and the light we must desire is the light of God's Word as applied to all our thoughts and feelings and actions.

By nature, we are evil. Our thoughts are evil and fleshly. The light of God's Word reveals this evil and tells us what God desires, and if we love God we shall be very anxious to search out and do everything He desires and give His Word the benefit of every doubt.

The natural way is to decide what we desire, and what our flesh desires, and then try to justify it. If we allow ourselves to be deceived by this tendency, we can always find self-justification, and God will let us be self-deceived; yea, *help* us to be self-deceived.

But if we sincerely want to learn, want to improve, want to change, want to please God rather than ourselves, then God will open our understanding.

Light is the great theme of the Scriptures throughout. The very first thing God said was—

"Let there be light."

"And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness."

And in the last chapter of the Bible we are told of the redeemed—

"God giveth them light."

The Spirit through Solomon says—

"The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Prov. 4:18).

John said of Jesus—

"That was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (Jn. 1:9).

And Paul says—

"God, Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6).

By nature, we are all darkness. It is our life's purpose and our life's work more and more to absorb and radiate the light, and cast out the darkness.

The Light is God's Word: every part of it, from beginning to end. ALL Scripture, we are told, is profitable that we may be made perfect. We must prayerfully and continually study it, ponder on it, agonize to understand every word, as if it were a precious map leading us to great treasure, as it truly is.

All the time we can spare should be given to this. It is the only way to gain the life that only the few will ever find.

* * *

"If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the Truth" (1 Jn. 1:6).

"Walking in darkness" is doing anything according to the mind of the flesh. The Word of God sets before us a way of life—

a way of thinking about everything, a way of directing our interests and desires, a way of conduct toward, and thought about others.

It is usually very different from the natural way. It requires learning, practice, and effort, and continual seeking of guidance and help. If we are not consciously examining all we do, and consciously trying to conform it to God's Word, then we're automatically and inevitably "*walking in darkness.*"

Fellowship with God is not just a technicality—not just a form—not just the accepting of certain beliefs or joining a certain group. It is a WAY OF LIFE—a thinking like God, a walking in harmony with His revealed will and commands.

John minces no words. The issue is too grave, and self-deception is too terribly easy. It is so easy to "*say that we have fellowship with Him.*" Millions in the world say this. Wherein are WE different?

And let us not compare ourselves with the worst of them, or even with the average of them. Let us honestly face what the BEST of them are doing (supposedly for God, as they think), and ask ourselves, wherein are *we* so different that we expect life while the best of these will get but death?

The primary difference must of course be the Truth itself. True belief, true doctrine, is important—vitaly important. It must be what God says and not what man says, for God is all Light, and man is all darkness.

But just *having* the Light is not enough. We must, says John, *walk in it*—all the way in, plunging into it joyfully and unhesitatingly, letting it fill us and surround us. Notice the expression in this verse—

"We lie and DO not the Truth."

The Truth is not just something we *have*. It is something we must "DO".

* * *

"But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin" (v.7).

We here this morning are in what we call fellowship with one another. The validity and power of that fellowship depends upon each one of us sincerely determining and endeavoring to walk in God's light in every aspect of our lives. Apart from that, it is meaningless, powerless and purposeless.

If we walk in light, John says, the blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin. Two words here are deeply significant: "*cleanse*"

and "all". Sin is a dirtiness, an uncleanness, a defilement. Sin is the natural motions and thoughts of the flesh—

"In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing"
(Rom. 7:18).

Sin is catering to our own desires, seeking our own advantage and pleasure. Sin is wasting time that God has commanded us to devote to His service.

Sin is using God's goods for our own indulgence beyond the point of necessity or usefulness for His purpose. Sin is everything short of the perfect holiness of the character of Christ.

If we desire and seek God's light, the blood of Christ will cleanse us from all these fleshly things. Until it does, we are dirty and offensive in God's sight.

It is said of the true ecclesia of God, the true Bride of Christ, that Jesus sanctifies and cleanses it with the washing of the Word, that it might not have spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but should be holy and without blemish—a glorious Ecclesia, a pure Bride.

"The blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin."

It is important that we realize this. The Truth—the Way of Life—is an all-or-nothing thing. Unless we are cleansed of ALL sin, we are lost. One seemingly small sin at the beginning plunged the world into six thousand years of sorrow and death.

If we fail through neglect of prayer and study of the Word to discern our sins, if we cling willfully to anything we know to be sin, or even have reason to suspect might be sin, then we cannot be saved.

HOW does Christ's poured-out blood "cleanse us from all sins?" Do we think that God was just establishing a technicality in Christ's death? Do we think God was just proving a point, so He could overlook sin? Do we think that God just waves a magic wand and says "Abracadabra, you are clean"?

Is THAT our idea of how "the blood of Christ cleanseth us from sin?" It is the idea of many who think cleansing from sin is some sort of a superficial ritual that has all been taken care of for us. But John says—

"Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself.

"Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not"

"Let no man deceive you: he that DOETH righteousness is righteous."

"Whosoever DOETH not righteousness is not of God"
(3:3-10)

THIS is how God cleanses us from sins—in *reality*, not just in symbol. Where does Christ's work come in then? He laid the essential foundation of perfection *on which we must build*. He established the acceptable place of meeting—the Mercy-Seat—the Seat-or Place, of Mercy—the place and means of cleansing and forgiveness, where man could approach in safety unto God's terrible holiness and exalted purity.

Paul said God set him forth as a Mercy-Seat to manifest God's righteousness, that He (God) might be righteous and also the builder of righteousness within all who approach Him through Jesus. John says of Christ that to all who received him he gave power to become sons of God.

Shall we sit down and say that it is too much?—that it cannot be done? Or shall we thankfully and joyfully take up this power so graciously offered, and by it become the sons of God? Paul exhorted the Philippians—

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

Here in one phrase it seems like we ourselves must do it all; and in the very next it seems like it is all of God—not only the doing, but the very will or desire behind the doing.

Both are true—marvelously and inseparably true. It is all of us, AND all of God.

A very crude comparison is power steering. Tremendous power is there, waiting to do immediately all the work on our behalf as soon as we turn our lives toward the right direction, but it will never turn itself but go straight down the old natural course of death to the end, if we do not try, but just say it cannot be done.

“The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.”

That is what we are here to memorialize this morning, in infinite thankfulness and joy. It is clear why he had to die. We know sin had to be condemned, the body of sin had to be put to death, the devil, the diabolos, the motions of sin, had to be destroyed by the victory of perfect obedience right to the end—God's pure law vindicated, God's merciful way of reconciliation proclaimed in a foundation of justified holiness.

We know why he had to *die*. But why did he have to SUFFER? Why did it “please God to bruise him, and put him to grief”? What good is served, what point is proved, what law is established by inflicting apparently unnecessary suffering on a perfectly obedient, perfectly submissive Son?

Paul throws much light on this, and reveals a vital first principle of holiness when he says—

"It became Him—that is, it was fitting for Him (God)—for whom are all things and by Whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to MAKE THE CAPTAIN OF THEIR SALVATION PERFECT THROUGH SUFFERINGS" (Heb. 2:10).

There is the answer to it all. The sufferings were to make him perfect.

Was Christ ever *imperfect*? He was imperfect in the sense that the seed is imperfect as compared to the ripened fruit. His character—always beautiful, always spotless—had to be developed and matured and strengthened and tested in the fierce furnace of affliction, that it might be meet for God's everlasting companionship.

And what was needed for his preparation for the eternal glory of divine sonship is needed for his brethren also. Therefore let us, like Paul, thank God for suffering, seeing in its every aspect and instance the all-wise hand of a loving Father shaping and beautifying us for a glorious destiny—

"Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment" (1 Jn. 4:17).

"There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear" (1 Jn. 4:18).

"And this is the love of God—that we keep His commandments" (1 Jn. 5:3).

Give Thanks Unto the Lord

*"Seek the Lord and His strength: seek His face
evermore. Let the heart of them rejoice
that seek the Lord" (Psa. 105:3, 4).*

We have for consideration a very beautiful Psalm. We value the Psalms more and more as we grow older. We see their reason and purpose. We recognize our need for what they supply.

The Psalms are deep spiritual food—divine nourishment—bread from heaven. If we do not regularly feed upon these things, then we are sick, weak, undernourished, carnal, fleshly. Failure to fully draw on this transforming nutrition is the cause of most of the fleshly weakness, and poor spiritual memory, and lack of faith and spiritual cheerfulness that so many bemoan in themselves and profess to deplore.

The proper food is all there in abundance. We inadequately take advantage of it, and then make unworthy excuses for the inevitable result.

A deep, constant imbibing of the things of God provided is the **ONLY WAY** to life. It is *impossible* to be spiritually healthy and strong without it. There is no "light within"—only evil and corruption requiring constant treatment with strong spiritual medication to keep it in check.

The book of Psalms is frequently quoted or referred to by Christ and the apostles, not just as expressions of beautiful thoughts and feelings, but as specific, word-for-word, divinely inspired doctrines and prophecies and commands. If we accept Christ, then the Psalms are for us—on his authority—imperative divine law, acceptance of and obedience to which are essential to salvation.

The basic theme of the Psalms is deep and unshakable thankfulness to God, rejoicing, spiritual peace in the midst of any sorrow, because of the infinite love and power and goodness of God to men. Thankfulness that we are in direct, personal, beneficial contact with the omnipotent power of goodness that rules the universe should overshadow every other consideration in our lives and minds.

Whoever really HAS this in truth has GOT to be happy. It would be impossible to be otherwise. And this is freely available to all—urgently pressed upon them by the appealing grace of God. But very few are willing to put the misguided thinking of the flesh aside and follow the way of life required

The Psalms are full of God, full of Christ, full of what God has done in the past and will do in the future.

The Psalms represent the frame of mind—the ONLY frame of mind—that is acceptable to God. If we are not in tune with the spirit of Psalms, we are not the children of God.

Psalm 105 begins with nine exhortations, nine plain commands, and only if we sincerely endeavor to remember and obey these commands can we consider ourselves possible candidates for eternal life through the love of God.

These commands are as important as any others, perhaps much more important, though all commands are important, for our reaction to these commands immediately manifests the state of our heart toward God. The nine commands of Psalm 105:1-5 are—

1. *Give thanks to God.*
2. *Call upon His Name.*
3. *Make known His deeds.*
4. *Sing unto Him.*
5. *Talk about His Works.*
6. *Glory in His name.*
7. *Rejoice.*
8. *Seek the Lord, and—*
9. **REMEMBER!**

They begin with "Give thanks to God"—give thanks in everything, and always. They end with "Remember"—keep always in memory, in the forefront of the mind, where action and character are determined. Let us think upon these nine points, one by one in order.

1. *"Give Thanks Unto the Lord"*

This is fittingly first, for it is basic; it is the most important. Cheerful thanksgiving based on an intense appreciation of God's infinite beauty and goodness, **MUST** be our basic frame of mind **ALWAYS**.

For this alone is life in the true sense—a living awareness of divinity and glory, an overflowing gratitude, irrepressible love welling up from within in reciprocation of divine love poured down on us from above.

If we have not got this, we are dead. We are cold walking carcasses; mere creatures of flesh like the dead world about us.

Thanksgiving is a beautiful frame of mind—healthy, wholesome, upbuilding, beautifying, inspiring to others. It leads to all other beauties of mind. It drives away all contrary characteristics: self-pity, envy, dissatisfaction, dissension, criticism

of others. True, humble thankfulness to God for *His* infinite patience and goodness makes us want to help others, not to criticize and condemn.

God's children are guaranteed perfect peace of mind, if they do their simple little part—

"Great peace have they which love Thy Law, and nothing shall offend them" (Psa. 119:165).

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee" (Isa. 26:3).

If we do not have this, we are not yet deep enough in the Truth; we have not yet put down our roots deeply enough into the rich soil of the Spirit-Word.

If we do not have the perfect peace of mind that God promises all His children, and that only He can give, and that can only be found by seeking it from Him, then wisdom cries that we should apply ourselves to it while it is yet called today. We should make it our most urgent matter of attention.

We must look in the right place for the trouble—for the reason we lack peace. We must look within our own fleshly hearts and minds—within our own weakness of faith and love.

No one outside of us can make us happy or unhappy. Happiness or unhappiness is from within.

It is so easy to criticize and blame others because we lack peace of mind. It is so easy to shift the blame from ourselves to our external circumstances. This has been the miserable way of the world from Adam on.

But if we truly do believe what we SAY we believe, then continual, cheerful thanksgiving is not just the only reasonable and sensible frame of mind—it is the only *possible* frame of mind. We couldn't be unhappy if we tried.

In the light of the greatness and goodness of God, we should be overwhelmed with joyful thanksgiving continually. After all God has done, and is doing, and promises to do for us, if we are not happy we are reproaching God, ignoring and belittling His love and care.

If we are unhappy, we are unspiritual, we are carnal, we are dull and unresponsive to divine things. The infallible Word assures us, and the assurance should be all-sufficient for all time:

"All things—ALL things—work together for good to them that love God" (Rom. 8:28).

Do we BELIEVE this? It is God's Own guaranteed Word. Does our life and our attitude toward everything give evidence that we believe this? This is the essence of Faith—

"The assurance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen" (Heb. 11:1).

If we have not found this divine, unearthly peace of mind within ourselves, and largeness of heart toward others, then something is wrong. We are missing life's meaning and joy. We have not really found the saving Truth of God.

We take our own affairs too seriously. Our petty, passing affairs are not important. It is only God's purpose that matters.

The present is nothing—just a striving after wind. The future is everything. The present with all its ridiculous little concerns will be gone in a moment. The future will last forever.

If we are wrapped up in ourselves, we have never grown up. We are mentally stunted. The whole purpose of life is to grow up, to mature and develop spiritually by the study and absorption of the Word of God.

We cannot be self-centered infants all our lives. We must get our minds on something real and worthwhile, outside of ourselves and our petty little affairs and problems.

Now the Psalms will do this for us—IF we will let them, if we will get down to work and take advantage of them.

As natural creatures we are no use to God. He pities us, but cannot use us eternally.

There must be great changes made in our minds and our characters. He has given us the tools. He has furnished us the power. He tells us how. All we have to do is to follow the instructions and USE the tools.

What must we do? We must read more, we must meditate more, we must think more, we must DO more.

"Faith"—the power that moves mountains and overcomes the world—that turns sorrow to joy, and frustration to peace—

"Comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."

Our baptism is just the beginning, the very barest, most elemental beginning. The preparing process takes the whole life—all our strength, all our interest and attention.

The difference between being dyingly natural and livingly spiritual is simply a matter of nourishment: spiritual food, spiritual growth, spiritual exercise, spiritual interests, spiritual activity.

We are still considering this "giving thanks" to God—what it really means, what it involves, how it must be the permanent, consistent basis of our mental outlook at all times. Paul says—

"In EVERYTHING give thanks, for this is the will of God" (1 Thess. 5:18).

"In EVERYTHING"—good and bad. It takes faith and understanding to give thanks for trouble and suffering, but Paul could do it. He had enough spiritual understanding to see the reason and purpose and necessity for trouble.

We have to get to learn this too if we want to be any eternal use to God. Any position of usefulness and responsibility takes learning and practice, and this is the highest position in the universe.

It is not easy. No real learning is easy. Look at the effort the people of the world will put into passing, worldly things. They do it because their heart is there. They love money, or fame, or power, or importance, or the sense of achievement.

Look at the effort and time Christadelphians are willing to put into things they want and are interested in.

Yet so many seem to assume that they will just coast automatically into eternal life—without any real effort and application at all.

EFFORT is the secret, and LOVE is the power. What are we doing for God? If we haven't this kind of consuming thankfulness to and love for God that will drive us to constant joyful action and service to the limit of our ability, then let us have wisdom to do something about it without delay.

Let us put this down on our daily schedule as number one at all times: "Give thanks!" We should carry these nine commands with us always, and refer to them frequently—keep them in the forefront of our minds. And first of all is, "Give thanks!"

We cannot be unhappy when we are giving thanks; we cannot be sorry for ourselves; we cannot be angry at or unkind to others. Truly we can alternate with marvelous inconsistency and breathtaking rapidity between blessing God and cursing man, as James points out.

This is a highly-developed fleshly accomplishment, but such have not truly found God, or peace, or the joyful reality and power of true thanksgiving.

2. "Call Upon His Name"

—His Name Yahweh. What does it mean to "call upon His Name"? How would we specifically define it?

The basic meaning of this word "call" is to call out to someone to get their attention, to address by name, to greet or accost, to make contact with someone. It is derived from the word meaning "to meet, to come together."

If we compare this root meaning with the way it is used in Scripture, we shall get the full picture. These are the two steps in studying—

1. Get the real meaning of the word according to the best authorities.

2. Compare the uses of the word throughout Scripture.

The latter is the most important, for how God Himself uses the word is the final determination.

This is why all modern versions of the Bible are useless for satisfying and profitable study. They are not direct translations but just vague paraphrases according to the ideas of men. We cannot dig into them for the real meaning of the Spirit. We must accept some man's conclusion as to the meaning. They might be right, but we have no way of comparing and checking, so they are dangerous.

A word derived from this word "call" means exactly the same in Hebrew as "ecclesia" does in the New Testament—

"A group called out to assemble in worship."

As, for example, Ex. 12:16—

"An holy CONVOCATION."

Now, proclaiming God is covered in the third command; talking together about Him in the fifth; asking for help in the eighth. What then is specifically meant here in the second?

"Call upon his name."

It appears to mean *identifying ourselves with God*—making ourselves His—separating ourselves unto Him in allegiance and worship. The first use of this phrase is significant—

"To Seth was born a son.

"Then began men to call upon the Name of the Lord"

(Gen. 4:26).

This clearly does not mean the first appearance of worship, but it does appear to mean the beginning of SEPARATION in worship—the clear, healthy separation between the sons of men and the sons of God, which was broken down later and led to the worldwide corruption that brought the judgment of the Flood.

3. *"Make Known His Deeds"*

We must speak of God to those around us: not simply as a matter of preaching, but naturally and inevitably as the greatest and most basic fact of life. No thought or conversation has any relation to reality that is not built on this foundation.

If our belief is real and living, then it will color and control ALL our conduct and conversation. If it doesn't, we are living a lie.

David in the Psalms speaks naturally of God in all aspects of his life. In ALL that befell him, both for good or ill, he could vividly discern the loving and guiding, though often chastening, Divine hand.

And for the benefit of all subsequent generations he was caused to record his inmost thoughts, making known God's wonderful works among the children of men. The Psalms are the outpouring of this desire to make the greatness and goodness of God known, that all men may come in joyful wisdom to the beauty of holiness.

We must, like David, fill our minds and thoughts with God and His goodness, and then we too shall be moved to speak in the fullness of our hearts—not in contention and condemnation but compassion and invitation.

4. *"Sing Unto Him"*

The Psalms are songs. They go beyond mere proclamation of God. They go beyond mere prayer. They have far greater depth and intensity and feeling than mere words.

Singing is a vital part of worship: both public and personal, both openly with the lips and silently in the heart. Paul speaks of (Eph. 5:19)—

"Making melody IN YOUR HEARTS unto the Lord."

People who do this are beautiful people, desirable people, people whose company is joyful and inspiring. The truth of God is a living thing. It must fill the heart as well as the understanding.

Could OUR normal frame of mind be described as "making melody in our hearts to the Lord"? If so, we have found the secret of life. If not, let us find out what is wrong and what we are missing, before it is too late!

5. *"Talk of His Wondrous Works"*

THIS is best illustrated by the words of Malachi—

"Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another" (3:16).

This was the bond of their communion together—the "wondrous works of God." What we say is the measure of what we are. The content of our normal conversation is the indicator of the spiritual fruitfulness or barrenness of our mind.

This Psalm, like many others, speaks of God's wondrous works in delivering His people from Egypt. Why is this theme repeated over and over—the blood, the frogs, the lice, and the first-born slain?

Some feel they must pass quickly over these things. They are embarrassed and uncomfortable. They prefer to dwell only on

God's love and mercy. Others glory and rejoice in these terrible judgments, with personal pleasure and vindictiveness.

Both views are wrong. We are told (Eze. 33:11)—

"God hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked"

—nor should His servants. They should sorrow and grieve, like Christ over Jerusalem, though Jerusalem cruelly slew him. The judgments of God on wickedness are dwelt upon in the Psalms, and we meditate upon them, because—though sad—they are essential to the world's salvation—

"When Thy judgments are in the earth, THEN will the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness"

(Isa. 26:9).

It is an undeniably desirable thing that the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness. Therefore His terrible judgments that lead to that righteousness are desirable.

But He calls on US to learn from the recorded lessons of the past, and to learn the wisdom of righteousness *without* the necessity of judgment.

The judgments on Egypt are a great type of the judgment of the world in the last day, when fleshly folly will be wiped out, and godly righteousness established.

We meditate upon these judgments upon Egypt, and take comfort from them—especially in this foolish, evil, violent day—because they show, not only that God *can* control all things, but that at the proper time He *will* control them. It seems today that vice and violence are expanding unrestrained, and things going rapidly from bad to worse throughout the earth.

But God is just as deeply interested, and just as closely in command, as He was when Egypt oppressed Israel, though He was silent until the appointed time arrived. There are no mistakes. Nothing goes beyond its appointed bounds. God is working His will in the Kingdom of Men as surely as He was in the terrible days of the Exodus from Egypt. That is why the Psalms say so much about that time.

God only rarely openly bares His arm. But those rare times are the key to all history.

Therefore His people talk often one to another of all His wondrous works. This is the central command of the nine. Let us be ever found so engaged.

We all can talk at endless length upon what interests us and fills our hearts—mostly things to do with ourselves. But how much of our talk is idle chatter, because our interests are so shallow!

6. "Glory in His Holy Name"

THREE deep and wonderful things are combined: glory, holiness, and the Memorial Name of Yahweh.

What does it mean to "glory"? What are we here commanded to do? It is more than rejoicing, for that is the next command. "Glory" as a noun means "supreme splendor or excellence." The highest, finest attribute or characteristic of anything is its glory (Prov. 20:29)—

"The glory of young men is their strength."

Of course, here more than physical strength is meant, for John says—

"I write unto you, young men, because ye are strong"

(1 Jn. 2:14).

The young have strength and vigor to accomplish. The old have wisdom and experience to direct. These are their respective glories.

To "glory in His Holy Name" is to make it our highest aim, to "seek FIRST the Kingdom of God," to—

"Set our minds on things above, not on earthly things"

—to center and focus our lives upon attainment to an eternal part in that glorious Memorial Name of Yahweh, the manifestation of God's glory in a purified multitude.

"Glory ye IN His holy Name."

Shine forth that Name and purpose in all you do. Put off the Old Man of the flesh; put on the New Man of the Spirit.

7. "Rejoice Ye That seek Him"

What else *could* they do than rejoice, if they are truly seeking Him? What other possible frame of mind is there that fits the situation? Paul said—

"I rejoice in tribulation" (Rom. 5:3).

And James said—

"Count it all joy when ye meet various trials" (1:2).

Why? Because God is thereby working out our glory. Jesus said (Matt. 5:12)—

"Rejoice and be exceeding glad"

—when you suffer in faithfulness. "Leap for joy" about it, he says (Lk. 6:23).

"Leap for joy" because of suffering! What a strange thing to say! Why such strong and striking language? Clearly he is trying to impress us with something very important.

"Leap for joy" when you encounter tribulation. Not just bear it well. Not just be patient. Not just control yourself and see you are not provoked to retaliation and wrong doing.

These are all negative virtues. Jesus' approach is positive: rejoice, be thankful, welcome it, leap for joy, praise God for your rigorous spiritual training and discipline that is lovingly preparing you for eternal glory.

Have we really comprehended the full picture of what our holy calling means, or are we still groping on the outer fringes of the glory of godliness? Let us ponder these marvelous things, and extract their transforming power, especially this strange command to "leap for joy" at tribulation.

8. "Seek God and His Strength"

"Seek and ye SHALL find," said Jesus. And through Jeremiah, God said (29:13)—

"Ye shall find Me when ye shall search for Me with ALL your heart."

"Seek His face FOREVERMORE," the Psalmist says. Clearly then the seeking is a perpetual activity.

Truly we have found much. We have been called out of darkness into His marvelous light. We have found the Way of Life.

But seeking the Lord is an endless duty and an endless pleasure—a constant striving for deeper understanding, greater comprehension, fuller discernment of God's great revelation of Himself and His Word.

And finally—

9. "REMEMBER!"

"Remember His marvellous works that He hath done: His wonders, and the judgments of His mouth."

His works: the marvels of Creation. His wonders: the specific manifestations and working out of His purpose. His judgments: that which He has recorded for our instruction, training, and guidance.

"Remember!" How often the Scriptures sound this warning note!

Some things we remember indelibly from childhood. Some things we forget the next day. How clear our memory often is for worldly things, while so forgetful in spiritual things!

Why? What is the answer? We reveal where our heart is by what we remember and what we forget. We remember worldly things best because our minds are on worldly things.

Let us face it and not make excuses, or blame it on "poor memory." We shall never cure it if we do not face it. Let us test our heart by this rule—

"Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also"
(Matt. 6:21).

What are we fluent in—remembering all the details, and able to chatter on endlessly about? Is it the things of God, or our own passing, personal things? This ninth command says—

“Remember HIS marvellous works, HIS wonders, and the judgments of HIS mouth.”

Fill the mind with God, and we shall gradually become like God. Fill the mind with the things of the flesh, and we shall be mere creatures of the flesh.

1. *Give thanks to God.*
2. *Call upon His Name.*
3. *Make known His deeds.*
4. *Sing unto Him.*
5. *Talk about His Works.*
6. *Glory in His Name.*
7. *Rejoice.*
8. *Seek the Lord, and—*
9. **REMEMBER!**

The Captain of My People

"This man shall be the peace when the Assyrian shall come into our land, and when he shall tread in our palaces" (Mic. 5:5).

Hezekiah was one of the three greatest kings of Israel: David, Hezekiah and Josiah. His outstanding characteristic was trust in God—

"He trusted in the Lord God of Israel; so that after him was none like him of all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him.

"For he clave to the Lord and departed not from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the Lord commanded Moses" (2 Kgs. 18:5, 6).

His one recorded failure—his heart being lifted up with pride when he showed all his glories and treasures to the Babylonian ambassadors—was the result, not of lack of trust, but of fleshly presumption upon that trust. How easy it is to fail—either at one extreme or the other! How deceptive is the flesh and the heart of man!

Because Paul had great privileges and prominence in God's purpose, he had to have a "thorn in the flesh" to humble and handicap him. Hezekiah had great power and great blessing, and great favor with God for his zeal and faithfulness: and the flesh being what it is, even this great man was carried away, and had to be humbled and rebuked.

There is a tremendous lesson here—we are never safe. We must be always prayerfully on our guard against the deception of the flesh.

The chronology of this period is difficult to harmonize, both within the Scriptures itself, and with the Assyrian records. Much is made by orthodox commentators of the accuracy of the Assyrian records—the so-called "eponyms" or lists of years and events tied in with eclipses, etc.—and the archeological inscriptions. The modern tendency is to rewrite the Bible record to fit these human records.

But as soon as we look into these wonderful "eponyms," we find scholars vary greatly in interpreting and aligning them, and they are clearly far from dependable. And as for the inscriptions found, the Assyrians, even more than most, were notoriously liars and boasters in promoting their own glory.

The scriptural record in 2 Kings 18 to 20 is clearly not all in chronological order, nor meant to be. Chapters 18 and 19 are

generally chronological, except that some items are mentioned in them that refer backward or forward—like the general summary in 18:2-8, and the death of Sennacherib in 19:37 which was actually twenty years later. Also it is not clear where time gaps occur. There appears to a twelve-year gap between verses 16 and 17 of chapter 18.

Chronology is not too important, except to the extent that it helps us to see the relationship of events to each other, and the period in a man's life and development when he does certain things (as in what period of Hezekiah's life his heart was lifted up). We can get a better and fairer picture of a man's actions and record if we can determine the order in which they occur.

Hezekiah's sickness and presumption are recorded at the end, in both Kings and Isaiah, but clearly they did not occur at the end, by the dates and facts given. We know he lived fifteen years after his sickness.

The history of Hezekiah is given great prominence in the Scripture record. It fills eleven chapters: 2 Kgs. 18 to 20; 2 Chr. 29 to 32; and Isa. 36 to 39. This seems to be the most likely order of events—

1. *The great reformation and Passover and cleansing of the land from idols, and the re-establishment of the true worship of God—in Hezekiah's first year.*

2. *The siege and fall of Samaria and carrying away captive of the northern ten-tribe kingdom of Israel—in Hezekiah's fourth and sixth years.*

3. *The first invasion of Judah by Assyria, in his fourteenth year. He strips the gold and treasures from the Temple and buys off the Assyrians. The Assyrians claim that at this time they took two hundred thousand captives from Judah. The Assyrian account of the ransom Hezekiah paid corresponds generally with the scriptural account, though somewhat exaggerated (after the normal human custom).*

4. *Hezekiah's sickness and recovery, in the same year (his fourteenth). Fifteen years are added to his life.*

5. *The embassy from Babylon, and Hezekiah's pride and presumption in connection with it—very soon after his sickness.*

6. *Another Assyrian invasion twelve years later, in Hezekiah's twenty-sixth year. On this occasion Hezekiah resists, pays no tribute, and puts his faith in God. The Assyrian host is destroyed, and Jerusalem is delivered in answer to Hezekiah's faith and prayers. Judah is given a one hundred and five-year*

new lease on life (to 608 BC), when Pharaoh Necho of Egypt deposes Jehoahaz and sets up a puppet, and Judah's independence ends.

Hezekiah's supreme act of faith—defying the vast army of Assyria that was right in his land—seems clearly to have occurred near the end of his life—long after his sickness and recovery and the presumption that arose out of it. We cannot be positive, but this seems to fit best both with the Bible picture and the Assyrian records.

Let us then trace the course of Hezekiah's reign on the basis of the record in 2 Kgs. 18-20, putting the events recorded elsewhere (Chr. and Isa.) into their most likely proper order.

It should be noted that although Isaiah is not mentioned until near the end of Hezekiah's reign, he was actually very prominent and active, not only all through Hezekiah's reign but also in the three reigns before him. His own book records his dealings with Hezekiah's father, the wicked Ahaz, to whom he made the great prophecy of the virgin bearing the child Emmanuel. Isaiah was clearly a major factor in Hezekiah's faith and zeal and reforms.

Also Micah was prophesying at this time (as well as Hosea in the northern kingdom of Israel). Jeremiah records (26: 18) that, in contrast to the reception and treatment he received, Hezekiah and the men of Judah hearkened to Micah when he warned them that because of the land's wickedness, Zion should be plowed as a field.

Beginning, then, with 2 Kgs. 18—

V. 1: Hezekiah began to reign in the third year of Hoshea, the last king of the northern kingdom of Israel.

V. 2: He was twenty-five years old, and reigned twenty-nine years.

V. 3: He did right before God, like David.

V. 4: He removed the "high places"—a system of local worship and sacrifice, long tolerated (apparently because there was often for long periods no central worship, due to the wickedness and idolatry of the reigning king). These high places were sometimes used to worship God, but they were usually centers of idolatry and fleshly corruption. He broke down the images. He broke in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made, because it had become an object of superstition and idolatry.

This verse (4) records briefly what is given in great detail in 2 Chr. 29 to 31. Let us then turn there to pick up the record.

2 Chr. 29:3: In the first month of his first year, he opened the Temple.

Vs. 4-11: He exhorted the priests and Levites to the work.

V. 9: He reminds them that their fathers had fallen by the sword because they had neglected the worship and service of God, and their wives and children had been taken captive. In the previous chapter (2 Chr. 28:5, 6, 17) we learn that a great multitude had been taken captive to Damascus, that one hundred and twenty thousand had been slain, and that Edom also had taken captives.

V. 10: He speaks of the "fierce wrath" of God against them. This was apparent both from the warning words of the prophets and also from the miserable circumstances they were in. They were oppressed and spoiled by their neighbors, and under tribute to Assyria.

Vs. 12-15: The priests and Levites sanctify themselves.

Vs. 16-19: They cleansed the Temple, the court, and the vessels, in sixteen days.

Vs. 20-24: They made a great sin offering for the nation: seven bullocks, seven rams, seven lambs, seven goats. We note that in verse twenty-four it is twice emphasized that it was for ALL Israel (not just Judah). The sin offering—the recognition and admission and atoning for sin—must come FIRST . . .

Vs. 25-26: THEN he set the singers and players in order. The rejoicing follows the purification.

Vs. 27-30: Having thus laid the foundation, they re-established the regular system of offering and sacrifice—

"And they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshiped."

Vs. 31-35: Then all the congregation brought their offerings. We note in verse thirty-four that there were not enough priests ready—the Levites, who had been more zealous in self-preparation, had to help them. The priests, the ones who should have been foremost in zeal and activity, had been negligent and uninterested.

2 Chr. 30:1-9: Hezekiah sent letters to all Judah and Israel to come to hold the Passover at Jerusalem. It was arranged to hold it in the second month because there was not time to prepare to do it at the appointed time in the first month.

V. 10: The general reaction in the northern kingdom was rejection and ridicule of the invitation. Many had been already carried away. They had just three more years to go to the

complete destruction of their kingdom. This was their last opportunity. But they "laughed it to scorn."

Let us not self-satisfiedly condemn them, or marvel amusedly at their obvious folly. We could very well unconsciously be doing the same thing ourselves.

V. 11: Some did humble themselves and come. General scorn and rejection cannot be made an excuse for not proclaiming, for there may always be the few who will hear, and they make the effort worthwhile. Furthermore, the proclaiming is a duty and responsibility, even though none give heed.

V. 12: In Judah, God "gave them one heart" to obey. All is of God. God in His mercy is uniting them in zeal and holiness, giving them a new start.

V. 15: The zeal of the nation puts the dilatory priests and Levites to shame, and they belatedly sanctify themselves.

Vs. 17-20: Some of the congregation had not had time or proper understanding to cleanse and prepare themselves as required, but Hezekiah prayed for them and God accepted them. We cannot presume on this: we must make every effort to know and to obey. Yet this does give us assurance that God is merciful and flexible toward sincerity, and not rigid and mechanical.

V. 21: They kept the Passover with great gladness. The only possible source of any real gladness is the assurance of harmony and peace with God through faith and obedience. Nothing else has any real satisfaction. That is why the fear of God is the BEGINNING of wisdom—anything short of it is self-destructive stupidity.

V. 23: In their joy and zeal they decided to double the time, and keep the feast another seven days. This is the kind of enthusiasm that is a joy to contemplate.

2 Chr. 31:1: Stirred up to this high pitch of zeal, all the assembled congregation dispersed through all the land, both Judah and Israel, and destroyed all the images and groves and high places—

"Until they had utterly destroyed them all."

Note the positive comes first. They were not in a fit condition, nor did they have the incentive and zeal, to go out and destroy the evil until they had first put themselves in harmony with the good.

But zeal for destruction does not always mean zeal for construction; nor does a burst of destructive enthusiasm mean

a consistent holding fast thereafter. The flesh enjoys destroying something, especially under the gratifying pretence of "righteous anger." But it takes a lot more depth and patience and character to consistently and ploddingly build.

The rest of 2 Chr. 31 is the setting up of the permanent appointments and arrangements of the priesthood, worship and offerings. Finally (vs. 20, 21)—

"And thus did Hezekiah throughout all Judah, and wrought that which was good and right and truth before the Lord his God.

"And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the Law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did it WITH ALL HIS HEART—and prospered."

This was the beginning of his reign. Now back to 2 Kgs. 18—
V. 5: He trusted in the Lord God: none like him before or after.

V. 6: He clave to the Lord: he departed not from following Him.

V. 7: And the Lord was with him, and he prospered whithersoever he went forth. And he rebelled against the king of Assyria, and served him not.

This prospering, and rebelling against Assyria would appear to apply to the latter part of his reign, though doubtless it was his course and purpose and desire from the beginning. The first time the Assyrian king came to punish his rebellion, he submitted and paid an enormous tribute. We are not told the reason—whether under pressure his faith failed, or whether the people or his leading men would not support him in his resistance.

It does seem clear throughout the historical record, and from the writings of Micah and Isaiah, that all the initiative for faith and resistance depended on Hezekiah himself (with the encouragement of Isaiah and Micah), and that there was little depth of faith in the generality of the people.

On the occasion of the first invasion, Shebna seems to have been the first officer under the king—"over the house"—as we see in Isa. 22, and he was not a good or faithful man, as Isa. 22 reveals. It is possible he remained over from the reign of Hezekiah's father, and that he was strongly entrenched.

On the later occasion, when Hezekiah successfully resisted, and held the people with him, and the Assyrian host was

destroyed, we find that the faithful Eliakim has replaced Shebna as "over the household," as Isaiah had foretold (22:19-21).

Vs. 9-12: The final carrying away of the northern kingdom of Israel into captivity, by Assyria, and the complete termination of their kingdom. They had, as a whole, scorned God's last merciful plea to them through Hezekiah. They had seen Hezekiah's reforms, and how God had blessed him, but they preferred destruction to wisdom and obedience.

In the natural course of things, Judah would have suffered the same fate at the same time, but it is clear that Hezekiah's efforts and reforms and mediation for the nation deferred the wrath of God, which had already very strongly begun to be manifested.

V. 13: Eight years after the fall of Samaria, in Hezekiah's fourteenth year, Sennacherib the king of Assyria came against Judah. Hezekiah had inherited a kingdom already under tribute and vassalage to Assyria, for his father had submitted to them.

Hezekiah may have accepted the situation at first, until he could reform and rebuild the nation, so God would be with them. Or he may have rebelled from the beginning and this may have been Assyria's first opportunity to come against him in punishment.

It appears from Assyrian records that Sennacherib was not the supreme ruler at this time, but his father Sargon, according to the most likely chronology, but the term "king" was not so restrictively used as today, and it did not necessarily mean the one supreme ruler. Very similarly, in Daniel 5, Belshazzar is called the "king" of Babylon, though his father was still alive, and was the chief ruler of the kingdom.

The Assyrian records that have been discovered in the past century or so give a remarkable confirmation to the general historicalness and reality of the Bible, though details are often hard to reconcile. Until recent discoveries, the Bible had been for two thousand years the only record of these events at all.

V. 14: Hezekiah submits to Assyria and pays tribute. The Bible says three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. If the translations of the inscriptions are correct, Sennacherib claims it was eight hundred of silver and thirty of gold—remarkably similar, considering the normal lying and boasting of the Assyrians. (Translators don't always agree on rendering the inscriptions).

Vs. 15-16: Hezekiah stripped all the treasures of the Temple to pay the tribute. He is not condemned for it, and we do not know the circumstances. It could hardly have been pleasing to God. Hezekiah's sickness occurred the same year, and it appears that God soon after far more than made up all the loss to him, for when the Babylonians visited him to congratulate him on his miraculous recovery, he showed them all his treasures (Isa. 39:1, 2).

V. 17: The king of Assyria sends a great host against Jerusalem.

From several considerations, there seems to be a break in time between verses 16 and 17, which, according to the most likely chronology, appears to be twelve years. For while verse 16 speaks of Hezekiah's submission and tribute (on the earlier occasion), the section starting with verse 17 speaks all through of his resistance and refusal to submit, and his miraculous deliverance.

It seems clear that between verses 16 and 17 we must put his sickness and the embassy from Babylon and the temporary uplifting of his pride and presumption, and his soon-after repentance and humbling of himself, for in the very sentence when God tells him he will add fifteen years to his life (2 Kgs. 20:6), He also tells him He will deliver Jerusalem from Assyria. This must be after the occasion of submission and before the occasion of resistance.

The record beginning at verse 17 of chapter 18 tells of the deliverance and carries the record in an unbroken line right through to the destruction of the Assyrian host and the death of Sennacherib back in Assyria.

So following verse 16 of chapter 18, we go to chapter 20, the record of his sickness.

This begins, "In those days"—referring back indefinitely to some time earlier, for chapter nineteen goes right down to the death of Sennacherib, which was nearly twenty years after the death of Hezekiah himself.

Furthermore, we are told in this chapter (20) that fifteen years were added to Hezekiah's life. He reigned twenty-nine years, so we have to go back to his fourteenth year for his sickness—the same year the Assyrians first came and he paid tribute, as recorded in 18:13-16. So beginning chapter 20—

V. 1: God said, "*Set thine house in order for thou shalt die, and not live.*"

V. 3: And Hezekiah wept sore, and prayed not to die. Whether he was wise in this request is hard to say. Certainly as a general rule it is best to submit to the vastly superior wisdom and arrangements of God, rather than to seek our own way. Who are we to know what is best? And certainly the son that was born during the added fifteen years was by his wickedness the direct cause of Judah's final destruction (2 Kgs. 23:26). And certainly Hezekiah's one great failure occurred later, and as a direct consequence of his extension of life.

If his concern was for himself, it would seem far wiser to submit to God's appointments. But if his concern was for his people, like Paul and Moses under similar considerations, then at least we can sympathize. The fact that God gave him assurance of deliverance from the oppression of Assyria right together with the extension of his life (v. 6) would point in this direction and indicate that this was probably why he did not want to die.

He doubtless realized the shallowness and precariousness of the people's reformation and worship. He would realize there was much to be done if the nation was to be preserved, and he would not want to leave his people as they then were—under bondage and tribute to Assyria.

Truly he did fail after this, but also he did humble and recover himself, so God's wrath was turned away, and he went on later to his greatest triumph of faith—his defiance of the Assyrian host. In its consequent miraculous destruction Judah was completely relieved of the Assyrian oppressor for many years, and may have been permanently so had not Manasseh's wickedness caused God to bring Assyria to carry him away captive.

* * *

Hezekiah's life was extended fifteen years. In Rabshakeh's appeal to the people to submit to Assyria (2 Kgs. 18:32), he said the king would carry them away to a land like their own land. This was the Assyrian policy: Israel had already been taken away, and so had a great number from Judah itself.

Clearly the Assyrians planned the end of the nation of Judah, and Hezekiah could see this closing in on the land. But as a result of his faith and resistance, we find that Judah enjoyed one hundred and five more years of independence and national life, from the year of Hezekiah's sickness (713 BC) to 608 BC, when Pharaoh Necho carried king Jehoahaz captive and set up Jehoiakim as an Egyptian vassal.

One hundred and five is seven times fifteen; the nation had seven-fold the extension of life that Hezekiah had.

V. 8: Hezekiah asked for a sign. Why? Was this a lack of faith? And he was given a sign—a tremendous sign—one of the great mysteries of Scripture which people have pondered on ever since. In some way, God caused the shadow on the sundial to go exactly ten degrees backward, and He gave Hezekiah choice beforehand whether it would be backward or forward.

Why such a tremendous sign for something that was going to happen in three days anyway? Couldn't Hezekiah just believe and wait?

Perhaps this reveals something to us about Hezekiah's faith that God knew and Hezekiah realized. Faith is not an automatic thing: God's strength is made perfect in weakness.

Hezekiah bore great responsibility for the nation. Their destiny and very existence depended on what this one man did. The Assyrians are notorious for their ruthless and wanton cruelty to their captives—especially to any who had resisted them. It was customary to cut off the hands, feet, ears and noses, and put out their eyes, or to impale them alive on sharp poles.

Clearly, for what he had to do in standing up to this power with only the armor of faith, Hezekiah needed the strength of a tremendous sign. It wasn't just getting well. It was the prodigious work that lay before him.

The very fact that he failed so soon after this when put to the test emphasized the need. It wasn't that his faith failed. He failed in the opposite direction—presumption, self-sufficiency: his heart was lifted up. And the sign was the indirect cause of his failure, for the ambassadors had come because of his sickness and recovery, and to "enquire of the wonder that was done in the land."

How hard it is for the flesh to keep a true and stable balance! But it was all part of his training and development, out of which he at last successfully came.

V. 12: Berodach (or Merodach) Baladan sends messengers and a present to Hezekiah.

V. 13: And Hezekiah "hearkened unto them," and showed them everything he had. What does it mean, he "hearkened unto them"? Clearly there was something more to it than a simple goodwill visit. Isaiah pointedly asked Hezekiah, "What saith these men?" (v. 14).

Merodach-Baladan had a continuous history—before and after this time—of revolt and sedition against Assyria, to which he was nominally subject. It would seem here that his purpose was intrigue, and Hezekiah seems to have been flattered and carried away.

Hezekiah's basic desire was freedom for his people from Assyria. Here was a strong ally with a scheme for revolt. It would be easy for him to convince himself that here was a provision from God.

But he did not seek divine counsel. If we are not careful to continually seek God's guidance—in study of His Word and in prayer—we can let our desires, very commendable as they may be, cause us to get involved in questionable associations and activities by relying on our own wisdom and power. Of this incident 2 Chr. 32:25 records—

"Therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem."

Note again how his action affected others beside himself. The specific reason given for God's displeasure was that—

"He rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him, for his heart was lifted up."

Apparently, like Moses, he for the time being forgot his complete dependence upon God, and was carried away by the natural pride and self-sufficiency of the flesh. Mercifully, Isaiah was sent immediately to rebuke him back to wisdom and humility and faithful dependence. Deliverance from the Assyrian yoke was not to come by human scheming or by the pride-arousing arm of the flesh.

Isaiah—in saying that all Judah's wealth, and Hezekiah's own descendants, should be taken captive to Babylon—does not specifically say it was because of Hezekiah's display of pride. But he does make it very clear that material things are very transitory and nothing to build pride on, and also that Babylon would be a very dangerous ally, and would replace Assyria as the oppressor.

Hezekiah immediately humbled himself, and recognized his error, and so did the inhabitants of Jerusalem (so, clearly, they were involved with him). And he was given assurance (v. 19) there should be—

"Peace and truth in his days."

We note "peace AND truth." There cannot be peace without truth. Hezekiah's whole course before God was a sincere

endeavor to serve Him in TRUTH, and when he humbled himself he determined to follow truth, and not allow pride to deceive him again.

This concludes 2 Kgs. 20 (except the final summary of vs. 20, 21), and brings us back to 2 Kgs. 18:17.

The Assyrians have invaded the land again, and this time Hezekiah is not paying tribute but putting his faith in God, and defying them. It is clearly a different and later occasion from verses 13-16, where he bought them off.

The Bible does not give any date for this invasion, but from Assyrian records it appears to have been twelve years later, in Hezekiah's twenty-sixth year, in 701 BC, near the end of his reign. In the intervening twelve years, God had prospered Hezekiah greatly.

Rabshakeh's words (2 Kgs. 18:19-25 and 28-35) make two things clear that distinguish this invasion from the previous one—

1. Hezekiah was in defiance and not submitting and paying tribute.

2. The purpose this time was not tribute, but destruction of the nation (v. 25) and deportation of the people (v. 32).

Rabshakeh's speech is very clever, and he makes five strong points that would be a great test of his hearers' faith—

1. (v. 21): He points out that Egypt, their only possible natural ally, was both weak and undependable—a bruised reed which pierced the hand of him that leaned on it for support. Isaiah had publicly said such in warning against dependence upon Egypt, and doubtless the Assyrians were aware of this, for they show a remarkable familiarity with Judah's internal affairs. (Espionage and intelligence has always been the lifeblood of successful war). Isaiah had said—

"They shall be ashamed of Egypt their glory . . . whither shall we flee for help to be delivered from the king of Assyria?" (20:5, 6).

Similarly, over one hundred years later, the Babylonians were aware of Jeremiah's prophecies and exhortations to his people to submit, and they used them in their psychological warfare against Judah.

2. (v. 22): Rabshakeh points out that Hezekiah had removed all the high places throughout the land. To many, perhaps most, of the people, this would be removing the visible aspects of their worship, and rejecting their God. Again we note

Rabshakeh's knowledge of Judah's affairs, and his clever use of that knowledge.

3. (v. 23): He vividly exposes and emphasized the military weakness of Hezekiah and focuses attention on his own vast military resources by the challenge that he will supply two thousand horses if Hezekiah can furnish riders.

Hezekiah's inability to meet this challenge would manifest to all the people how hopeless his condition naturally was. It would also, a little later, emphasize the miraculousness of the deliverance.

4. (v. 25): Rabshakeh says God had told him to come against Judah to punish it. (And he is actually familiar with and uses the divine Name, Yahweh. We notice later he is able to speak Hebrew).

This point would have a disturbing and discouraging effect on those most likely to support Hezekiah: those sincere ones who realized the nation's wickedness and the call for God's judgment. Here again, Rabshakeh manifests an apparent knowledge of Isaiah's prophecies, for Isaiah had said to Ahaz, Hezekiah's father (7:17)—

"Yahweh shall bring upon thee the king of Assyria."

There would, therefore, be much doubting and searching of heart: If this is truly God's doing, should we resist?

5. (v. 33): His final point: "Have any gods of any lands been able to deliver their people from Assyria?" If Assyria was stronger than the combined gods of all the other nations, how could little Judah and its God stop them?

But here was where the Assyrians, with their cleverness of argument, went too far and destroyed themselves. They directly challenged the God of Israel. Furthermore, the king of Assyria himself put this last point—their key point, their basic challenge—into writing, and messengers came again from the king of Assyria with it in a letter (2 Kgs. 19: 9-14). And Hezekiah took this letter of blasphemy and spread it before the Lord in the Temple.

The consequence was the miraculous destruction of one hundred and eighty-five thousand of the enemy in one night. And we learn from 2 Chr. 32:21 that it was ALL the mighty men of valor, and the leaders, and the captains—his whole trained officer corps—and not just plain soldiers that could soon be replaced. This would break the back of the Assyrian power for many years.

This appears to have been about three years before Hezekiah's death. He had at last, by his faith, delivered his people from the enemy. This typical Messiah had gone to the gates of the grave (Isa. 38:10-14), and had come again the THIRD DAY (2 Kgs. 20:5) to the House of the Lord, and at last in renewed strength had "become the peace when the Assyrian came into the land" (Mic. 5:5).

"And Hezekiah slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the chiefest of the sepulchres of the sons of David, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem did him honor at his death . . .

"And Manasseh his son reigned in his stead."

And with Manasseh began all over again the wickedness and abominations, and consequent oppression of the cruel Assyrian power, and at last the complete destruction of the nation and desolation of the land.

This Man Shall be the Peace

"Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which Thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old" (Mic. 7:20).

THE PROPHECY OF MICAH

We are reading together the prophecy of Micah. Why do we read these things?—this book written nearly three thousand years ago about the sins and calamities of people of a different age, long since dead: sins which we are not likely to be in a position to commit—idolatry, oppression of the poor, witchcraft, physical violence against our neighbors?

These things sometimes seem repetitious, and irrelevant, and monotonous. What value and interest do they have for us in this so "enlightened" and exciting twentieth century AD?

We read these things because they are the eternal Word of God to man—the one tangible thing we can hold in our hands that connects us to eternity.

We read them because these things are written for our admonition, our instruction, our training and development in godliness. The sins may be different, but the basic struggle is the same—the struggle against the deceptiveness and stupidity of our natural flesh that wants to take us down the glittering path of death—that wants us to cast aside the joys of eternity for the silly, passing, exciting, half-pleasures of the present, that always leave us unhappy and unsatisfied and craving for more.

We read these things to fill our minds and hearts and thoughts with the wholesome and pure and exalted things of the Spirit, and thus to become spiritually-minded, which is life and peace—and to clear out of our minds all the natural little pots and pans rubbish of the passing present. Pots and pans have their place—an essential place—but a very, very SMALL place in the spiritual mind.

We read these things that, through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures, we might have hope—hope and joy in a hopeless and joyless world. The world has excitement. It has brief gratification. It has many silly and childish activities that it quaintly and rather pathetically calls "pleasures"—like beating some object back and forth with a stick. It calls these things pleasures because it does not know or comprehend what REAL

joy and pleasure and satisfaction actually is. It uses just the little, bottom, animal part of its brain.

We read these things because this is our one precious lifeline of Light to keep us from sinking in the dark, dead ocean of the world.

CHAPTER ONE

Micah 1:1—Micah prophesied in the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, some time in the fifty years between 750 and 700 BC—nearly three thousand years ago, halfway back to Adam. He prophesied concerning Samaria and Jerusalem: Israel and Judah.

Millions, yea, billions of people have come and gone since the days of Micah. All are forever perished and forgotten, but he remains with us in the eternal record. Why?

Because, in his brief passing day, he had the wisdom to cast off the world and cast in his lot faithfully and wholeheartedly with the things of eternity; while they—the forgotten billions—chased the infantile “pleasures” of the present.

Jotham and Hezekiah were good kings—two of the best. Ahaz—in between—son of Jotham and father of Hezekiah, was one of the most wicked and corrupt.

Jotham is a strange and shadowy figure. He did right before God: nothing adverse is recorded concerning him; he was a great builder—he “built cities and castles and towers.” He was a great conqueror. He became mighty, it is recorded, because he “prepared his ways before the Lord his God.” But so little is recorded concerning him—no personal details at all (2 Kgs. 15:32-38; 2 Chr. 27).

Though he was personally among the best of the kings, we are told that in his reign “the people did yet corruptly” (2 Chr. 27:2). This is the sad key to many things—

“The people did yet corruptly.”

How unnecessarily sad! That the people, blessed with so many blessings—shown the way of wisdom—should be so stupid! They did not think they were corrupt. They were offended at the suggestion. “What do we do wrong?” they often said, as reported by the prophets. They just acted naturally, like natural people, and everything they did seemed perfectly all right to them. But everything outside the narrow spiritual way of life is corruption and death.

Hosea and Isaiah were already prophesying when Micah began in the reign of Jotham. They had been prophesying since

the previous reign of Uzziah, Jotham's father. Amos had been, too, but his ministry was now ended. It was a period of crisis, and of great prophetic activity. The end of Israel's kingdom was at hand, and Judah came perilously close to destruction also, but was saved by Hezekiah's faith.

We learn from Jeremiah 26 that Micah was very instrumental in helping to bring about the reforms under Hezekiah which temporarily saved Judah from annihilation. It is Micah's chapter 3 that Jeremiah mentions as influencing the people of Judah—

"Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps" (v. 12).

Eight hundred years later, in its final desolation under Titus, Zion actually and literally was ceremoniously plowed by the Roman soldiers, as a mark and symbol of its complete and permanent destruction. And when the walls were later rebuilt, the city moved northward and the original hill of Zion was left outside, so that ever since it has remained open fields—current aerial photographs still show it so.

There are two great lessons in Micah for us—as timely today as the day they were written—a lesson of warning and a lesson of hope.

1. Sin WILL be punished. There is no outwitting or outmaneuvering God. He has said, very simply and clearly, that obedience and spirituality will bring happiness and life; disobedience and fleshliness will bring sorrow and death.

It is so very simple and very conclusive, so tragically confirmed by all human history, especially Israel's; yet so few seem to get the point. Most allow themselves to be deceived by the subtlety of the flesh, and feel that they can, in their own special case, please the flesh and still have God's treasures.

Why are "intelligent" people who should know better so stupid about this one thing—the most important of all? Because they don't make the EFFORT—they don't see the NECESSITY—of getting these prophecies, the Word of God, sharply enough into their minds and consciousness—

"Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Rom. 10:17)

—and Faith is the one thing we've got to have more of than anything else if we are to have any hope of overcoming. Faith is the wisdom and the power to put first things FIRST, and keep them there.

2. The glorious end of all things WILL be accomplished, and all present things, good and bad are working toward that end. As we stand back and view the great sweep of history, and as—with the slow passage of time—these once terrible calamities fall into their proper perspective in the plan of God, we are assured, and we realize, that all is for a wise purpose.

The people of God suffer and struggle now for their own good and training. The wicked prosper because they do not matter. This is their passing day. Let them have it to the full. The Assyrians prospered while Israel suffered. The Assyrians are gone forever, but Israel continues still.

"Thou wilt perform the Truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old" (Mic. 7:20).

The nation of Israel and its long history is the type of each individual. Here on a vast scale written across the pages of history, God manifests and reveals His way with those who are called according to His purpose: trying, disciplining, developing, sometimes terribly punishing, but finally—for the true remnant that endures all in faith—blessing and purifying and perfecting.

V. 2: "Hear all people". This call is for us. We do well to give heed. It is said that those who ignore the mistakes of the past are doomed to repeat them.

Vs. 3, 4: The Lord cometh forth in terrible judgment, melting the mountains and tearing the valleys. It is a symbol of tremendous destruction and upheaval. Israel's world was coming to a violent end, and soon the scene will be repeated on a worldwide scale. Only those who in wisdom have chosen the merciful chambers of the Lord will escape.

Vs. 6, 7: Samaria shall be utterly destroyed. And so it was, soon after. After the bitter sufferings of a three-year siege, its inhabitants were driven away in chained, naked gangs as slaves. These were just ordinary people, doing ordinary things, pleasing themselves, ignoring God's commands.

The rest of the chapter is the similar coming judgment on Judah. Judah witnessed Samaria's dreadful end, but heeded not the lesson.

CHAPTER TWO

Chapter 2:1, 2: Injustice in Judah. Though they were all the chosen children and close family of God, they oppressed and abused one another. Civil war is always the bitterest war. The

closer the relationship, the deeper the feeling—either for good or for ill. Most murders are in the family.

We must be careful of this among ourselves. We are the family of God, very closely knit together. Our closeness must be for good, and for comfort, and for patience, and for strength—never for bitterness or antagonism.

We tend to take our own people for granted, and to let our feelings and actions run free with a harshness and rudeness we'd never show to strangers. The only preventative of this is ever-increasing kindness and love in the spirit.

Vs. 3-5: They would be utterly spoiled and lose all their heart-set worldly possessions; and so it later came to pass.

V. 6: "Don't prophesy to us!" Mind your own business and don't tell us how to run our private lives! So the stupidity of the flesh has always reacted to exhortation.

V. 7: Are your calamities because God's power to help you is limited? Or because He does not care? Doesn't God's Word always bring true peace of mind and happiness to those who obey it? Show a case where it is otherwise!

Vs. 8, 9: It is their own wickedness that brings their trouble.

V. 10: The ultimatum: "Your opportunity has passed! Get out! Go into captivity. The land is polluted." They could not recognize the pollution, because it must be spiritually discerned by the Light of the Word of God.

V. 11: They want no prophets except those false ones who will flatter them and preach prosperity.

Vs. 12, 13: A joyful, merciful break in a message of gloom. The final deliverance and regathering—gathered together as scattered sheep.

The "Breaker" is come to them. Another strange and significant expression. Christ is the Breaker—to break open the gates of death; to break through their enemies; to break the barriers of their captivity; and above all, to break them and their fleshly spirit, so they may be acceptable to God.

"Their King shall pass before them, and the Lord on the head of them" (v. 13).

CHAPTER THREE

Chapter 3:1-3: Those commissioned to administer the Law of Moses did not themselves obey that Law. How typical! This is a universal failing.

We so easily fall into the same pattern. So quick to criticize and apply the Law of Christ to the sins of others. So slow and so blind to see its deep and searching application to every

activity of our own lives. If we judged ourselves as eagerly as we judge others, what a loving, wonderful, spiritual, unearthly community we would be!

We would be at all the meetings, instead of seeking our ease elsewhere. We would put aside everything of the world, everything of our own pleasures; and every thought and moment would be consecrated to the service of God in love! Let us take care of the INNER part first, so we may stand some chance at the judgment seat of Christ.

"Let him that is without sin cast the first stone" (Jn. 8:7).

Truly none are completely sinless, but we are sinless in God's sight if we are covered by Christ, and if we strive to put away all the things of the world.

But if we are willing to condone and justify in ourselves any worldly activity or affiliation, for pleasure or for profit, then we are blind hypocrites when we condemn others.

"They shall cry unto the Lord, but He will not hear them" (v. 4).

We assume that, when we have had enough of the flesh and the world, we can just run back to God at any time and he will be happy to receive and take care of us.

Truly He is infinitely merciful, and He extended mercy and patience to Israel time after time. For this we can be thankful. But any beforehand, calculated presumption upon His mercy is the utmost of folly, and doomed to sorrow. God is not mocked—"As a man soweth; so shall he reap."

"Night shall be unto you . . . The sun shall go down over the prophets . . . There is no answer of God" (vs. 6, 7).

The ministry of the prophets was one of God's greatest blessings to Israel. Here were inspired men of God, living right among them, whom they could follow and be safe. But they always sought false prophets and persecuted those who told them the Truth.

At last, three hundred years after Micah, in the days of Malachi, the prophetic ministry ceased. It shone brilliantly and briefly four hundred years later in John, Jesus and the apostles, then went out again, and left Israel and the world to two thousand years of darkness and evil Gentile night.

"But truly (says Micah) I am full of power by the Spirit of the Lord, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin" (v. 8).

A very powerful verse. A verse for us to consider deeply. We have the words of the prophets—let us heed them.

Vs. 9-11: The heads and rulers abhor judgment and pervert equity, the priests teach for hire, and the prophets divine for money.

This (we remember from the words of Jeremiah) was in the days of the good king Hezekiah, for this was the very prophecy of Micah to which Jeremiah refers. How could this be in Hezekiah's day?

It gives us a revealing picture of the entrenched and deep-rooted corruption in high places with which Hezekiah had to contend—of the largely single-handed battle he fought.

"Therefore shall Zion be plowed as a field" (v. 12).

And it HAS been—for two thousand years.

CHAPTER FOUR

Chapter 4:1: "But"—here is a change. A complete reversal from desolation to world dominion—

"BUT in the LAST DAYS, the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains.

"And many nations shall say, come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord.

"And the Law shall go forth of Zion, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem."

No more corruption and confusion as at present under man's evil rule, but one universal law of righteousness.

"Nation shall not lift up a sword against nation" (v. 3).

What a glorious change from man's evil history! War has always been his principal occupation. Again just yesterday (Dec. 4, 1971), two large nations went to war, as all nations continually have, like vicious animals. And yet man makes such pious and pompous pretensions of being mature and civilized.

"They shall sit every man under his vine and his fig tree, and none shall make them afraid" (v. 4).

Again, what a tremendous contrast to the evil present, with crime and violence doubling every five to ten years, and getting closer and closer to all of us! How unerringly the prophetic Spirit of God puts its finger on the outstanding evils of these latter days of proud man's glorious civilization—war and violence, oppression, injustice and corruption. The US news media are constantly reporting police and political corruption on a larger and larger scale, reaching into the highest places; and this is one of the world's supposedly more just and advanced and democratic societies.

It is very interesting that these verses appear almost word for word in Isaiah 2. Isaiah was contemporary with Micah, and very active in the affairs of Hezekiah. Clearly this double witness is to focus our attention on this remarkable prophecy of the glorious coming reign of Christ.

"In THAT DAY will I assemble her that halteth . . . And make her a strong nation, and the Lord shall reign over them in Mt. Zion for ever . . . And the Kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem" (vs. 6-8).

Truly a glorious destiny for Israel, the people of God, after all their travail has passed away! But in the meantime a long night of sorrow lay before them—

"Thou shalt go even to Babylon" (v. 10).

Assyria was the then-current world power and oppressor, and Babylon at this time was of no power. But both Micah and Isaiah point to Babylon as the destined oppressor and destroyer of Judah, as Assyria was to be of Israel.

"There the Lord shall redeem thee."

Deliverance from Babylon should come in its time. Deliverance did come in seventy years from literal Babylon, but Judah was again carried captive centuries later into the much more terrible Babylon of universal Rome, where it is still scattered and oppressed unto this day.

"Now also many nations are gathered against thee that say, Let her be defiled, and let our eye look upon Zion" (v. 11).

How strange and how wonderful that today, two thousand and seven hundred years later, we see these same nations surrounding Israel, barking like mad dogs, still seeking her destruction and backed up in their evil enterprise by Russia and the Papacy; for the Pope has never recognized Israel's existence, but has visited and fawned on her Arab enemies.

"But they know not the thoughts of the Lord . . . for He shall gather them as the sheaves into the floor" (v. 12).

Here is Armageddon—the gathering of Gog and the False Prophet of Rome and their bands for destruction on the mountains of Israel.

"Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion, for I will make thine horn iron and thy hooves brass, and thou shalt beat in pieces many people, and I will consecrate their gain unto the Lord" (v. 13).

This has never yet occurred. This is the "Great Day of God Almighty." How wonderfully we see things shaping up today

before our eyes for this long-foretold and now soon-coming climax!

CHAPTER FIVE

Chapter 5 contains Micah's best-known prophecy: the vital item of information concerning the Messiah that Micah alone was privileged to supply—

"But thou, Bethlehem-Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto Me that is to be ruler in Israel" (v. 2).

This was the prophecy to which the chief priests and scribes immediately pointed when Herod asked them where the Messiah should be born. They took the prophecy simply and literally, and of direct divine origin, and they were sure of their ground—and they were absolutely right. Even so will the other prophecies be just as literally and surely fulfilled.

In verse 5 is another well-known and important prophecy—

"This man shall be the peace when the Assyrian shall come into our land."

We see the vicious Assyrian today, like the Assyrian of old, gathering his forces to carry out his evil thought against Israel, and blasphemously defying Israel's God.

"This man shall be the peace." Not just give peace, but BE peace. Christ IS peace. There is no peace outside of him and we seek it in vain when we seek it anywhere else. But how long it takes foolish man to learn this so simple and easy lesson!

"GREAT peace have they that love Thy law" (Psa. 119:165).

"There is NO peace, saith my God, to the wicked" (Isa. 48:22).

"Thou wilt keep him in PERFECT peace whose mind is stayed on Thee" (Isa. 26:3).

Israel never learned—shall we be so foolish, too?

"Then shall we raise against him seven shepherds and eight principal men."

Seven is completeness and perfection. Eight is a new beginning. Does this refer to a particular fifteen men? Bro. Thomas suggests Christ plus the fourteen (double seven) who dominate the New Testament picture: John the Baptist, Paul, and the twelve apostles.

Vs. 7 and 8 are a striking contrast, but they are harmonious parts of the whole—

"The remnant of Judah shall be as a dew from the Lord, as showers upon the grass."

"The remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles as a lion amongst sheep, who treadeth down and teareth in pieces."

These are two essential aspects of Israel's latterday work with the nations—to discipline and to bless.

"The Kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem" (Mic. 4:8).

The rest of chapter five is the final purification of Israel itself.

There is much more of interest in this book of Micah. The next two chapters each have their well-known quotation—

CHAPTER SIX

"He hath showed thee, O man, what is good. And what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

"Justice, mercy and faith"—the things which Jesus calls the "weightier matters of the Law" (Matt. 23:23).

Can we honestly say that we "love mercy"—that this is our basic way of life? What does it mean, to love mercy? Let us think about that a lot. It is the key to many things—"LOVE MERCY." It will open our understanding to many things. It is a beautiful, Christlike characteristic.

We will find that "loving mercy" is very closely related to "walking humbly"—in fact, they are inseparable, and they complement each other. They are two sides of the same godly character. "Come and see my zeal for the Lord" is often the voice of pride.

CHAPTER SEVEN

In chapter seven there is another prophecy unique to Micah—

"According to the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt will I show unto him marvellous things.

"The nations shall see and be confounded at all their might" (vs. 15, 16).

It is this passage, in conjunction with several others, and the general fitness of things, that led bro. Thomas to the conclusion that the events of the "last days"—the transition period between the evil night of the Gentiles and the glorious day of the Lord—would consume forty years, one generation, to purge and purify the earth.

Training must begin in early childhood. Today there is little discipline: only increasing wildness and self-will: a proud, wilful, lawless generation. A new generation must come up, taught in the wisdom of God and not the folly of the world, before the earth will be fit for Christ's Kingdom. A generation of the earth must perish in the wilderness.

Finally, the transcendent beauty of Micah's closing words (7:18-20)—

"Who is a God like unto Thee . . . "

This is a play on Micah's own name. The full form is Micaiah, "Who is like Yah?"

". . . that pardoneth iniquity and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage?

"He retaineth not His anger forever, because He delighteth in mercy.

"He will turn again; He will have compassion upon us; He will subdue our iniquities." (A strange expression!)

He WILL subdue our iniquities, if we will let Him—if we will call upon Him—if we really want our very pleasant iniquities subdued. There is no other way to peace, and we cannot do it ourselves, but we must be mature enough and have enough sense to really desire to get rid of our fleshly and worldly desires—

"And thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea."

And the final glorious assurance of the Everlasting Covenant:

**"THOU WILT PERFORM THE TRUTH TO JACOB
AND THE MERCY TO ABRAHAM WHICH THOU HAST
SWORN UNTO OUR FATHERS FROM THE DAYS OF
OLD!"**

The Tongue of the Learned

"Where is the bill of your mother's divorce, whom I have put away? . . . For your transgressions is your mother put away."

ISAIAH CHAPTER FIFTY

So God begins His appeal to Israel recorded in Isa. 50. We are reminded of Hosea's beautiful living allegory of Israel as the unfaithful wife who abandoned her husband and children. It is a sad picture that the Scriptures present to us of God's chosen people. In the main, it is three thousand and five hundred years of wickedness, bondage, and estrangement from God. Why? Why must such terrible sadness be?

Because of folly, wilfulness, short-sightedness of seeking, and being immersed in the passing animal present instead of the eternal spiritual future. We each have just a few brief years of opportunity. We are here but for a moment—a moment so short and precarious that nothing really matters about it but one thing—laying hold on eternal life. Anything that does not contribute to this is precious, irreplaceable time forever wasted, forever lost. Most of us live as though we take our eternal salvation for granted, with plenty of time for passing, perishing things. What folly! What tragedy!

"Work out your salvation with fear and trembling"
(Phil. 2:12).

"Always abounding in the work of the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58).

"If the righteous shall scarcely be saved, where shall the wicked and the ungodly appear?" (1 Pet. 4:18).

Do we really BELIEVE these warnings? Do we really believe God—or are we just like blind, stupid, heedless Israel? Do we really believe God when He says the righteous shall scarcely be saved, and that it is only by always abounding in the work of the Lord that any shall attain to the Kingdom? How do we possibly think that we have time for a host of other things?

"Wherefore, when I came, was there no man? When I called, was there none to answer?" (v. 2).

Why has it always been thus? Why is it that most who take on the Name of Christ proceed thereafter to *"neglect so great salvation"*? Why did Paul have to say—

"I have no man likeminded . . . ALL seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's?" (Phil. 2:20, 21).

We each have twenty-four hours a day, one hundred and sixty-eight hours a week. How much of it is spent in *"always abounding in the work of the Lord?"* Set it side by side: time spent for ourselves, time spent for God's work. Add your own up for yourself. Is it a record worth turning in to the Master? Whom do we think we are deceiving?

"Wherefore, when I came, was there no man?"

". . . Is My hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? Have I no power to deliver?" (v. 2).

Is our lack of service and dedication because we don't really believe God can do what He promises? Do we have to spend so much time grubbing for present things because we do not believe He will or can take care of us?

"Having food and raiment, be therewith content" (1 Tim. 6:8).

"Give us this day our daily bread" (Matt. 6:11).

"Seek ye first the Kingdom of God" (Matt. 6:33).

" . . . Behold, at My rebuke I dry up the sea; I make the rivers a wilderness" (Isa. 50:2).

God has given ample evidence of His power and His moment-to-moment control of all things. What more evidence do we need, or could He give?

"I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering" (v. 3).

From the natural ordinances of day and night, to the obliteration and overthrow of the mightiest political heavens, God manifests His power and control continually before our eyes.

* * *

"Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have put away?"

Consider the long and dreadful history of Israel—their degradation, their constant living in fear and insecurity, their frequent massacres, their being driven like cattle from country to country. All these things are terrible lessons written in blood and fire to try to teach us wisdom, and realization, and spiritual awareness, and total, urgent, exclusive dedication to the one thing that is needful. But how many are really moved to tremble at these things and to walk in wisdom?

"The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned" (v. 4).

The word for "learned" here is actually "disciple"—the faithful follower, the one who is taught by the master. The picture here changes abruptly from condemnation of the unfaithful wife Israel to a beautiful portrayal of Christ, her one true, faithful

Seed unto God: a portrayal of wisdom, of beauty, and strength of character, and faithfulness.

If we only had the simple common sense to put verses 4 to 9 in actual practice in our lives on a robust, fulltime basis, most or all of our problems would disappear, and we would be well on the way to the Kingdom of God. If we do NOT have the sense to put these things in constant, daily practice in all that we do, we are just completely wasting our time and lives.

In their perfection of beauty, these verses describe Christ—
“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

But they are far more than that. They are the required pattern for all who would be Christ’s at his coming.

“The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary” (v. 4).

Can we say honestly this? Do we want to be able to say it? Is this the way we want to dedicate our lives; or do we prefer to seek our own pleasure and profit? How did Christ acquire the tongue of the learned so he could give joy and life to the weary? By suffering and by study—

“He learned obedience by the things that he suffered” (Heb. 5:8).

“O how love I Thy Law! It is my study all the day . . . through Thy precepts I get understanding” (Psa. 119:97, 104).

So it must be with all who would be Christ’s—

“Thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation” (2 Tim. 3:15).

How many of us can say we know the Holy Scriptures? How is it we can talk a blue streak all day about passing, present things with no memory problems, but when someone starts asking very simple, elementary Bible questions, the answer so often is a blank stare and a weak smile, and—“Oh, I have such a terrible memory?”

“Where your treasure is, there will your heart (and your memory) be also” (Matt. 6:21).

So much knowledge about so many things that do not matter! So little knowledge about the one thing that does matter!

“ . . . He wakeneth morning by morning; He wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned (as the disciple—the eager learner)” (v. 4).

Morning by morning, day by day, precept upon precept—steady, consistent plodding study and application. The rage

today among those who esteem themselves wise is for what they quaintly call "higher education"—so they can earn a few more grubby dollars and enjoy a few more snobbish luxuries and pleasures. How empty and how sad! And the end they are so diligently laboring toward is the same old cold dark endless grave as everyone else.

But what about the TRUE "higher learning," the TRUE "education"—the one that can really do us some lasting and eternal good? Their poor little animal minds cannot comprehend this—

"The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God—they are foolishness unto him" (1 Cor. 2:14).

God says, to Israel and to us—

"Be ye not as the horse and the mule, that have no understanding" (Psa. 32:9)

—set your sights on a destiny a little better than that of the dumb beasts that perish.

"The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious" (v. 5).

The flesh, being naturally foolish, naturally rebels against wisdom. The key to salvation is to discern and overcome IN OURSELVES the natural rebelliousness of the flesh against the Word of God. We can see it SO clearly in others.

"The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other" (Gal. 5:17).

"... I was not rebellious, neither turned away back" (v. 5).

In a similar passage in Psalms it is put this way—

"Mine ears hath Thou opened . . . I delight to do Thy will O my God. Yea, Thy law is within my heart" (Psa. 40:6-8).

God does not just require obedience. He requires an intense desire and JOY to obey. He requires a constant "searching the Scriptures" to know and fulfil His will more fully and more perfectly—

"The zeal of Thine house hath eaten me up" (Jn. 2:17).

The only true Christadelphian—bride of Christ—is the one whose whole life and interest revolves wholly and exclusively around God, who is always about the Father's business. There are no half-measures. If we have the Truth in truth, this is what it will inevitably do to us. It will transform us. It will eat us up. It will grow and grow stronger and stronger in our lives. It will be a fire in our bones. We have read in the past few days—

*"I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot;
I would thou wert cold or hot.*

*"So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold
nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth" (Rev. 3:15, 16).*

Lukewarm—unpalatable, sickening, disgusting to God. Half and half—half in the Truth and half in the world.

There are many commands of God's love and wisdom to discipline and subdue and mortify the flesh. The flesh will of course fight them. We have two courses to follow—to either recognize the evil motions of the flesh within us, and pray like Paul (Rom. 7:24)—

"Who shall deliver me from this body of death?"

Or we can stupidly side with the flesh against the commands, and squirm and twist and maneuver to obscure and evade them.

We can either be zealously on the safe side of a command—
anxious to manifest our love by over-obedience if possible. Or we can raise every objection and stretch every apparent loophole or supposed obscurity of the command to justify the wilful way of the flesh. One way is life—the other is death.

*"I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them
that plucked off the hair" (v. 6).*

Why? Because it is God's will and wisdom that we overcome the flesh and put it to death by the mind of the Spirit. This was Christ's great victory: *"I have overcome."*

"Blessed is he that overcometh."

How much have we overcome the flesh? How much do we live, think and act by the mind of the Spirit? The fruits of the Spirit are these—

"Love, joy, peace . . ."

Is this the picture that our lives and characters give to the world, and to our brethren and sisters?

"Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control" (Gal. 5:22, 23).

Is this how an impartial observer would describe us? Would he marvel at our unearthly, patient, long-suffering Godliness under pressure and provocation? If not, why do we think we shall get eternal life? God insists on RESULTS, on fruit—this *"fruit of the Spirit."* Of the tree that bears no fruit He says—

"Cut it down! Why cumbereth it the ground?"

We must be visibly radiating spirituality, or we are living a lie—we have made no contact with divinity as we claim to have done. If a light bulb does not radiate brilliance, it has either

made no contact with the source of power, or it is just a dead bulb. In either case, it is worthless as a light in a dark place.

If we really ARE brethren and sisters of Christ, we SHALL radiate in the world, and stand out like a live bulb amid a host of dead ones. We shall be utterly and strikingly and unmistakably DIFFERENT from all natural, animal mankind.

"If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged . . . " (1 Cor. 11:31)

—judged at the last day and condemned.

" . . . I hid not my face from shame and spitting " (v. 6).

This is the faithful victory of Christ, and this is why he now sits in glory at the Father's right hand. We are well aware of the patience and gentleness and self-control with which he went through every form of humiliation and suffering. This is our great example. This is our great inspiration. None of us is ever asked to submit to a fraction of what he suffered in order to manifest his faith and love and obedience to the Father. And what little we are put through, in our training and development for the Kingdom, we are assured will never be beyond our power to sustain. Not, of course, our OWN power. If we rely on that, we are lost.

The Spirit of Christ in Isaiah 50 continues—

"For the Lord will help me, THEREFORE shall I not be confounded " (v. 7).

That is the point. We have got to be tried so we can learn to draw upon and experience this help—so that our faith can be developed and strengthened by being put to test and to use.

" . . . Therefore have I set my face like a flint " (v. 7).

Let us keep that expression ever before us. Here is the only true wisdom and character and maturity and stability—

"I HAVE SET MY FACE LIKE A FLINT."

Not stubbornness; not wilfulness—that's the flesh; but a steadfast, enlightened, unshakeable courage and determination to stick close to God and to follow the path of obedient, CHEERFUL holiness regardless of any adversity. Let us be like Christ who *"set his face to go to Jerusalem."*

"He is NEAR that justifieth me; who will contend with me?" (v. 8).

Here is the secret of strength. He IS near! Of Moses it is said (Heb. 11:27) that he *"endured as seeing Him Who is invisible."* He endured everything—the meekest of all men—because he could SEE GOD. God was a tremendous, overwhelming, ever-present reality to him. God said to Jacob—

"I am WITH THEE . . . in all places whither thou goest."
David said, and here again it is the spirit of Christ speaking—
*"I have set the Lord always before me. Because He is
at my right hand, I shall not be moved"* (Psa. 16:8).

This is the psalm where he says—

"Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell" (v. 10).

Jesus is here telling us the secret of his endurance and victory over the world—

"HE IS NEAR THAT JUSTIFIETH ME."

If we were actually in the direct presence of God, we would have no difficulty maintaining faith and holiness, and keeping our mind on divine things.

We ARE in the direct presence of God—ALWAYS. It is all a matter of perception and discernment. This is how all the faithful of old were able to endure—

"He endured as seeing Him Who is invisible."

Jesus said—

"I am not alone; because the Father is with me."

And when he left his disciples, he gave us a beautiful promise that is all too little remembered and laid hold on—

*"If any man love me, he will keep my words, and my
Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and
make our abode with him"* (Jn. 14:23).

"We"—God and Christ—will *"come unto him and make our abode with him."* Have we sought the fulfilment of this marvelous promise? Has it happened to us?

*"Behold, the Lord GOD will help me: who is he that
will condemn me?"* (v. 9).

Again, the primary reference is to Christ, and his God-strengthened perfection—

"Which of you convinceth me of sin?" (Jn. 8:46).

"I do always those things that please the Father"
(Jn. 8:29).

But Paul, writing to the Romans applies this very quotation directly to Christ's brethren, at the end of chapter 8. He is developing and climaxing that glorious theme that—

*"ALL things work together for good to them that love
God"* (Rom. 8:28).

If we are the children of God, nothing can possibly happen to us that is not for ultimate and eternal good. What a wonderful and comforting assurance! What is there in the world that can begin to offer a minute fraction of that guarantee?

Why then do people depend on broken cisterns when the waters of life flow so freely? We do not need to worry about the

reason of things. All we need to be concerned about is that we react faithfully and spiritually to ANYTHING that comes upon us, knowing that all evil will at last pass away, if we hold fast. Paul continues—

"If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31).

Our only concern in this life should be to make sure God IS for us. And that is done by careful, reverent, loving, thankful obedience—constant effort to get a deeper knowledge of His Word, and a closer likeness to the character of His Son.

We hear so much in the world about consolidating all our debts into one simple bank loan—about consolidating all types of insurance into one simple overall policy. But the world has nothing like this simple solution that covers every problem and every need: this Bank to end all banks, this insurance to end all insurances, this comprehensive, immutable guarantee to eclipse all rickety human schemes of "cradle-to-grave" security blankets against fear—

"IF GOD BE FOR US, WHO CAN BE AGAINST US?"

And here Paul brings in the verse from the chapter in Isaiah we are considering (Rom. 8:33, 34)—

"Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?"

It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth?"

We deal with no one but God. We are accountable to no one but God. We are concerned with no one's judgment but God's. Paul said to the Corinthians—

"With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of any man's judgment. He that judgeth me is the Lord" (1 Cor. 4:3, 4).

Truly we must conform to many things to do with men, but only because God says so—not because of any inherent importance in the things or men themselves. Of all human, worldly, present things and people, Jesus continues in Isa. 50—

"... Lo, they all shall wax old as a garment. The moth shall eat them up" (v. 9).

Here is the only true test of value and of importance. What will last, and what will pass away? Let us consciously separate all things clearly into these two categories—the things that last and the things that pass—and then give all our attention to the things that are eternal. Ask yourself of everything: Will it last? Is it related to eternity? If it is not, forget it. Life is too short. It isn't worth our precious time.

Paul builds this theme to a glorious climax in the final verses of Romans 8. Let us conclude with them, and try to keep them

ever before our minds in all that we do, in all our waking hours (35-39)—

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

“As it is written, For Thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter . . .”

Stop and think deeply about all these terrible trials the faithful of old have cheerfully endured, and held firm and obedient through—

“Nay in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

“For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come.

“Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

With Unveiled Face

"Wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart" (Psa. 104:15).

Our purpose in studying the Scriptures day after day is to extract strength and guidance for an acceptable walk before God, that our course may finally terminate in life, and not death. Let us, above all things, avoid the mistake of the Israelites who performed all the ordinances of God without any perception of their real meaning. God had, in the law of sacrifice, a reason and a purpose. He never acts arbitrarily, or without a definite end in view. The purpose of the Law is as living and active today as it was when first given through Moses over three thousand years ago. That purpose is *to lead us to Christ.*

The Jews, as a nation, failed to derive the benefits from the Law that were intended because they attributed its virtue to its mechanical performance. They went by the letter of the Law, and not by the spirit. The spirit of the Law is not something *contrary* to the letter. The spirit is *contained in* the letter. But though performing the letter, Israel did not comprehend the spirit. As Jesus said to them—

"These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone" (Matt. 23:23).

Both the letter *and* the spirit are necessary. It is by the medium of the letter that we are taught the spirit. As Paul says—

"I had not known lust, except the Law had said, Thou shalt not covet" (Rom. 7:7).

But we cannot stop at the letter. We must get at the *principle behind it*, of which the letter is but the expression. We must, through the letter, make contact with the spirit. If we do not complete this circuit, no power comes to us. The Law, instead of being a conductor *to* life becomes an insulator *from* life.

The Jews offered their sacrifices. They carefully measured out their tenth deal of flour, and their fourth part of an hin of oil. But still, in their case, the Law *failed in its purpose* through the weakness of the flesh.

We must *not* fail. In the slow cycle of events, it is *we* who *now* day after day and year after year read over and over the many ordinances of the Mosaic Law. Do *we* do better than the Jews? *"Understandeth THOU what thou readest?"* We have a much better opportunity. Much more has now been revealed to

enable us to see the hidden meaning. Much is now clear history that was then but veiled prophecy. Much is now forced upon the eye of sight that was then only dimly visible to the straining eye of faith.

With all these advantages, and with the vastly enlarged scope made possible by printing and education, how do *we* stand in the matter of intelligent perception? For the past two months we have been daily reading from this Law. Have we done it mechanically, wondering why a record of all this meaningless, monotonous rigmarole was preserved? Or have we done it eagerly and intelligently, engrossed in the ever-unfolding beauties of type and shadow—constantly impressed by countless evidences of unfathomable wisdom working out a symphony of perfection over the vast range of ages, every detail foreseen and prepared?

"It is the glory of God to conceal a thing; but the honour of kings is to search it out" (Prov. 25:2).

The mind that is seeking closer contact with the spirit will not be content with merely reading these things as a matter of duty.

Of one thing we may be sure! A spiritual perception will not just *happen* through the familiarity of repeated performance. The *natural* result is just the opposite. Each additional performance removes the act further away from conscious purpose into the realm of habit and adds one more layer to the veil that obscures the lesson hidden within.

The long history of the Jews is an outstanding proof that ordinances can be performed with scrupulous care by one generation after another for *thousands of years* without ever stumbling upon the secret concealed inside. Let us exert every effort to avoid a similar failure! Nothing is easier than to drift and fail.

We must deliberately stop and ask, What is the meaning and purpose? And what is the bearing upon *our* lives and actions? This requires effort. The natural man does not think any more than he is compelled to. He prefers to live by feeling and sensation. And what thoughts he does have do not run to deep spiritual things. But we must set ourselves to—in the words of Paul—

"MEDITATE on these things: give thyself wholly to them" (1 Tim. 4:15).

We must establish a strong mental connection with them through which we can derive power. It will *never* come natu-

rally, but it *will* gradually come *more easily*, and gradually yield greater power and pleasure.

It is quite easy to read without thinking about what is being read. Such reading is *worse* than useless. It is actually *harmful* because it is deceptive. Our natures are always fighting against the spirit, always devising ways of deceiving us into the belief that we are really accomplishing something when actually we are just going through the motions; always inventing for us motives to soothe our consciences and undermine our resistance.

The central theme of the Law is *sacrifice*. Very early in the revelation of Scripture is sacrifice brought to our attention, and gradually the lesson is broadened until we are led to the conception expressed by Paul—

“Present your bodies a LIVING SACRIFICE which is your reasonable service” (Rom. 12:1).

And by Jesus—

“He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it” (Matt. 10:39).

How would we define sacrifice? We would be inclined to say that it is the unpleasant process of having to give up something that we would like to keep. But this is a petty, self-centered definition. Sacrifice is a very satisfying process if it is properly comprehended. The dictionary defines sacrifice as—

“The destruction or surrender of anything for the sake of something else; giving up of some desirable thing IN BEHALF OF A HIGHER OBJECT.”

The whole secret is in the PURPOSE. Of Jesus we are told—

“For the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross and despised the shame” (Heb. 12:2).

That was sacrifice—giving up of some desirable thing *in behalf of a higher object*—even the *“bringing of many sons to glory”*. Paul expresses the basic principle of sacrifice when he says (1 Cor. 12:31)—

“Yet show I unto you a MORE EXCELLENT WAY.”

Life inevitably consists of a continuous series of sacrifices—a long process of choices. Some truly endeavor to train themselves in sacrificing the lower for the higher, sincerely seeking the better way. These, who appear to sacrifice much, actually sacrifice least. Some sacrifice the better way to the worse—the future to the present. These are the great majority. Some, reluctant to sacrifice anything, attempt to hold both. Theirs is the most pitiful case—they in the end, find they have sacrificed most. Jesus says—

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman, seeking goodly pearls: who when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold ALL THAT HE HAD, and bought it" (Matt. 13:45, 46).

Rather an extreme action, selling ALL that he had. Almost foolhardy, we would think. Only one thing would justify it—the incomparable value of the pearl. What does this mean, translated into our own lives? It means the gradual rounding up and sacrificing of all the non-essential items in our life, steadily working upward, making sure that in each case we are consciously taking advantage of a corresponding spiritual compensation in return. "Giving up a desirable thing *for the sake of something better.*"

We cannot afford to leave little pockets of vacuum. That is fatal. Jesus taught us this when he spoke of the evil spirit which—though once cast out—came back to find his house still empty, whereupon he brought seven more with him more evil than himself, and the last state of that man was worse than the first.

Each lesser item sacrificed must be consciously replaced by a spiritual satisfaction which had been previously hindered by the thing cast out. In this way we leave no opportunity for the evil spirit to return. In this way, too, we avoid the foolishness of self-pity, and the wickedness of self-glorification. We are the gainers every step of the way. We can give nothing to God. We just choose the better way for ourselves as revealed by His beneficial light. The only possible reaction in the case is gratitude that we have been shown the better way to our own greatest well-being.

Let us view sacrifice in its true and attractive light—a continually-repeated process of giving up one thing *for the sake of a better one*—a gradual advancement toward the most glorious of all blessings and most intense of all pleasures, a full living sacrifice to the perfect will of God.

When a man, according to the Law, took the best of his possessions and laid it on God's altar, what did it signify? It was an intelligent, worshipful recognition that *what God had yet to give was vastly greater and more glorious than that He had already given.* That everything a man had, including his own life, he would gladly and eagerly lay upon the altar of his faith in God's plans for his future eternal blessing.

Sacrifice is the joyful recognition that the future is full of promise and the best is yet to come. Sacrifice frees a man from

the petty limitation of the poor little present, and relates him to the boundless scope of eternity.

All this shines through the letter of the Law as we read the many divine ordinances which Moses penned so long ago. All this is still but a small fraction of what the Mosaic sacrifices signify to the discerning heart. Sacrifice, with all its little details deep with meaning, taught in picture-story the whole glorious message of the prophets and apostles—the whole history of the divine purpose.

And overshadowing the whole picture is the one great sacrifice for sin, the crowning sacrifice, not a separate feature, but a gathering together of all others in one perfect representation of everything that was embodied in all the rest.

To what extent could the faithful Israelite discern significance in the flour and wine and oil which, in certain prescribed amounts, were associated with the sacrifice? We cannot tell, but for us they set in motion many trains of thought. Nor is each item restricted to a single meaning. An interplay of many meanings gives depth to the picture. These common objects which the Spirit uses to construct its symbol-pictures gradually increase in interest as we study their varied significances.

We can neither strive after, nor be satisfied with, a flat, mathematical interpretation—this means this, and that means that. The spirit is always fuller than the letter by which it is expressed. A certain amount of inexpressible feeling must be communicated by, though not actually contained in, the letter. A mathematical interpretation is final and complete, so it ceases to hold the interest.

"Then shall he that offereth his offering unto the LORD bring a meat offering of a tenth deal of flour mingled with the fourth part of an hin of oil. And the fourth part of an hin of wine for a drink offering shalt thou prepare with the burnt offering or sacrifice, for one lamb"
(Num. 15:4, 5).

Bread is the symbol of strength, both natural and spiritual. Bread is also the symbol of the body of Christ—many individual grains of seed sown in the act of baptism—springing up to newness of life—gathered in the Lord's harvest—threshed to remove the chaff—ground in the mill to a smooth, fine consistency in which each seed merges with countless others to form one body.

Bread again is that one individual body which is offered for us—the bread which came down from heaven—the Purpose

manifested in flesh. Flour is a certain step in the process of making bread. So we discover that the sacrificial ordinances include a chronological presentation of the Truth—an unfolding of the purpose. The seed; the sheaf; the flour; the baked bread.

Bread again is the fruit of labor; in the joint partaking of it, it is fellowship and covenant relation; it is doctrine; it is protection and security; it is the final basic necessities of life; it is the ministration of charity.

Then the oil with which the flour must be mingled. Even the idea that something must be mingled with the flour is a lesson in itself. It shows that exactly the same thing might be acceptable or not acceptable—*according to that which accompanies it*. Oil is a symbol of spirit. Things must be done *in the right spirit*. Just the bare doing is not enough. The purpose and motive must be right.

In the act of anointing we see the spirit-oil poured out upon a believer, sanctifying and consecrating him—setting him apart—devoting him to a purpose. In the lamp the spirit-oil is guidance and enlightenment and comfort and encouragement. Mingled with the flour the spirit-oil transforms a loose, powdery mixture which a slight wind would scatter, into one homogeneous mass that can be shaped to a desired form. When passed through the fire it will hold that shape and its natural heavy doughiness will be transformed into palatableness and flavor. Oil, again is gladness and joy.

Wine, in the figures of Isaiah, is the gospel message, offered freely without price. Christ uses it in the same way, and he also employs the contrast between new and old wine to illustrate the relation of his teaching to the Law. It was a *new vintage of the same thing*. The time had come for the new. Wine can also be a mocker and deceiver, false as well as true. As such, it is the cup of false doctrine in the hand of the apostasy.

Again, wine is the blood shed for sin, the life obediently poured out unto death—the life is in the blood. And wine is well-being, prosperity, celebration of good. Wine is grapes trodden in wrath, bitter judgment poured out that the condemned must drink.

Bread and wine are body and soul; they are the necessities and pleasures of life; they are the physical and mental aspects of life. Wine and oil are soothing and healing ointment. David says (Psa. 104:15), that God gives—

"Wine that maketh glad the heart of man and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart."

The gladdening gospel wine, the enlightening spirit oil and the strengthening bread of life. And behind the wine is the multitudinous imagery that surrounds the vine and its branches—

"I am the true vine and ye are the branches . . . without me ye can do nothing" (Jn. 15:1).

Without him, what are we? What incentive would there be to carry on day after day in meaningless plodding towards oblivion? One long struggle, with its inevitable bitter twilight and final extinction. But the bread and the wine are here before us. Here is a point of contact with the eternal. The bread and the wine, each with the wide meaning and association which it has acquired through the long period of the Spirit's teaching and revelation.

There is a strange sense of familiarity when the mysterious figure of Melchizedek brings forth bread and wine in the presence of Abraham. In this gift of long ago by the King of Righteousness to the Father of the Faithful, all the history of God's loving purpose is condensed. The Jew today, as his fathers have done for ages, still brings forth his bread and wine at the solemn Passover feast. But the veil is still over their face.

* * *

"Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. 5:7).

"Take, eat, this is my body" (Mk. 14:22).

"This is the new covenant in my blood" (Mk. 14:24).

Each thread we pick up in Scripture leads us to this point. Each thread is *intended* to lead us to this point and *falls in its purpose* if we do not follow it through. Let us not read these things with a veil of blindness or habit or preoccupation upon our minds, so that we, like the Israelites, "*cannot look to the end of what is signified.*" Let us not permit the Law to fail in its purpose through the weakness of the flesh. *The Law must lead us to Christ.* He is the priest, the altar, the sacrifice, the bread, the wine, the oil. All things point to the redeeming love of him whom we have assembled to remember.

Cities: of Men and of God

"Go to, let us build us a city" (Gen. 11:4).

ISAIAH CHAPTER FIFTY-TWO

We have all doubtless often been struck by the remarkable coincidental relationship between the various parts of a day's daily readings, revealing the marvelous interweavings of the harmony and unity of God's Word. Such is the case when we find ourselves, by the "Companion," reading Isaiah 52 and Revelation 14 together. Therein we have a parallel picture of history's two great symbolic cities, with their ultimate destinies—*Jerusalem and Babylon*.

"Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments O Jerusalem, the Holy City; for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean" (Isa. 52:1).

"Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication" (Rev. 14:8).

The Holy City, the city of life and hope and light—and the Unholy City, the city of death and confusion and evil. The city of future eternal joy—and the city of present, passing pleasure.

Both these chapters carry us forward to the time when the wisdom of the true choice will be manifested for the blindest to see—Zion exalted and Babylon destroyed. No exhortation or persuasion will be needed then to point out the advantages of the more excellent way. It will be convincingly clear to all, but the books will have been closed and the decree will have gone forth—

"He that is unjust, LET HIM BE UNJUST STILL" (Rev. 22:11).

Too late then to seek oil in panic-stricken confusion. There was plenty of time once, and constant pleadings, but now it is too late.

This picture of two cities, two rival commonwealths, is woven all through the Scriptures. This pictorial and allegorical form of teaching greatly helps the memory and impresses the imagination.

The seed of the Serpent and the seed of the Woman run parallel right from the beginning. From the time Cain hated and slew Abel because he was annoyed and condemned by Abel's more faithful and fuller life, the two cities have existed. Cain

went, we are told, and *built himself a city* (Gen. 4:17)—an establishment, a center, an organization, a foundation of power. *Abel already HAD a city.* He was satisfied and secure. So Cain hated him in the misery of his own misdirected and unsatisfied desires.

* * *

The sons of God, in the long years that followed, tired of the Zionward journey. The vision of their distant city grew dim. The glittering cities of the children of men drew them aside and the result was the greatest catastrophe that has yet befallen the race. Out of the wreckage, only eight were saved, and even among those eight, *all was not well.*

And when men began to multiply again, they said—

“Go to, let us BUILD US A CITY” (Gen. 11:4).

Give us a city, give us a king, give us something we can see and handle, something social and exciting. This *spiritual* City, this *divine* King, this “joy of the Spirit” and “treasure in heaven” are rather thin fare for the natural appetite. *“Our soul loatheth this light bread”*—this divinely-provided manna from heaven.

But there was one among them who could see through the emptiness of the present. Abraham set forth seeking “a city that had foundations” (Heb. 11:10). He was obsessed with a desire for something *real and lasting.* He knew that—

“Except the Lord build, they labor in vain that build it”

(Psa. 127:1).

So he sought for a city—

“Whose Builder and Maker is God” (Heb. 11:10).

By God's guidance he found the *City of Peace* with the *King of Righteousness* reigning in it (Gen. 14:18), set high upon a mountain in the *Land of Promise.* And Abraham was satisfied, for he saw afar off the glory of this city, and he believed these things, and embraced them, and confessed that he was a stranger and a pilgrim separated from the cities of the children of men and waiting in faith for the City of God.

Not far from this mountain, in the attractive green valleys below, there was a city of the children of men. And God said to Lot—

“Get you out of THIS place . . . escape to the MOUNTAINS . . . lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of THIS CITY” (Gen. 19:15, 17).

And so another chapter in the lessons of God was written, and Sodom, the city of corruption, added its name and example to Babel, the city of confusion.

Isaiah says in this fifty-second chapter, verse 4—

"My people went down aforesaid into Egypt."

See how marvelously the hand of God worked in this! And as we read, let us be impressed with the inexorable workings of God's justice—slow, invisible, often disguised, but *terribly sure and strikingly fitting*. Rebekah misled Jacob, very well-meaning but misguided; Jacob deceived Isaac, still well-meaning but still deception; Laban deceived Jacob, not quite so well-meaning; Jacob's sons deceived Jacob and sold Joseph into slavery into Egypt, ill-meaning and vicious; and finally the Egyptians betrayed and enslaved the Israelites and killed *their* children as *they* had thought to do to Joseph. *What a gradually broadening chain of evil and sorrow!*

And what did the Israelites have to do in Egypt?

"They built for Pharaoh TREASURE CITIES, Pithom and Raameses" (Ex. 1:11).

What irony! The sons of God sunk to ignorant slavery and forced to build cities for earthly treasures of the children of men!

* * *

The next typical unholy city was Jericho. This was an important place, a strong fortress, the gateway to the conquest of the land of promise. It was the first city confronting the Israelites as they set out to occupy their inheritance; its defeat was miraculous and symbolic, and its destruction was complete.

It is several times called "the city of palm trees." Now palms throughout the Scriptures represent triumph and joy—victory after faithful struggle. Palms so appear in the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev. 23:40), at Christ's royal entry into Jerusalem (Jn. 12:13), and in the hands of the victorious host before the throne (Rev. 7:9). In Psalms (92:12) and the Song of Solomon (7:7), the righteous are likened to the straight, erect beauty of the palm tree.

How then is Jericho, the *unholy* city, a "city of palm trees"? Because Jericho is a *counterfeit* copy of the true. The palm trees indicate that Jericho is not just the cities of men generally, but the false *ecclesiastical* city. There is one reference to palm trees that gives us a hint of this meaning. Speaking of the heathen idols, Jeremiah says—

"They are upright as the palm tree, BUT SPEAK NOT" (10:5).

They have a dead form of godliness, but lack the living power. Trees without fruit, twice dead (Jude 12). In this light, the

Roman system is pre-eminently a "city of palm trees," for their dead idols are legion.

As the destruction of the hosts of Sihon and Og typify the defeat of Gog, so the subduing of Canaan with its *seven* (or completeness of) nations typifies the subduing of the earth. And Jericho came first. At the seventh trumpet sounding on the seventh day, Jericho fell. So will great Babylon, the unholy city.

Jericho had to be utterly destroyed. The other cities of the land they took over and used—but *not Jericho*. As the fourth beast (Dan. 7:11), a curse of perpetual destruction was put upon it. It was never to be rebuilt (Josh. 6:26).

But what happened? Someone in the host of Israel did not realize the terrible reality and power of the One Who was in their midst and led them, and great trouble came upon the whole camp as a result until they had put away the covetous one from among them. God had promised them abundance in His good time, but *here was something they could not have*.

But Achan was out of harmony with the purpose. He could not wait for God. "*Is it a time to receive money and to receive garments?*" said Elisha to Gehazi (2 Kgs. 5:26). First things first, and all things in God's order. "*Verily they HAVE their reward.*" Achan said—

"I SAW . . . I COVETED . . . I TOOK . . . and I HID"
(Josh. 7:21).

He *THOUGHT* he hid. What a pitiful delusion! He dug a hole and hid it away from God! Is it possible that *we* sometimes are as foolish as that?

And what was it? "*A goodly Babylonian garment.*" What a snare those goodly Babylonish garments have been to the children of God all through the ages! It was a "goodly" one—doubtless one of Babylon's best, and the *very latest model*. But was it worth the price he paid for it?

John saw the unholy city in a goodly Babylonish garment—

"*And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet color, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls*" (Rev. 17:4).

Her gold and precious stones and pearls are counterfeit, as are her palm trees. Her ostentatious parading of these apparently genuine symbols of righteousness and truth deceives the world and in a subtler way may deceive the very elect. Believers are in little danger of deception by the bare Church of Rome itself, or her many ecclesiastical daughters; but her institutions, customs and thinkings permeate the world. The fourth

empire still exists in universal diffusion. It is still a Roman world. And each year, on December 25, this Roman world pays more or less conscious homage to the scarlet woman on the seven hills—

"By her sorceries were all nations deceived" (Rev. 18:23).

But Isaiah in the fifty-second chapter, verse 1, tells us of better garments than the flashy tinsel of Rome—

"Put on THY beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city."

Here is a refreshing and satisfying change of scene. Here is the beauty of holiness which so delighted the heart of the Psalmist—

"Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness" (Psa. 29:2).

What is this holiness, without which *none shall see the Lord* (Heb. 12:14)? It is nothing strange or mysterious. The word simply means "separateness." Worship the Lord in the beauty of separateness—separateness from anything that is displeasing to God or out of harmony with His ways. We can see immediately that the result must necessarily be *perfect beauty*.

It is not necessary to point out the desirability of beauty, but it is necessary to learn what, in God's sight, constitutes beauty, and what mars it. Solomon says—

"He hath made everything beautiful in its time: also He hath set eternity in their heart . . . Whatsoever God doeth, it shall be forever: nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it: and God doeth it that men should fear before Him" (Ecc. 3:11-14).

He hath made everything beautiful in its time. All God's work, and everything associated with *Him*, is beautiful. Apart from God, *nothing* is. Of natural attractiveness, unassociated with God, Solomon says again—

"Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain" (Prov. 31:30).

And further—

"Beauty without spiritual understanding is like a jewel in a swine's snout" (Prov. 11:22).

Wisdom will always perceive and be repelled by the snout behind the jewel. So beauty is purely a matter of spiritual education and discernment. It is inward, and not outward—

"Whose adorning let it NOT be that OUTWARD adorning (like the scarlet woman), but the HIDDEN man of the heart, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit" (1 Pet. 3:3, 4).

There is one item of outward glory and beauty that God has expressed delight in; one that He Himself has expressly created for glory. While of great beauty and dignity in itself, its chief beauty in God's eyes lies in its evidence of wisdom and discernment and humble acceptance of, and obedience to, God's will. Its importance rests in its symbolism of harmonious, God-appointed relationship. In God's love and wisdom He has made this a token of blessing and honor, and the marring of it a matter of sorrow and shame. *God's mind is expressed in 1 Cor. 11:6, 15.*

The world's fashions in beauty vary with every age and every nation. What is beauty to one nation appears quite hideous to another. But God never changes. Are we wearing *His* holy garments—appointed "for glory and for beauty"—or the *world's*? When we are called to the judgment seat, we shall have to go as we are. The importance of some of the desires God has expressed may strike us a little more forcibly *then* than now.

"Put on THY beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the HOLY city. From henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean" (Isa. 52:1).

As custodians of the holy city, believers have the solemn responsibility of maintaining its standards and laws. Bro. Roberts says on this point—

"If the knowledge of the Truth fail to beget the new man in the heart of the sinner, the baptism following his knowledge is not a birth. It is a mere performance of no benefit to him, but rather to his condemnation . . .

"It ought, therefore, to be seriously considered by all who contemplate that step, and *by all who are called upon to assist them*, whether there is EVIDENCE of death to sin before arrangements are made for burial. The burial of a living man is cruelty. It were better for the sinner to leave God's covenant alone than to make a mockery of it."—*Further Seasons, pg. 13.*

It is no kindness to either the city or the individual to bring in the uncircumcised in heart. The issues are too serious. The Holy City—*God's city*—has been in degradation and misery for twenty-five centuries. *Why?* Because the custodians of its holiness neglected to keep it holy. What an unforgettable lesson!

* * *

"Ye have sold yourselves for nought . . ." (v. 3).

We are often reminded that the Jews are God's witnesses. What a sad witness they are to this eternal truth! What have

they gained by putting aside the loving guidance and restraints of God's arrangements, and seeking their own pleasure and benefit?

"Unto them were committed the oracles of God . . . To whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory and the covenants, and the giving of the Law, the service of God, and the promises" (Rom. 3:2; 9:4).

What great blessing this people had! What great responsibilities these blessings entailed! What terrible punishments because they had been allowed to approach so close to God, and yet had failed to discern His mind or be transformed by His love!

" . . . and ye shall be redeemed without money" (Isa. 52:3).

God's purpose will not fail. Regardless of man's failure, injustice or unkindness, we have the divine and eternal assurance that certain things are sure and guaranteed. And Israel's long night is not purposeless. The nation will rise out of it purged and white.

What does He mean, "redeemed *without money*"? Surely this refers to the "stone cut out of the mountain *without hands*."

"Not by power, nor by might, but by MY spirit, saith the Lord" (Zech. 4:6).

When all natural strength and resources are spent and cast aside, then will redemption come. The proud and militant Jews of Palestine have a sad and bitter lesson to learn before that day. And so it is with spiritual Israel—

"MY strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9).

The proud, able, self-reliant—all such are no value to God.

* * *

"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings of peace and salvation" (v. 7).

Here is real and divine and eternal beauty. The Spirit through Solomon speaks of these beautiful feet in the Song of Songs—

"How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O prince's daughter!" (7:1).

The divinely-appointed shoes whereby they walk in the ways of God, and run to do His bidding.

John sees these feet as flaming pillars of fires of *war*, purging the dross and ugliness of the earth, preparing it for eternal beauty (Rev. 10:1). Paul sees them shod with the preparation of the gospel of *peace* (Eph. 6:15).

* * *

"They shall SEE EYE TO EYE when the Lord shall bring again Zion" (Isa. 52:8).

Why is it necessary to say that? The sad history of Israel, both natural and spiritual, show how real and necessary this blessing will be. Consider the Jews—at the greatest moment of their history for the past two thousand years, faced naturally speaking with their supreme crisis—yet torn by bitter factions among themselves. And we remember the words of Joseph, as he sent forth his brethren with a message of life and hope for the perishing, *"See that ye fall not out by the way" (Gen. 45:24).*

"Depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing. Go ye out of the midst of her" (v. 11).

That same warning again. That same picture of the two cities—come out of one and enter the other. Paul quotes these words of the Spirit through Isaiah when he says—

"Come OUT from among them and be separate and touch not the unclean, and I will receive you and be a Father unto you" (2 Cor. 6:14-17).

On this condition alone will God accept us as children.

Thy Word is Truth

THE DIVINE TREASURE OF THE SCRIPTURES

"The Holy Scriptures are able to make thee wise unto salvation" (2 Tim. 3:15).

If there is any book in the world that holds the key to life and happiness, it is the Bible. If the Bible does not do that, nothing does; and man's case is hopeless: an animal existence; an animal end.

The Bible makes tremendous claims: divine inspiration; infallibility; revelation of man's origin and all his meaningful history, of the purpose of his existence, of his eternal future for good or ill, according as he submits without question and obeys without reservation the asserted universal authority of this Book.

The Bible is a purifying Book. It is a comforting, uplifting, inspiring Book. No one who truly studies and believes and obeys it could possibly be ever depressed or unhappy or dissatisfied or anxious about *anything*. It is the complete cure for all mental disharmonies: these are of sin and the flesh. Compared to it, *all* other supposed sources of relief and guidance are broken crutches and empty cisterns.

When we observe how the great churches of our day have cast aside the Bible as the divine, infallible guide to belief and conduct, and what a sordid, immoral mess they have sunk into as a consequence, we are more than ever impressed with the vital necessity of the pure Word of God as an absolute authority to keep man from sinking to the lowest bestiality and folly, as we see all around us today.

The Bible, prayerfully and consistently studied and obeyed, makes anyone better, wiser, and happier. It changes him from a dying, animal creature of the passing present, to a living, spiritually-minded child of God, related to the eternal future.

The strongest proof of the Bible's divinity is the personal experience of its light and power and wisdom and unassailable joy. It is truly a light shining in a dark place, and the more we prayerfully devote ourselves to it, the more irresistibly this will be impressed upon us.

The Bible is the *only* sound, dependable, unchanging thing in an unsound, undependable, and ever-changing world.

We must go to the Bible for ourselves. And we must be prepared to give much prayerful time and effort to the en-

deavor. It must be the major—the only real and deep—interest of our life.

The Bible means what it says, subject to the ordinary common-sense rules of language. The only special equipment we need to understand it is a deep love of God and a humble, teachable heart.

Truly it contains symbols, and mysteries, and figures of speech. But the vast bulk of it—*especially the commands concerning our actions and conduct and transformation of character from animal to spiritual*—is very plain and clear: painfully plain and clear.

The principal requirement to the understanding of any one part is a familiarity with the whole. If we are not prepared to take the time and make the effort to read and study it *all*, then we have little hope of properly understanding *any* of it, for mainly its explanation and unfolding comes from itself, with loving familiarity.

The literal and simple part must be accepted and *obeyed*. THEN the symbolic and deeper parts will gradually open up, in complete harmony with the literal. There is no other way to the knowledge that gives life. God is certainly not going to reveal His deeper things to those who refuse or neglect to obey His elementary commands.

* * *

The Bible claims to give a complete and authoritative answer to man's origin and destiny. It claims to speak of an eternal future condition of unalloyed joy, and how man can attain it. It claims to speak with absolute authority. It demands absolute obedience by all. Over two thousand times it declares : "*THUS SAITH THE LORD!*"

No one need waste his time on the Bible who is not sincerely prepared to submit unreservedly to what he finds, and follow wherever it leads. God has no time or place for fools who merely want to play with the idea of salvation as an amusing hobby, while clinging to the things of the world.

* * *

The great trouble with the world is SIN. This is at the root of every evil, sorrow, sickness and death. Sin is the opposite of obedience. Obedience is doing God's will. Sin is ignoring or disobeying God's will and doing our own will, the evil will of the flesh. Sin says, "I will do as I please." Obedience and wisdom say, "I will do as God wills."

We find within us the motions of sin, just as the Scriptures say: pride, envy, selfishness, greed, inconsideration, irritability, impatience, anger, cruelty. We see the earth filled with wickedness and violence and oppression and crime. Paul's lament—

"I find a law in my members . . . a law of sin . . . when I would do good, evil is present with me" (Rom. 7:21-23)

—is the universal experience of any who have thought on the matter at all. *Only the Bible explains these things*, and tells us how to recognize them and overcome them, and at last become completely free from them by a glorious physical change.

We freely recognize, if we have any sense at all, that kindness and patience and love and unselfish consideration for others would make a far happier world for all: but we find these obviously good and desirable qualities do not come naturally to us, but the very opposite. They are contrary to nature. *The Bible tells us why*, and it alone gives the all-sufficient and all-powerful solution.

The Bible is God-manifestation: God manifesting Himself to man, drawing man to Him, teaching man how to approach God, and enjoy God, and become like God, and be forever with God; teaching man how to become in his turn a glorious manifestation of God.

* * *

The Bible is *one* book, one inseparable unity. No one can possibly understand the New Testament who rejects or neglects the Old, or who thinks the Old has served its purpose and need not be studied.

Christ and the apostles constantly referred to the Old Testament as an infallible divine authority. The New Testament speaks with commendation of some who, hearing Paul preach the *Gospel of salvation*, examined the *Old Testament* to see if what he was saying was true (Acts 17). Jesus said that if men did not believe what Moses wrote, they could not believe him (Jn. 5:47). When Paul said that the Scriptures were able to "make wise unto salvation" (2 Tim. 3:15), he was speaking of the Old Testament. He said that he preached—

"NONE OTHER THINGS than those the Prophets and Moses did say should come" (Acts 26:22).

* * *

Though written by forty different men over a period of sixteen hundred years, the Bible has one unified theme: God's dealings with the earth and mankind as He gradually works toward the

fulfilment of His purpose—to fill the whole earth with His glory: everything beautiful and in harmony with His Own perfection and holiness. *With the Bible, we walk in light and understanding in relation to this purpose. Without the Bible we walk in darkness and ignorance that ends in death.*

Throughout the Old Testament, beginning in the Garden of Eden, there is a continuous chain of reference to a Deliverer who was to come. He is foreshown to be both all-powerful in the earth, universally obeyed, ruling with an iron rod—and also *weak, despised, and rejected.*

Jesus, after his death in weakness and resurrection to power, explains this strange paradox and apparent contradiction to his wondering disciples—

“O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have SUFFERED THESE THINGS AND to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself” (Lk. 24:25-27).

The entire Law of Moses is an intricate and elaborate foreshadowing of the coming sacrificial Savior. The whole book of Psalms presents him and his glorious work and overcoming. The tremendous prophetic power of Isaiah 53 cannot be avoided or evaded. The more we think on it, the more marvelously powerful it will become.

A faithful servant of God, wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, brought as a sacrificial lamb to slaughter, bearing the sin of many, cut off from the land of the living, making his life an offering for sin—*then rising to triumph and victory, seeing the results and being satisfied, prolonging his days, because he had poured out his life unto death.*

To a godly and spiritual mind, that chapter alone—in the light of the record of Christ, is sufficient to stamp the Bible as divine.

* * *

God declares flatly that the world and the universe as we see it is *positive evidence* of His reality, power and divinity, and that men are absolutely WITHOUT EXCUSE if they cannot perceive it (Rom. 1:20). And surely any intelligent man unspoiled by worldly wisdom and philosophy and the childish absurdities of Evolution must see that this is so.

And if there is a God, as the Creation positively proves, and if He has made an intelligent and responsible creature like

man, it is a practically inevitable conclusion that there would be given a message from God to man: a message of revelation and instruction, exactly as we find the Bible to be. For there not to be such a message, under the circumstances, would be a marvel indeed. Man has such a potential for good or for evil that it is incredible that an obviously wise and powerful Creator would just make him and then turn him loose without any guidance or instruction.

The Bible is the only book with any serious claim to be that message.

The modern pagan religion of Evolution asks us to believe on faith that marvelous and incredibly intricate and interwoven design has just happened by blind chance, countless millions of times over. This weird "explanation" to try to get rid of the reality and authority of God is just asking too much of credulity.

Consider the bee at work in the hive, each living but a few weeks, each born with the instinct to gather honey, not for itself but for others. Or the individual ant laboring in the vast anthill, doing its own specific and essential task for the whole. Or a rainbow, or a sunset. Or an atom of matter—any atom—an infinitesimal speck of matter, every one loaded with a bound-in concentration of almost incalculable energy. Or a star in the vast universe . . .

Then babble about blind, powerless, purposeless, futureless, hopeless "evolution" *creating* all these marvels! How can mankind be so thoroughly besotted? To the spiritual mind, the existence of one thing alone—*beauty*—brings the whole rickety contraption of evolution crashing down. Evolution—cold, dead, robot, mindless evolution—has no place in its dark imaginary world for beauty. And the apex of all beauty is the "*beauty of holiness*," of which evolution knows and cares nothing. "*The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God*" (Psa. 14:1).

* * *

The Bible is a Jewish book. The Old Testament has been revered by the Jews and meticulously preserved by them as their national history and national treasure for at least a provable two thousand years. And yet from beginning to end it continually condemns them as wicked and stiff-necked and murderous and disobedient, and plainly foretells from the very beginning their long worldwide scattering and terrible suffering because of their inveterate wickedness. The Bible has

hardly one good word to say about them as a nation, except their final purification and blessing by God—a small purged remnant.

All of today's principal modern alphabets—even Russian—are derived from the Hebrew alphabet in which the Jews, by divine inspiration, were writing beautiful poetry and deep majestic prose, authentic world history and eternal principles of wisdom, while all today's great nations were naked, painted, savage, illiterate barbarians.

The Jew is the center of the purpose of God with man and the earth. After four thousand years of history, the Jew continues as distinct and separate a people as ever. After two thousand years of worldwide scattering and homelessness he is again a nation in the earth, different from all others: the center of world controversy, sitting at the strategic crossroads of the globe.

Take away the Jew, and the whole world picture would change completely. The Middle East, with its crucial oil wealth, would still be firm and strong on the side of Britain and US, and Russia would have no foothold of hate and discontent on which to build her growing power and influence in the Middle East and Mediterranean and Africa. But Israel is the key: Jerusalem is the burdensome stone (Zech. 12:3).

Take away the Jew, and there would be no cement to unite Catholic Europe, godless Russia and Jew-hating Arab in the latter-day coalition against the mountains of Israel (Eze. 38-39).

The history of the Jews—*God's hand* in the history of the Jews—is the key to the understanding of the Bible. From the very beginning of that history, four thousand years ago, there have been many detailed prophecies concerning them. The vast bulk have been already fulfilled; some concerning the "last days" are in process of fulfilment or still to be fulfilled.

Those that have been fulfilled have been fulfilled *very literally and specifically*: their continual wickedness, the repeatedly foretold punishments, the final rejection of their long-expected Messiah, their scattering, their long period of suffering, their continued blindness, the desolation of their land, their continued separate entity as a people always prominent in the eyes of the world.

And finally, in our own highly privileged generation—before our eyes—the preliminary aspects of their final re-gathering and re-establishment in their own land. The few remaining prophecies—the inseparable final phase of this long unbroken

chain of fulfilled prophecy—will equally be fulfilled literally and specifically.

God chose Abraham, the father of the Jewish race, and declared that through him and his seed He would work out His glorious purpose of filling the earth with His glory.

Through the Jews came God's holy Word of salvation and life; His marvelous manifestation of Himself to mankind; His Son, the Head and Savior of mankind, the future King of the whole earth.

In their wickedness and disobedience, the Jews (as foretold) rejected their God-given Savior, though he came to them fulfilling *all* the prophecies, manifesting all the attributes of God, and doing works none other man had ever done before. Then—and by means of Jewish rejection—in God's wisdom and foreknowledge, the sacrificial aspect of Christ's great work of salvation was accomplished.

For two thousand years the Jews, his own people, have rejected him in bitter blindness, and have suffered in consequence the dreadful judgments of God. But in our own day we have seen a wonderful and long-foretold change. Israel has been reborn after nearly two thousand years of political death and burial. Their initial regathering is, as foretold, in continued blindness and disobedience and wickedness.

If there ever was the slightest shred of excuse for rejecting or denying the divinity of the Bible, there is no longer now. The reborn Jewish nation literally shouts out its witness to the divine origin of the holy Word of God. Jerusalem, God's city, the "City of the Great King" (Matt.5:35), was to be, in Christ's own words—

"Trodden down of the Gentiles UNTIL the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (Lk. 21:24).

The sign of the ending of Gentile times was to be the rebirth and regathering of the nation of Israel. Israel is being regathered; and Jerusalem at the moment has for the first time in two thousand years escaped from the downtreading Gentile heel, though so far it is but a precarious escape, and the Gentiles, in an unholy Catholic-Arab-Russian alliance, are scheming mightily to get it under their desolating feet again.

* * *

Concerning the latter days, the prophet Ezekiel was shown in vision a valley full of very dry bones. He was told they represented the nation of Israel, and he was asked—

"Can these bones live?"

And God told him in answer—

"I will take the children of Israel from among the nations whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land. And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel, and one king shall be king to them all" (Eze. 37:21, 22).

The first two points—gathering into the land and establishing them there as a nation—have been *preliminarily* fulfilled before our eyes in very recent history. The third point—"One king to them all"—still remains to be fulfilled. Psa. 102:15, 16 declares—

"When the Lord shall BUILD UP ZION, He shall appear in His glory . . . So the nations shall fear the Name of the Lord, and all the kings of the earth Thy glory."

Israel's regathering is the great sign of the return of Jesus Christ to the earth—

"God shall send Jesus Christ . . . whom the heavens must receive until the times of restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:20).

* * *

The historical accuracy of the Bible right back to the beginning—four thousand years before Christ—has been repeatedly confirmed by archaeological discovery, while *man's* records for that period are a pitiful jumble of legends and myths. Until the advent of archaeology, man's knowledge of the past, outside of the Bible, went just a few centuries before Christ, and was very limited and erroneous even that far. Up to a little over one hundred years ago, the most pitiful rubbish was gravely peddled by the learned of the world as ancient history. One has only to glance through the long-famous "Rollin's Ancient History" to show that. It is not so long since "educated" men solemnly denied that there ever had been such a city as Babylon.

But amid all man's abysmal ignorance and darkness, the Bible's clear light went back four thousand years before Christ in lucid, specific, accurate detail. As archeology has gradually dug up and pieced together the past, more and more it has confirmed the detailed accuracy of the Bible and exposed the errors and presumptions of man, especially in many cases where the wise of the world denied Bible truth.

Many now well-known figures of ancient history—as Belshazzar, Sargon, Pul, the specific Egyptian Pharaohs, etc—were completely unknown outside the Bible, and their existence denied, until the spade of the archaeologist confirmed the Bible and silenced the critics: silenced them, that is, on those specific points, for the flesh never learns wisdom but merely shifts its attack. The great Hittite Empire, once the rival of Egypt and Babylon, was not long ago so completely unknown that men scoffed at Bible reference to them as a strong and feared people.

According to the chronology indicated in the Biblical records, the creation of man works out very close to 4000 BC. This is just about the time that man's own now archeologically *proven* history starts, as contrasted to blind guesses and speculations of millions of years. No written records or inscriptions have ever been found that can be dated before 3500 BC; and these oldest records come, of course, from the Mesopotamian valley, where the Bible says man began.

It is a very strange fact, if man has existed as claimed for hundreds of thousands of years, that he suddenly learned to write and make records just after the time the Bible says he was created, and that he shows up just where the Bible says he was. One is *fact*: the other pure speculation.

Ancient Babylon of 2000 BC had a higher degree of civilization and standard of living than that of Europe up to just a couple of hundred years ago, and higher than most parts of the world today. Babylon and Nineveh were two of the greatest cities of antiquity—perhaps *the* greatest. In their day, they were capitals of world empires, centers of world power. At their zenith of prosperity and pride, the Bible predicted they would be completely desolate.

They so completely disappeared that for centuries, up until a little over one hundred years ago their very sites were unknown, and it was denied that they ever existed. Now their locations have been identified and unearthed, and their one-time splendor and magnificence confirmed.

Memphis (*Noph*) and Thebes (*No*), ancient Egypt's two greatest cities, likewise were at their height prophesied to become desolate, abandoned ruins. So they are today, though Egypt remains a nation, again as the Bible said it would (while Babylon would disappear). For centuries the greatest, most powerful, most scientifically-advanced nation of the world, Egypt has become—as *prophesied*—a base nation for the past

twenty-five hundred years, under the humiliating heel of foreigners: never lifting itself up as a world power again. Fifty times Israel's size, and with more than ten times its population, Egypt—in concert with several other Arab lands—has four times in the past thirty years attacked Israel, and each time has been humiliatingly defeated, though armed to the teeth with the most fearsome weapons Russia's evil mind could supply.

* * *

The Bible puts man's origin in Mesopotamia—the area of the Euphrates and Tigris rivers. Archeology has increasingly confirmed this *fact*, though on the meager basis of a handful of dubious and widely-scattered bone scraps, the wise of the flesh are frantically trying to put man's origin elsewhere—as central Africa or China.

A century ago it was the fad of science to try to make Egypt the original cradle of mankind and civilization, clutching at unsound assumptions of extreme antiquity, based on wishful misreadings of recently unearthed archeological finds. The advance of factual knowledge through fuller and sounder archeological study has thoroughly exploded that once popular theory. Solid fact and sound research put man's origin in just one place—exactly where the Bible says it was.

It was a popular fad in the scientific community one hundred years ago—even as late as the 1890s—to say that writing was not invented till the eighth century BC, so it was impossible for Moses to have written the five books attributed to him. As always, science was wrong, and the Bible right. Objects bearing writing have been found that are universally agreed to date well over one thousand years before Moses. Science has shifted its attack elsewhere. The strange and sad thing is that mankind as a whole does not learn anything from these presumptuous blunders of science. They back away from their discredited arguments against the Bible, but come back with new ones just as silly.

Some may feel this is unfair to "science." The scientific community, above anything else, wishes to be seen as the essence of reason and rationality and impartial objectivity, far above the common follies of superstition and ignorance. But man hasn't really changed from the days of the alchemists and astrologers. The scientific community generally, as a body, either by conviction or self-interest, worships at the altar of the modern superstition of Evolution—those with doubts suppressing them lest they be "cast out of the synagogue."

Now, God tells us plainly that any who cannot see evidence of Him all around them in Creation are fools, blind, and without excuse; and furthermore that—“*The fear of the Lord is the BEGINNING of knowledge.*”

Where then does this put the scientific community? The words are not ours but God's. Whatever their mechanical accomplishments or contrivances—and some indeed are spectacular, like going to the moon—still no group standing on the Alice in Wonderland foundation of Evolution can be called wise or intelligent.

Some among them, including some who sadly should know better because of their privileged association with God's Truth, try to combine this modern false god with worship of the true God, attempting to please both sides, but the hybrid offspring they create is more hideous than the original basic atheistic Evolution. The whole philosophy of Evolution is the “*Ascent of Man*” from primeval slime ever upward through the reptile and animal kingdoms, to the glorious, cunning and aggressive biped that proudly and brutally dominates the earth today. The true Bible picture is the very unflattering opposite: that man came from the Divine Hand “very good”—a perfect product of Divine workmanship and love; and that by disobedience and wilfulness he fell from that position, and has been degenerating through sin and evil ever since to his present pride, wickedness and immorality.

Man has repeatedly had to reverse himself with every advance of true knowledge. The Bible, on the other hand, has been increasingly confirmed as knowledge has creepingly grown. The marvelous theory of the physical world formulated by the genius of Isaac Newton in the seventeenth century met every then known test and fitted every then known fact; and was considered eternal gospel up to the end of the nineteenth century. Then Einstein showed that this long-accepted theory breaks down in the light of the latest observations. And without doubt, if sufficient time permit, another will come along and show how inadequate Einstein's theory is in light of further facts.

* * *

The very continued existence of the Bible, in spite of intense and repeated efforts to destroy it, and especially its yearly multi-million worldwide distribution—always the world's best seller since the very beginning of printing—is in itself a fulfilment of prophecy, and a stamp of the uniqueness of this

Book. It has been translated into well over a thousand languages, and more are added each year. It has recently been translated into Somali, which never had a printed alphabet till a few years ago. Sometimes writing has been created for an oral language just to permit the Bible to be written in it. At present thousands of translators are working on versions in over five hundred languages, many of which have never before had Bibles.

Throughout the Bible, as God's message of good news to all mankind, it presumes its own continued existence until its divine work is done—

"The Word of our God shall stand forever" (Isa. 40:8)

"My Word shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please" (Isa. 55:11).

The Jews were very deeply impressed with the divinity of their Scriptures, and they took measures to preserve their accuracy that were far more comprehensive and rigid than any safeguards applied to any other book in history—repeatedly checking and rechecking even the number of letters, as they made copies. A copy of Isaiah recently found near the Dead Sea, and universally agreed to be two thousand years old, is to all intents and purposes identical with the book as we have it in the King James' version.

The Bible, or Scriptures, of Jesus' day was the same as our present Old Testament, containing exactly the same books: no more or less. Jesus and the apostles spoke of this combined volume as the Holy Scriptures; they spoke of it as an inseparable unit; and they accepted and quoted it without question as wholly divinely inspired, word for word—basing fundamental arguments and doctrines on single words, and even parts of words, as singular or plural (Jn. 10:34; Gal. 3:16). If it is not divinely inspired, word for word, then the arguments based on it by Christ and the apostles are pointless and powerless. Jesus said—

"Till heaven and earth pass, ONE jot or ONE tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law till ALL be fulfilled" (Matt. 5:18).

The jot was the smallest Hebrew letter. Tittles were the little horns that distinguished one similar letter from another. This is how literally Jesus accepted the Old Testament Scriptures as infallibly inspired. He said again—

"ALL things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished" (Lk. 18:31).

"This that is written MUST be accomplished" (Lk. 22:37).

And even more positively and sweepingly he said—

"The Scripture cannot be broken . . . The Scripture CANNOT BE BROKEN" (Jn. 10:35).

There is no possibility of doubt as to how Jesus viewed the Holy Scriptures, the Word of God. It is sometimes argued that in the days of his mortal flesh, he just ignorantly adopted current theories. Let us remember he was *immortal* when he said—

"O FOOLS and slow of heart to believe ALL that the prophets have spoken!" (Lk. 24:25).

Christ's words and the words of the apostles are absolutely full of Old Testament quotations and allusions, direct and indirect. The whole New Testament is thoroughly steeped in and saturated with the Old. Christ's whole life and death were consciously and deliberately in fulfilment of Scripture. Repeatedly he said—

"Thus it MUST be . . . that the Scriptures may be fulfilled."

In his great temptation in the wilderness, at the very beginning of his ministry, his answer and defence always was **"It is written."** This was the power and basis of his overcoming. Regardless of pressure or temptation, *he would do nothing contrary to what was written in the Word.* Could any testimony to its divine authority be stronger?

The first scripture Jesus quoted in his temptation was not chosen by accident, but is deeply significant to our subject—

"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God" (Lk. 4:4).

"Every word"; do we get the full significance of that phrase? If the Bible is not wholly inspired, as Christ taught it is, then who knows or is to say what part is "every word of God," and what is not?

Christ always spoke of the Scriptures as the final authoritative standard of appeal. When he said to the Sadducees—

"Do ye not therefore ERR, because ye know not the Scriptures?" (Mk. 12:24)

—he is saying that if they *did* know the Scriptures well enough, they would not err. Now, if knowing the Scriptures can preserve a man from error, then the Scriptures themselves must be free from error. An erring thing cannot preserve anyone from error.

Those who do not have a wholly inspired Bible do not have any Bible at all. Who knows where their Bible starts or ends:

what part is inspired and what is not? Either it is wholly inspired, as Christ unquestioningly regarded it, or every man writes his own Bible according to his own fallible judgment of what *he* thinks is divine. Instead of being the obedient learner, man becomes the supreme judge.

Christ was the Word made flesh. It was essential in the purpose of God that he be absolutely perfect and true in character, word, and action. This is strong supporting evidence that the Bible—the *recorded* Word, that Word which Christ came to perfectly manifest and fulfil—is also absolutely perfect and true. For it to be anything less would surely be unfitting in the light of the required perfection of Christ, the *living* Word, who was its fulfilment.

* * *

The Bible demands man's complete submission and obedience to God as the only possible doorway to God's love and mercy and salvation. We shall never be able to obey perfectly, but this is no excuse but rather all the more reason to continually strain every effort to obey.

In the beginning, God placed man under a strict, specific law. It was not a general principle of morality or goodness that man could in any way figure out for himself as right. It was a completely arbitrary regulation to test his obedience and faithfulness: "You may eat this; you may not eat that." And upon simple obedience depended life and death. In the very last chapter of the Bible we have exactly the same story—

"Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the Tree of Life" (Rev. 22:14).

The only way of access to the Tree of Life is to keep studying out what God has commanded, and making constant effort to obey. His commands are many, specific, and sometimes arbitrary—that is, in the sense that they must be specifically learned. For instance, Adam's "love" or "good intentions" could never have told him what trees he could eat of, and which not. It had to be *direct instruction* from God, carefully listened to and remembered.

Adam and Eve doubtless "meant well," but they allowed themselves to be persuaded that God did not really mean *exactly* what He said. They thought they could safely use their own good judgment. They did not realize that life and death depended on very careful and specific, word-for-word obedience. It is a great and primary lesson. The one thing God

demands above all else is that we believe Him implicitly with complete childlike faith, and that we are very careful to—to the best of our ability—do *exactly* what He commands.

Without the specific, detailed instruction of the Bible, natural ignorant man cannot possibly tell what is “right” or “wrong,” “good” or “evil”—

“It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps” (Jer. 10:23).

“He that trusteth his own heart is a fool” (Prov. 28:26).

“That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God” (Lk. 16:15).

“There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Prov. 16:25).

In his memorable outline of his teaching given on the Mount (Matt. 5 to 7), Jesus gives many *specific commands*—commands that are directly contrary to the natural mind, and which would never appeal naturally to anyone’s “good intentions”: *Love your enemies; do good to those who hate you; lay not up treasure on earth; resist not evil; take no oaths; take any loss rather than sue at law, etc.*

And then he says at the end (Matt. 7:26) that whoever does not obey all these commands is building his house on sand, and the coming storm of judgment will destroy it.

Only a clear recognition of the infallible divinity of the Bible can lead a man to obey these flesh-crucifying commands, regardless of consequences and contrary to all dictates of fleshly wisdom. A partially-inspired, half-right, half-wrong, hit-and-miss Bible has no transforming power.

* * *

Salvation will not come from just a few tired minutes of mechanical, absent-minded reading of the Bible each day, but by an intense, earnest, overpowering, constant yearning to know more of God and His Word; to do more in service to Him; to love Him more deeply and to conform more closely to His will. This must be the reigning passion of our lives. If it isn’t, we are not of the few wise that God will select from the perishing billions to live eternally with Him.

It is so fatally easy to delude ourselves into assuming we of ourselves are something special in God’s sight, arbitrarily chosen from the perishing billions, and that He will somehow overlook our disobedience and neglect and waste of time, just because we’re us.

We see others giving their whole lives with the intensity of fanaticism to what they mistakenly think is the Truth of God, and we pity their alien blindness with a sense of our own superior enlightenment, and we feel so snug and secure in our ivory tower of special divine choice.

But there is no excuse for this dreamy delusion. Time and time again we are told that God is no respecter of persons, and if we wish His approval we *must* diligently study and learn all His commands, and obey them to the limit of our ability: that there is *no* salvation any other way—

“He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the Truth is not in him”
(1 Jn. 2:4).

“Ye are my friends, IF ye DO whatsoever I command you” (Jn. 15:14).

“Not every one that saith, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom, but he that DOETH the will of my Father”
(Matt. 7:21).

“Whosoever DOETH the will of my Father, the same is my brother and sister and mother” (Matt. 12:50).

“Jesus Christ, Author of salvation to all them that OBEY him” (Heb. 5:9).

“If ye (baptised believers) live after the flesh, YE SHALL DIE” (Rom. 8:13).

Repeatedly the Word of God is likened to essential food and drink. Daily partaking and digesting and assimilating are vital to health and growth and very life itself.

Jesus said, not only *“Come UNTO me,”* but also—

“Abide IN me . . . If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth and burned” (Jn. 15:4-6).

And in the same context he tells us how we abide in him—

“If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love” (v. 10).

Do we keep them? Do we *know* them? There is no other way to life.

The Fulness of the Time

*"He that hath two coats let him impart to him that hath none.
And he that hath meat, let him do likewise" (Lk. 3:11).*

The life and death we meet weekly to remember is the great central focus and turning point of God's divine Plan of the Ages. The previous ages had all been but preparation for this brief vision of ineffable glory: those few short years in which God marvelously manifested Himself in flesh, and the great work of man's redemption was wrought in the perfection of prayer, and patience and pain.

Of the patriarchs Jesus said—*"Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and was glad" (Jn. 8:56).*

And Paul tells us that the whole Mosaic constitution of things was but a schoolmaster to lead to Christ (Gal. 3:24).

In the fulness of times, Christ came: the perfect man; the embodiment of all the purposes and ideals of Creation; the central axis around which all the meaning, glory and beauty of the Plan revolved.

A great change was bound to follow upon this transcendent revelation. For four thousand years all history had been building up to this climax—

"We were in bondage (says Paul) under the elements of the world, but when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son" (Gal. 4:3, 4).

The fulness of times *had* come. The wine could no longer be restrained in the ancient bottles. That which had been brooding in the womb of the Spirit for forty centuries—first conceived in the promise to Eve; gradually taking shape in covenants and revelations to Noah, and Abraham, and Judah, and David; shadowed forth through Moses' Law with inexhaustible beauty and intricate detail; and heralded with ever-increasing boldness from prophet to prophet—finally, in the fulness of times, burst into the full view of the world.

Nothing could ever again be the same. The whole relationship of mankind to God was changed because of the transcendent revelation of Himself that God had made in the wonderful life, terrible death, and glorious resurrection of this perfect man.

"The former times of ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30)

—that is, to completely change their way of life according to this wonderful, divinely-provided pattern.

Four thousand years had been devoted to preparing the scene for the brief appearance and work of this one man. God's values and proportions are quite different from man's. Time and numbers mean nothing to Him. We must shake off the human perspective as we view the Divine Plan of the Ages. God said to Gideon (Jdgs. 7:2, 3)—

"The people are too many for me to deliver Israel by: let all the fearful and fainthearted go away."

Two-thirds of the host left, and ten thousand remained. God said, "The people are yet too many." And finally the number was brought down to three hundred, just one percent: ninety-nine percent were sent away. And God said, "by this three hundred will I save you." Three hundred who drank water differently from the rest.

How natural it is to be influenced by numbers—to feel comfortable and assured if we are part of a large group: and to be influenced by the opinions of others, particularly by those who have an appearance of position and prestige, but all Scripture teaches the contrary—

"He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him"
(Isa. 53:2)

—this simple, homeless, unschooled carpenter; this strange, wandering, unsettled preacher, with his devoted little band of unschooled followers. What a stumbling-block he was to those who judged by appearances and surface aspects!

"Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?" (Jn. 7:48)

—they asked in derision: and that to them was conclusive.

But this one despised man, forsaken at last even by his few friends, singlehandedly—by the help and power of God—turned the world's eternal future from darkness to light. ONE man—

"My strength is made perfect in weakness . . . God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the mighty" (2 Cor. 12:9; 1 Cor. 2:27).

"Be of good cheer," Jesus said, "I have overcome the world . . . Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (Jn. 16:33; 14:27).

And the timeless, changeless comfort of his eternal peace he pours out freely to his friends—

"My peace I give unto you" (Jn. 14:27).

And as one perfect and devoted man singlehandedly wrought this victory over all the evil of the world, and thereby founded

and established the whole future course of history; so another man, practically singlehandedly, carried the news of that victory through the length and breadth of the Roman Empire, in the face of every form of hardship and disappointment—

"He is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my Name before the Gentiles . . . I will show him how great things he must suffer for my Name" (Acts 9:15, 16).

In this proclaiming to the Gentiles of the eternal purpose of God, the same strange divine pattern is followed: the same complete reversing of all human values and conceptions. Jesus said, applying to himself the inspired words of Isaiah—

"The Lord hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor" (Lk. 4:18).

Why especially the poor? Why are they so consistently singled out for mention? Because that is God's way. God is fashioning His glorious Temple—stone by stone through the ages—out of the humble and lowly things of this world. The wise and noble and mighty and highly respected are of no use to Him. He cannot make anything worthwhile and eternal out of them: they are too deeply impregnated with pride and ambition and the glory of the flesh.

When John lay in prison, struggling against doubt and despair, he sent to Jesus asking—

"Art thou he that should come? Or look we for another?" (Lk. 7:19).

And the reassuring message Jesus returned to him contained this—

"Go and show John those things which ye do hear and see . . . THE POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED UNTO THEM."

Paul declares that the apostles at Jerusalem added nothing to him as to the substance of the Gospel, but there was one vital injunction in connection with his preaching they pressed urgently upon him—

"Only they would (he said) that we should REMEMBER THE POOR, the same which I also was forward to do" (Gal. 2:10).

Possibly they feared that this once high-minded and influential Pharisee would overlook the humble class to whom God's promises were directed, but they need have no concern: Paul saw the picture too clearly, as he manifests in 1 Cor. 1. This preaching to the poor was the hallmark of the Gospel as it went forth to the Gentiles—

"Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed on him?" (Jn. 7:48).

No, it was not for them. Or rather, they were not for it. God in His wisdom hath chosen the weak and simple things; the lowly things. Why must Jesus be of the lowest of the people?—a humble workman, born in a stable. Why? Think of the circumstances of that birth of the Son of God: the smells, the dirt, the insects, the germs! Are we perhaps just a little out of touch with the realities of life?

Why must his parents be too poor even to offer the normally required sacrifice at his circumcision? The Law said—

"And if her means suffice not for a lamb, then she shall take two turtledoves, or two young pigeons" (Lev. 12:8—R.V.).

At the dedication of the magnificent Temple, his royal type and predecessor Solomon offered one hundred twenty thousand sheep. But when this Living Temple was dedicated, the true dwelling-place of God among Israel, his parents were too poor to offer one lamb on behalf of the Lamb of God. What a tremendous lesson! How God delights to reverse all fleshly and artificial standards! Let us get our thinking in line with God, and not man.

As Mary exclaimed in her beautiful, inspired song of praise (Lk. 1:48, 52, 53)—

"He hath regarded the low estate of His handmaiden . . . He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree: He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich sent empty away."

Why must John the Baptist be clothed in rough skins, and exist on the meager fare the desert offered him?

"What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? They who are clothed in soft raiment, and live delicately, are in kings' courts" (Lk. 7:25).

Indeed, John was in "King's courts," but it was a very different kind of King: one who wore a crown of thorns. What is God teaching us? There was no soft raiment or delicate living for John, a man exalted in God's purpose as the greatest of the prophets. He was a Voice crying in the wilderness—

"Prepare ye the way of the Lord! . . . All FLESH is grass, and all the GLORY THEREOF as THE FLOWER OF THE FIELD" (Isa. 40:3, 6).

Why must Paul hunger, and thirst, and be buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place, and be as the filth of the world, and

the offscouring of all things (1 Cor. 4:11-13)? Why did not God choose normal, respectable, influential men to carry this great message of the Gospel to the Gentiles? In the answer lies the great secret of the divine way with mankind. These three great men, and those that followed them—terrible and unmovable in their single-minded, seemingly-fanatical devotion to the one needful thing—must be free of all worldly and fleshly encumbrance, because the message they carried was so revolutionary, so transforming, so searching and penetrating to the very roots and foundations of life. The life they preached cannot be veneered onto the surface of a comfortable, worldly, "normal" life.

"The ax is laid to the root of the tree," proclaimed John, *"Every mountain shall be brought low, and every valley shall be exalted"* (Lk. 3:9, 5).

That was the watchword of the new dispensation: a complete reversal of all greedy and selfish human ways and thoughts. It is a call to freedom from everything that is fleshly—

"They that are in the flesh cannot please God . . . To be fleshly-minded is death" (Rom. 8:8, 6).

It is a call to freedom to everything that is worldly—

"All that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world" (1 Jn. 2:16).

It is a call to divine holiness and perfection—

"Be ye holy, even as I am holy . . ." (1 Pet. 1:16).

"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:48).

In the sacrifice of Jesus, God held nothing back. There were no half-measures, and He expects none in us. Divine love and human endurance were drawn out to the utmost, to lay the foundation of a new world, free from all the evils of the flesh.

John said many things as the Voice crying in the wilderness, though very little of it is recorded. So what is recorded must be very significant. In the divine summary of his message, what stands out? Stirred to their depths by his terrible warnings, they asked, What shall we do? In his reply, he went to the very heart of the Gospel—

"He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none. And he that hath meat, let him do likewise" (Lk. 3:11).

He was not preaching charity: he was preaching revolution: a wonderful, free new way of life. *"He that hath five coats, let him give one away that he doesn't need"* would be noble human

charity: a generous twenty percent. That would be "Love thy neighbor"—a pleasant hobby. But John's message was, as was his Master's (Matt. 19:19)—

"Thou shalt love thy neighbor AS THYSELF."

That goes very deep: "as"—as much as—in the same way as.

Need we ask, then, why these three great men, our divinely appointed examples, lived as they did, with such a message for the world? Could a man with worldly possessions preach such a Gospel to the poor?

Are we facing and coming to grips with the realities of life? This great offensive which rocked the world, whose banner was mutual love and self-sacrifice (Jn. 13:34, 35)—begun by John, centered in and exemplified by Jesus, and carried to the world by Paul—was a divine crusade against all the natural ignorance and selfishness and pettiness of the flesh. It was a campaign of faith against faithlessness, and godliness against greed—

"Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old . . . Take no thought for your body, for your heavenly Father knoweth your needs" (Lk. 12:22-33).

Love of neighbor as love of self. Childlike faith from day to day: the only way to happiness and peace. And those who carry this message, how must they live to give their words any meaning? Natural and spiritual things will not mix—

"The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh . . ." (Gal. 5:17).

"The natural man cannot know the things of the Spirit of God" (1 Cor. 2:14).

And so it is the Gideon story all over again. The thirty thousand of the flesh must be cut down to the three hundred of the Spirit, before they can go forth in the power of God, conquering and to conquer—

"Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith Yahweh of hosts" (Zech. 4:6).

"His bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible," (2 Cor. 10:10) they said of him, this chosen vessel who carried to the world the most revolutionary message ever proclaimed—

"I came not with excellency of speech . . . I was with you in fear, and in much trembling . . . that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God" (1 Cor. 2:1, 3, 5).

Thus was the pattern set and the foundation laid for the strange work of God during the dark ages of the Gentiles. And

so, by the tireless labors of this despised man, the Gentile world was told of the unsearchable riches of God, and of the marvelous divine Light that had dawned upon the darkness and helplessness of the world. And a few precious jewels were drawn out of the great mass of useless and perishing rubble.

But to all outward appearances, Paul's work was a dismal, heart-breaking failure. Like the two who preceded him, he was in the end crushed and destroyed by the triumphant evil power of the flesh.

"All men counted John to be a prophet" (Mk. 11:32).

But where was this multitude when he was imprisoned and brutally murdered? They saved their support and clamor for men like Barabbas.

And when the power of darkness closed in on Jesus, even his closest companions abandoned him; and the fickle people, whom he had ceaselessly labored to heal and bless, and who had acclaimed him a week before, screamed for his death and reveled in the spectacle of his cruel suffering—glad in their hearts to be free at last from the resented burden of this strange troubler of the national conscience.

And so with Paul—*"The more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved"* (2 Cor. 12:15)

—simply because he did not correspond to their fleshly conceptions of how love should behave—

"Am I become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?" (Gal. 4:16).

The world is full of Gadarenes, who do not want their evil spirit cast out, nor their swine destroyed.

Paul's second letter to Timothy is the last and most intimate of his recorded writings. The long struggle is nearly over, and he speaks very touchingly to Timothy, who soon is to be left to fight on alone. Timothy was the one of whom Paul said to the Philippians (2:20)—

"I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's."

To Timothy he wrote from his prison cell, as he awaited execution—

"All they which are in Asia be turned away from me" (2 Tim. 1:15).

The Ephesian ecclesia was in Asia, where for years he had labored night and day for them with tears, and where they wept

on his neck so dramatically when he left them. This had been just a few years before.

And at the end of this last letter to Timothy, he says of his public trial (2 Tim. 4:16)—

"No man stood with me: all men forsook me."

But he continues—

"Notwithstanding, the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me" (v.17).

Why not raise up a dozen or a hundred Pauls to carry the Gospel to the Gentiles? Wasn't the message worth a much larger and better organized operation? Why the tremendous load on this one man? God does not work in masses. We are constantly impressed that the work of God is very selective, and intensely individual. In God's sight, one true, zealous, whole-hearted saint is of infinitely more value and use than multitudes of mere individuals. This is apparent in all the records of His workings with mankind.

Such then, in the wisdom of God, were the experiences of the great apostle to the Gentiles. Even the beloved Barnabas—the one who had first befriended and defended him when his conversion was doubted, and who had worked so closely with him in hardship and danger—had to be taken away.

God's Plan of the Ages rested, for the moment, in the hands of these two men, whom the Spirit had expressly selected to go forth together to preach the Word to the world (Acts 13:2). But a strong division of judgment comes between them, and they separate, and Barnabas drops from the record, and Paul goes on alone.

We do not for a moment make a judgment on Barnabas. None of us could begin to compare with this noble and great-hearted man, who true to the Master's call sold all that he had, and cheerfully took up the hard road of the cross. But still it is a deeply impressive lesson in the ways of God. What harder decision could Paul ever have to make than that? Is it possible for us to comprehend how much the companionship of Barnabas must have meant to him in this lonely labor of enlightening the Gentiles, and the heartache this tragic separation would bring upon him?

And on top of it all, rarely mentioned but always present, he himself had that bitter "thorn in the flesh" to harass and hamper his work. Three times he earnestly pleaded that he might be delivered from it, but the Lord replied—

"My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9).

How strange and wonderful are the ways of God! How utterly different from the ways of man!

"God hath chosen the base things, and the things which are despised to confound the things which are mighty, that no flesh should glory" (1 Cor. 1:27).

Fewness and weakness should never be regarded with anxiety or concern. Numbers should never carry any weight in determining divine things. God's true people have always been very few and very weak. Many from time to time have had to stand entirely alone. In his final days on earth, as he faced alone his great ordeal which we meet weekly to commemorate, Jesus said that, in the last dark, deceptive days of the Gentile times, as the sea and waves of the nations lash and toss with ever-increasing frustration and fury—

"The love of the many will wax cold, but he that endures to the end, the same shall be saved" (Matt. 24:12, 13).

And what do all these things mean to us? Each must decide for himself. The principles are clear. The message these men proclaimed and exemplified is plain. The application is individual.

The Great Creator of the universe has stooped down to us and given all—in love. Our moment of eternity lies within our grasp. Are we big enough to respond in a way that is commensurate and in keeping? It certainly means a very different way of life from the natural. Let us each wrestle through the night with our own heart—and face the eternal realities.

Household of Faith in the Latter Days

"We all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the Glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit" (1Cor. 3:18).

A FRATERNAL GATHERING ADDRESS

The Gathering Committee's outline for this address lists these five items:

1. *The attitude of the Household in relation to the Signs of the Times.*
2. *The attitude of the Household in relation to the Gentile world.*
3. *The attitude of the Household in relation to Israel.*
4. *The effect the Signs should have on the Household.*
5. *The glory that will be theirs in the Kingdom of God.*

First, then: *Our attitude toward the Signs.* It should comprise these aspects: *Awareness, Thankfulness, Deep Interest, Neutrality, Caution, Balance, and Discrimination.*

AWARENESS: Jesus severely chided the Pharisees because they could not discern the Signs of the Times. It could have helped save them from the greatest tragedy that ever befell a people. They should have been aware of their location in Daniel's messianic Seventy Weeks, which culminated in their generation. They should have recognized in Rome the terrible, strange-tongued, eagle-nation from afar (Deut. 28) that was to destroy their city and Temple (Dan. 9:26), and cast them out of their land.

They should have recognized John as Isaiah's "Voice crying in the wilderness", and as Malachi's messenger of the Messiah. But they did not—and all that was foretold came suddenly upon them.

THANKFULNESS: Without the Signs, the whole pattern of our lives would be far less interesting; far more hazy and indefinite. Truly we could live full, godly lives without them: they are not essential to salvation. But they greatly strengthen faith and interest, and give us encouraging bearings and landmarks whereby to plot our position in the outworking of the Divine Purpose. It is much more pleasant and comforting to be traveling in clear sunlight, observing the changing terrain that indicates the approach of our destination, than it is traveling in indistinguishable dark or fog.

The "sure word of prophecy" would lose much of its force for us if we had no way to tie ourselves in, by current events and circumstances, to our specific position in the Plan. The Signs are of God's love and mercy, for the strengthening of His children. The wise will be thankful for them, and will be stirred to godly action by them.

DEEP INTEREST: It is a remarkable paradox that the true, unworldly, separated people of God are far more interested in the significant events in the world than the world itself is. The vast majority of the world's four billion people—we could say ninety-nine percent—know and care little or nothing of what goes on outside their own tiny personal circle of low animal activity and enjoyment. Even in our own supposedly educated and sophisticated countries, we find the weekly newsmagazines are almost entirely petty froth and rubbish: a few meaningful paragraphs in average issues of over one hundred pages.

Our position is unique. It is *their* world, but we are more interested in what is happening and where it is going. We have a program. We know generally what is going to happen, though we do not know specifically from event to event, which makes it far more interesting.

NEUTRALITY: We must constantly remind ourselves to be neutral: to keep in harmony with the *Divine* view of things. It is the potsherd striving with the potsherd of the earth: ALL fleshly and evil.

We have natural sympathy with the downtrodden and the oppressed. On the other hand, we have natural, selfish sympathy with the *status quo* and the preservation of the inequities which favor our own safety and well-being, as the historic dominance and privileges of the White race, which seized as much of the world's good lands as it could—especially the British—confining the other races to overcrowded conditions in less favorable areas. Canada has six people per square mile; India has four hundred and ninety. Australia has five people per square mile; Japan, which covets Australia, has seven hundred and ninety, and her land is very barren generally.

We have many natural, fleshly sympathies and prejudices which we must examine, try to be aware of, and guard against. Our interests and sympathies in watching the Signs must be on the basis of the will and purpose of God, and not our own national, racial or personal feelings.

CAUTION: We must be very careful about attempting to prophesy, and about over-emphasizing passing events. There

are many ziggs and zaggs in the development of the Purpose. Just a few years ago, prominent brethren in another group were confidently saying in their official magazine that bro. Thomas was wrong, and Russia could not *possibly* be King of the North, because of her "Pact of Eternal Friendship" with Egypt. Very soon after, that pact went the way of all human pacts.

Exactly one hundred years ago, the Brotherhood had every reason to believe the end was upon them. The temporal power of the Pope had recently ended—the twelve hundred-year period of power to persecute—just when expected. Russia was furiously driving against the tottering Turkish Empire with the full weight of its armed might. Europe was favoring Russia, because of religious sympathy and envy of Britain's power. Britain opposed the Russian advance, and had drawn a line at Constantinople beyond which it dared Russia to go. Turkey held the Holy Land, where Russian and Catholic interest was strong. The Jews were stirring toward political life, and had begun to return.

But it was not the end. All the Signs they saw were correct, but had to get far bigger and more prominent: Israel, Russia, war, violence, immorality, human knowledge and travel and pride, world turmoil and discontent, etc. Britain and Europe had to be weakened, and shrink tremendously on the world scene: the German and Austrian empires broken up—all fading before the dreadful superpower of Russia.

BALANCE: The Signs are important, but secondary. Some have made shipwreck in over-emphasizing them far out of proportion: obsessed with them to the detriment of deeper things—then often being devastated when they did not follow an expected pattern at an expected time. Unbalance concerning the Signs can lead to a shallow and unstable faith: a gospel of political sensationalism.

Character, service to God and the Brotherhood, and an ever-deepening knowledge of the full range of the Truth, must be the principal aspects of our interest and effort. And finally—

DISCRIMINATION: We must distinguish between normal phenomena and legitimate Signs of the Times. We weaken our case if we consider every tornado a Sign. Earthquakes, floods, droughts, violent weather activities only become Signs if they establish a measurable *new* pattern of greatly increased frequency or intensity or significant location or bearing on current events.

This principle applies equally to human events and activities. We must distinguish between normal variations and repetitions of what has always been, and specific *new* aspects peculiar to these last days. War has always been, and therefore war is not *in itself* a Sign (although it is a striking fulfilment of prophecy that, despite all man's protestations and predictions of peace, and claims of civilization and culture, war still is with us more prominently than ever).

But war is a Sign in that it has suddenly, in our lifetime, become infinitely more deadly and destructive and horrible and burdensome to the world's peoples: man now has the actual ability in his hands to destroy all life on the planet, and make it uninhabitable for centuries.

The hundreds of billions of dollars, and billions of hours of ingenuity and labor, and mountains of irreplaceable natural resources, spent annually on ever deadlier and more diabolic instruments of war, could transform the earth into a paradise for all, and eliminate all cause for men to go to war at all, if mankind had any decency and wisdom. But it cannot be, as long as evil human nature rules the earth.

* * *

The second item: *The attitude of the Household in relation to the Gentile world.* Jesus said—

"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son" (Jn. 3:16).

He said again—

"Thou shalt love thy neighbour AS THYSELF" (Matt. 19:19).

And in illustration, when pressed as to who is "thy neighbor", he showed by the parable of the Good Samaritan that the term has universal application. It is as large and broad as the heart is able to expand and grow up to. He said further, through Paul:

"As ye have opportunity (that is, to the fullest extent ye are able), DO GOOD TO ALL MEN" (Gal. 6:10).

This is a very important injunction as part of the Way of Life. It requires positive action and effort. It is by context directly connected with the promise (v. 8) that those who sow to the Spirit shall reap everlasting life: that is, it is a required part of the sowing to the Spirit. Jesus said also, even more searchingly:

"Love your enemies . . . DO GOOD to them that hate you" (Matt. 5:44).

Do we *carefully* obey this, or do we conveniently ignore it?—content to feel noble and superior in not returning the evil? The

Way of Life is a very special kind of training for a very special Divine position for eternity. Are we big enough for it?

This is one group of commands. There is another group, as:

"Love NOT the world . . . If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 Jn. 2:15).

"Come out from among them and BE YE SEPARATE" (2 Cor. 6:17).

"The friendship of the world is enmity with God" (Jam. 4:4).

"Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness" (Eph. 5:11).

These two sets of commands seem contradictory: many in fact use one set to discountenance the other, according as their preferences may be. But we know they are *not* contradictory. And we know that both sets are vitally important, are *commands*, and *must be obeyed*.

Wisdom will humbly and enquiringly discern the true pattern and balance between them. We must have an attitude toward the world that harmonizes and fulfills *both* sets of teachings. Bro. Roberts said, with much discernment, that it is such apparently opposite commands as these that develop our spiritual insight and penetration. We are forced to analyze and discriminate, and perceive the finer lines of instruction. We cannot jump to broad or coarse conclusions. We are forced to the delicate balance of self-control within limited guidelines.

We can have no *fellowship or fraternization* with the world. We must maintain all our motives and desires and interests on a higher, purer, spiritual plane: but our feeling and attitude toward them must be kindness and hope and helpfulness. Jesus said—

"I came not to judge the world, but to save the world" (Jn. 12:47).

He *will* judge, eventually—he plainly tells us so (Acts 17:31)—but that was not his mission then: *nor is it ours*. It is essential to the healthy development of our character that we suppress the fleshly tendency to constantly criticize and condemn "those that are without"; and rather by study of the mind of Christ learn how to *desire* to do good unto all men. And the kindness and concern must be genuine, from the bottom of our hearts in wisdom; not a forced, surface kindness.

Christ wept for wicked Jerusalem, in spite of her long and bloody record of wickedness and murder of the prophets of God. He was bowed down with the realization that wickedness

is tragic, self-destructive folly; and he desired to save men from it, not coldly condemn them in it. So must we, sincerely, with heartfelt concern and sympathy.

Primarily, of course, we must be *separate*. We must feel separate, think separate, act separate. We are not, and cannot be, a part of the world in activities, interests and associations. All we do, all day and every day, must be with the sole motive of pleasing God, keeping close to Him in heart and mind, doing all for and unto Him.

This is first, and fundamental; but it does not stop there. We have obligations to the world; and the importance of these obligations is not so much for the world's sake, as for our own training and character.

Criticism and judging come cheap and easy. They are natural, and fleshly, and very small-mindedly self-gratifying. But to learn how to put ourselves out, and set aside our own comfort and satisfaction, and take the time and trouble and effort to help and strengthen those we so glibly criticize, is the Christ-like sacrifice God demands—

“DO GOOD TO ALL MEN . . . Do good to them that hate you” (Lk. 6:27).

It is a positive command; a required part of the Way of Life. Some people spend much time in building muscles by lifting great weights: if faithfully adhered to, the results are very impressive. These are the weights that build the essential muscles of the Spirit.

Truly we must discern right from wrong. We must clearly recognize and not obscure the fact that—“*the whole world lieth in wickedness*”—and that, being of the flesh wherein there is “no good thing” all that it does is sin, being not of enlightened faith (Rom. 14:23). By desiring to help, we do not condone what is wrong. We simply show the more excellent way. Christ, in his single-minded devotion to the work of God, associated freely with publicans and sinners.

We have no reason to believe he *especially* chose such company although we do know that he *especially* chose the company of what were snobbishly regarded as the “lowest class” of the people—

“Unto the POOR the Gospel is preached” (Lk. 7:22).

This was one of the special signs that he was the true Messiah, as he sent word to John in prison. There is no especial virtue in the poor; but as soon as men get into any position above that stage, then pride and greed and selfishness and

covetousness intensify, so that it is increasingly hard for those who are not poor to enter the Kingdom, or be faithful stewards of the goods God has put testingly in their hands.

It was the poor, zealous Philippians, and not the rich, self-satisfied Corinthians, who were closest to Paul and who helped him the most in material things. The poor live closer to the reality of man's weakness and helplessness and dependence.

We must, by close association with God and Christ and the Word, develop the God-like characteristic of earnestly desiring to do good to others: this is true *spiritual* living. And it is, appropriately, the *happiest* way. The natural way is to grasp and hoard. People are always collecting things, and its mostly *rubbish*. This is fundamental to the flesh. We all do it as children, but if our lives are going to be useful to God, we *must* mature and grow out of such childishness. Often it's pretty and attractive rubbish; but it's still rubbish, and wastes precious time, and gets in the way of single-minded service and dedication to the work of God. Let us *unclutter* our lives, so we can make them spiritually useful.

The natural way, again, is self-interest; and indifference or antagonism to others: small, cramped, self-centeredness. Some even use the glorious Gospel of God to justify this fleshliness. The *spiritual* way is self-forgetfulness, and deep concern for others. To our shame, many in the animal world could give us lessons in this respect. While we sit back in comfort and smugly criticize, they are out there in self-sacrifice, *doing* something for others.

We must not let the flesh use the true, necessary, God-required narrowness of the Way of Life as an excuse for self-centeredness and unconcern for mankind. Christ, the perfect Example, never for a moment forgot or strayed from the narrow way, but still his whole life was an unbroken pattern of selfless concern for all mankind. *So must be ours.*

* * *

The third item: *Our attitude toward Israel*. Here special factors come into play. Israel is truly part of the world that "lies in wickedness", but a very special part. Israel is the "apple of God's eye" (Zech. 2:8); although today sunk in blindness and rebellion and ignorant blasphemy. We must have a very special feeling and affinity for Israel—

"He that blesseth thee I will bless" (Num. 24:9).

But we must not be blind to the characteristic of stiff-neckedness that always has and still does distinguish them as

a nation. They not only reject Christ himself: they arrogantly reject the very conception of *any* need for a mediatorial, sacrificial Savior. They have no conception of their hopeless bondage to sin. Their holy, God-given Law has taught them nothing. They feel they can approach God on their own, without any need for a Christ. They cannot see that their temporary mediatorial Law is ended, and they have *nothing* in its place. An article in the *Detroit Jewish News*, comparing Judaism with what they believe to be "Christianity", says—

"Judaism teaches that man can be all-righteous or all-wicked, for his ethical conduct is solely up to his own decision. Christian belief is predicated on the doctrine of 'Original Sin'. In his daily prayers, the Jew proclaims, 'My God, the soul which Thou hast given me is pure.' Christianity teaches that man is sinful by birth. Christianity regards the flesh as the cause of sin.

"The Jewish interpretation of ethical freedom implies that repentance is the omnipotent cure of sin. The Christian doctrine of 'Original Sin' leads to the conclusion that man is too weak to repent effectively. He is too sinful to atone, and so needs the help of Jesus.

"The Christian finds atonement in the belief that Jesus died for the sins of mankind. This idea of 'vicarious atonement'—the payment of the penalty not by the sinner but by a substitute for him—cannot be reconciled with Jewish convictions."

Truly this is a confused mixture of truth and error, in response to the only "Christianity" they know—the sad caricature of Christ exhibited by the Churches: the substitutionary Christ who is punished instead of man who deserves it. But while rejecting the orthodox errors, they also reject the true doctrine of the necessary sacrifice of Christ, though so clearly foreshown in their Scriptures from beginning to end. Their position still is as in Christ's day among them—

"We are free . . . we are not in bondage . . . we have no need of your freedom" (Jn. 8:33).

Israel is tragically today, as Hosea foretold, "*without a sacrifice*".

But we must never—in thought or word—align ourselves against Israel, blind and wicked though they be. Their judgment and condemnation and punishment is God's exclusive prerogative, of which He is very jealous. How bitterly He denounced, and how dreadfully He scourged, those very na-

tions whose natural enmity He used to bring fully merited punishment upon His erring people!

We must never allow ourselves to even *appear* to side or sympathize with those who despise or defame the Jew; for they are—though greatly erring—“*beloved for the fathers' sakes*” (Rom. 11:28).

We marvel in never diminishing wonder at the continuous, living miracle that they present: a unique and different people from all others—and such a major, out-of-proportion factor in the world's activities. And today, in their own land, living on the endless raw edge of crisis: four times in twenty-five years viciously attacked on all sides by vastly greater numbers dedicated to their annihilation; and four times decisively defeating the attackers. And the hypocritical world sides with the oil-rich aggressors, and tells Israel she must strip herself of her defences.

* * *

The fourth point: *The effect the Signs should have on us in preparation for Christ's return.* Theoretically, we should not need the Signs. We should be so deeply impressed and overwhelmed and mentally saturated with the glory of God and the power of the Gospel and the beauty of the Truth that every moment's activity should be an excited, joyful pressing toward the Kingdom, regardless of any current events.

But God knows our frame, and the natural dull cloddishness of our spiritual perceptions; and He has given us the Signs as one of His helps to keep us in touch with the eternal spiritual realities.

The Signs add greatly to our responsibility. Where much is given, much is required (Lk. 12:48). No past generation has ever had such concrete, visible evidence as we have. The re-birth of Israel alone should be an ever-present marvel, never growing dim or less exciting.

We should continually thrill as we see these striking and so typically Jewish figures—Begin, Dayan, Sharon—like something suddenly risen out of the Old Testament, strutting about the world stage. We do not credit them with any special wisdom. In fact, their uncompromising, tunnel-visioned Jewishness may be what helps bring upon Israel its final “time of Jacob's trouble”, as it did in AD 70.

But how marvelous are these events! How wonderfully they tie in with all past history, and with prophecy of what is yet to

be! And just this week, the godless, bully nations of the world vote unanimously that Israel's settlements on their own ancient land are "illegal"!

* * *

And we have mighty Russia: a dreadful and increasingly industrialized, increasingly scientific, cold, rigid dictatorship, controlling one sixth of the earth, and well over one sixth of its resources—fanatically devoted to world dominion. It is the world's richest nation in mineral resources; it has two and a half billion acres of forests; over one half the world's coal; two fifths of its iron.

Russia's gross national product is half that of US, but it is all muscle and sinew: not frittered and dissipated in puffy trinkets and self-indulgent pleasures and luxuries, as US's is. Russia is just beginning to tap its vast resources; US has pretty well exhausted hers by profligacy.

Russia leads the world in steel, coal and oil production: the three basics of industrialized power. She leads in largest power-dams, and has almost unlimited water power for many more that she plans. She builds everything on a colossal scale.

Exactly one hundred years ago Russia and Turkey were at war, and the Brotherhood thought it was the descent of Gog, and that Armageddon was immediately imminent.

But what was Russia then, compared to now? The mighty British Empire was at its proud peak. Its commerce and navy dominated the world: its industrial production was many times Russia's. In 1860, British steel production was ten times Russia's, and equal to all the rest of the world's combined. Its coal production was double the total of all the rest of the world: coal was then the only source of industrial energy. Russia was not even a factor in world coal production at all: now it's first.

One hundred years ago, the Brotherhood thought the King of the North's "many ships" (Dan.11:40) were the large secret armada of landing boats by which they suddenly surprised the Turks and crossed the Danube in huge numbers, overwhelming Turkish defences and beginning the war.

It was certainly a reasonable application. But today Russia has "many ships" in the full, global, naval sense—several times more, in fact, in actual numbers than US—and they will clearly play a large part in the final showdown. In the past fifteen years, Russia has gone from practically no navy at all, to the world's second largest; in many respects rivaling and even surpassing US's shrinking and aging fleet—including three

hundred and fifty huge submarines: far more than US has; and far more, and more deadly, than Hitler had at his peak when he was sinking a million tons of Allied ships a month and came close to breaking the back of Allied transport. We see how tremendously Russia has developed in recent years.

The Signs are not to be an obsession, to the detriment of deeper, spiritual things; but are to help keep our outlook and awareness broadened from our own petty things to the developing panorama of the great Divine plan with mankind.

* * *

Finally, the last item: *The glories that will be ours* (if worthy) *in the Kingdom of God*. What is our conception of "glory"? It depends upon our depth of spiritual perception. What would be "glory" for us? The more shallow our perception, the more we perceive glory as external rather than internal. We know the common worldly conception: splendor, magnificence, renown, celebrity, the worshipful subservience and envy of others: power over others (how the flesh loves that!).

Certainly glory, as represented visually, is brightness, brilliance, radiance, effulgence. But this is merely the outward *manifestation* of glory, as are all the gaudy trappings of power and prestige.

The Scriptures say much of the "Glory of God", and all true glory must be related to, and part of, that. The Glory of God is His fundamental character and nature: pure, holy, righteous, wise, loving, incorruptible, imperishable. It is to this Glory we are called, and to which we are to yearn and strive.

The first reference to the "*Glory of Yahweh*" is in Exodus 16, in connection with the giving of the Manna, the heavenly bread.

The second is in Exodus 24: the giving of the Law at Sinai.

The third is the promise in Exodus 29 that the Tabernacle—God's dwelling-place—should be sanctified by God's Glory. We perceive the type and significance—

"Ye are the Temple of the living God" (2 Cor. 6:16).

Then we come to the fourth: a key passage concerning the Glory of Yahweh. Moses asked—

"I beseech Thee: SHOW ME THY GLORY" (Ex. 33:18).

God answered (next verse)—

"I will make all My GOODNESS pass before thee."

And in the subsequent gracious revelation in chapter 34, God identifies His Glory with His goodness and mercy and love (v. 6)—

*"And the Lord passed before him, and proclaimed:
Yahweh, Yahweh Elohim, merciful and gracious,
longsuffering and abundant in goodness and truth."*

This was God's response to Moses' request, and *this is the true "Glory of Yahweh"*, of which the light and splendor and brilliance are but the outward manifestation (1 Jn. 1:5)—

"God is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all"

—and *this clearly refers to moral rather than physical aspects*, because it is spoken of in relation to righteousness and sin.

Psalm 19 announces that—

"The heavens declare the Glory of God" (v. 1).

Here is wisdom and power, truly, but it is more than that. The vast, majestic, orderly *beauty* of the heavens declares goodness and benevolence and trustworthiness and purpose, though it is silent as to what the goodness may have in mind, or what the purpose may be.

Psalm 45 says—

"The King's daughter is all glorious WITHIN" (v. 13).

Modern versions and most commentaries make the meaning much more shallow by arbitrarily adding words, as R.V.: "within the palace". But we believe this is a reference to the *true* glory the Bridegroom sees in the Bride—the *inner* glory of character and substance. This is the natural meaning of the Hebrew as it stands, without tampering.

In harmony with this are several beautiful references to glory in the New Testament. John says (1:14)—

"We beheld his glory . . ."

—that was the "Word made flesh dwelling among them"—

*" . . . the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,
FULL OF GRACE AND TRUTH."*

"Grace" was his character. "Truth" was his foundation. "Full" was the degree of his Godlikeness (Jn. 8:29)—

"I do always those things that please the Father."

That was the glory they beheld. If we desire the eternal spiritual glory of perfect oneness with God in mind and in nature, *this is the glory*—portrayed by Christ—that we must strive with all our efforts to develop and manifest. Let us be sure we are not like Israel: seeking a showy, external, flesh-pleasing glory, and never realizing that the true glory must be developed *within* us by the power of the Word, and that *now* is the time it must be done, if ever.

It is a joyful endeavor: life's greatest possible pleasure and adventure. But it requires complete dedication, constant at-

tention, and continual constructive self-examination. How much closer are we today than yesterday? How far did we fall of God's glory *today*, and what can we learn from it to reduce failure in the future?

There must be a continuous self-purifying confessional of prayer in Jesus' Name. Prayer is not a periodic thing, but continuous: a state of the heart; a condition of the mind. We must pray in *everything*: large and small—for God's guidance in it, and for His acceptance of it. *Nothing* is too small to be prayed about, for all is equally part of the one single fabric of our life. What cannot be prayed about must not be done.

It will always seem like failure, for the more we learn and overcome, the more we will realize how little we have *really* overcome. Let us remember that when we have "done all"—that is, when we have spent a lifetime trying our hardest—we are *still*, as Jesus says, "unprofitable servants". But God in His mercy is going to accept those "unprofitable servants", if they truly have "done all"—that is, all they could: their best. He has assured us that our pitiful little unprofitable best *is* enough, if it truly is our best.

His mercy through Christ will make up the difference, and He will accept us as "perfect and blameless in His sight".

We know that many *will* succeed in this glorious race. Though "narrow is the way, and few there be that find it", still in the end, that relative few is described as a "multitude no man can number". *They can do it: so can we*. The prize of glory is well within our ability, IF we will drop everything else and give it every ounce of effort that we have.

If we truly value the prize, and appreciate and rejoice continually in the infinite love and goodness of God, we cannot possibly be content with giving anything *less* than our best and most.

Paul says—

"All have sinned, and come short of the GLORY OF GOD" (Rom. 3:23).

Clearly here the "Glory of God" is His perfection of beauty and holiness, and the perfection He requires of those who would be one with Him.

Paul is explaining in this chapter why the perfect God-manifesting *glory* of Christ was necessary, that a foundation of perfection might be laid, sin repudiated and condemned, and God forever honored; that God might *then* be merciful to all weak but loving creatures who seek Him with all their heart.

Paul speaks often of this divine Glory that God is, that Christ manifested, and that man must strive for. The term appears over one hundred times in his writings: but perhaps he nowhere expresses it more searchingly and beautifully than in writing to the ecclesia at Corinth. In 2 Cor. 3 he is led to speak of the Old and New Covenants. He speaks of the tremendous, overawing Glory of God as manifested in the Old Covenant, the "ministration of death", the dispensation of condemnation.

We have seen that the inauguration of this Old Covenant is where reference to the *Glory of Yahweh* first appears in the scriptural record. The Law, and its services and standards and requirements, indeed was glorious: "holy, just and good", as Paul describes it (Rom. 7:12).

What a wonderful, joyful, beautiful people Israel *could* have been: IF they had lived up to their glorious Law to the best of their ability! That was all God asked. He did not demand impossible perfection. He made merciful provision for constant honest failure, and ever-renewed effort. Let us ponder that thought (for it has very important significance for us today): *What a wonderful, joyful, beautiful people Israel COULD have been—what an unearthly manifestation of God's glory to the world—IF they had lived up to their holy, divine Law to the best of their ability!*

But glorious as the Old Covenant was, the New is far more glorious. That is Paul's point. We know the sad conditions in the Corinthian ecclesia: conditions that Paul warned must lead to disfellowship if not corrected (1 Cor. 4:21; 2 Cor. 13:2,10). Paul is trying to inspire them to the beauty that could be, the *glory* that could be—

"If the ministration of DEATH was glorious . . . how shall not the ministration of the SPIRIT be MORE glorious?" (2 Cor. 3:8, 9).

Is it glory we seek? This is what Paul is offering and exhorting to—

"We all, with open (correctly: unveiled) face, beholding as in a glass (mirror) the Glory of the Lord, are CHANGED into the SAME IMAGE from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (v. 18).

So we see clearly *what* this Glory is, and *when* it must be achieved. It is the likeness of Christ who is the Glory of God, and NOW is the only time for its development. It will not come wafting down upon us at the last day. There *must* be a "change" *now*, and it is the steady beholding that does the changing—

"We beheld his glory, full of grace and truth."

The urgent question then is—"Are we, while we still have fleeting opportunity, by steadily keeping our eyes on Christ the Glory of God, *being changed* 'from glory to glory'—that is, changed continuously from one degree of divine glory to a fuller degree?"

This is the sole purpose and reason for our present life: anything else is tragic waste of precious time and golden opportunity. This progressive change should—*must*—be *discernible*: in knowledge, and in character, and in godly action—a continuously closer likeness to the "Lord the Spirit." Only God can determine the acceptability of the accomplishment in each case, for He alone knows all the abilities and opportunities, all the weaknesses and limitations.

But, certainly, the change—the glorifying process—*must be very substantial*. We are not here to play games, or to just go through hypocritical, meaningless motions. God is not mocked. He has no patience with half-service or pretence. It must be our best and our all, even though in our limited ability our sacrifice appear relatively but a turtledove, or even just a handful of meal. God knows what our best is: and it is as good in His sight as anyone else's best. The poor widow gave more than they all. None can despair, and none can be over-confident.

We are reminded of what a wonderful people—what a tremendous witness to the Glory of God—Israel *could have been* in the earth, IF they had fulfilled to the limit of their ability the requirements of their glorious Law. *What about us: who have a far more glorious law?*

If we are looking for "glory", it is right at our hand: and this is how it is acquired—by long, hard, but joyful, labor and study and effort—not by living today in relaxed self-service, on our "beds of ivory" in our "celled houses"—and then expecting all the glory to come suddenly pouring on us at the final day. *Our "glory" is, and will be, just what we are making of ourselves right now: day by day, and effort by effort.*

Glorious miracle there will yet indeed be: from weak, erring, human flesh—of such pitifully limited knowledge and power and accomplishment—to glorious divine strength and wisdom: but only for those who have been yearningly straining in that direction through their mortal lives.

Truly there is an aspect of the glory that still awaits us, if we are *worthy*: the final purifying and perfecting, the physical transformation, the divine nature, eternal oneness with God,

the open manifestation in the fullness of life and power: every moment ineffable joy.

Paul says, a few verses further on—

“For God, Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the GLORY OF GOD in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6).

The *“light of the knowledge of the Glory of God.”* God has given us this light, this knowledge, this Glory; and He has offered us the ability to look steadfastly upon it—not like Israel, who drew fearfully back—but in love, without fear: and to be transformed into glory by it, if true, eternal glory is what we desire *above all else.*

Moses, standing before Israel, had to cover his face, and veil the Divine glory. Israel's fleshly sight was too weak, their fleshly heart too gross. The glory of the Old Covenant was freely offered to them, that they should be a holy nation of priests, to carry the joy of God's Glory to the world. How wonderful they *could* have been! But they failed.

We have been called to a greater Covenant, a better ministry, a more glorious call to glory. Israel failed. They did not realize they were failing. They were quite satisfied with what they ignorantly *thought* was their success. But the attraction and distraction of the present, and of the heathen world around them, took their time, and effort, and interest—and they failed. They never realized the unique wonderfulness and magnitude of the Divine call that had come to them, and had chosen them for God's Glory, out of a perishing animal world.

It would be a tragedy if the same must at last be said of us.

Glory is oneness of heart and mind and character with God. *There is no other glory.* At the judgment seat of Christ, we shall be given *exactly that which we have set our heart on, and dedicated our life and energies to.* That is pre-eminently fair and just.

If it has been the Glory of God, then it will be the Glory of God: oneness with God in mind and substance, in eternal joyfulness. If not, then it will not. *Now*, we have the choice: *then*, it will be too late.

Let There be Light

"The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. And we beheld his glory: the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth (Jn. 1:14).

"The only begotten of the Father": his glory was his Godlikeness. And note the connection of thought—

"As many as received him, to them gave he power to become Sons of God" (v. 12).

"Power to become Sons of God!" *That is the power we seek.* What a marvelous thought that there *is* such a power available to the weak mortal sons of men: power to become Sons of God; power to be "filled with His Glory"; power, like Jesus, to be "full of Grace and Truth"—FULL: no room for anything else. No room for worldliness, or self-pleasing, or bitterness, or unkindness, or any kind of pettiness: just *Grace and Truth*.

Just conceive of the divine beauty of a society of individuals who are all *full* of Grace and Truth—wholly united in single-hearted mutual love of God and of one another. How dull and empty do the things of the world seem when placed beside the glory of this power to become the eternal, grace-filled Sons of God! Let this be clear: no one can be a Son or Daughter of God who just lives and spends his time in his own interests and concerns and pleasures, like the rest of the world.

Jesus said—

"I am the Light of the world" (Jn. 8:12).

To his disciples he said—

"Ye are the Light of the world" (Matt. 5:14).

By this saying, he absorbs us into himself, as parts of this divine, golden Lampstand of which he is the central stem and reservoir. The oil of the Lampstand is the pure Spirit-Word—

"Thy Word is a Lamp unto my feet, and a Light unto my path" (Psa. 119:105).

Our minds turn to Zechariah's Lampstand and Olive-tree vision. But the oil gives no light until it is kindled by the zealous flame of love. The kindling of the flame comes from God—

"We love, because He first loved us" (Jn. 4:19).

The Law, or Word, of God is the great record and manifestation of this love, from the moment that God said: "Let there be Light," to the time that the True Light said, at the close of his last message—

"I am the bright and Morning Star . . . Behold, I come quickly" (Rev. 22:16, 12).

John says—

"LIFE is Light" (Jn. 1:4); and

"He that LOVETH abideth in Light" (1 Jn. 2:10).

The whole purpose is comprehended in that first fiat of divine omnipotence: *"Let there be LIGHT"* (Gen. 1:3). Let there be LIFE. Let there be LOVE. Let living Beauty and Grace spring forth from the silent, slumbering Darkness.

The Light is not cold and abstract, but warm and personal, because it is Life and Love. Let us keep the *personal* aspect ever before our minds, for therein lies the power: the glorious "Power to become Sons of God."

We have doubtless all been deeply impressed, as we do our Daily Readings year by year, with the Glory and Beauty of God's Word as extolled in Psa. 119. Its theme is summed up in v. 97—

"O how love I Thy Law! It is my meditation all the day."

Not just law as an impersonal thing—ordinances and regulations—but *living* Law: the Living Word. Let us accent the personal aspect: "O how love I THY Law!" It has often been pointed out that every verse of this Psalm contains some synonym for the Word: statute, judgment, precept, commandment, etc. But have we noticed that it is always prefaced by "Thy": *Thy* statutes, *Thy* judgments, etc.?

We love the Law because it is God's Law: because it leads us to Him, reveals Him to us, draws us to Him, binds us to Him—teaches us how to dwell in Peace within the circle of His love and holiness. It is in this *personal* relationship created by the loving acceptance of the Law that all its power lies. The Truth is an intensely personal affair. God is personal, Jesus is personal, the brethren are personal—

"We know we have passed from death to life BECAUSE WE LOVE THE BRETHREN" (1 Jn. 3:14).

See therefore the vital importance of personal, fraternal Love!—intense, expanding, radiating Love. It marks the difference between Life and Death—*"None of us liveth to himself"* (Rom. 14:7). That is, not if we really *are* Christ's. Love of the brethren must be a major aspect of our lives—second only to the love of God: for on these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.

And loving the brethren is not just a passive, benevolent frame of mind. It must be an active, living force: seeking their welfare, desiring their company, drawing close to them in oneness of mind and heart and purpose—lovingly seeing in

them (though perhaps in present feeble measure, as they too may only see it in us) an earnest spiritual striving toward perfection: the potential glorious *Sons of God!*

The whole purpose of God is intensely personal: to surround Himself with an intimate family, a holy multitude of children, all knit inseparably together in the closest bonds of spiritual love: bound together by the knowledge that all in love have totally given their lives for each other, after the command and example of the great Elder Brother—

"Hereby perceive we love, because he laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 Jn. 3:16).

Are we just technically "in the Truth," or are we really a part of this strange and glorious enterprise going on in the earth today: the true, select, eternal nobility of all the earth's generations? To lay down our lives for the brethren, as John says we must, does not just mean to be prepared to *die* for them (though that is necessarily included). But much more it means to wholly *live* for them, as Jesus did: to yield the whole life to the service of Christ and his Body, as the Bride yields her life to the Bridegroom.

"O how love I Thy Law! . . ." (v. 97).

The inspiring beauty of this 119th Psalm of tribute to the glories and life-giving power of the Word of God lies largely in the fact that herein we have a portrayal of the mind of Christ in his hours of meditation and prayer. Here again is the personal, living aspect. He alone has lived and thought these thoughts in their deepest and fullest measure. And to the extent that we follow him into the inner chambers of this marvelous palace of splendor and beauty and light, to *that* extent—and to that alone—do we enter into his love.

". . . it is my meditation ALL THE DAY."

Can we conceive any less of Jesus? No, we cannot. Only "all the day" fulfils the picture. Love is all or nothing: never satiated, never surfeited.

"Thou through Thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me"
(Psa. 119:98).

Natural wisdom and intelligence depend upon brain capacity and education. But how happy we should be that the wisdom of the Spirit is on a completely different plane, and depends on love, and character, and the way the heart is tuned to the Light of the Word of God!

"I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes; for so it seemed good in Thy sight" (Matt. 11:25).

We are impressed—and appalled—by the prodigious mental capacities and ingenuities of the men of the world who have so painstakingly developed such diabolical instruments of misery and desolation as rockets and jets and guided missiles and laser beams and hydrogen bombs. But the humblest saint in Christ has infinitely more true wisdom and knowledge than the wisest of the world, for—

"The fear of the Lord is the BEGINNING of wisdom (nothing is wisdom short of that), and knowledge of the Holy is understanding . . . THIS is Life Eternal, to know Thee, the Only True God" (Prov. 9:10; John 17:3).

All the rest is just perishing, animal, foolish cleverness—but these have found the *power to become Sons of God!* How pitifully insignificant is the puny power of the hydrogen bomb compared to that. An immortalized saint could effortlessly extinguish man's biggest bomb.

"I have more understanding than all my teachers . . ."
(Psa. 119:99).

"I am the Light of the world," said Jesus. He had instruction and guidance for all the world. Was it of his own natural wisdom or philosophy? His own mental powers? Had he himself conceived the wondrous thoughts and gracious words that he spoke?—

"Never man spake like this man . . . He hath done all things well" (Jn. 7:46; Mk. 7:37).

" . . . for Thy testimonies are my meditation all the day"
(vs. 99, 97).

That was his secret of wisdom, and *it must be ours.* By nature, we are but animal creatures, but the testimonies of God are spirit and divine life. Meditation upon them must be our joy, our hobby, our relaxation, our solace and refuge from the battle and the storm. How much this verse reveals to us of Jesus, and of the inner power that maintained the glorious radiance of the Light of the Word made flesh!

"I understand more than the ancients because I keep Thy precepts" (v. 100).

Here we go a step further and deeper. We find this vital divine principle woven throughout Scripture. We shall often be struck with it, if we are watching for it: the principle that *spiritual*

understanding depends on the degree of endeavor to walk in holiness before God (Prov. 3:32)—

"The secret of God is WITH THE RIGHTEOUS."

David says—

"The MEEK will He guide in judgment: the MEEK will He teach His Way" (Psa. 25:9).

Daniel's "man clothed in linen" said—

"None of the wicked shall understand" (Dan. 12:10).

And Jesus himself gives the same divine rule—

"If any man will DO GOD'S WILL, he shall know of the doctrine" (Jn. 7:17).

We may be troubled and concerned by conditions in Christadelphia: by the great problem of fellowship—where and when to draw the line, and to make a stand for the standards of the Truth. Here's the answer—

"THE MEEK WILL HE GUIDE . . . THE MEEK WILL HE TEACH."

There is no other answer. Who are we, of ourselves, that we should be able to judge rightly, and others be astray? *"The meek will He guide."* If He guide us, we cannot go wrong. If He guide us not, we cannot go right. And He *will* guide a certain few, on a consistent, stated basis—

"Ye shall find Me, when ye shall seek for Me with ALL your heart" (Jer. 29:13).

The seeking must be in the Word, and in prayer. All guidance is in the Word. The Word is the Light and Lamp: the Word prayerfully studied *and meticulously obeyed* (as we have seen). Prayer is useless if we are not willing and anxious to do our most and our best to totally serve and obey. *"The meek will He guide"*—and outside of that circle of divine guidance, what hope have we of finding our way?

The knowledge and absorption of the Light of the Word is a progressive attainment of faith working and building upon faith: faith upon faith, and love upon love (2 Cor. 3:18)—

"We all, with unveiled face, reflecting the glory of the Lord, are being changed into the same image, FROM GLORY TO GLORY, by the Spirit of the Lord."

And Paul goes on to say, as he joyfully develops this beautiful theme—

"God, Who commanded the Light to shine out of Darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 3:6).

We see how he goes right back to the first word of divine command, as God dissipated the heavy primeval Darkness with the marvel of Light: "*Let there be Light.*" And here, at last, in the fulness of times, in the face of Jesus Christ, is the ultimate fruition of that Word of Promise—

"The Light of the Knowledge of the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

Not, of course, the ultimate fruition in *breadth*, for truly—
"*ALL THE EARTH shall be FILLED with the Knowledge of the Glory of God*" (Hab. 2:14)

—but the ultimate in *height*: the apex of the perfected manifestation in the face of Jesus Christ—the Perfect Man, the Image of God.

Paul is particularly comparing the *unveiled* and *eternal* Glory in the face of Christ with the veiled and fading glory of the face of Moses, on which the Israelites feared to look. But there is more in this reference to the face of Jesus than that. The contrast is deep. Israel feared because they did not have love. Love and Fear are opposites.

Herein is bound up all the inspiring and transforming *personal* attraction of the Divine Love—the *face of Jesus Christ*—through which shone all the spiritual characteristics of the beauty of Holiness. And herein lies the secret of the power he gives men to become Sons of God, which is: the maintaining before the eye of faith of the *vision of the Glory* of the face of Christ—seeing him looking with love upon us; exchanging glances of inexpressible understanding and affection with him.

Here is the power that overcomes the world. In Peter's dark hour, when in confused panic he denied his Master, Jesus turned and looked upon him (Lk. 22:61). The glance was enough to re-awaken all his fear-forgotten love and loyalty, and he "went out and wept bitterly." And we hear no more of fear or betrayal from Peter, but, immediately after Jesus' ascension, a fearless standing up to the authorities, and thereafter a faithful, lifelong service, even unto suffering and death.

But Paul immediately adds, in this marvelous message of Glory—

"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us" (2 Cor. 3:7).

The issue must be clear. The utter *earthiness* of the vessel must be fully recognized before the divine transforming Love can be poured into it to fill it with the radiant Glory of the Light

of the Word. It must be clear that the Glory is of God alone. There must be no self-glorifying confusion of the vessel with the Glory that fills it.

Furthermore, the vessel must first be *empty*—empty of self—cleared of all other contents, and waiting in patient readiness for the time of the good pleasure of God to fill it with the Spirit-Word-Oil and use it as a Lamp of Glory. Of Jesus we are told that he “emptied” and “humbled” himself, so that he might be a fit vessel for God’s use as the Light of the Word—

“He made himself OF NO REPUTATION (‘ekenosen’: emptied himself) . . . and humbled himself” (Phil. 2:7, 8).

This is illustrated by the next verse of the Psalm—

“I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep Thy Word” (v. 101).

What is the “evil way?” How broad is the definition, and how much does it include? The Scriptures teach us that there are but two ways: the Way of Life and the Way of Death—and that the Way of Life is very narrow, and that all outside it is the Way of Death. Have we not often pondered upon Christ’s words concerning the sheep and the goats at the Judgment Seat: the so sharp line of distinction between eager welcome and violent rejection—

“Come, ye BLESSED . . . Depart, ye CURSED!” (Matt. 25:34, 41).

The lesson is that it is all or nothing, black or white: there are no grays. It is impossible to be just *partly* in Christ: “Whatever is not of faith is sin.” There is no halfway. In the very nature of things, there *could not* be. The issues are too vast. It is no light thing to aspire to be Sons of God to all eternity. We must be prepared to make tremendous adjustments in our lives from the animal world around us. *We tread on holy ground.*

We are either completely Christ’s brethren, in total heart and soul, or we are not his brethren at all. If we are, our love for, and devotion to, him will dominate our lives and shape our every act, because that is the very nature and power of *true and genuine Love.*

If we find that love for him does not grasp and possess and motivate us in this manner, increasingly filling us with the intense yearning toward the treasures of the Word of God that this Psalm portrays, filling us with divine contentment and peace, lifting us up above the little passing concerns and interests of this brief, vain life, and enabling us to discern and put aside the natural evil motions of the flesh—if this has not

happened and is not happening, then *we are not being "made perfect in love,"* we have not made contact with the divine power, we are not sufficiently exposing ourselves to the—
"Light of the Knowledge of the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 3:6).

We are shivering in the darkness and the cold, deceived by a lifeless form of godliness, rather than walking in the glory of the living sunshine of his love.

"I have refrained my feet from EVERY evil way . . ."

"In my flesh dwelleth no good thing . . . Now the works of the flesh are these . . . Love not the things of the world: if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (Rom. 7:18; Gal. 5:19; 1 Jn. 2:15).

What are the "things of the world" that make up the great, godless Way of Death—the "evil way?" *We know.* We do not have to be told, if we are honest with ourselves. We know the tests—

Is it redeeming the time?

Is it a victory for the Spirit?

Does it make me more holy?

Can I do it "as unto the Lord?"

Is it a part of the "living sacrifice" that the Father delights to see in His children who are seeking His face?

Does it help to fill my mind and interests with the eternal things of God?

What am I serving with my free time and interest: the flesh or the Spirit?

We know the final wages of each. "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin," because it is outside the holy circle of the transforming and sanctifying Spirit-Power. The "Light of the Knowledge of the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" will give us a clear answer, if we will let it. The Psalmist continues—

"Through Thy precepts I get UNDERSTANDING: THEREFORE I hate every false way" (119:104).

There is the answer. Meditation on the Law brings *understanding*—and understanding brings hatred of everything of the world and of the flesh. The man who sees the danger and undesirability of something, and hates it, does not need to be persuaded to leave it alone—if he has any intelligence at all.

Our hate for the false way will be in proportion to our love for the true. Jesus says he is the True Way, and that anything outside of him is false, for he personifies the Father's perfect Will and Word. If our life is sufficiently filled with a zealous

affection for Christ, we shall have no desire for the things of the world in which he has no place, and which take our time and attention from him. That is why there is the clearcut black-and-white division at the Judgment Seat—

“Come, ye blessed . . . DEPART, YE CURSED! Your love for me either filled and overflowed EVERY aspect of your life, and crowded out ALL worldly things—or else you had no true love at all: for that is what the True Love will inevitably do to you.”

Jesus, as the Light of the World, has much to say about Light and Darkness. Light is the living reality. Darkness is nothing of itself, but simply the absence or lack of Light, though Darkness appears real and substantial (and fearful) where there is no Light to make its non-existent unreality manifest. This is in perfect harmony with the facts which Light and Darkness are scripturally used to symbolize. Jesus said—

“The Light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is FULL of Light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is FULL of Darkness” (Lk. 11:34).

He is emphasizing the vital importance of the *singleness* of the eye, no split or double vision, no mixture of interests, for what our eye is on is what we are interested in. The body, we note again from this passage, is either *full* of Light, or *full* of Darkness. No half-way. The Divine Light of the Word will not mix or dwell with Darkness. Hereby we know that if part of the Darkness continues to linger in us—part interest in worldly things—then the light we think we have is not the True transforming Light. We are relying on a look-alike makeshift that falls short of the full, life-consuming love of Christ. He continues—

“Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness” (v. 35).

It is clear from this solemn warning that it is quite possible to think we have light when we are actually in darkness. He says indeed—

“If the light that be in thee be darkness, HOW GREAT IS THAT DARKNESS!” (Matt 6:23).

How then are we to know and be sure of the True Light? In the next verse Jesus tells us (Lk. 11:36)—

“If thy whole body therefore be FULL of Light, having NO PART DARK, the WHOLE shall be full of Light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light.”

This wording is a little obscure. At first glance, it appears to be simply a self-evident repetition: "If your body is full of light, it will be full of light." But as we ponder upon it (as we must on all Scripture), and compare other versions, the meaning becomes clear, and we see it as the *test of the True Light*. We believe what he is saying is this—

"If you have the True Light, it will FILL YOU COMPLETELY. There will be NO DARK PARTS. Everything in your life will shine brightly and consistently with the Divine Light, like the shining of a lamp."

A lamp is *all* bright and radiating light: not an incongruous, inconsistent mixture of Light and Darkness. This seems then to be the key thought: if it is the *True Light* that you have, it will triumphantly drive out *all* Darkness: all worldly interests and works of the flesh. For the *True Light* is not just cold intellectual illumination, but living divine love and power. Once the *True Light* takes hold of you, you will never be content till *all* the ways of Darkness are rooted out, and the *Light* increasingly burning brighter and brighter—

"The path of the just is as the SHINING LIGHT, that shineth MORE AND MORE unto the Perfect Day" (Prov. 4:18).

"How sweet are thy words unto my taste! Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth" (Psa. 119:103).

That is the frame of mind the *True Light* will bring. How far this is from the drudgery of enforced duty! In the goodness of God, goodness itself is beautiful, and evil is ugly. But the natural mind requires spiritual education to discern the beauty, and reject the natural ugliness—for both are spiritually discerned. Filth and ugliness and corruption and perversion appeal to the ignorant and depraved natural mind of man. This is the present downward course of society.

Does this spiritual ecstasy in the sweetness of the *Light of the Word*, as expressed here by the Psalmist, seem far beyond the attainment of our drab, earthy, mortal natures? The Psalmist himself felt the need to pray—

"INCLINE my heart unto Thy testimonies, and not to covetousness. TURN AWAY mine eyes from vanity, and REVIVE me in Thy way" (vs. 36, 37).

Here is the glorious struggle and perfect victory of Christ—

"In ALL points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15).

Paul said—

"O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from this body of death!" (Rom. 7:24).

But he also said—

"I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content . . . I can do ALL THINGS through Christ who strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:11-13).

And—

"We are MORE THAN CONQUERORS through him that loved us . . . Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" (Rom. 8:37, 35).

It is essential that we experience weakness and depression, in order to learn and value the Source of all comfort and power. Thus (119:73)—

"Thy hands have made me and fashioned me: give me understanding."

We are God's workmanship. But as we first find ourselves, He has not finished His work. He has much more to do in those He will eventually glorify for His eternal use. But He desires us to recognize His handiwork so far, and to urge Him to complete the process. Not that He of Himself needs urging, but He delights in those alone who earnestly desire and seek the operation of His hand. The Psalmist pleads (vs. 125-133)—

"Give me understanding . . . Order my steps in Thy Word, and let not any iniquity have dominion over me."

It is the cry of a faithful man, conscious of weakness, and seeking strength. The operation of God upon the faithful (Phil. 2:13)—

"Working in them both to will and to do of His good pleasure"

—is not a passive, effortless transformation from without, but rather a striving and struggling through the night like the striving of Jacob with the angel, agonizing for the Divine blessing and the New Divine Name. It is God's will and wisdom that it should be that way. But still there is—beyond, and above, and around all the dark struggle—the aspect to which the Psalmist testifies in v. 165—

"Great peace have they which love Thy Law, and nothing shall offend them."

This is the great beauty and mystery of the Way of Life: peace in the midst of conflict, rest in the midst of strife. The Light of the Word said, on the eve of his last, and greatest, and most terrible ordeal—

"Peace I leave with you: my Peace I give unto you . . . In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good

cheer: I have overcome the world . . . Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (Jn. 14:27; 16:33).

The tribulation of the world is the striving in the night. It is *all* the striving: inward and outward. But, in the strange and glorious working of the Spirit, it cannot detract from the Peace. It only *intensifies* the Peace. Peace is the Master's great parting gift: Peace that triumphs over everything in the world. Paul shows the inter-relationship of the Peace and the tribulation, and the inworking Spirit-Word-Power—

"We have Peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ . . . We rejoice in hope of the Glory of God. And not only so, but we rejoice IN TRIBULATION ALSO: knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience approvedness, and approvedness Hope. And Hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 5:1-5).

"THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH, AND DWELT AMONG US, FULL OF GRACE AND TRUTH . . . THAT WAS THE TRUE LIGHT . . . AND TO AS MANY AS RECEIVE HIM, TO THEM HE GIVES POWER TO BECOME THE SONS OF GOD" (Jn. 1:9-14).

Draw Near to God

PSALM 73

During this past week we have read together Psalm 73. Our thoughts are upon that this morning. The Psalms are the deepest part of Scripture. They are deeper than what we call doctrine. They deal with all the problems and experiences of the people of God—all the problems related to the constitution of sin, the present dispensation of evil, the vanity to which creation was subjected in hope. The Psalms contain all aspects of the truth. They are the most intimate, personal, and expressive part of Scripture.

Jesus was tried in all points like his brethren, and we see all the meditations of his heart in the Psalms, not that he himself ever failed or contemplated sin or foolishness. And in all things he entered into the weaknesses and sorrows of his brethren, and in this way even the confessions of sin are his. There was the recognition of evil motions of the flesh which he constantly fought against, and which constantly assailed him. He experienced the complete pattern of the flesh. Just as Daniel, Nehemiah, Isaiah, and other righteous men spoke in their prayers as if they were part of those who had sinned against God saying, "*we have sinned.*"

Verse 1: "*Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart.*" This is the theme and the conclusion of the Psalms in this first verse. And then the Psalmist goes into detail concerning his previous passing doubts. "*Truly God is good to Israel.*" This we must cling to, regardless of any other consideration. The book of Job is meant to teach us the fatal folly of ever for a moment questioning God, or murmuring at any of His all-wise arrangements. All complaining and dissatisfaction are evil. We are so apt to judge things on the basis of our own thoughts, desires, or conveniences. Human prosperity, as though it is desirable, is usually a degenerating evil. For tribulation and trouble and suffering are divine and upbuilding purifiers and teachers. The school child wants to play and enjoy himself, rather than to submit to rigorous study and training. In this, we are all children. We want the candy and not the discipline. But there must be a process of refining and purification to develop sense of character and beauty of holiness—to open our eyes to spiritual and eternal values, if we are to be of any permanent use to God. And God will preserve only

that which is useful to Him. He is seeking the material for His eternal temple.

"Even to such as are of a clean heart." God truly is good to all. But His goodness is exercised in superlative degree toward the pure in heart. All His great purpose revolves about them. All things are theirs and for their sake. All that God does is with a few who share ultimate blessing and union with Him. *"Such as are of a clean heart."* We use the term "heart" as the very root and center of anything—the deepest springs of character and conduct. *"Let a man examine himself"* (1 Cor. 11:28) is the apostle's solemn exhortation. The pit of the inmost heart must be right and clean in the sight of God. The evil motion of the flesh within us must be discerned and abhorred—repudiated. Failures and weaknesses must be recognized and confessed and put aside.

Verse 2: *"As for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped."* The Psalmist expresses a problem that all in some way face, and he works his way through from doubt to full, unshakable assurance. *"My feet were almost gone."* Let us take warning. The danger is ever present. Let us never presume upon our own strength and steadfastness, for only the power and guidance of God can preserve us from falling. And that power and guidance is only given to those few who keep in close contact with Him.

Verse 3: *"For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked."* He permitted himself to look upon the ease and prosperity of the godless, and to become dissatisfied. He entertained (and it is very easy) the feeling that he was missing something, that he was a martyr, that he was being denied something pleasant and exciting that those who had no care about God were enjoying. How grieving this short-sighted, careless view must be for the loving spirit of God. And His children belittle the great treasure of His fellowship, which should outweigh and obliterate every other consideration. For the leeks of Egypt are more impressive than the cloudy pillar of the divine presence and care. We remember in the parable the father's gentle answer to the elder brother, *"Thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine"* (Lk. 15: 31).

"My feet were almost gone." He was on the brink of dropping into the bottomless chasm of unbelief. This, we realize, is horror and trembling when he has come to himself, for *"God is not mocked"* (Gal. 6:7). He is infinitely patient and long suffer-

ing, when patience and long suffering are justified. But it is His own declaration that He has no pleasure in fools. And those who having once stood in the light of God's love, allow themselves to look with desire upon the lot of the wicked, are putting themselves into that class, in whom God has no pleasure.

Verses 4-9 describe the apparently trouble-free and thoughtless course of the men of the world, leading them to overbearing self-assertiveness and pride.

Verse 8: *"They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily."* They scoff at those endeavoring to serve God. They look upon the lowly and the godly, struggling for livelihood and suffering for principle, with amused content.

Verse 9: *"They set their mouth against the heavens . . ."* They blaspheme and ridicule all thoughts of God.

Verse 10: *"Therefore his people return hither: and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them."* This is the sad part, that which grieves the Psalmist and the disaster in which he himself had nearly stumbled. *"Demas hath forsaken me, having loved the present world"* (2 Tim. 4:10). But the greatest and most subtle danger is not open forsaking of the Truth, that is open and clear and can be coped with, but a deceptive losing of its power and intensity, while nominally remaining in it. Few openly forsake the Truth, and it is no particular virtue just to hold it nominally. But most men must have some sort of form of worship. But with many it becomes just another religion, satisfying their religious instincts—a return to the world in heart, in practice, in character.

Continuing in verse 10: *"And waters of a full cup are wrung out to them,"* that is, those of God's people who return to this. This appears to refer to the present advantages that they gain, or appear to gain, by their unfaithfulness. The figure being used is in the same sense as "my cup runneth over." But it could be a parenthesis referring to the final judgment cup of sorrow and rejection, although verses 11 and 12 carry right on with the thought of their present success. So it seems to be a part of that—the apparent, deceptive success of returning to the world.

Verses 13 and 14: *"Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning."* These are the lowest points in the bitterness and turmoil to which the Psalmist now sinks. We may say from verse 13, (though he does

not openly say this), that he does not actually accept the conclusion. It is the one that seems to inevitably press upon him in his anguish. *"I have cleansed my heart in vain,"*—as Job was led to say, *"What does it profit a man to serve God?"* It is put here in vivid and uncompromising terms that we may grasp the sadness of the lesson, so that in ourselves it comes much more subtly and stealthily. There is the danger that we may thrust aside many scriptural lessons, because they are worded with such stark plainness that we may self-righteously feel they express attitude far below what we could ever descend to. But here is where we need the piercing light of the spirit, to examine the devious recesses of our inner heart. We are much more likely to say these things unconsciously in our actions than consciously in our words. When we are discouraged, or when for a time we forget the things of God and are engrossed in present things and worldly activities, we are in reality thoughtlessly reproaching God in the spirit of these verses.

Verse 15: *"If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should offend against the generation of thy children."* The Psalmist realizes the essential contradiction of this position. He dares not express it. He knows it is the denial of the basis of all prayer and hope. It is a betrayal of all who sought to serve God, and a commending of the wisdom of the wicked. This was what Elihu rebukes Job for, saying, *"Job walketh with wicked men. For he hath said, It profiteth a man nothing that he should delight himself with God"* (Job 34:8, 9). By saying this, Job justified the ungodly. If we ever complain about anything, we are doing the same. Often all appearances are in this direction. The great lesson is that the divine wisdom and divine goodness underlie everything. How clearly we can now see this in Job's case, and he himself could see it afterwards. How hard and perplexing it was at the time for Job in his misery and distress.

Verse 16: *"When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me."* The mental conflict overwhelmed him. He could neither face nor escape the despairing conclusion of verse 13: *"I have cleansed my heart in vain."*

Verse 17: *"Untill I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end."* There is a deep reference here, expressed by Jesus, as in John 7:17, *"If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God."* The Psalmist had, despite his perplexity gone into the sanctuary. He had sought unto God. This is the solution to all problems—go into the

sanctuary. The very word "*sanctuary*" illustrates the answer. Literally, it just means "*holy place, that which is sanctified.*" But it has rightly come to carry the meaning of "*refuge, a haven of safety, a place or position of holiness.*" That is the only true place of safety. Whatever the difficulty—go into the sanctuary. Go into the holy place. Seek God, and seek holiness. Put aside the problems and seek the practical pursuit of personal holiness. Holiness and separation is the refuge from all evil and the doorway to understanding. It is a blessing in disguise, when we are driven in extremity and trouble to flee into the sanctuary of God.

"*Then understood I their end.*" The end solves the whole difficulty. The perplexity and despair were the results of a narrow and short-sighted view. Now the whole picture has suddenly changed before the Psalmist. None of the actual facts and circumstances have changed. The wicked still prosper. The righteous still suffer. There is still just as much sorrow and trouble. But now everything is seen in an entirely different light. What seemed to be an insoluble contradiction now is plain and clear and harmonious. Actually, nothing changed but the Psalmist's own viewpoint and understanding. When we shut our eyes, the light is still there, but we just don't see it. Those with their eyes open, do. There is a great general lesson here, as well as a particular one. And that is, in all things we must endeavor to make our view of things the right one. Our ignorance does not obliterate fact, except for us ourselves, to our own loss. The first step in this direction is to learn that the natural mind and heart is desperately wicked and deceitful above all things. Only the wisdom of the spirit can guide us into truth. This must be clearly and humbly realized before we can understand anything in truth.

The world is so full of so many views and opinions. Who are we that we have any assurance of having the right one? Of ourselves, we are no better than the great majority, and we are far less intelligent than many of the world. One thing we can have, and that makes all the difference. The only way we can be right among so many conflicting views is by the guidance of God. And the only way to obtain that guidance is clearly and simply set forth. "*If any man will do His will, (and in many things His will is very clearly laid out) he shall know of the doctrine*" (Jn. 7:17). His understanding will be opened, his doubts will be removed, if he will set himself to do what he

knows already. Obey the simple, yet profound rules of holiness that mean a complete revolution of all life's motives and desires. And then—and then alone—we will truly know the Truth.

Verse 18: *"Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castest them down into destruction."* How truly is worldly prosperity a slippery place. Slippery, because at best, it is so brief, so tenuous—the constant struggle to be on the top of the heap, and many are trodden under. And slippery because it is so deceitful and difficult to maintain a humble, lowly, God dependent, self-denying faith in circumstances of outward well-being.

Verse 19: *"How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment: they are utterly consumed with terrors."* The Psalmist's whole perspective has changed. He now clearly sees that the present, which seems to loom so large, is but a brief moment at best. Then comes the inevitable end, the inevitable reckoning.

Verses 21 and 22: *"Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins, so foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee."* Here again we have a striking parallel with Job's sudden realization that he had spoken presumptuously before the awful greatness and goodness and majesty of God. *"I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes"* (Job 42:6). If we have not, and more than once, experienced this same, sudden, and overwhelming realization of pompous, self-satisfied foolishness, then we have not yet learned much wisdom at all. How blind and foolish is the natural mind in relation to spiritual wisdom! *"He that is spiritual discerneth all things."*

Verse 23: *"Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand."* What a relief to suddenly awake from this nightmare of doubt and foolishness to find that it was not too late, that God still held his hand. *"My foot had well nigh slipped."* How close he had come we now realize.

Verse 24: *"Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory."* How comforting now comes this unquestioning reliance upon God—guiding first, and then the glory. Everything in it's own order. How pitiful are all who rely on themselves and on their own reasoning and set themselves against God. What a priceless blessing to have reached the stage of complete dependence and acceptance of the way of God, allowing God to solve all the problems, and waiting with unassailable patience the time of acceptance to glory.

Verse 25: "*Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.*" None includes more than just people: it includes things—no one or no thing. The heart that can truthfully say this without any reservation has found the secret of life and peace. There is nothing I desire before, or beside, other than thee. Not only is God the most desirable of all things, but there is nothing else at all worth desiring. God is all. God is everything. All is of God and from God. This is obviously the only true wisdom. But how can we convince our own blind, sinful, mortal flesh?

Verse 26: "*My flesh and my heart falleth.*" Here is his weak point. They are weak and perishing; they are overwhelmed with the struggle and the great problem of life—the bondage of corruption, the vanity under which creation groans. "*Who shall deliver me from this body of death?*" (Rom. 7:24) "But," we continue, "*God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever.*" "*My strength is made perfect in weakness,*" (2 Cor. 12:9) Jesus told Paul. And Paul was thereafter content, and carried with faithful endurance his lonely, single-handed load right to the end. "*God is the strength of my heart.*" And there is no limit to His power. This perishing, mortal flesh is not of itself equal to the burden, but Paul prayed for all his brethren that they might be strengthened with might by His spirit in the inner man, that they might be filled with all the things of God.

Verse 27: "*For, lo, they that are far from thee shall perish.*" How close are we to God? We are assured that if we draw nigh unto God, He *will* draw nigh unto us. What are we doing about drawing nigh unto God? It does not just mean approaching him from time to time in worship, or even just speaking to Him periodically in prayer. The world is full of people who do that. So there must be much more to it than that, for the few that He chooses. It is measurable by the proportion of time that God is in our thoughts—the time we spend studying and meditating on His word. The extent to which we in all we do from moment to moment consciously endeavor to please Him rather than ourselves. If we examine ourselves as we are admonished to, especially upon this occasion, we shall, if we are honest with ourselves, realize that much of what we do—large and small—is simply pleasing ourselves and nothing else, just plain juvenile games. The ones who in the end will be found to have made God their portion forever, will be that rare and privileged and peculiar few who have forced themselves to continually

examine their own activities and motives, and have taught themselves to deliberately, consciously make the pleasing of God the whole purpose of their life in all its details—the total exclusion of self. “*Not my will, but thine*” (Lk. 22:42). This and this alone is drawing nigh unto God—making Him our portion forever.

Verse 28: “*But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord God, that I may declare all thy works.*”

The Brightness of His Glory

The epistle to the Hebrews is an exposition of the greatest event in history, portrayed against the background which is able to give it the most significance and solemnity. It is a manifestation of the great glory and purpose of God in Christ as fully revealed in the light of four thousand years of Mosaic revelation and preparation. Only through Moses can we properly appreciate Christ. We must follow the chain of God's purpose through the Mosaic revelation of Creation and world history.

Gradually, through Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, the development of Israel, the long succession of prophet and seer, God laid the foundations of the supreme event of the ages. This is the theme of Hebrews—the inexpressibly exalted nature of this glorious manifestation for which, for four long millenniums, man and creation were being slowly prepared. Here, more than anywhere else, are sounded the twin chords of the transcendent privilege and responsibility of those who draw near to God through Christ.

The first three verses reveal the sublime character of the things with which the book deals: God has, in the fulness of time, visited man in a Son. This Son, who dwelt for thirty-three years on earth among men, is the appointed heir of all things—for him all things were made. He is the focal point of God's glory, the express image of His substance, and He sustains the universe by the Word of His power. Have these thoughts become so common place to us that they have lost their power to thrill us with ceaseless wonder, and to transform our lives?

Previous to the Son, angels were the highest manifestation of God's glory given to man, but we are quickly shown the incomparable superiority of the Son to the angels. The Holy Writings, extant in the earth for one thousand five hundred years before, and stamped with the indelible impress of inspired divinity, clearly reveal that the One to whom they all point was to far transcend the angels in station and glory. This is the message of chapter 1, and at this point, we are reminded of the great responsibility weighing on those to whom God has extended His mercy and His love—

Heb. 2:1-3—*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 if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and*

*disobedience received a just recompense of reward;
How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation."*

"More earnest heed"—This is the crying need of all; more earnestness, more heeding. Less lightness and thoughtlessness and carelessness. God could not possibly have done more to vividly impress us with all His glory and majesty; yet how easily we slip back to the natural, empty state of carnal neglect. Spoken by the Lord himself, confirmed by them that heard him, have been witnessed by God with signs and wonders—and the testimony sealed in many cases by the blood of the messenger.

Is it possible that once enlightened regarding these things they could ever be absent from our minds, or that our lives and conduct could ever after even for a moment be uninfluenced by them?

Sadly, we recognize it is all too possible. Being what we are, it is almost inevitable.

Heb. 2:10—"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 sufferings."

Why? Because perfection through suffering is the only road from man's present state to the ideal destiny the Scriptures hold forth. It is the hard, necessary way, and the Pioneer must tread it first. "Pioneer" is the right word here, rather than "captain".

The Pioneer of Salvation trod the uncharted way alone, that he might lead many sons to glory. The rest of the chapter elaborates the oneness of Christ with his brethren in origin and nature and shows how essential this was to enable him to save them.

Heb. 2:14—"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same."

V. 17—"Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren."

How else could he be their Pioneer, their forerunner, their brother? How else could he lead and inspire them by the power of his patiently, suffering example?

Death and sorrow do not lay hold on angels. We admire these glorious creatures, but we are not drawn to them by the common fellowship of suffering and struggle.

Chapter 3 begins again with exhortation. The object of the book is not just to prove. It goes far beyond and deeper than

that. It is to impress, and arouse, and stir up to renewed realizations and appreciation and zeal and endeavor. Wherefore, holy brethren—*“holy brethren”*—what sanctification and communion are expressed in these words! Could there be bitterness or unkindness or foolishness or worldliness among holy brethren?

“Partakers of the heavenly calling”—sharers together of such inestimable divine glories and privileges. *“Consider”*—the original word here is defined by Young’s Concordance as *“perceive thoroughly with the mind”*—examine and dwell fully upon every detail. Consider this great personage—our apostle, our high priest—as apostle, approaches us from God; as High Priest, approaches God from us. Consider him, the great Mediator, the Keystone of Salvation—patient, meek, preeminently kind and gentle, inconceivably pure and holy, but outstandingly, as pointed out here, true and faithful to Him that appointed him and this is the exhortation.

Heb. 3:6—*“Whose household are we, IF we hold fast our confidence and rejoicing firm unto the end.”*

Vs. 12, 13—*“Take heed brethren”; “exhort one another daily.”*

Once a week is far from sufficient. The heavenly calling of God in Christ Jesus is not a once-a-week affair. It is a constant, daily matter, pervading every aspect of our existence, or—it is but a mockery.

Heb. 4:1—*“Let us therefore fear.”*

Not a morbid dread, but a hearty, wholesome, self-searching concern.

Many have failed and are failing. There is no easy road. Success is quite possible, but only if every precaution is taken to secure it. It is not for the careless or half-hearted. It is only for those who seek it with all their heart and mind, and who constantly meditate upon the law of the Lord. *“Let us therefore fear”*, and let that fear keep us constantly alert to the great responsibility and dangers that face us.

Heb. 4:11—*“Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest.”*

Let us not think it can be entered without labor, much wearying labor, but *“the rest of the laboring man is sweet”* and no rest is as sweet or worth laboring for as the rest that remaineth for the people of God. Men will work themselves to death for the love of many things. Are the children of the world wiser and more zealous in their generation than the children of

light? They do it for a brief corruptible crown—how much more earnestly should we be glad and labor for an eternal incorruptible one!

Twice more we find "let us" in this chapter (4). There is great power in the expression. Let us therefore fear and let us therefore labor are based upon our solemn responsibilities.

But "let us hold fast", (v. 14) and "let us therefore come boldly" (v. 16) are reasoned from our glorious blessings and privileges.

Seeing then we have a great high priest who from experience is thoroughly familiar with all our problems and temptations, let us therefore come confidently and unreservedly near before him, in sincerity seeking mercy and grace in the time of need.

The only essential is sincerity, that is, wholeheartedness, complete dedication. We cannot hold anything back. We must put all our faith in one place, as we find brought out in chapter 11. That is the requirement that deters so many. They cannot summon the courage to trust their full weight to the everlasting arms. They must hold on somewhere else, too, just in case.

Chapter 5:2—"*Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity.*"

"Compassion on the ignorant and on them that are out of the way". We need this as a reminder. The more severe our duty compels us to be, the more kindly and gently and understandingly we must strive to discharge it.

Even Christ, at his first advent, shunned the duty of judging as far as he consistently and forthrightly could without compromise of Truth, and rather applied himself to healing and teaching and persuading.

Heb. 5:8—"*Though he were a son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered.*"

Not that he was ever disobedient, but he learned the full meaning and beauty and value and power of obedience and the confident communion with God that it brings by experiencing the dark tempting shadows of evil and suffering. And again, the inspired writer returns to the direct theme of exhortation—

Heb. 5:11—"*Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing.*"

He is speaking of Melchizedec, that strangest of all Bible characters, of whom we but get such a shadowy elusive glimpse. How we regret the sad necessities that limited his exposition of this subject!

Heb. 5:12—“For when ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again the first principles.”

How many of us have had ample time to become teachers, if we had but applied ourselves as strenuously to God's word as we have to other pursuits? Do we daily meditate upon the mysteries of God, yearning after strong meat, or are we quite content to be babes forever, without any desire or interest for the hidden treasures of God's gracious revelation?

Progressing then beyond first principles, Heb. 6:1—“let us go on to perfection”. We must move forward. We must grow. Jesus himself learned obedience and was made perfect through suffering and “grew” in knowledge, and wisdom.

We have missed the whole significance of the Gospel message if we are content to stand still. “Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue, knowledge;” and so forth. “Be no more children, but grow up into Christ in all things.”

Chapter 7 returns to Melchizedek, king of Salem and priest of the most high God.

Heb. 7:4—“Consider how great this man was.”

So little we know of him, and yet how sublime that little is! He appears but once in the sacred record and for just the most fleeting appearance. He makes one brief statement, and three short verses comprise the whole incident, but he leaves an indelible mark on the whole history thereafter—King of Righteousness and King of Peace, Priest of the Most High God; greater than Abraham and the whole Aaronic priesthood.

One thousand years after Abraham, the name of Melchizedek appears again—just as briefly, just as significantly. “Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek” (Psa. 110:4) are words of Spirit through David of David's greater son.

As Paul points out, two fundamental facts are established by this statement, the end of the Mosaic economy and the eternal existence of the promised seed.

Who Melchizedek was, where he came from, on whose behalf he was priest and what happened to him, none of these things are told and it is useless to speculate. This incident gives us a fleeting glimpse into a whole new field of wonders.

Apart from this, we would have thought that God's relationship to Jerusalem began when it was taken by David from the idolatrous Jebusites. But here we find the greatest, most mysterious character in the Old Testament reigning there for God a thousand years earlier.

What secrets are buried in the age-old ruins of Zion? Was it here that the sons of God assembled before Him in the far-off days of Job? How little we really know of God's revelation to men. Are we firmly rooted in the things that count?

Chapters 8 and 9 show that the Mosaic Dispensation, though glorious, was but a shadowy symbol of that which was to come. The countless sacrifices under the law were nothing in themselves. There is nothing in the death of an animal that can renew and transform the mind. Ritual has no living power.

But by the complete dedication—even to the most cruel of deaths—of a perfect life to the service of his brethren, Christ has established the right and power to transform us by love.

The blood of bulls cannot purge conscience, but the blood of Christ tells us we are washed and forgiven as long as we keep close to Him.

But the consciousness of his presence must and will lay a restraining hand on our natural impulses.

This is the constant purpose of this letter to the Hebrews—to bring the transforming power of these glorious things to bear upon the individual heart and mind—to lift them out of the natural and fill them with spiritual zeal and desire.

Therefore this epistle is framed around the great sacrifice of Christ as the culminating manifestation of God's majesty and love.

And therefore it alternates between, or rather perfectly combines, exhortation and consolation, a constant shepherding against the twin evils of negligence and discouragement.

Heb. 10:22—*“Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith.”*

The true heart and the full assurance are inseparable. A true heart is a completely devoted heart—an individual heart whose whole desire is Godward.

Such a condition does not come by mere fortunate chance or accident. It is developed by deeply considering the sublime truths and facts which this epistle urges upon us.

Consider our great Apostle and High Priest.

Consider the majestic mystery of Melchizedek—how great this man was to whom the patriarch Abraham paid tithes.

Heb. 12:3—*“Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.”*

Heb. 10:24—*“Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works.”*

Heb. 10:25—*“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is.”*

No Scripture is of private interpretation, but some truths and precepts shine out more clearly in one particular place than anywhere else and this is such a one.

Then comes that solemn dreadful warning in vs. 28, 29—

“He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses,” (stoning to death with stones was the penalty), *“of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God?”*

How careful we must be of the great treasure entrusted to us! Could we conceive of being careless and ungrateful with even a man who loved us so greatly as to give his son to die for us? It seems unthinkable, but how easily our minds drift away into things that displease and grieve Him.

Heb. 10:36—*“For ye have need of patience.”*

The original word means much more than we understand by patience. It is a persevering and right-minded endurance, implying far more effort and action than our word patience. We can see this from—

Heb. 12:1—*“Let us run with patience the race set before us.”*

“Ye have need of courageous active endurance” that ye might do the will of God to the end and finally receive the promise.

Then the familiar 11th chapter. The patient labors of bro. Thomas have in *Eureka* given us a far richer rendering of v. 1—

“Faith is the continuous keeping in memory of the assured hope of the future, and an intelligent understanding and belief of the historical development of God’s purpose in the past.”

Heb. 11:34—*“By faith men have subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions.”*

Did we realize it was Daniel’s faith that sealed the lions’ mouths? Remember the oft repeated words of the Master, *“Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace.”*

“Out of weakness were made strong.” They were not born with this triumphant power of faith, nor did it just come upon them. Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God (large daily doses). They were weak and fearful, but they became strong and fearless, by faith. And because of faith (v. 37) they were stoned, sawn asunder, destitute, afflicted, tormented, slain with the sword. The call of faith is no light thing.

Heb. 12:1, 2—“Wherefore, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of faithful, suffering, triumphant witnesses, let us, too, lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, looking unto Jesus, who, for the joy set before him, endured the cross and despised the shame.”

Steadfastly consider him, when inclined to be weary and faint in your minds.

Heb. 12:12—“Lift up the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees.”

The road is often bitter, but the end is glorious, and soon that end will come, and great will be the rich reward of patient endurance.

Heb. 12:14—“Follow holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.”

Are we holy? Are we striving to be holy, sincerely endeavoring to lay aside all things in word and deed that are not becoming to our high and holy calling? God has promised to give us all the power that we need if we will put forth the effort and true desire.

Heb. 12:28, 29—“Wherefore let us serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear, for our God is a consuming fire.”

Throughout, the delicate balance between gentle comfort and stern admonition is perfectly maintained.

Heb. 13, the final exhortation and benediction, is of great beauty in both thought and expression.

Heb. 13:1—“Let brotherly love continue.” Permit it to fulfill its gentle, healing mission.

V. 2—“Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.”

V. 3—“Be mindful of the affliction of others”, just as feelingly as if it were you yourself.

V. 5—“Be content with such things as ye have; for He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.”

V. 13—“Let us go forth unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.”

Thirteen times in this epistle the apostle says, “Let us”, and finally—

V.15—“Let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually.”

Sacrifice is the theme of the epistle, on every plane from the highest to the humblest—from the great sacrifice of Christ to the simple sacrifice of consistent cheerfulness and praise.

Brotherly love, hospitality, fellowship in affliction, joining him without the camp—all are opportunities for the sweet communion of self-sacrifice.

Consistent unwavering thanksgiving and praise is often great sacrifice and effort. Its value increases with the depth of the sorrow and suffering of the heart, and—

“Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever, Amen.”

The Man Greatly Beloved

We have once again, in our daily readings, read together the books of three men whom God raised to minister to Israel during the terrible period that marked the end of their kingdom—Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel.

Our thoughts this morning are with the last of these—Daniel, the “man greatly beloved.” What a wonderful title and tribute to be heard from the mouth of an angel of God! What could be more desirable than to be addressed by God in these terms?

He was not just highly esteemed and commended, and valued as a faithful servant—he was much more—he was “greatly beloved.” God loved him personally and individually, drew near to him, took pleasure in him, because he sought God with a true heart.

As we consider the things that are recorded about him, let us take note of the characteristics he manifested, that we too may develop characters and characteristics that God will love.

His great and outstanding quality was a fervent and fearless faith, but he manifested much more of godliness than that.

The book of Daniel opens at the time Nebuchadnezzar first came against Jerusalem in the days of Jehoiakim. Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 1:3) selected certain youths from the princes of Judah to attend him at his court, and four are especially mentioned (v. 6)—Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah (the latter three are better known by their Babylonian names (v. 7) Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego). From the beginning Daniel appears in the position of spokesman and leader of the four.

The first event recorded concerning them gives a striking insight into their character, independence of mind, and settled determination to put the service and honor of God foremost in their lives, regardless of their circumstances or the danger of such a course.

Nebuchadnezzar was supreme ruler of the most powerful nation on earth—a cruel and ruthless nation which at that time was rapidly growing in power and conquest. Daniel and his companions were captives. They were in a position to escape the common lot of captives, and to achieve great benefit and advantage, if they gained the king's favor.

Dan 1:8—*“But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the king's meat.”*

Daniel could have easily convinced himself that the position he was in made a rigid adherence to the Law of Moses an

impossibility, and that it would be foolishness to jeopardize his life, and that of the other Jewish captives, by making an issue of meats. Have we not often heard such arguments?

But Daniel saw through all these specious deceptions of the flesh's reasoning. He knew God had given a law and had pronounced great blessing on those who faithfully endeavored to keep it. Regardless of danger or difficulty he determined to obey it as fully as he could under his captive circumstances. Therefore, he determined in his heart that, though a captive in a strange land and in the court of a mighty and terrible despot, whose word meant life or death, he would manifest his faith and love by keeping God's Law in every way he could. It is clear that from the beginning he was immovably determined upon his course, but we notice that he requested of the overseer that he might be excused from eating the king's meat. There is always a proper way to do things.

We notice further (Dan. 1:9) he was "in favor and tender love" with his Babylonian overseer. How much this tells us of the character of Daniel, even at this early age! Though of such strong determination, he must have been of exceptional gentleness and courtesy and pleasantness to have won the "tender love" of this man. This is a striking picture, and there is a great lesson in it. Strength and firmness do not necessitate harshness and coldness—true, godly strength of purpose is ALWAYS accompanied by gentleness and kindness.

The result of this faithful, uncompromising stand was (Dan. 1:15) that God blessed these Hebrew children with physical health and robustness above all the others and in addition, pre-eminence in wisdom and understanding. All things are in the hands of God. Do we fully apply the lesson to ourselves? The main thing—the ONLY thing of any importance—is to sincerely seek to please Him.

He can, as He sees fit, give health, or wisdom, or any other blessing in limitless abundance, or He can withhold. Are we then putting the emphasis of our carefulness and concern in the right place? Are we more concerned about pleasing God than about looking after our health and welfare from a natural point of view?

In this case, these four faithful men were given, not only better health than others, but pre-eminence in understanding and wisdom and skill, because they had put pleasing God before any other consideration—even to the point which most would consider fanatical foolishness.

This is the substance of Daniel chapter 1.

* * *

Chapter 2, which follows soon after in time, records the famous dream of the great metallic image which represented the course of the Kingdom of Men from Nebuchadnezzar's day down to ours. What a clear, brief, masterly, striking portrayal of the great sweep of history. And how wonderfully and significantly all the details fit when laid against the pattern of events as they have transpired. Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, divided Europe and now we are in the last days of the vision.

Think of how much this one revelation has meant to us in understanding and confidence and assurance! It is not for us to tremble in darkness, fearful of the future which seems so ominous to the natural eye, as evil and ruthless men threaten the world with automatic destruction. The pattern was laid out long ago, and will follow its course unerringly to the end.

We watch current events with keen interest, seeing the overall picture wonderfully developing as world tension and rivalries increasingly center in the Middle East.

In the past twenty years, we have seen the British and Western power decline with unexpected speed in the Middle and Far East, and Russia suddenly loom as a major factor in the critical Palestine and Egyptian area. Now events have taken a new turn. Russia appears for the present beset by seething revolt and unrest in her oppressed satellite empire, just as she seemed to be achieving her greatest prestige as the weak nations' friend in the rest of the world. Russia is out of Egypt and U.S. is growing in strength and influence—as it should be.

It is an exciting drama as the potsherds of the earth strive together for power and possession, unaware that the Lord God rules in the Kingdom of men, and is gradually shaping events to suit His own Divine purpose.

We see the hidden aspect of God working in world history perhaps more strikingly illustrated in Daniel than anywhere else in Scripture—

"The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days, but lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, and I remained there with the kings of Persia" (Dan. 10:13).

Thus spoke the angel Gabriel to Daniel, and what undreamed of vistas of absorbing interest this brief glimpse of angelic manipulation open up to us!

Returning to the image vision of chapter 2, we find Daniel's faith fully justified by the hand of God upon him in the presence of the king—

Dan. 2:48, 49—*“And the king made Daniel a great man, and ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon. And he set Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego over the affairs of the province of Babylon.”*

So ends chapter 2, but the favor of man is precarious.

* * *

Chapter 3 records the incident of the golden image and the fiery furnace. It illustrates a form of trial to which God's servants in all ages are subjected—pressure to conform and to give reverence to man-made objects of worship.

Even today in times of national danger, brethren have been faced with the same issues and the same hazards. Patriotism and flag-worship can become a frenzied cult in times of war; and we must be prepared, if necessary, to face this danger and test with meekness and restraint, but with inflexible determination to keep a clear and faithful allegiance to God alone, with our windows wide open. (Brethren who seek citizenship in any worldly country are bowing to the Babylonian image of gold). This test will also face us in many subtle and disguised ways. The world is full of things and principles, and men will try to pressure us to conform and in a sense “worship”. Let us remember the inspiring example of Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah.

Dan. 3:17—*“Our God is able to deliver us”*

. . . but even if it be not His will at this time to work a miracle on our behalf, still—

“Be it known unto thee, O King, that we will not worship the golden image thou hast set up” (v. 18).

What a calm and noble example of courage in the face of imminent peril! And again the power of God was manifested to the confusion of the heathen and for the salvation of His people.

That power will ALWAYS be manifested eventually for God's people, even though God's purpose may require their present suffering and martyrdom. The FINAL result will always be the same as occurred here—salvation and deliverance. This is the great lesson of these events.

Chapter 4 gives the dream of the cut-down tree and the seven-year madness of Nebuchadnezzar that was represented by it. Nebuchadnezzar reigned forty-three years—from 605 to

562 BC. His madness would appear to be sometime after the final destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC, as the Scriptural records represent him as the active ruler of Babylon during their period of the wars against Judah and the surrounding nations.

Also his boast, *"Is not this great Babylon which I have built?"* would appear to be uttered after a considerable period of building and development of power.

Babylon was the head of the image that represented the kingdom of men, so there is a special significance in what was divinely caused to happen to her and her ruler. The lesson of this chapter is expressed in verse 17—

"To the intent that the living may know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will"

—a fact just as true today as it was then.

In a dream, the king saw a mighty tree in the midst of the earth, reaching up to heaven, visible to the ends of the earth, harboring all the birds of the sky in its branches, and sheltering all the beasts of the field under its shadow.

At the height of its prosperity, a "watcher, a holy one" descends from heaven and issues the decree—

"Hew down the tree, but leave its stump, and bind it with a band of iron and brass, and let seven times pass over it" (v. 14-16).

The vision appears to have a three-fold significance. First, to Nebuchadnezzar himself (seven years); second, to Babylon (seventy years); third to the kingdom of men as a whole (seven times three hundred and sixty years).

Its immediate and typical fulfilment was in Nebuchadnezzar. Just one year later, in the midst of his pride, he was divinely struck with madness, and for seven years, roamed the fields like an animal and ate grass.

But the full scope of the vision is obviously greater than this as further indicated by the binding of the stump of the tree with a band of iron and brass.

The constitution of the kingdom of men since the fall of the Babylonian Empire is just as pictured here—the Babylonian stump bound with the band of Roman iron and Grecian brass.

All in any way familiar with history are aware that our present-day civilization is principally "bound" by the customs, principles, and heritage of Greece and Rome in language,

government, philosophy, art, architecture, law, science, literature, etc.

There are fewer who recognize the basic Babylonian fleshly and religious stump; but students of God's word know that the modern religious world is fundamentally Babylonian, and that "Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth" is the title the Scriptures give this system.

Such documentary books as Hislop's "Two Babylons" expose the pagan Babylonian origin of the world's principal religious observances and traditions and festivals, as Christmas, Easter, Halloween, etc. God's people can have nothing to do with such Babylonian corruption.

V. 16—*"And let seven times pass over it."*

"Seven times" in Scriptural symbol amount, on the largest scale, is seven times three hundred and sixty years, or two thousand five hundred and twenty years. The significance of this lies in the fact that our day, which we know from world conditions is the time of the end, lies just this length of time from the period of the Babylonian empire.

Seven times measured from the beginning of the head of gold comes to 1914; seven times from the end of Babylon, about 1984—that is the seventy years of Babylon carried forward "seven times" or two thousand five hundred and twenty years, runs from 1914 to 1984.

At the end of his madness, Nebuchadnezzar, typifying the kingdom of men cured from its present delusions and brought to the true knowledge and worship of God, declares, v. 35—

"All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; and He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, what doest Thou."

This is the great value of Daniel for us today, the great truth we must keep before our minds as we watch the futile maneuverings of the sin powers of the earth, as the final crisis approaches. Even of proud and terrible Gog himself, God says—

"I will turn thee back . . . and I will bring thee forth."

Russia is merely fulfilling God's will and preparing the scene for the manifestation of God's glory.

Chapter 5 describes the last night of the great Babylonian Empire. Daniel is now an old man, over eighty, and the king is Belshazzar, who was apparently the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar. This chapter was long used by critics in an attempt to

discredit the Bible, for it did not fit with the fanciful legends of the heathen "historians". The critics said there was and could be no such king, but archeology has completely justified the Bible account.

This destruction of literal Babylon by Cyrus is typical of the destruction of symbolic Babylon by Christ. Even as the enemy surrounds the city, the king Belshazzar; confident of his power and defences (v. 1), makes a great feast unto his lords, and in their drunken revelry (v. 3), they make sport of the holy vessels of the Temple, drinking to their own heathen gods out of them.

So the Babylonian harlot is "drunken with the blood of the saints", and she says, "I sit a queen and am no widow", at the very time that her destruction strikes.

Suddenly (v. 5), Belshazzar's merriment is silenced, and the revelers are struck with terror by the appearance of the fingers of a man's hand writing on the wall. The king (v. 7), calls for all his wise men, and offers great honor to any who can interpret the supernatural message. Daniel is not at this time in public prominence, but his fame is well-known. The queen reminds Belshazzar of him (v. 11) and Daniel is called. He spells out the meaning of the divine message, v. 25-28—

"Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharstin." "Numbered, Numbered, Weighed and Divided."

The handwriting is clearly on the wall today, but the blind nations cannot read it.

V. 30—"In that night was Belshazzar slain, and Darius the Median took the kingdom."

* * *

Chapter 6—the lions' den—is a lesson and an inspiration in many ways. It is not always God's purpose to miraculously intervene and close the lions' mouths. Many faithful men have sealed their testimony with their blood. But the lesson and comfort of this chapter is not dimmed. In the end, all who are His will stand eternally before Him.

The events of this chapter occur in the reign of Darius the Mede. Though we find Daniel in retirement during the reign of the blaspheming drunkard Belshazzar, he is brought into public prominence again under the Medes and Persians though now of advanced age.

His trial on this occasion reminds us of the final trial of the aged Abraham—the offering of his son—which came when it seemed all trials were past.

The prominence of Daniel, and his godly separateness, leads to jealousy. His enemies realize (v. 5), that they will not be able to find anything against him, unless they can create a situation in which he must choose between obedience to God and obedience to the king.

So (v. 7), they flatter the vain king into making a foolish decree that none may ask a petition of any but him for thirty days. The course Daniel follows is a striking illustration of the principle that a lit candle is not to be hid under a bushel, not even temporarily, and it is a standing rebuke to all who, on the plea of "prudence", hide their divine light that is meant to illuminate the world.

When open confession of the principles of Christ is dangerous or inconvenient, how often we hear it quoted that we should "not cast our pearls before swine;" but Daniel's conduct puts such a misapplication of Scriptures to shame.

"Ye are the light of the world . . . LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE."

Daniel makes no attempt at concealment, though he knows he is walking into a planned trap and is exposing himself to a cruel death.

It was only for thirty days. How easy it would have been to shut his windows and make sure that his prayers were unobserved. What harm would it have done to use a little caution in this way?

But Daniel, "the man greatly beloved," could see the issue so much more clearly than that. He saw that such a course would have been weakness, cowardice, failure and defeat, and so all generations since have been strengthened by the power of his fearless example—

"Dare to be a Daniel! Dare to stand alone! Dare to have a purpose firm, and dare to make it known!"

V. 10—"Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into this house, and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforesaid."

Chapter 7 begins the great prophetic visions of Daniel which now continue right through to the end of the book. They were all at the end of his life—in the short reigns of Belshazzar and Darius, and the first three years of Cyrus. Chapter 7 is the vision of the four beasts that parallels the image of Nebuchadnezzar, but the symbolism here is much fuller and

more striking: that was for a heathen monarch; this is for the servants of God. There the kingdom of men was as a great manlike image; here it is shown as savage, destroying beasts. Here we have the deeper details of the little horn that prevailed against the saints; of the Ancient of Days, the Son of Man, similitude of God—manifestation coming in the clouds of heaven, the opening of the books of judgment, the ten thousand times ten thousand standing before him, and the saints taking the Kingdom under the whole heaven.

These were vast and mighty things for a mortal man to see, and to carry alone in his heart. Daniel says, v. 28—

"My thoughts much troubled me, and my countenance changed in me, but I kept the matter in my heart."

But more terrible things were yet to be revealed to the man greatly beloved. He was to see the long centuries of the desolation of his people; the restoration and then the destroying again of the city and the Sanctuary, the cutting off of the Messiah—visions and revelations that overwhelmed his spirit and caused him to lie sick for some days.

Chapter 8, occurring still in the reign of Belshazzar, contains the visions of the Persian ram destroyed by the Grecian he-goat. After the goat had destroyed the ram (v. 7), its great horn, Alexander, was broken (v. 8), and four horns took its place (the four-fold division of the Greek empire under Alexander's generals). From one of these horns (v. 9) came a little horn, the Roman power, that was to wax great against God's land and sanctuary and to take away the daily sacrifice, and (v. 14) the vision was to be for two thousand three hundred days, *"then shall the Sanctuary be cleansed."*

The vision throughout concerns the he-goat and what developed from it; and the appearance of the goat coming like a whirlwind from the west under Alexander is the first specific action in the vision. Counting therefore, two thousand three hundred years from the brief nine-year period of Alexander the Great, 332-323 BC, we come to the period 1969-1978. Of the end of the period we are told—

V. 14—*"Then shall the Sanctuary be cleansed."*

There are several aspects and significances of the cleansing of the Sanctuary, the principal one being the personal one, *"Ye are the temple of the living God."* The cleansing is related to the time when it is said—

"He that is filthy, let him be filthy still; He that is holy, let him be holy still."

Now is the time to prepare to be among the holy things retained when the unclean is cast out in the great day of cleansing—"If we would judge—cleanse, purge, ourselves—we would not be judged."

Chapter 9 occurs in the first year of Darius, right after the Babylonian oppressor had been destroyed. Daniel understood (v. 9), by the prophecies of Jeremiah that the captivity of his people was to be for seventy years. This first year of Darius, as closely as can be determined, was sixty-nine years from the beginning of the captivity, and Daniel sets himself (v. 3) to seek by prayer and fasting and supplication for the gathering and blessing of his people.

Certain things are notable about Daniel's prayer. Even though the end of the time had come, and the destroyer had been destroyed, Daniel does not take the regathering for granted or merely wait for God to move—

"Prayer, supplication, fasting, sackcloth and ashes" (v. 3) indicate the urgency of his appeal. With such intense desire God is well pleased. He desires those, and only those, who burn with intense longing for the fulfilment of His promises.

And then we note how Daniel identifies himself with his people and their sinful condition. There is no superior self-righteousness, but a loving, sympathetic desire to stand for them and plead for them. It is repeatedly—

"We have sinned . . . we have rebelled . . . we have not obeyed . . . we made not our prayer."

As he prayed (v. 21), a gracious answer came to him. The angel Gabriel, who had appeared and explained the vision of the he-goat, stood beside him again. This is the angel that appeared to Zacharias to announce the birth of John, and to Mary to announce the birth of Jesus, and he appears to no one else by name (though Michael is mentioned). It is here at the end of his life, that Daniel is first addressed (v. 23) as the "man greatly beloved." The beloved Daniel is the Old Testament counterpart of the beloved John—both in their old age received marvelous apocalyptic revelations—love is the key to the deep knowledge of God.

Gabriel's message at this time is brief, but it is one of the most striking prophecies in the Bible—perhaps it could be called the central prophecy of all, v. 24—

"Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city: to finish the transgression; to make

an end of sins; to make reconciliation for iniquity; to bring in everlasting righteousness; to seal up the vision and the prophecy; and to anoint the Most Holy."

What depths of meaning are contained in these words! How beautifully and wonderfully all this was fulfilled in Christ. Here is the hope and salvation of all mankind. Here is all the Law and the Prophets. But Gabriel continues, v. 26—

"And Messiah shall be cut off . . . and the people of the princes that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary."

Daniel is left with the enigma of the end of sin, reconciliation made, everlasting righteousness brought in, the covenant confirmed . . . and the Messiah cut off, the city and the sanctuary destroyed. We can see now, in the wonderful working of the eternal purpose, how all this fits together and was fulfilled in Christ. But what would Daniel's thoughts and feelings be? Here is glorious accomplishment associated with utter defeat and desolation. These were the things the angels desired to look into.

The next vision, chapter 10, occurs in the third year of Cyrus, apparently about three years after the foregoing (prophecy of seventy weeks). It is clear that Daniel's great concern in the meantime has been to learn more of the things in store for his people, and regarding "Messiah the Prince."

As the chapter opens, Daniel has set himself (v. 2) to mourn and fast and seek unto God for an answer to his searchings. He had been fasting and mourning three weeks when (v. 5), he sees a vision of a man that corresponds in striking detail with the Son of Man similitude that appeared to John on Patmos, representing the multitudinous Christ.

Like John, he falls at this man's feet as dead (v.9), and, like John, he is caused to arise and is given courage and strength and he is told, chapter 10:14—

"I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days."

Chapters 11 and 12 contain this final revelation. Chapter 11 is a detailed history of the conflicts between the King of the South and the King of the North—the two parts of Alexander's Empire—Egypt and Syria—between which lay Palestine, their common battleground.

As time passes on, nations come and go, and Rome enters the picture as the King of the North by the conquest of the territory. The Roman power develops into the Papal power, into whose

hand the people of God are given for one thousand two hundred and sixty years.

Much history is telescoped into a few verses, but verse 40 turns our attention to the "Time of the End". There is still a King of the North and a King of the South. The ancient enmity still exists, and God's land is still the crossroads and the battleground, just as we see today.

As the final crisis arises (v. 40), the King of the South pushes against the King of the North, then the latter-day King of the North comes forth like a whirlwind and carries all before him. At the zenith of his power he meets his end (v. 45) between the seas and the glorious holy mountain.

Chapter 12 is the final picture. This time of the great power and final destruction of the King of the North is described (v. 1) as a "time of trouble on the earth such as has never been", but it is also a time of great deliverance. It is the time (v. 2) of the awakening of the dead and the rewarding of God's faithful servants of all ages, chapter 12:3—

"They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament."

We know that this great day is even now upon us—are we among the wise? Are our lives filled and dominated by the consciousness of these great things? Do we feel the intensity of Daniel's supplication and yearning?

Ch. 12:4—*"But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book, even to the time of the end."*

He heard one ask another (v. 6), "How long to the end of these wonders?" They speak of the 1260, 1290 and 1335 years. Here again a final seventy-five year period is indicated related to the rebirth of Israel. At the moment, these periods appear to run out successively in 1917, 1947 and 1992. But it is not for us to know—only to be wide awake to the possibilities.

Daniel heard the mystic reply—he heard but he understood not (v. 8). The vision was not for Daniel. The aged prophet had come to the end of his long exile. His weary years of prayer and concern for his people were now over.

Ch. 12:8, 9, 13—*"Then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? And he said unto me, Go thy way Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. Go thy way till the end be; for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days."*

May it be our lot to stand with him, the man greatly beloved.